

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper C

Date	27th September 2023
Title of report:	Strategic Transport Plan update
Purpose of report:	To report on a Direction Statement and the latest programme for producing and approving the Western Gateway Strategic Transport Plan

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Approve the latest programme for producing and approving the Western Gateway Strategic Transport Plan.
- II. Note the Direction Statement in Appendix One.
- III. Approve the draft communications strategy in Appendix Two.

1. Background

- 1.1 The importance of the Western Gateway's long term Strategic Transport Plan 2025 to 2050 to updated Local Transport Plans, providing the golden thread that links national, regional and local policies together, highlights the need to have the Plan in place. Whilst this is less urgent given the long awaited guidance for Local Transport Plans remains unpublished the need to have the Plan in place remains.
- 1.2 A revised programme and report on the engagement with key stakeholders on the 'Making the right choices' was reported to the Board at its 28 June 2023 meeting.

2. Direction Statement

- 2.1 Work is ongoing with producing the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body long term Strategic Transport Plan to 2050. With emerging evidence and the results of the 'Making the right choice' engagement earlier in 2023 this is taking longer to produce than anticipated. This has an impact on the programme for consultation and approval which is set out in the following section. In the meantime to provide an indication of where we are at with the Strategic Transport Plan, our current thinking and where we go next a Direction Statement has been produced. A summary is provided below with

the main Statement in Appendix One. It is important to stress this is a point in time so nothing is set in stone.

2.2 The Direction Statement includes the following:

- Vision and three key objectives around achieving net zero, enabling a strong and sustainable economy and levelling up the region
- Emerging evidence base and four scenarios to test: business as usual, technology, behaviour changes and decarbonisation
- How ‘Making the right choices’ engagement is shaping the plan
- Six central policies around modal shift, decarbonisation, freight, rural, connectivity and housing and employment.
- Strategic Investment Priorities with the emphasis on interventions that have either a region wide or multiple local authority area benefit. Indicative examples are given.

2.3 Whilst not a formal consultation the intention is to publish the Direction Statement on the Western Gateway website and invite feedback.

3. Revised Programme

3.1 The Board meeting on 28 June 2023 approved a revised programme for public consultation taking place over October/November 2023. The revised Strategic Transport Plan would then go to the Board in January/February 2024 for final approval. Due to resourcing levels it is regretted that this timetable is no longer viable. The proposed revised programme is set out below.

27 September 2023	Direction Statement and revised programme to the Western Gateway Board meeting.
6 December 2023	Draft Strategic Transport Plan to the Board for approval for public consultation.
Dec 2023 - Feb 2024	Public consultation on the draft Strategic Transport Plan begins
March 2024	Revised Strategic Transport Plan adopted by the Board

3.2 As will be evident from the Direction Statement set out in section 2. the aim remains to produce a short, high level transport Strategic Transport Plan providing the individual authorities with the policy and evidence base and steer for delivering their own Local Transport Plan policies and schemes.

4. Consultation, communication and engagement

4.1 Officers from the Western Gateway’s constituent authorities have been consulted on the revised programme for producing the Strategic Transport Plan. Full consultation on the draft Strategic Transport Plan will be

undertaken late early 2024. A draft communications strategy for the draft Plan can be found in Appendix Two. The final version will be brought back to the Board for approval.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 Delivering the Western Gateway's Strategic Transport Plan will open up new travel opportunities and improve accessibility for everyone. 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 2023/24 is £50,000. The costs of producing and consulting on the draft Strategic Transport Plan and final approval 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 Direction Statement for the Strategic Transport Plan

Appendix Two Draft Communications strategy for the Strategic Transport Plan consultation

Contact Officer

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

Appendix One

Direction Statement on the Western Gateway Strategic Transport Plan

September 2023

Why this Direction Statement?

Work is ongoing with producing the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body long term Strategic Transport Plan to 2050. With emerging evidence and the results of the 'Making the right choice' engagement earlier in 2023 this is taking longer to produce than anticipated. Rather than wait till the first full draft is available we thought it would be helpful to share where we are at, our current thinking and where we go next. It is a point in time so nothing is set in stone. We welcome input. This then is our Direction Statement.

Background

The Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body 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 grant and contributions from our nine local authorities.

