

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper A

Date **10th July 2024**

Title of report: **Revised Western Gateway Business Plan 2024/25**

Purpose of report: **To set out the Business Plan for the Western Gateway in 2024/25 following the Department for Transport funding settlement**

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Welcome the Department for Transport funding for 2024/25.
- II. Approve the revised 2024/25 Business Plan for Western Gateway as set out in Table One
- III. Delegate day to day decisions on operational spend (within the overall budget agreed for each workstream) of up to £50,000 to Programme Team.
- IV. Delegate decisions on re-profiling spend (within total budget) to Senior Officer Group.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 13 March 2024 the Western Gateway Board approved the Business Plan for 2024/25, subject to confirmation of Department for Transport funding.
- 1.2 In a letter dated 24 May 2024 the Secretary of State for Transport, Mark Harper confirmed approval of the Business Plan with a funding allocation for 2024/25 set at £816,000.
- 1.3 The letter expressed appreciation for the collaborative work of Western Gateway in supporting the Government's objectives in the region stating "*This is in recognition of all the great work you have done supporting the Government's objectives in the Western Gateway region – and the way in which you have worked collaboratively with the Department for Transport and our delivery bodies as a supportive partner.*"
- 1.4 Although the level of funding, at £816,000 is slightly lower than the £896,000 initially anticipated from Baroness Vere's letter of 21 March 2022, it

nonetheless represents a significant increase from the £605,000 received in 2023/24 and is to be welcomed.

- 1.5 The approved Business Plan was originally based on the higher funding amount, so a revised version has been prepared as detailed in Table One. This version aligns with the Secretary of State's request for Western Gateway to uphold its two primary roles: creating and maintaining a transport strategy and providing the Government with advice on investment prioritisation.
- 1.6 Additionally the Department for Transport expects the Western Gateway to continue developing its Regional Centre of Excellence by providing tailored support to Local Transport Authorities in the region in four core work areas: producing updated Local Transport Plans; providing support on Quantifying Carbon Reductions; developing effective business cases and developing and maintaining a pipeline of future schemes.
- 1.7 The Western Gateway's constituent authorities will cumulatively contribute £180,000 making a total budget of £996,000 for 2024/25.

2. Programme for 2024/25

2.1 The proposed programme for 2024/25 is shown in Table One below.

Table One: Programme for 2024/25

Work Area	Specific Workstream	Budget	Comment
Strategic Transport Plan (STP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Investment Plan produced. • Sustainability Appraisal • Public consultation on Strategic Investment Plan • Modelling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report describing future transport scenarios and uncertainties. ○ Modelling of impacts of prioritised SIP proposals 	£145,000	Strategic Investment Plan is a Department for Transport requirement to provide advice on prioritising investment. Technical support required for work areas signposted in the Strategic Transport Plan.
Rural Mobility Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of rural mobility pilot(s) and partners 	£50,000	Funding key to maintaining momentum. Strategic Transport Plan signpost for rural planning guidance. Joint work with Peninsula Transport.
Rail Strategy	Potential schemes for development funding include:	£150,000	Proposed to focus funding on Dorset

Work Area	Specific Workstream	Budget	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heart of Wessex Line Dorset Metro (with Dorset Council funding) West of England Line Electrification Wiltshire Strategic Rail Study (expected mid 2024) MetroWest to the South 		Metro and the West of England Line – see Rail report.
Freight Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South West Freight Forum Delivery of interventions as set out in the Strategy 	£50,000	Funding key to maintaining momentum Joint work with Peninsula Transport.
Alternative fuels for freight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2: Shortlisting of long list of sites Phase 3: Business case development for shortlisted site(s) 	£10,000	Final version of shortlisting tool from Midlands Connect expected summer 2024. Joint work with Peninsula Transport.
Electric Vehicle (EV) charging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EV Charging Strategy produced in-house with Peninsula Transport New EV charging infrastructure tool via Transport for the North for LAs to use 	£5,000	EV Strategy being produced in house with Peninsula Transport. Budget is for additional technical work and LA training if required.
Regional Centre of Excellence and Business Case support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Scoping out provision of regional guidance including spatial development, and interchanges Scoping of household travel survey Set up a dedicated online support site to provide tools and best practice Development of tools for transport and QCR and sharing/training LA partners. To include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common Analytical Framework via Transport for the North 	£100,000	Support for updating Local Transport Plans. Support for local authorities for developing effective business cases for local authority led Strategic Transport Plan interventions. Developing and maintaining a pipeline of future schemes from the Strategic Transport Plan. Roll out of Carbon Assessment Playbook tool to all the local authorities to assist with their Local Transport Plans, major schemes development and

Work Area	Specific Workstream	Budget	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carbon Assessment Playbook (+ possible upgrades to include more place types) ○ DfT Connectivity tool (piloting) ● Business case development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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. 		Quantifying Carbon Reductions work.
Coach Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● South West Coach Sector Forum ● Development of strategic coach routes and other interventions from the Strategy 	£40,000	Funding key to maintaining momentum
Contingency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reserve to pay for redundancies and general contingency including future Major Road Network bids 	£102,000	Baroness Vere letter advised retaining a reserve to pay for redundancies in case the STB is shut down. Extra funds at year's end will be allocated to the STB funding reserve maintained by the Combined Authority
Operational costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core Team salaries ● Seconded staff costs ● Communications/engagement support 	£344,000	Based on the team structure and resourcing the lead officer role
	TOTAL	£996,000	
Funding			
	Department for Transport	£816,000	
	Local Authority Contributions	£180,000	
	TOTAL	£996,000	

3. Commentary on the revised Business Plan

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 In line with the Department for Transport settlement letter funding has been allocated to the Regional Centre of Excellence and Business Case support work. These have been combined into a single budget along with the Carbon Assessment Playbook and the Strategic Cycle Network. All of these initiatives support the Strategic Transport Plan and the Strategic Investment Plan and the local authorities in producing their Local Transport Plans.
- 3.3 It is proposed, subject to continued Sub-national Transport Body funding, that business case support will be increased for 2025/26 following approval of the Strategic Investment Plan. Support will focus on the interventions in the Strategic Investment Plan.
- 3.4 A contingency budget of £102,000 has been set aside to add to the reserve carried over from 2023/24. This reserve was advised by the Baroness Vere funding settlement letter of March 2022, in case of redundancies should the Sub-national Transport Body be shut down. It is expected that there will be a new round of Major Road Network funding and the contingency budget will be used to support this work.
- 3.5 Previously the Technical Lead, Senior Transport Officer and Transport Officer posts were recharged against individual projects. Following advice from the Department for Transport to simplify reporting, all staff costs are grouped in a single budget.
- 3.6 The Lead Officer role remains vacant. With the funding for 2024/25 being significantly higher than 2023/24, it is proposed to review the appointment to this post, which has been forecasted within the operational cost. Previously it was difficult to justify the salary of the post with a smaller budget.
- 3.7 Given the scale of the programme for 2024/25 and the increased budget the need for additional staffing resource will be kept under review. Previously the need for a data officer has been identified.

4. Consultation, communication and engagement

- 4.1 The Senior Officers Group, with officers from all the Western Gateway's constituent authorities, has been consulted on the revised programme for 2024/25.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 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.

6. Legal Considerations

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

7. Financial considerations

- 7.1 Department for Transport funding for 2024/25 is confirmed at £816,000. The Western Gateway's constituent authorities' contribution will be £180,000 making a total budget for 2024/25 of £996,000.
- 7.2 The West of England Combined Authority following Board approval in March 2020 remains the accountable body.

8. Conclusion

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

Contact Officer

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