

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper A

Date **2nd October 2024**

Title of report: **Western Gateway Business Plan 2025/26**

Purpose of report: **To approve the Western Gateway Business Plan for 2025/26 for submission to the Department for Transport**

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Approve the Business Plan for 2025/26 as set out in Table One.
- II. Delegate to the Programme Team to make changes as required with the agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the end of August the Department for Transport (DfT) sent guidance on preparing Sub-national Transport Body (STB) business plans for 2025/26. The deadline for submission is 30 September 2024. The draft Business Plan is to support the DfT's preparations for the October budget. Submitting the business plan is no guarantee the STB will receive funding.
- 1.2 The DfT's 30 September 2024 deadline means submission was before the Western Gateway Board meeting on 2 October 2024. Approval in principle was sought at the Senior Officers Group meeting on 16 September 2024 and with the Chair and Vice Chair at the Agenda review meeting on 18 September 2024 to submit. Retrospective approval is thus asked of the Board at this meeting.

2. Programme for 2025/26

- 2.1 In line with the guidance it is assumed the levels of funding are the same as 2024/25. Given nationally agreed pay rises this represents a fall in the funding available for projects. Total budget is £996k (£816k from the DfT and £180k from the constituent authorities). This budget will allow the Western Gateway to continue to develop the programme set out in 2024/25 with a part time Lead Officer now in place. Funding is focused on taking forward for delivery key elements of the Strategic Transport Plan, rail, rural mobility, freight and coach work and providing capability and capacity for the local authorities

through the Regional Centre of Excellence. No new strategy work is planned. £100k is set aside for contingency.

- 2.2 It should be stressed that the Business Plan recognises what needs to be undertaken. The level of resources available mean it will be challenging to deliver everything in the programme for 2025/26. In this light the Business Plan should be seen as a shopping list of work from which priority items will be selected to take forward. All selections will be reported to the Board. Some areas of work may need to be deferred to 2026/27.
- 2.3 The landscape for STBs is changing rapidly with the new Government's five missions, devolution and in particular the revised National Planning Policy Framework housing forecasts. There will be a need for the Business Plan to be flexible in adapting to this changing landscape and be adjusted accordingly. The Business Plan, therefore, should not be taken as set in stone. All changes will be reported to the Board.
- 2.4 A summary of the programme is shown in Table One.

Table One: Draft programme for 2025/26

Work Area	Specific Workstream	Budget
Strategic Transport Plan (STP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 month review of Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and Strategic Transport Plan (STP) Modelling work to support local authorities (LA) revised housing figures and support business case development for SIP schemes 	£150k
Rural Mobility Strategy*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further funding for selected rural mobility pilots to deliver proposals 	£50k
Rail Strategy	Development funding for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wiltshire Rail Strategic Study (TransWilts services) Heart of Wessex Line development to Full Business Case Dorset Metro development to Full Business Case 	£125k
Freight Strategy*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of South West Freight Forum in new format 	£50k
Electric Vehicle (EV) charging*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help deliver actions from the EV Charging Strategy Continued support for LAs on the new EV charging infrastructure tool 	£5k
Regional Centre of Excellence and Business Case support including the Strategic Cycling Network**	Providing capacity and capability for the LAs through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop dedicated online support site to provide tools and best practice for the LAs 	£95k

Work Area	Specific Workstream	Budget
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative Fuels for Freight Phase 3: Business case development for shortlisted site(s) following use of ALFFI tool Signposted areas of work from the Strategic Transport Plan including rural planning guidance, buses, travelling less and M4 to Dorset Coast Strategic Study (when published) Business case development for schemes emerging from the SIP Develop the business case for a selection of key cycle route interventions from the Strategic Cycling Network study Support proposals for new combined authorities and the devolution agenda through use of the Strategic Transport Model, the Carbon Assessment Playbook and other tools 	
Coach Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of South West Coach Sector Forum and develop alternative fuels/carbon management plans for coach sector 	£60k
Contingency****	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserve to pay for redundancies, winding up of the STB and general contingency 	£100k
Operational costs***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Team salaries including Lead Officer Seconded staff costs Communications/engagement support Business operations 	£361k
	TOTAL	£996k
Funding		
Department for Transport		£816k
Local Authority Contributions		£180k
TOTAL		£996k

Notes:

* Rural mobility, freight, alternative fuels for freight and EV charging are all joint projects with Peninsula Transport STB.