As a Sub-national Transport Body we are required by the Department for Transport to produce a Strategic Transport Plan to guide the region's future transport investment and provide a steer for our nine local authorities in producing their Local Transport Plans. Our partners National Highways and Network Rail are very much part of this with their plans and strategies integrated into ours.

Back in April 2023 we launched our 'Making the right choice' engagement with key stakeholders to find out what they thought about issues for the region and opportunities to tackle them. The document can be found here:

<https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Making-the-right-choices-April-2023.pdf>

Our vision and objectives

We are proposing to keep this simple.

Our vision is for:

“A decarbonised Western Gateway transport network for people and freight providing access and greater connectivity for all whilst supporting sustainable new housing and employment.”

And our three key objectives are focused around:

- a) Achieving Net Zero - develop a pathway to decarbonise the transport system in the region by 2050 through targeted investment and behaviour change.
- b) Enabling a strong and sustainable economy - help to grow productivity by sustainably moving people and goods, facilitating international trade and delivering value for money.
- c) Levelling up the region - make all parts of the region better places to live, with more job opportunities and more accessible transport that tackles transport-related social exclusion and improves health and wellbeing.

Our 'Making the right choices' engagement identified a clear priority for achieving net zero with strong support for the other two objectives. It is proposed that priority be focused on achieving net zero supported by the two other objectives.

Emerging evidence base

To support the work of producing the Strategic Transport Plan we are drawing on the wealth of information, issues, opportunities and recommendations from our own strategy work (including joint work with Peninsula Transport) and that of our key stakeholders National Highways and Network Rail. This includes:

Rail Strategy, Western Gateway, 2020
South West Rural Mobility Strategy, Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway, 2022
South West Freight Strategy, Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway, 2022
Making the case for rural investment, Western Gateway, 2023
Alternative Fuels for Road Freight Strategy, Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway, 2023
Coach Strategy, Western Gateway, 2023
Strategic Cycling strategy, Western Gateway, expected late 2023
Economic Connectivity Study, Western Gateway, 2019
Multi-modal Port Access Study, Western Gateway, 2020
Route Investment Strategies, National Highways, 2023
M4 to Dorset Coast Study, National Highways, expected late 2023
Birmingham to Bristol Strategic Rail Corridor Study, 2022
Bristol to Exeter Strategic Rail Corridor Study, 2022
Great Bristol Strategic Rail Corridor Study, 2023
West of England Main Line Strategic Rail Study, 2020
Dorset Strategic Connectivity Study, Network Rail, 2022
Rail Vision to 2050, Western Gateway Partnership, 2023

Background evidence work has been compiled to support the four strategic transport corridors identified in the short term Strategic Transport Plan to 2025. Data collected includes travel to work, socio demographic profile, economic profile, environmental data and the infrastructure and transport network. We will be taking a region wide approach with the Strategic Transport Plan. Within it the four corridors will provide the evidence base for the strategic interventions required to address north south and east west connectivity.

The evidence base is supported by the Western Gateway Strategic Transport Model. This has been used to test two initial scenarios for business as usual and do something. Since these were undertaken Government guidance has been updated so we will now be testing four future scenarios. These are drawn from the new Department for Transport Common Analytical Scenarios and are:

- 1) Business as usual/Core – current trends continue except where affected by “firm and funded” government commitments
- 2) Technology – new technology improves efficiency and enables new ways to travel. This scenario forecasts the greatest volume of traffic mileage growth.
- 3) Behaviour Change – modal shift away from car use. This scenario forecasts the lowest volume of traffic mileage growth.
- 4) Decarbonisation – major mode shift away from carbon producing transport to growth of active and public transport.

The results will feed into the direction the Strategic Transport Plan should take and which strategic interventions have the most impact and wider benefit.

Dorset Council using its in-house transport modelling team will provide the technical support for testing the four scenarios. The modelling approach will be shared with the Department for Transport for their input and review.

How the ‘Making the right choices’ is shaping the Plan

With only 35 responses to the engagement received care should be taken with the following key findings. They do nonetheless represent well thought out and detailed responses and are helpful in shaping our Strategic Transport Plan thinking. Key findings are:

- 70% of the responses agree with the issues identified.
- Majority agree that Achieving Net Zero to be the top priority and especially decarbonisation of transport.
- Recurring view that ‘Making the right choice’ favours road building and Business as Usual while lacking practical commitment to public transport and rail improvements.
- For the Issues in our region section, connectivity should focus on rail rather than road. Corridors to be viewed as transport corridors rather than mono-modal corridors
- Support for the opportunities mentioned with Rail being ranked highest in terms of priority, followed by Bus and Coach, Alternative Fuels and Demand Management.
- Concern that it is unclear how achieving Net Zero by minimising road use will be balanced against the need for economic growth.

