

# Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

## Board Meeting

### Paper D

Date	<b>27 November 2024</b>
Title of report:	<b>Technical Programme Progress update</b>
Purpose of report:	<b>To provide a progress update on the ongoing work to deliver the technical work programme of the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body.</b>

#### **Recommendations:**

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. To note the progress of the programme update report.
- II. Approve an increase of up to £10k for the Coach work, due to an extension of scope
- III. Approve an increase of up to £10k in the cycling budget to cover a possible additional round of engagement and revision and associated costs.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report contains an update on the progress of a number of elements of the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body (STB) technical work programme.

## **2. Freight Strategy Implementation and freight forums**

- 2.1 As part of year 2 priorities, a monitoring report of what was achieved following the publication of the Freight Strategy has been completed and published on our website. A summary includes the continued success of the Freight Forum and progress on key interventions as detailed within the Monitoring Report which highlighted the work on the impact of bridge strikes, lorry parking and facilities, backloading trial, shifting freight to rail and maritime and drone delivery engagement with UWE.
- 2.2 As part of year 3 priorities, the freight forums (3 sub-groups and the main forum) will be continuously maintained with a focus on fostering a broader range of engagement. Forum meetings have been coordinated to take place in Autumn and Winter. The 8<sup>th</sup> round of the road sub-group was held successfully on 15<sup>th</sup> October, the next sub group for maritime and aviation will be on 5<sup>th</sup> of December. Discussions are ongoing with officers on conducting

workshops and campaigns that will look to raise awareness of freight among members and officers of local authorities. This work is expected to complete in Spring 2025, with support from consultants.

- 2.3 A further update on the development of the workshop and campaigning activity will be shared with the Partnership Board at the next meeting.

### **3. Rail Strategy**

- 3.1 Dorset Metro: Development of the strategic outline business case for an extra train per hour Dorset Metro shuttle service between Wareham and Brockenhurst with possible extension to Swanage and the provision of a clock-face service between Weymouth and London Waterloo is in progress, with work expected to be completed in Spring 2025.
- 3.2 West of England Line (Tisbury Loop): Development of the strategic outline business case for a half hourly service between Salisbury and Yeovil Junction is in progress. Examining the case for four potential options; two trains per hour to all stations via infrastructure enhancements, Skip-stop (omit station calls at Tisbury, Templecombe, and Sherborne), and focus on performance benefits of a Tisbury Loop extension without the associated service level increase. Basic service agreements have been signed with Network Rail, with work expected to be completed in Spring 2025.
- 3.3 Heart of Wessex Line: Work is continuing to develop the business case for hourly services with Network Rail. Preferred option will be skip-stop (Chetnole and Thornford only one train per two hours) and will require a new loop between Castle Cary and Yeovil Pen Mill.
- 3.4 A further update on the development of various workstreams will be shared with the Partnership Board at the next meeting.

### **4. Coach Strategy**

- 4.1 The feasibility study of first of three priority routes identified in the Strategy is substantially complete. However, imminent changes to the coach service provision to Bristol Airport and the removal of Megabus routes materially changes the operating environment and business case assessment already undertaken, so this is now needing to be further reviewed before publication. This is an extension to the agreed contract and while the full nature of the additional work is still being agreed, the Board is asked to approve a budget extension of up to £10k to cover the new work.
- 4.2 The third Southwest Coach Sector Forum was held successfully on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. 40 participants were in attendance, including local authorities, coach operators, CPT and National Highways.
- 4.3 The proposal for the third phase of work is focused on a) coach parking and facilities, including site surveys and audits, b) surveys with drivers and passengers and c) feasibility assessment of priority routes 1 and 3 from the

Strategy. The procurement for phase 3 has been finalised, and AECOM has been commissioned to continue the work they have been undertaking through a direct award.

## **5. Alternative Fuels for Freight**

- 5.1 In March 2022 Western Gateway and Peninsula Transport STB jointly commissioned Atkins, with their industry partner CENEX, to undertake a study to consider the barriers and opportunities associated with the transition of freight vehicles to alternative fuels. The study adopted a methodology successfully applied in a similar study for the Midlands Connect STB.
- 5.2 A site ranking tool has been developed by Midlands Connect to shortlist potential refuelling locations. The DfT provided additional capacity funding to Midlands Connect to roll out this function and undertake this work for all STBs. The tool can be used to test range of potential locations and the criteria can be adjusted to reflect the rurality of the Western Gateway areas. The advisory tool combines a mapping function with demand forecasting to indicate when sites will be needed.
- 5.3 The tool and accompanying dashboard are under development and will be made available for Local Authorities to feed into Local Plans and Local Transport Plans. Tool is now available and awaiting roll out to all Local Authorities. Following the roll out of the tool, consideration will be given by Western Gateway to supporting the delivery of potential sites through business case development and working with stakeholders and operators.

## **6. Regional Centre of Excellence work**

- 6.1 Western Gateway's new Transport Model has now been completed. We have used the model to provide an analysis of possible future road traffic levels and distribution across the region, based on four different growth and behaviour scenarios (Common Analytical Scenarios).
- 6.2 Results were shared with officers and members to help inform future thinking and planning. A written report is being developed which will be shared with members.
- 6.3 Western Gateway's Carbon Assessment Playbook is now available for use by partners. An introductory session for officers and members was held and follow-up support sessions for officers is being coordinated, with the first session successfully held on 13<sup>th</sup> November and a second on 21<sup>st</sup> November.
- 6.4 New tools, including DfT's Connectivity Tool and Local Transport Carbon Infrastructure Benchmark Tool, have been delayed and now expected in spring. Western Gateway will be providing introductory sessions for partners and are exploring options to participate in a pilot study using the Connectivity Tool to inform local plan making.

- 6.5 Procurement tender process ongoing with the commercial team to secure a consultant for the work to support the revised housing forecast. 1) Development of Health, Physical Activity and Social Value evaluation guidance/tool, 2) Production of high level review of the new housing requirements and their impact at a Western Gateway wide level and 3) Production of Regional Spatial Planning Guidance for identifying the best possible locations from a region wide transport and connectivity perspective
- 6.6 Establishing working partnership with universities around the region aimed at enriching the field of transportation planning and providing valuable opportunities for students and graduates - 3 students from Gloucester university are currently on placement as part of the Centre of Excellence work.

## **7. Cycling**

- 7.1.1 A revised assessment of the prioritised cycle routes from the strategic network (presented in the October Board meeting) was expected by the current meeting. However, issues with the scoring conducted have again delayed the finalisation of that draft list.
- 7.1.2 This continues to be worked on and we expect to circulate to Members and officers for comment within the next couple of weeks.
- 7.1.3 Revisions required following this further round of engagement and consultation were not scoped in the original agreement, so Members are asked to approve an increase in the cycling budget of up to £10k to cover these revisions and the associated project management costs prior to finalisation of the report.
- 7.1.4 We are still expecting the final report to be completed in the current financial year.

## **8. Consultation, communication and engagement**

- 8.1 This update has been discussed by the Programme Management Team and approved by the Senior Officer Group.

## **9. Equalities Implications**

- 9.1 No adverse impact on any protected groups

## **10. Legal considerations**

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

## **11. Financial considerations**

- 11.1 The technical programme is produced within the allocated budget as spelt out in the business plan.

## **12. Conclusion**

- 12.1 This paper provides a summary of the various element of the Western Gateway technical programme of work and the progress made since the last board meeting. The Board is recommended to note the progress that has been made with the various workstreams.

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