

Board Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Tuesday 25th March 2025, 14:30-16:30

Location: Guildhall, High Street, Bath, BA1 5AW

Attendees:	
Name	Organisation
Cllr Andy Hadley	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) (AH)
Cllr Chris Willmore	South Gloucestershire Council (CW)
Cllr David Gray	Gloucestershire County Council (DR)
Cllr Derek Beer	Dorset Council (DB)
Cllr Ed Plowden	Bristol City Council (EP)
Cllr Hannah Young	North Somerset Council (HY)
Cllr Manda Rigby	Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) (MR)
Cllr Tamara Reay	Wiltshire Council (TR)
Colin Chick	Gloucestershire County Council (CC)
Andy Whitehead	South Gloucestershire Council (AW)
Jack Wiltshire	Dorset Council (JW)
Luisa Senft-Hayward	Gloucestershire County Council (LSH)
Orlagh Phipps	Gloucestershire County Council (OP)
David Bullock	Wiltshire Council (DB)
Pam Turton	Bath and North East Somerset Council (PT)
Ben Kempner	Department for Transport (BK)
Joseph Parkes	Network Rail (JP)
Matt Haywood	Network Rail (MH)
Hannah Shrimpton	Peninsula Transport (HS)
Nigel Blackler	Peninsula Transport (NB)
Arina Salhotra	Sphere Marketing (AS)
James White	Western Gateway STB (JWh)
Jess Holroyd	Western Gateway STB (JH)
Hattie James	Western Gateway STB (HJ)
Mena Abidakun	Western Gateway STB (MA)
Hannah Fountain	Western Gateway STB (HF)
Allan Creedy	Western Gateway STB (AC)
Rosa Kell	Public participant (RK)
David Redgewell	Public participant (DR)

Christina Biggs	Public participant (CB)
Apologies were received from:	
Cllr Kye Dudd	West of England Combined Authority (KD)
Cllr Jon Andrews	Dorset Council (JA)
Bella Fortune	North Somerset (BF)
Samantha Howell	Wiltshire Council (SH)
Louise McBride	West of England Combined Authority (LMB)

Actions	Allocated to	Target Date:
SIP: Revisit the cost figures in section 6 of SIP.	HF	June 2025
SIP: add references to INTS and release of new docs including M4 Dorset Coast Study & Wiltshire LTP4.	HF	June 2025
Business Plan: Tweak the Regional Centre of Excellence section to clarify alignment with government priorities on support for the housing growth.	JW	June 2025
Cycling Strategy: Typo in section 2.1- should be 10,000 residents. Recommendation in paper should say delegate not defer.	HF	June 2025
Coach: Consider wording in phase 3 coach report to show support for sustainable/public transport even if coach is not feasible.	HF	June 2025
Work programme: STB will consider how DRT and community transport can fit into the work officers are doing on buses in 2025/26.	WG	June 2025
Tweak the A303 letter to cover points discussed.	JW	June 2025
Feedback to DfT that LAs found out about the pothole allowance in newspaper/media before they received the letters that were sent to LAs.	BK	June 2025
Feedback to rail colleagues about concerns on rail stations not meeting the Equality Act - certain interchanges/stations in the region do not have lifts working. Network Rail will consider response as well.	BK/MH	June 2025
Forward minutes/questions around rail ticketing and pricing - for NR & DfT to respond.	WG	June 2025

New Railways Bill consultation - 15 th April deadline - for STB officers to complete.	WG	June 2025
Promote alternative public transport options when there are planned delays/cancellations and raise the reduction of rail fares.	BK/MH	June 2025
GWR created video to support neurodiverse people prepare for using trains and navigating stations. NR to share the video and put us in touch with relevant team at GWR to share and consider recreating similar videos across region.	MH	June 2025
Cllr Hadley to pick up with Richard from NH on M4 Dorset Coast study concerns.	AH	June 2025

Item No	Notes / Actions
1.	<p>Welcome, apologies and introductions.</p> <p>Cllr Rigby welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies. There is no representative from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority due to the pre-election period. Cllr Rigby gave an overview of which MPs and Ministers have had introductions and corresponded with the Western Gateway STB. Minister for Local Transport MP Simon Lightwood was complimentary about cross-boundary work with Peninsula Transport STB and was keen to hear about our plans and connectivity tools.</p> <p>Cllr Rigby will be standing down as Chair and this will be her last meeting. A new Chair will need to be elected.</p>
2.	<p>Actions and Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>All actions from previous meeting closed. The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record.</p>
3.	<p>Public Questions</p> <p>Cllr Rigby confirmed some questions were received in advance by some members of the public.</p> <p>Mr David Redgewell spoke about linking bus services across the region (airport, Port of Poole etc), and that buses should be integrated with coach services. Mr Redgewell's comments were noted by the Board and thought to be well-made. His full statement can be found here: Public-Questions-to-Western-Gateway-Board-25032025.pdf.</p>

