

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper C

Date **28th February 2023**

Title of report: **Strategic Transport Plan Issues & Option paper**

Purpose of report: **To set out the draft Issues & Option paper for the Western Gateway's Strategic Transport Plan**

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Approve the Issues & Option paper as set out in Appendix One for engagement with key stakeholders.
- II. Approve engagement starting in March 2023 and extending into the pre-election period. OR
- III. Approve engagement starting in May 2023 with the revised programme as set out in section 3.5.
- IV. Approve the list of key stakeholders as set out in Appendix Two.
- V. Delegate producing the final version of the Issues & Option paper to the Programme Team in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair.

1. Background

1.1 The format for the Issues & Options engagement paper was agreed by the Board on 7 December 2022. This is for a short, concise and clear paper will be accessible, easy to read and use, evidence based and using a series of maps and information graphics to get the messages across. The Issues & Options paper will form the basis of initial stakeholder engagement. Its responses will be used to inform the draft Strategic Transport Plan 2025 to 2050 later this year.

1.2 The draft version of the Issues & Options paper is attached as Appendix One.

2. Summary of the Issues & Options paper

2.1 The Issues & Options paper focuses on three key issues facing the Western Gateway region:

- Achieving Net Zero – carbon emissions and the environment
- Enabling economic growth

- Levelling up the region
- 2.2 This is followed by six potential options for addressing these issues. None of these options are exclusive and it is likely combinations of all of them will be required.
- Improving the road network for all users
 - Managing the demand for travel
 - Enhancing bus and coach services
 - Encouraging active travel
 - Rail improvements for passengers and freight
 - Promoting alternative fuels
- 2.3 The Western Gateway STB is already actively working in many of these areas - for example on developing the case for enhanced services on the Heart of Wessex line. We would like, however, to know our stakeholder views on what else should be done. Key stakeholders will be asked for their views on:
- Have we identified the key issues you believe the region is facing? If not, what are we missing?
 - Rank priority of issues
 - Have we identified the right range of options? If not, what are we missing?
 - Rank priority of options
 - Other views on Issues & Options
- 2.4 This is still a draft document and work is still required to make it more engaging and accessible. Maps and infographics are to be added. This draft version is intended to provide an indication of what is included in the document rather than the finished Paper. In addition, delegation is sought for by officers to complete the document in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair. The final designed Issues & Options Paper will be produced and placed on the Western Gateway website – www.westerngatewaystb.org.uk.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Engagement will be for four weeks with the aim to start in mid-March 2023. This is later than originally intended due to it taking longer to produce the Paper than expected due to resourcing issues within the Western Gateway and the local authorities and ongoing delays to completing the evidence base. The revised timescale is shown below. It will mean the engagement runs into the pre-election period. Government advice is it starts on 28 March 2023 although some local authorities have earlier dates. The timescale is shown below.

w/c 13 March 2023	Issues & Options engagement starts
w/c 10 April 2023	Issues & Options engagement finishes
28 June 2023	Report on the results of the Issues & Options engagement to the Western Gateway June Board meeting.

	Draft Strategic Transport Plan (using the results of the Issues & Options engagement) to the Board for approval for public consultation.
June to July 2023	Public consultation on the draft Strategic Transport Plan begins
Autumn 2023	Revised Strategic Transport Plan adopted by the Board

3.2 Advice has been sought from all the authorities of whether extending into the pre-election period is acceptable. The legal view from the West of England Combined Authority, which is the accountable body for the Western Gateway STB, is the engagement is business as usual and not politically sensitive in the context of local elections. As the STB is engaging on issues and options and not policy or proposals at this stage it can be extended into the pre-election period. One of the authorities has internal advice that permits consultation that started in the pre-election period to continue into it. Of our nine authorities one has requested postponing to May, once the elections have taken place. In the light of the legal view it is recommended that engagement continue into the pre-election period.