The full report on the ‘Making the right choices’ engagement can be found here:

<https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Final-IO-Consultation-Response-Summary.pdf>

Central policies

We are proposing the Strategic Transport Plan has six central policies for:

- 1) Modal shift
- 2) Decarbonisation
- 3) Freight
- 4) Rural
- 5) Connectivity
- 6) Housing and employment

These central policies, which overlap, are to be fleshed out in more detail with the sections below providing an indication of what they will comprise.

1) *Modal Shift*

- Encourage people to switch from private car to active travel and passenger transport.
- More freight to switch to sustainable modes including rail and coastal shipping.
- Enable sustainable and seamless and safe end to end journeys through a fully integrated transport network across the Western Gateway area.
- Encourage the setting up and use of multi modal hubs providing people with more choice in the way they travel.

2) *Decarbonisation*

- Push the switch to alternative fuels for private travel, public transport and freight including rail electrification.
- Reduce the demand for car based trips through making it easier for people to access jobs and services locally or by digital means.
- Reduce demand for car based trips by implementing measures and policies that reduce the relative costs and increase the relative convenience of active and public transport choices.
- Use of technology to provide alternative ways to move goods, for example drones, and providing greater mobile and broadband connectivity to reduce the need to travel.

3) *Freight*

- Increase the use of alternative fuels for freight.
- Promote the importance of planning for freight.
- Promote the safeguarding, setting up and use of new multi-modal freight terminals.
- Move goods more sustainably around our network by shifting modes to rail and coastal shipping, load sharing and the use of technology.
- Promote ways to reduce freight traffic through consolidation, first mile/last mile deliveries, backloading and sharing deliveries to hard to reach areas.

4) *Rural*

- Increase accessibility for our rural communities to education, training, services and jobs including the development of rural mobility hubs.

- Networks of settlements working together, sharing facilities, services and resources to form 30-minute rural communities.
- Settlements to support more local services where people need them to strengthen communities and economies and reduce the number and length of journeys.
- Provide alternative options to travel through new technology and the digital sector.
- Improve connections between our rural areas and the rest of the Western Gateway area to support levelling up and boost our rural economies.
- Underpinning rural mobility by strong digital connectivity.

5) *Connectivity*

- Improve connections and access within and between our urban centres through improving walking, cycling and passenger transport.
- Manage seasonal variations in traffic by encouraging more people to travel by train and coach to the South West.
- Deliver more reliable regional connections within, across and beyond our Western Gateway area moving people and goods more efficiently to support the leisure industry, enable economic growth and help productivity and facilitate new housing and employment.
- Improve journey time and reliability for freight, passengers and employees to our international gateways.

6) *Housing and employment*

- Support our local authorities in planning for net zero carbon growth in new locations for housing and employment reducing the need for people to make car based trips.
- More accessible transport and multi modal hubs to tackle transport related social exclusion and improving health and wellbeing.
- Focus on place making.

Strategic Investment Priorities

To realise our objectives and implement our central policies we will need a programme of strategic interventions. The emphasis is on strategic in the sense the interventions have either a region wide or multiple local authority area benefit. To this end we are proposing to focus on a limited number of strategic interventions based around the following themes. The examples given are indicative for now pending a strong case for inclusion from the emerging evidence base (see below).

- Major rail infrastructure interventions which increase capacity and enable new and more frequent services across and beyond the region and ensure outlying settlements have good connections. Possible examples are Westerleigh Junction between Bristol Parkway and Swindon for services to Cheltenham, Gloucester, Bristol, Birmingham, London and South Wales, the Heart of Wessex Line for services from the South Coast to Bristol and the Midlands Rail Hub for services south of Birmingham to Cheltenham, Gloucester and Bristol.