	<p>Ms Christina Biggs from Bristol Rail Campaign and Bristol Clear Air Alliance spoke of her personal response to the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). She is doing a project on hydrogen in Swansea and has a PhD in physics. She has produced unpublished first draft, which lists possible impacts of climate change and potential solutions. Potential for solar batteries. Personalised to region - Severnside, Severn Net, farmland, good universities to make solar panels etc. This could be a plan that the Western Gateway could develop. Ms Biggs was thanked for her contribution and her comments have been noted.</p>
4.	<p>Paper A - Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)</p> <p>This paper was introduced by Cllr Hannah Young, project executive for the SIP. Cllr Young thanked the Project Board for their exceptional detail and work on the SIP, which was produced in a tight timeframe and under budget.</p> <p>Cllr Young highlighted changes that had been made to the SIP document in response to representations made through the consultation and wider engagement. These include the addition of a new Section 12 to capture wider national or pan-regional issues where WGSTB may have advocacy and support duties, e.g. integrated ticketing and routing, cross-boundary coach and bus connectivity, and freight. It was also raised that we have strengthened section 7 to include other regionally significant schemes that weren't able to be included in the finalised list. There is a strong commitment to build on the SIP in 12 months' time, and this is a living document.</p> <p>It was asked if the cost figures could be checked that they were reflective of the schemes.</p> <p>ACTION: Check the cost figures in section 6 on SIP.</p> <p>ACTION: When reviewing SIP section 7, reference forthcoming INTS and recent release of new docs include M4 Dorset Coast Study & Wiltshire LTP4).</p> <p>KEY DECISION REQUIRED: Approve the SIP. For small final updates, these can be deferred to the SIP Project Board.</p> <p>Cllr Reay sponsored the recommendations in the report and the four recommendations in paper A were unanimously adopted.</p>
5.	<p>Paper B – Business Plan</p> <p>An updated and tweaked version of the Business Plan that went to the Board on 2nd October 2024. The Department for Transport offered STBs the opportunity to resubmit Business Plans with a deadline of 21st Jan 2025 which fell between the Board meetings. One was submitted by the deadline with the proviso that it would come back to the Board for their approval. The Programme stays largely the same with recruitment recommendations for a new Data Analyst (GIS) and an additional Transport Officer. The Business Plan was based around 24/25 funding. This was confirmed in the Secretary of States funding settlement letter. The letter set out three key areas for the Western Gateway to focus on - Delivering a pan-regional approach through developing regional transport strategies , focusing on pan-regional connectivity and integration and supporting local authorities' capacity and capability through providing access to STB modelling and analysis tools and expertise. Table Two in the report demonstrates how the Western Gateway's programme meets these areas of focus.</p>

	<p>THREE RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve business plan for 25/26 • Agree to £20k annual contribution per Local Authority • Approve the appointment of data officer and transport officer as set out in table three <p>It was asked whether the size of the STB is reflective of the other STBs. JW replied that following recruitment, Western Gateway (WG) will still remain one of the smaller STBs but will move us more in line with Transport East.</p> <p>It was raised that we need to understand transport implications of housing figures and economic growth plan and framing our work programme to align with the government agenda. There is need to amend the wording in the Business Plan to reflect this.</p> <p>ACTION: Tweak the Regional Centre of Excellence section to clarify alignment with government priorities and explain how the programme will support delivery of housing growth.</p> <p>It was raised that the posts are value for money and the focus on bus and EV is welcomed.</p> <p>It was highlighted that the CAP has the highest uptake in Western Gateway STB compared to any other STB - every partner authority requested access and this amounted to 180+. This is a success story to shout about.</p> <p>Cllr Young sponsored the Business Plan. It was unanimous in favour of all the recommendations.</p>
6.	<p>Paper C - Strategic Cycle Network</p> <p>The Western Gateway Cycling strategy was initially developed by Sustrans and AtkinsRealis in 2022. Board members felt the strategy needed more development so this has gone through a few iterations with the constituent Local Authorities. The network links the main settlements with the key strategic locations and national and international gateways - airports, ports and train stations.</p> <p>It was flagged that it was much improved but making sure the quality of the routes provided is of a good standard and suitable for commuting as well as leisure. Next iteration to consider how to develop the routes and identify baseline of quality for all LAs to aim for on all routes.</p> <p>There are some typos in the paper that were flagged (2.1) - £10k residents and defer instead of delegate.</p> <p>ACTION: Typo on 2.1 in cycling strategy - should be 10,000 residents. And recommendation in paper should say delegate - not defer.</p> <p>It was raised by WG that the main report needs a few tweaks and there are some typos before it goes to publication.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: To approve the cycle network.</p> <p>Cllr Gray sponsored. All in favour was unanimous.</p>
	<p>Paper E - A303 update</p>