3.3 All engagement is anticipated to be on-line and there will be no public meetings. Engagement will be with key stakeholders (see the full list in Appendix Two). This is drawn from those attending the Western Gateway Business & Transport and Freight Forums. It is not exclusive but the emphasis is on professional organisations who have previously engaged with the Western Gateway STB. Wider public consultation will form part of the draft Strategic Transport Plan 2025 to 2050 later in 2023.

3.4 Should the Board not wish engagement to continue into the pre-election period then this could be postponed until after the May elections. This will move the timescale outlined in section 3.1 to the right as shown below.

May 2023	Issues & Options engagement starts post elections
June	Issues & Options engagement finishes
October 2023	Issues & Options engagement report Draft Strategic Transport Plan for public consultation
Oct to Nov 2023	Public consultation on the draft Strategic Transport Plan
January 2024	Revised Strategic Transport Plan adopted by the Board

3.5 The importance of the STB's Strategic Transport Plan to updated Local Transport Plans, providing the golden thread that links national, regional and local policies together, places urgency on the need to have the Plan in place. This urgency is now less critical as the long awaited guidance for Local Transport Plans is now expected to be published in draft in March 2023. The original timescale for updated Local Transport Plans to be in place by March 2024 has, due to the delays in publishing the guidance, been moved to summer 2024. Thus delaying the engagement on the Issues & Options paper and moving the Strategic Transport Plan timescales is less critical. Nonetheless the key role of the Strategic Transport Plan and the commitment to producing it remains.

4. Consultation, communication and engagement

- 4.1 Officers from the Western Gateway's constituent authorities have been consulted on the Issues & Options paper along with National Highways and Network Rail and their comments incorporated.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 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 The Western Gateway's Strategic Transport Plan budget for 2022/23 is £80,000. The Issues & Option paper's cost will be met from within this budget.

8. Conclusion

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

Appendix One

Draft Issues & Option paper

Appendix Two

List of key stakeholders for Issues & Option engagement

Contact Officer

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

Appendix One

Draft Issues & Option paper

This is a draft document and work is required to make it more engaging and accessible. Maps and infographics are to be added at a later stage. This draft paper is intended to provide an indication of what is included in the Paper rather than the finished article. Once the content for the Paper is confirmed a designed document will be created.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body (STB) stretches from Gloucestershire down through Bristol, Bath, Wiltshire and Dorset to Bournemouth. Acting on behalf of the nine local authorities that make up our area we are the regional voice for transport helping to champion the region, prioritise interventions, take on the big challenges and work beyond local boundaries. By working regionally we save on unnecessary duplication and money and provide technical support. Our funding comes through a Department for Transport (DfT) grant and contributions from our nine local authorities.
- 1.2 In light of the period of change facing the Western Gateway region the purpose of the Western Gateway STB Issues and Options paper is to develop an understanding of the issues facing the region - and consult on the potential options to remedy these - in order to inform the development of our Strategic Transport Plan 2025 to 2050. We will ask your opinion on whether the highlighted issues are correct, whether we have missed any, and where our priorities should be in addressing them.
- 1.3 The issues and options outlined in this paper have been informed by a baseline report on the state of existing transport in the region as well as various supporting transport planning documents (e.g. Network Rail's strategic rail studies), carbon emissions reports and the contribution of local knowledge provided by local authorities .
- 1.4 This paper also considers the issues that are pertinent to the country as a whole ('The big issues nationally') as well as those specifically affecting the key transport routes through the Western Gateway area ('Issues in our local region'). It outlines the issues and options facing the region in terms of planning for future transport growth and takes into consideration both national and local priorities.

2.0 The Big Issues

2.1 The government has highlighted a number of top priorities that STB Strategic Transport Plans should try to overcome. Reflective of the national 'big issues', these priorities include:

- a) **Enabling economic growth** - helping to grow productivity by moving people and goods, facilitate international trade and delivering Value for Money.
- b) **Levelling up the region** - making all parts of your region better places to live, with more job opportunities, more accessible transport, which tackles transport related social exclusion.
- c) **Achieving Net Zero** - developing a pathway to decarbonise the transport system in your region through targeted investment.