- Major public transport enhancements serving significant areas of population. Examples could include the Dorset Metro and the Future West project in the West of England Combined Authority, Bristol to Oxford and other recommendations from the various Network Rail strategic corridor studies including the West of England Line.
- Major decarbonising transport schemes. Examples could include taking forward key locations for hydrogen and electric vehicle charging stations for freight and filling in some of the electrification gaps in the region's rail network.
- Multi modal freight terminals. Develop the case for sites taken from the South West Freight Strategy including Gloucester and Poole and Great British Railways/Network Rail work on freight.
- New and improved regional connectivity routes. Examples could include the three proposed coach routes in the Western Gateway's Coach Strategy, recommendations from National Highways M4 to South Coast study (when published) and Wiltshire proposals for the A350.
- Key strategic cycle routes from the Western Gateway's Strategic Cycle Network study.
- Roll out of successful rural mobility pilots to other parts of the Western Gateway.

We are not planning to include every local transport scheme or intervention. These are better placed to be picked up by the individual Local Transport Plans whilst set within the framework of the Strategic Transport Plan's central policies.

Monitoring and evaluation

A limited number of indicators for monitoring the performance of the Strategic Transport Plan will be developed.

Next steps and have your say

We will take this Direction Statement and expand it into the full long term Strategic Transport Plan for public consultation. The revised timescale is set out below.

27 September 2023	Direction Statement and revised programme to the Western Gateway Board meeting.
6 December 2023	Draft Strategic Transport Plan to the Board for approval for public consultation.
Dec 2023 - Feb 2024	Public consultation draft Strategic Transport Plan begins
March 2024	Revised Strategic Transport Plan adopted by the Board

In the meantime your views on the Direction Statement are welcome. Please email WesternGatewaySTB@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

Appendix Two

Western Gateway Strategic Transport Plan

Draft Comms strategy

September 2023

Introduction

This strategy sets out how we intend to undertake consultation on the Western Gateway's draft long term Strategic Transport Plan to 2050. This strategy outlines the ways we will inform and consult with our stakeholders and how they will be able to respond to the proposals.

The consultation follows on from and builds on the engagement undertaken for the Issues and Opportunities paper in April/May 2023.

A questionnaire will be included seeking views on, for example, whether the objectives strike the right balance and the central policies cover the right areas. Stakeholders will be encouraged to provide detailed responses if they wish.

Responses will be used to inform the final version of the Strategic Transport Plan for approval by the Board in 2024.

Timescales

The consultation on the draft Strategic Transport Plan will take place over six weeks in early 2024.

Public engagement process

Identify key stakeholders

Listening to and understanding the views of stakeholders is an essential part of any plan-making process. As suggested at the STB Board meeting on 28th September 2022 and as used for the Issues and Opportunities engagement the focus will be on key stakeholders. Response from the wider general public will, however, be welcomed. As was found with the Issues and Opportunities engagement responses from groups and individuals outside of the key stakeholders list provide valuable insights and views.

More stakeholder mapping and grouping will be undertaken to identify other key groups to involve in the consultation.

Notable stakeholders include: STBs, constituent authorities, neighbouring local authorities, LEPs, public transport operators, transport asset managers, transport user groups.

Publishing and promoting

Following approval by the Board to commence public consultation, the draft Strategic Transport Plan will be publicly available on the Western Gateway STB website: www.westerngatewaystb.org.uk. A news story will link to the paper online, which will also be available in the dedicated 'Strategy' section on the site.

The news story will be posted on Twitter and the Western Gateway's LinkedIn page along with regular posts to remind and signpost to the ongoing consultation during the six weeks.

Key stakeholders including members of our Business and Transport Forum and strategic corridor partners will be informed directly by email with a stakeholder newsletter. Updates will be given as part of any meetings and workshops taking place within the consultation period, for example the Business and Transport Forum and Freight Steering Group as well as our Senior Officer Group and other officer group meetings. One consideration should be to make these meetings face to face rather than virtual where possible, to further enhance engagement.

Our constituent authorities will be informed by email with a press release and the communications teams will also be emailed links to our relevant social media posts, with a request to engage with and share the posts as widely as possible with suggested texts for ease of sharing.

Our monthly newsletter to the Board, stakeholders and subscribers will include the news story and also flag our social media feeds to encourage online responses. Board members are requested to help promote the consultation by encouraging their local authority communications teams to work with the STB communications lead to share these messages.

Other ways to promote the draft Strategic Transport Plan will be explored.

It is not proposed that this consultation will include any public events.

Printed hard copies of the draft Strategic Transport Plan and associated documents will be available on request. An accessible version of the Plan will be available on the website.