** For Regional Centre of Excellence work the £95k is for consultant support. It is anticipated the majority of the work will be undertaken in house by the core team.

*** Operational costs based on the current team structure with a part time Lead Officer and part time comms. Business operations includes advertising/marketing, engagement and events.

**** DfT Business Plan guidance recommends funding is held in reserve.

2.5 The business plan guidance emphasises the important of positioning the document around the Government's five missions, the Secretary of State for Transport's five transport priorities and proposals for devolution. Demonstrating this a more detailed version of the programme is in Appendix One.

3. Alternative funding scenarios

- 3.1 The Business Plan remains focused on taking forward work on the Strategic Transport Plan, Rural Mobility Strategy, Rail Strategy, Freight Strategy and the Coach Strategy in order to maintain progress on current and committed workstreams.
- 3.2 The DfT requests a narrative on alternative scenarios for a 20% uplift and a 20% decrease.
- 3.3 Under a 20% uplift in DfT funding the total budget (including LA contributions) is £1,158k. An uplift allows more funding to be focused on the Regional Centre of Excellence work. This will require additional staff resources so provision is made to recruit a Data Officer and a second Transport Officer. A 20% uplift is considered by the other STBs to be highly unlikely.
- 3.4 Under a 20% reduction in DfT funding the total budget is £832k. This is similar to the budget for 2023/24. Budgets for rural mobility, freight and coach interventions are all reduced under this scenario and the Regional Centre of Excellence work scaled back. It is assumed the Lead Officer post returns to being vacant as it is hard to justify with a reduced budget.

4. One page summary

- 4.1 The business plan guidance requests a one page summary including what we do, plan for the next three years, benefits to partners and how it supports the government's missions and especially sustained economic growth. This is shown below. Please note that given the limitations of the one page format as set by the DfT it is not possible to include all of the Western Gateway's work or individual LA schemes and aspirations.

<p style="text-align: center;">What we do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Transport Plan (STP) 2024 - 2050 and Strategic Investment Plan(SIP) set out the vision, ambition, transport priorities and pipeline of schemes for transforming the transport network, delivering housing and kickstarting economic growth. Fund and partner the development of strategic studies to support north-south connectivity and east-west movement with Network Rail including the Heart of Wessex Line, Bristol to Birmingham and Bristol to Oxford. Facilitate best practice through established freight and coach forums to raise awareness and develop strategic interventions including new rail freight terminals and strategic coach routes. 	<p style="text-align: center;">In the next 3 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCOE development rolling out tools and guidance for decarbonising transport (incl. spatial planning, interchanges, alternative fuels, Carbon Assessment Playbook and EV charging) for our local authorities to use. Provide business case funding and support to develop the pipeline of schemes emerging from the SIP. Continue to work with Network Railway and National Highways on delivering rail and highway proposals including the Dorset Metro, West of England Line and M5 corridor improvements. Develop rural mobility pilots to support economic growth, address poor connectivity and reduce barriers to education and employment.
<p>STB: Western Gateway</p>	
<p>Mission: A resilient transport network that works for everyone and is fit for the future, helping people and businesses throughout the Western Gateway to thrive while protecting our environment.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Benefits to our Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak with one voice for the region engaging with the Government and industry partners including National Highways and Network Rail on developing and delivering strategic transport and infrastructure. Western Gateway funded rail schemes will see improved performance of the rail network, promotion of new travel opportunities, uplift in social mobility and tackle North South inequality across the region. Regional Centre of Excellence (RCOE) provides capacity and capability support through modelling (Strategic Transport Model) and planning tools and guidance to our local authorities in developing their Local Transport Plans and planning for future housing and employment growth. 	<p style="text-align: center;">We will support the Government's missions through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STP and SIP providing advice and assistance for the transport interventions required to kickstart economic growth and bring forward strategic development. Facilitate greener transport, modal shift and new travel opportunities by rail, coach and cycling and support economic growth by the efficient movement of people and goods while delivering on net zero. Assist and provide advice for new combined authorities on a common view and the importance of planning for the wider regional picture RCOE work promoting active travel for healthier and safer lives and providing tools and guidance to support growth.

5. Consultation, communication and engagement

- 5.1 The Senior Officers Group, with officers from all the Western Gateway's constituent authorities and the Chair and Vice Chair, has been consulted on the Business Plan for 2025/26.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 Delivering the Western Gateway's programme will open up new travel opportunities, improve accessibility for everyone and contribute to decarbonising transport. No adverse impact on any protected groups is expected.