3.0 Issues in our Region

3.1 Specific issues and potential interventions to overcome these have been identified for each corridor (see figure 1 for a map of depicting the locations of these corridors). These corridors have been selected based upon the understanding that such corridors include the key routes into, within and out of the region. The key corridors identified in the Western Gateway STB plan area include:

3.2 Specific issues and potential interventions to overcome these issues have been identified across the Western Gateway area by four important and influential travel corridors (see figure 1 for each of the four corridors). These corridors have been selected based upon the understanding that they are key routes into, within, and out and out of the region.

- 1) **Midlands to South Coast corridor**, connecting Birmingham and the Midlands to Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset;
- 2) **Midlands to South-West corridor**, connecting Birmingham and the Midlands to the Peninsula;
- 3) **South-East to South Wales corridor**, connecting London to Cardiff and Swansea

4) **South-East to South-West corridor** connecting London to the peninsula via South Wiltshire and Dorset

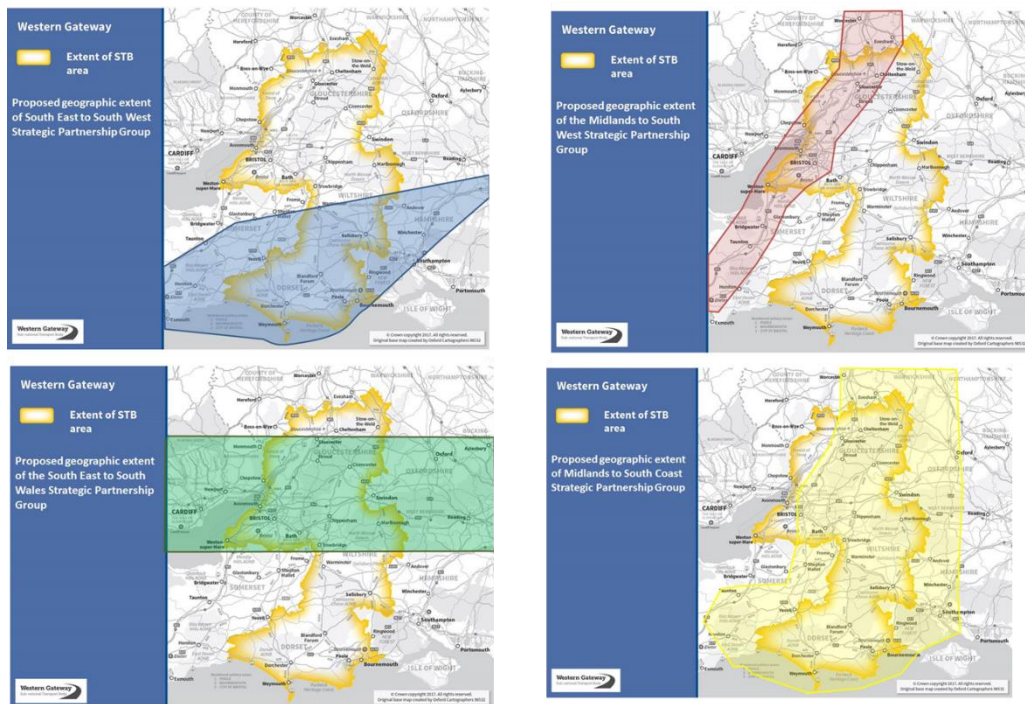


Figure 1 -The Four Strategic Transport corridors

3.3 Many of the issues are shared in-common across each of the corridors and within the region as a whole. The issues facing each corridor will be treated thematically in terms of their relevance to the national priorities highlighted by the DfT, with section 4 outlining our proposed options to overcome these challenges.

Issues in our region.

