

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper E

Date **10th July 2024**

Title of report: **Cycling Strategy Update**

Purpose of report: **Information on recent progress on Western Gateway's Strategic Cycling Strategy**

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Note update and proposed next steps.

1. Background

1.1 Western Gateway Cycling strategy was developed by Atkins and Sustrans in 2022.

1.2 179 cycling routes were proposed by partner authorities and assessed against a framework of criteria established and agreed by a working group of officers. These included:

1.2.1 Population within 400m of route (resident, workplace, children)

1.2.2 No. "destinations" within 400m (café, pub, shop, healthcare)

1.2.3 Tourism spots within 400m

1.2.4 Schools within 400m

1.2.5 Train stations within 400m

1.2.6 Bus stops within 400m

1.2.7 Strategic Road network within 400m

1.2.8 Intersections with other cycle routes (LCWIP, NCN)

1.2.9 Boundary crosses (district, LA, STB)

1.3 The 23 highest scoring routes were taken forward for more detailed assessment for potential strategic investment.

1.4 The resulting strategy was not considered acceptable to all STB members, due to:

- Geographical distribution – too clustered around Bristol, urban areas and areas of existing network
- Lack of confidence that all schemes have been received and assessed

- Lack of confidence that the scoring mechanism and outputs identify regional priorities, rather than strongly local priorities.

2. Further work (1) - Spring '23

- 2.1 To seek to address the concerns, a “thematic sift” of the proposals was subsequently undertaken to identify additional/alternative routes that align with STB priorities, including cross-border routes, rural routes, those with high tourism potential, those with decarbonisation potential and those that align with the strategic road network
- 2.2 This sift has been carried out but with no decision yet on if and how to assimilate those results, as concerns remained amongst partners that the core assessment metrics were still unsuited to the required task.

3. Further work (2) - Summer '23

- 3.1 To address these residual concerns, WG officers worked with Sustrans, Atkins and officers from the constituent authorities to review the assessment metrics and scoring process. The following steps were agreed with the project board:
- 1) Receive and review scoring metrics
 - 2) Review findings with Sustrans/Atkins and officer steering group to understand the course of the project, decisions taken and the options available
 - 3) Consider what adaptations could be made and additional work required
 - 4) Review the delivery of Task B (identification of regional network).
- 3.2 These tasks have been completed. A number of scoring metrics were identified that could be removed or adapted to give greater focus on the desired objectives. A small calculation error was also identified and rectified. Where changes to the metrics could be made easily and at no cost, these were implemented and the routes re-scored.
- 3.3 Unfortunately, this re-scoring did not result in a significant change to the list of prioritised routes, as hoped. A small amount of churn was generated within the highest priority routes, but not a substantial re-distribution.
- 3.4 In Sept'23, the Board agreed to undertake a deeper dive into the assessment methodology, investigating more nuanced alterations to some of the assessment metrics, inclusion/exclusion of qualifying facilities and/or a review of further decisions that may be skewing results (e.g. decision to exclude LCWIP network). Budget was allocated in financial year 23/24 for this purpose. The work was scoped out with the consultants, but then subsequently put on hold to prioritise the completion of the Strategic Transport Plan (STP).
- 3.5 As the STP is now approved, we can also bring through priorities and regional objectives from the STP to further guide the assessment of cycling routes. We now

propose to commence this work, as outlined below, for completion by the October Board.

4. Next Steps for further review of strategy

1. Update background data
2. Remove scorings for destinations that are fundamentally local in nature; add destinations from STP identified as regionally significant
3. Review network structure in light of 1 and 2 and rationalise routes to focus on those that are regionally significant.
4. Output: updated draft network
5. Re-prioritise the network including:
 - a. Update destinations analysis to include Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) areas (currently excluded)
 - b. Remove cross-boundary scores within West of England MCA to reduce over-scoring
 - c. Add in cross-STB boundary score
 - d. Analyse 'regionally significant destinations' from STP/SIP
 - e. Analyse 'national / international gateways' from STP/SIP
 - f. Add a new thematic sift for 'significant new development sites' (from STP) to highlight routes where a potential funding / delivery mechanism (through developer contributions) may exist.

It is important for members to note that the effects of these changes cannot be predicted until the work is completed. A significant possibility remains that there will still be an uneven geographical distribution of prioritised routes. Members are asked to consider primarily if these changes to the assessment methodology appears sound and fair.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 No adverse impact on any protected groups is expected.

6. Legal Considerations

- 6.1 None identified.

7. Financial considerations

- 7.1 The cost of the additional assessment work is £17.8k. This is funded by accrual from FY 2023/24 so no additional budget is required for this work.

7.2 If the resultant strategy and route prioritisation is deemed acceptable, budget to take forward development of business cases for specific routes may be drawn down from the Regional Centre of Excellence and Business Case Support allocation.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Board members are asked to note this update and the proposed next steps.

Contact Officer

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