7. Legal Considerations

- 7.1 The Western Gateway STB remains an informal non-statutory partnership.

8. Financial considerations

- 8.1 Department for Transport funding for 2025/26 is to be confirmed. It is anticipated that funding will be at the same level as 2024/25 at £816k. The Western Gateway's constituent authorities' contribution will be £180k making a planned total budget for 2025/26 of £996k.
- 8.2 The West of England Combined Authority following Board approval in March 2020 remains the accountable body.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The Board is asked to agree the recommendations set out at the beginning of this report.

Appendix One : Draft programme for 2025/26 and how it meets the Government's new priorities

Contact Officer

James White, Technical Lead Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Appendix One : Draft programme for 2025/26 and how it meets the Government’s new priorities

To note the level of resources available mean it will be challenging to deliver everything in the programme for 2025/26. The Business Plan should be seen as a shopping list of work from which priority items will be selected to take forward.

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government’s five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
Strategic Transport Plan (STP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 month review of Strategic Investment Plan • 12 month review of Strategic Transport Plan • Strategic Transport Model work to support the 12 month reviews • Modelling work to support local authorities revised housing figures • Update the model in line with new Government objectives • Modelling work to support business case development for SIP schemes (see Regional Centre of Excellence) 	<p>Strategic Transport Plan supports economic growth, promotes modal shift and greener transport, provides new travel opportunities and promotes active travel for healthier lives. Opportunity for closer working with the NHS on access.</p> <p>Reviews needed in the light of new Government’s requirements and Comprehensive Spending Review in Autumn 2025.</p>	<p>Strategic Transport Plan and Strategic Investment Plan are Department for Transport requirements to provide advice on prioritising investment. They will assist the transformation of infrastructure, delivering greener and more integrated transport.</p> <p>Strategic Transport Plan and modelling work will be a valuable tool for the local authorities in planning for new housing forecasts.</p>	<p>Strategic Transport Plan provides the wider regional view for new combined authorities.</p> <p>Strategic Transport Model provides a regional planning and evidence tool for the new combined authorities to use.</p>	£150k

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government's five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
Rural Mobility Strategy (joint work with Peninsula Transport)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further funding for selected rural mobility pilots (awarded funding in 2024/25) to deliver proposals Strategic Transport Plan signpost for rural planning guidance – see Regional Centre of Excellence below 	Supports economic growth, greener transport and better access to public services including health and NHS facilities in rural areas where the majority of the Western Gateway is rural.	<p>Improves rural transport tackling social mobility and inequality in rural areas.</p> <p>Delivers greener alternatives and greater integration for rural travel.</p>	Promotes best practice for new combined authorities to avoid the risk of a too urban focus. The majority of the Western Gateway is rural.	£50k
Rail Strategy	<p>Schemes for development funding are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wiltshire Rail Strategic Study (TransWilts services) Heart of Wessex Line development to Full Business Case Dorset Metro and West of England Line development to Full Business Case MetroWest to the South (contribution to North 	Supports economic growth, modal shift, greener transport with reduced emissions and improved connectivity to employment and public and health (NHS) services.	<p>Western Gateway funded schemes will see improved performance of the rail network, promotion of new travel opportunities, uplift social mobility and tackle North South inequality across the region.</p> <p>Close working with Network Rail sets the scene for future working with Great British</p>	Enables new combined authorities to agree and plan for the wider national and regional rail network as no services begin and end within one authority.	£125k

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government's five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
	Somerset Council and WECA study) Additional funding partners will be needed to undertake development work.		Railways and the role of the STB.		
Freight Strategy (joint work with Peninsula Transport)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of South West Freight Forum in new format Rail freight terminal(s) feasibility/business case work 	Supports economic growth, greener transport and more reliable and efficient movement of goods.	<p>Greener and more efficient freight movements including the successful backloading scheme.</p> <p>Better integration of freight movements including development of multi modal rail terminals.</p>	Raise freight awareness and the need to plan for freight with new combined authorities as freight is likely to be low on the agenda.	£50k
Electric Vehicle (EV) charging (joint strategy with Peninsula Transport)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help delivery and take forward actions from the EV Charging Strategy (joint with Peninsula Transport) Continued support for Local Authorities on the new EV charging infrastructure tool 	Supports greener transport, reduced emissions and a more accessible charging network.	Transforming EV charging infrastructure (non freight) across the region providing local authorities with the tools to plan provision.	Provides ready made EV tool and support for new combined authorities.	£5k