Issue 1: Achieving Net Zero – carbon emissions and environment

Decarbonisation

3.4 The predominant issue facing the Western Gateway STB region is planning and delivering schemes for decarbonisation as quickly as possible. Indeed, following the adoption of the Government’s net zero targets¹, transformational change - encompassing practices such as significant modal shift and access to sustainable transport from the outset for newly developed areas - is needed to meet locally and nationally adopted 2030 or 2050 decarbonisation targets. An example standout issue related to decarbonisation is that rural/suburban car journeys have been measured to contribute most to

¹ Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, 2021, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>.

carbon emissions². Consequently, increased multi-modal connectivity to these areas is important, and presents an opportunity to overcome such carbon surpluses.

Air Quality

3.5 A number of towns and cities within the Western Gateway STB region are subject to Air Quality Management Assessments³. Transport emissions are the most significant contributor to this poor air quality. These are typically located within urban/industrial areas and along major roads.

Car Use

3.6 Within the Western Gateway area car use is predicted to grow in the period spanning 2031 to 2051. It is projected that there will be a 12-15% increase in in trips during peak hours (7am to 9am and 4pm to 6pm) compared to 2019. The areas subject to the greatest impact from this growth are the M4 and M5 motorways and stretches of the A350 (for example, near Westbury), where flow capacity will hit 80-100% during peak hours⁴. This again points to the need for multi-modal interventions to move demand away from car use and in particular to reconsider the traditional predict and provide approach to providing more road capacity.

3.7 There are also challenges surrounding the need to provide the necessary infrastructure to support the electrification of the transport fleet considering legislative changes around ICE (Internal Combustion Engine) in 2030⁵.

Issue 2: Enabling Economic Growth

Housing

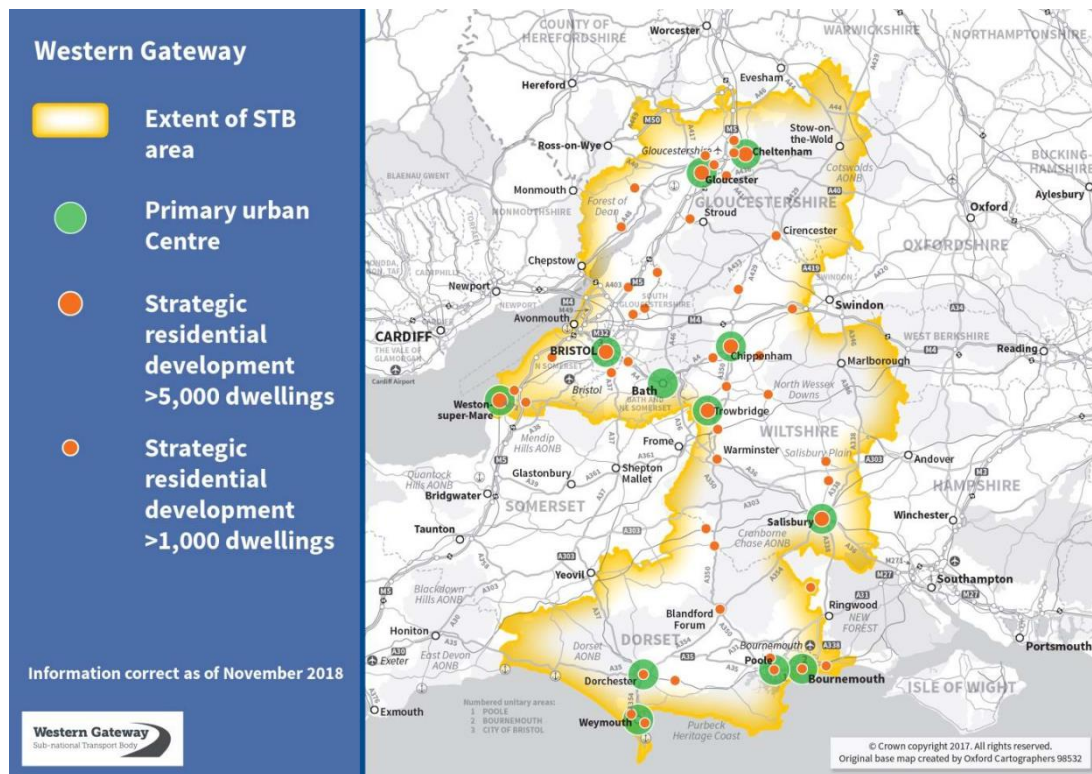
3.8 There is significant housing growth planned along the Midlands to South West Corridor, particularly close to the M5. With the M5 and M4 operating near or at capacity, this suggests the need to actively manage multi-modal shift, in addition to establishing sustainable travel from the outset, in these proposed growth areas. Areas planned to grow within the plan period include places such as Tewksbury, Yate, Weston-Super-Mare and within the Bristol urban area. See figure 2 (above) for a map depicting the locations of proposed growth in the region.

² South West Rural Mobility Strategy, 2022, p.20. Available at: <https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/our-work/ruralmobility/#:~:text=The%20South%20West%20Rural%20Mobility%20Strategy%2C%20developed%20jointly,become%20more%20connected%2C%20more%20accessible%20and%20more%20prosperous.>

³ A list of AQMAs are available at: <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/>.

⁴ Western Gateway Technical Baseline [forthcoming]

⁵ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2020. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution>.



Seasonal Traffic

3.9 There is a noted need to manage seasonal rises in road traffic, concentrated mainly on cross-regional travel from the Midlands and North along the M5 and from London and the South East on M4/A303 routes. This is particularly pertinent to issues of summer capacity on the SRN (Strategic Road Network)⁶.

Road Congestion

3.10 There is limited capacity and many delays on important strategic routes including the A350, A31, A35, A338, A36, A303, A37 and A46. The traffic volumes are generally highest on the A36 and A350, particularly around Salisbury and the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole urban area. In addition, the local highway network is impacted following any accidents on the M4/M5/A303. Parallel routes to the M5, such as the A38 and A46, have also seen significant growth over the last 10 years. Constrained urban networks are also present within the historic centres of Bath, Cheltenham and Salisbury. There are capacity issues on both the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the local road network, as well as with capacity issues on the A31 around Bournemouth and Poole; in Salisbury; on the A350 north of Blandford; around Westbury; and on the A37 corridor and to the A35 west of

⁶ South West Rural Mobility Strategy, 2022, p.20. Available at: <https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/our-work/ruralmobility/#:~:text=The%20South%20West%20Rural%20Mobility%20Strategy%2C%20developed%20only,become%20more%20connected%2C%20more%20accessible%20and%20more%20prosperous.>

Dorchester. Frequent narrow sections on the A350 between Shaftesbury and Blandford cause slow journey times for freight traffic.

- 3.11 The need to improve north / south links between the Midlands and South Coast is a fundamental challenge that the Western Gateway needs to address, especially in relation to accessing international ports for freight. The existing A350 corridor struggles as a strategic link between M4 and south coast ports, causing additional cost and delays for businesses. Traffic flows have increased between 2009 and 2019 in the majority of locations on the north-south corridor, with the greatest increases on the A36, A350, and A338. On rail, long journey times and infrequent services between Bristol and the Dorset South Coast are also present⁷.

Seaports and airports

- 3.12 The region's seaports and airports suffer from limited connectivity by public transport. This again points to the need for measures to increase the multi-modal connectivity of these destinations, alongside improving road access constraints to the sea ports of Poole and Portland. Increased connectivity is especially important considering the planned expansion of Bristol Airport.