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government's five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
Regional Centre of Excellence and Business Case support including the Strategic Cycling Network	<p>Providing capacity and capability for the LAs through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 3: Business case development for shortlisted site(s) following use of ALFFI tool. • Signposted areas of work from the Strategic Transport Plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop Health, Physical Activity and Social Value evaluation guidance/tool (in programme for 2024/25) ○ Scoping out provision of regional guidance including spatial development and interchanges (in programme for 2024/25) 	<p>Centre of Excellence work supports economic growth, promotes modal shift and greener transport, provides new travel opportunities for all (including work, health and education), promotes good design for safer and more attractive interchanges and promotes active travel for healthier lives.</p>	<p>Greener freight movements through developing the business case for hydrogen refuelling and EV charging stations for HGVs.</p> <p>Support for updating Local Transport Plans, Spatial Development Strategies and Local Plans to transform infrastructure, promote social mobility and tackle north south inequality across the region.</p> <p>Developing and maintaining a pipeline of future schemes from the Strategic Transport Plan.</p> <p>Deliver greener and more integrated transport with the use of</p>	<p>Need to consider networks for refuelling beyond new Combined Authority boundaries.</p> <p>Provides the tools and knowledge for regional planning for the new combined authorities and supports the devolution of powers for buses, rail and spatial planning.</p> <p>Assist and provide advice on proposals for new combined authorities on the importance of planning for the wider regional picture.</p> <p>Support for local authorities for developing effective business cases for SIP schemes.</p> <p>.</p>	£95k

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government's five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'Travelling Less' – review approaches to pricing, reallocation of road space, parking policy and provision and produce a strategy with recommendations for the local authorities. ○ Rural planning guidance – work with LPAs to develop guidelines around rural development, connectivity and local service provision/support. ○ Buses – assist local authorities in working together on bus franchise and enhanced partnership proposals to help 		<p>various tools and guidance for local authorities to use.</p> <p>Supports improving, integrating and co-ordinating bus services across the region.</p>		

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government's five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
	<p>integrate and coordinate services across the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ M4 to Dorset Coast Strategic Study (when published) – review of opportunities and approach ● Undertake household travel survey ● Continue to develop dedicated online support site to provide tools and best practice for the local authorities ● Continued development of tools for transport and QCR and sharing/training LA partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Common Analytical Framework via Transport for the North 				

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government's five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carbon Assessment Playbook ○ EV Infrastructure ○ ALFFI ○ DfT Connectivity tool (piloting) ● Business case development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide development funding for SIP schemes ○ Act as critical friend for LA major transport scheme proposals. ○ Develop the business case for a selection of key cycle route interventions from the Strategic Cycling Network study. ● Support proposals for new combined 				

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government's five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
	<p>authorities and the devolution agenda through use of the Strategic Transport Model, the Carbon Assessment Playback and other tools and promoting the wider regional picture.</p> <p>The £95k budget is for consultant support. It is anticipated the majority of the work will be undertaken in house by the core team. Given the scale of the programme and level of resources available some workstreams will need to be deferred to 2026/27.</p>				
Coach Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of South West Coach Sector Forum Develop alternative fuels/carbon 	Supports economic growth, modal shift, greener transport, enhanced	Improve coach services and their usage, transform the coach network serving areas away from the rail	Enables new combined authorities to see and plan for coach services.	£60k

Work Area	Specific Workstream	How the work programme for 2025/26 meets government priorities			Budget
		Government's five missions*	Secretary of State five priorities for transport**	Support devolution	
	management plans for coach sector	interchanges, more reliable, accessible and affordable services and improved connectivity and access to employment and public services.	network with integration at key transport hubs.		
Contingency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserve to pay for redundancies and general contingency including future Major Road Network bids 				£100k
Operational costs (based on the current team structure and part time lead officer role)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Team salaries Seconded staff costs Communications/engagement support 				£361k
	TOTAL	£996k			£996k
		Funding			
Department for Transport		£816k			
Local Authority Contributions		£180k			
TOTAL		£996k			

* Kickstart economic growth, Make Britain a clean energy superpower, Take back our streets, Break down barriers to opportunity and Build an NHS fit for the future

** improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform; improving bus services and growing usage across the country; transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country; promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality, delivering greener transport and better integrating transport networks