Issue 3: Levelling up the region

Rural Connectivity

- 3.13 As highlighted in the South West Rural Mobility Strategy⁸ report for the Western Gateway STB plan area, people most commonly travel by car to town centres, food stores, secondary schools, further education institutions, local facilities/services, and employment site. Indeed, rural areas are notably disconnected to these destinations, reflected in the higher rates of car use outside urban areas. This points to the need for measures to increase such destinations' multi-modal connectivity and schemes to inspire behaviour change.

Deprivation

- 3.14 There are pockets of deprivation in the Western Gateway STB area. These are concentrated in parts of Bristol, Gloucester, Bournemouth, and Christchurch, alongside rural pockets in the Forest of Dean authority area⁹.

⁷ See Dorset Connectivity Study. Available at: <https://sacuksprodnrdigital0001.blob.core.windows.net/regional-long-term-planning/Southern/Dorset%20Connectivity%20Strategic%20Study.pdf>.

⁸ South West Rural Mobility Strategy, 2022, Available at: <https://www.peninsulatransport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/20220805-South-West-Rural-Mobility-Strategy-v1-0.pdf>.

⁹ Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

Freight

3.15 As highlighted in the South West Freight Strategy¹⁰, constraints to existing freight routes include limited route choice in and out of the Western Gateway region on the Strategic Road Network, particularly along the M5/A38, A303/A30/A35 and A361 corridors. Furthermore, there are slow journey times between the M4 and the south coast, particularly during summer months. These constraints on the SRN are increased by noted poor rail connectivity in the region impacting upon the potential for modal shift to rail for the transport of freight goods throughout the South West. A lack of rail electrification through the region also raises issues regarding the needed phasing out of diesel trains to meet the 2050 decarbonisation targets of The Net Zero Strategy 2021¹¹.

4.0 Options in Our Region

4.1 Given the national and regional issues highlighted above, the long-term solution for our region is a wide-ranging impactful multi-modal transport shift to achieve decarbonisation. The table below shows how the pursuit of a combination of options (see the list) for the development of the Western Gateway Strategic Transport Plan will contribute toward achieving this over the plan period.

List of options:

1. *Improving the road network for all users*
2. *Managing the demand for travel or Demand Management*
3. *Enhancing bus and coach services*
4. *Encouraging Active travel*
5. *Rail improvements for passengers and freight*
6. *Promoting alternative fuels*

NATIONAL ISSUE	REGIONAL ISSUE	OPTIONS (see list above)
Achieving Net Zero	Decarbonisation	1, 5, 6
	Air quality	2, 4, 5, 6

¹⁰ South West Freight Strategy, July 2022. Available at: <https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/our-work/freight/#:~:text=Peninsula%20Transport%20and%20Western%20Gateway%20Sub-national%20Transport%20Body,West%20for%20the%20next%2030%20years%20to%202050.>

¹¹ Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, 2021, Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy)

	Rural journeys	3, 4, 5
	Car use	2, 3, 4, 5
	More rail freight	2, 5, 6
Enabling economic growth	Housing	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
	Seasonal traffic	1, 3, 5
	Road congestion	1, 2, 4
	North-south connectivity	1, 3, 5
	Sea and airports	1, 5
	Freight	1, 5
Levelling up the region	Rural connectivity	3, 4, 5
	Deprivation	3, 5

Figure 2 – Proposed options and their potential impact

Option 1: Improving the road network for all users

4.2 Given the widely understood need to achieve decarbonisation balancing different network needs to approach the existing capacity constraints at road capacity bottlenecks is needed. This is inclusive of offering solutions such as realistic multi-modal shift to replace demand for car travel, whilst also renewing, maintaining and operating the existing road network where constraints are present¹².

¹² See DfT 'Decarbonising Transport: A Better Greener Britain'. 2021. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1009448/decarbonising-transport-a-better-greener-britain.pdf.

Option 2: Managing the demand for travel

4.3 Adoption of demand management schemes, such as expanding clean air zones, congestion charging regimes, workplace parking levies and car clubs to encourage alternative ways to travel.

Option 3: Enhancing bus and coach services

4.4 Throughout the region it has been noted that there is a need to increase the number of bus and coach users as to encourage multi-modal shift. To approach this the South West Outline Coach Strategy¹³ recommends improving urban and rural coach connectivity across the Western Gateway by providing potential new bus and coach routes; increased service frequencies; better integration with other transport modes; a consistent adoption of new technologies across the Western Gateway region (such as alternative fuels, smart ticketing and live service information); improved coach stops, interchanges, drop-offs, layover parking facilities and better facilities for drivers. Improvements rest upon service interventions targeting convenience and punctuality. The enhancement of bus services can also play a role in improving first and last mile transport to and from railway stations (see option 4).

Option 4: Encouraging Active Travel

4.5 The emerging strategic study of the Western Gateways cycle network has highlighted a number of schemes to both improve and fill in existing gaps in the regions existing cycling network. The plan should legislate that adopted schemes be approved by Active Travel England and have compliant active travel elements to them. Further the plan should support reallocating road space to active travel, and incentivise active-travel modal shifts, such as supporting employers and education institutions to implement infrastructural provision.

Option 5: Rail Improvements for passengers and freight

4.6 In terms of passenger travel the Western Gateway STB has a key priority to improve North South connectivity, focusing on increasing services on The Heart of Wessex Line from Great Malvern through Bristol via Bath and Trowbridge to Dorchester and Weymouth. This is further supported by the Western Gateway's Rail Strategy¹⁴ which identified the need for greater connectivity and more frequent services on the Bristol to Weymouth route. In terms of rail freight, the provision of additional intermodal rail freight terminals is also an option as to move more freight onto rail and achieve significant carbon reduction benefits.

¹³ South West Outline Coach Strategy, Available at: <https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/our-work/bus-and-coach/>.

¹⁴ Available at: <https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/rail-strategy-2020-2040/#:~:text=A%20thorough%20review%20of%20the%20Western%20Gateway%20rail,of%20Choice%2C%20Social%20Mobility%2C%20Decarbonisation%2C%20Productivity%20and%20Growth.>

Option 6: Promoting alternative fuels

4.7 The promotion of alternative fuels is necessary to fully decarbonise the transport network, in particular the roll out of suitable Electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure for private vehicles. Indeed the Western Gateway has commissioned an additional piece of work on the joint Peninsula and Western Gateway STB Alternative Fuels for Freight Strategy. This will look at areas less well served by the potential network of electric charging and hydrogen refuelling stations identified by the Strategy. The revised Strategy will be completed by March 2023.

5.0 Questions

- Have we identified the key issues you believe the region is facing? If not, what are we missing?
- Rank priority of issues
- Have we identified the right range of options? If not, what are we missing?
- Rank priority of options
- Other views on Issues & Options

Appendix Two

List of key stakeholders for Issues & Options engagement

Associated British Ports

Bath Spa University
Bournemouth Airport
Bournemouth University
Bristol Airport
Bristol Port
British Ports Association
Business West
Bus Users UK

Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT)
Confederation of Business and Industry
Confederation of Passenger Transport
CrossCountry

Department for Transport
Dorset LEP

England's Economic Heartland Sub-national Transport Body

First Group
Freight rail operators - Freightliner, Imerys, Deutsche Bahn
G-First LEP
Go South Coast
Great British Railways Transition Team
Great Western Railway

Heart of the South West LEP
Homes England

Logistics UK/FTA

National Highways
National Express
Network Rail
NHS

Peninsula Transport Sub-national Transport Body
Poole Harbour Commissioners
Portland Port

Rail Freight Group
Road Haulage Association

Stagecoach

South West Infrastructure Partnership
South Western Railway
Sustrans
Swindon and Wiltshire LEP

Transport Focus
Transport for Wales
Transport South East Sub-national Transport Body
TravelWest

University of Bath
University of Bristol
University of the West of England

West of England LEP