	<p>This paper proposed letter to the Secretary of State regarding the A303 Stonehenge tunnel cancellation. It sets out the case for an alternative approach to resolve the issues through public transport measures and active travel.</p> <p>It was highlighted that the Salisbury to Exeter service, which runs parallel to the A303 route, is not fit for purpose and investments are required. There are implications for Wiltshire for rat running over local communities. Not just about traffic, make it clear that it is about the World Heritage Site. Wiltshire is pleased that the Wiltshire Rail Strategy is looking to improve rail services..</p> <p>It was raised that it should be a priority for DfT to address a Plan B due to the cost & time that has been spent so far for it to go nowhere so there is need to make a stronger point of this in the letter.</p> <p>ACTION: Edit the letter to make this point stronger.</p> <p>Recommendation: The Board is asked to approve the letter so it can be sent to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>Everyone was in favour of sending the letter.</p>
7.	<p>Paper F - Work programme</p> <p>The work programme report was summarised with each of the workstreams and the priorities of the STB. More work on buses needs to be done. Considerations should be given to support bus service integration to support longer distance journeys, especially where coach services are unlikely to be feasible.</p> <p>ACTION: Consider wording in Phase 3 coach report to show support for sustainable/public transport even if coach is not feasible.</p> <p>It was raised that we have seen the decline of voluntary transport. The future of rural transport needs to be considered, especially around the aging population - a lot of current DRT service/ community transport are volunteer drivers and may struggle to maintain services in the future. Wiltshire - reviewing the bus network to think about DRT 'filling in the gaps' from the fixed timetable. BSIP funding can be used for this. WG to consider how this can fit into the work officers are doing on buses in 2025/26.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: To note the programme update to date.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
8.	<p>Paper G - Finance Update</p> <p>It was updated that the main elements of expenditure to date relate to delivering the technical programme, including development of the Strategic Investment Plan, delivery of the Regional Centre of Excellence, Coach workstreams, progressing all other work packages and staffing costs. The paper summarises the spend position to end of January 2025 against the revised agreed budget 2024/25 of £996k. All underspend will be put in the risk contingency pot as obligated by DfT.</p>

	<p>It was asked what happens with underspend. It was clarified we roll it over to the next financial year.</p> <p>The clarity of the update was praised.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: To note the financial decision to date.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
9.	<p>Update from Associate Members</p> <p>Department for Transport:</p> <p>The INTS roadshows have all taken place. The DfT team is analysing over 6,000 responses, which includes the people’s panels and engaging with internal and external stakeholders. Drafting of the strategy will take place over spring and summer. Policy roundtables to be coordinated and have strategy published by autumn 2025.</p> <p>Great British Railways consultation (Railways Bill) is current with proposals for a new passenger watchdog. From 6th March 2025 passengers across England are now able to see how train services are performing. MP Simon Lightwood announced a new Disabled Transport Committee. Funding for EV charging point roll out of £120, making switch over faster, easier, and cheaper. Plug in grants extended for another year. Prime Minister wants all local authorities to provide evidence of potholes from the 24th March and annual progress reports will need to be published to meet requirements of 25% uplift of £125 million total. Bus Service Improvement Plans due to be submitted by 31st March for 2025/26 grant.</p> <p>It was asked if there was allowance for pothole prevention. It was confirmed there will be need to publish balance between prevention and reactive measures. There were concerns around social media publication before Local Authorities are informed of this.</p> <p>ACTION: Feedback to DfT that LAs found out about the pothole allowance in newspaper/media before they received the letters that were sent to LAs.</p> <p>It was raised about accessibility issues with the rail network - lift access out of action on a common basis. It is basic Equality Act requirement, it is a fundamental right.</p> <p>The reduction of rail fares was also raised.</p> <p>It was also highlighted that alternative public transport options should be promoted when there are planned delays/ cancellations.</p> <p>ACTION: Ben and Matt to feed this back to colleagues.</p> <p>Network Rail:</p> <p>Importance of the Comprehensive Spending Review Phase Two flagged up. Expect to hear clarity in next few months of funding for rail. Western Gateway rail priorities are included. Consultation is open for new Railways Bill and ends on 15th April 2025.</p> <p>. Working with James and Hattie at WG to develop a business case for West of England Line - performance only enhancement, extension of Tisbury route, extra platform and accessible footbridge. Second option for an additional service as far as Yeovil and the</p>

	<p>third option is a combination of the two. Draft business case will be shared end of this week. Building infrastructure proposals in to a computer model to see how it will improve the performance on the route. It was clarified that work will be done on timetables, not just infrastructure.</p> <p>Westbury steering group about to start and Network Rail pleased to be collaborating on this the Western Gateway and Wiltshire Council. Benefits for east west and north south services.</p> <p>Feedback on two trains a day on Saturday between Oxford and Bristol - it has generated revenue, Oxford, Swindon and Bath connection has been popular in the trial service. Accelerated existing efforts to put out a trial for a daily service.</p> <p>Network Rail can be commended on public participation. It was raised if the neurodivergence video for Chippenham could be done for other stations.</p> <p>ACTION: NR to share the video and put WG in touch with relevant team at GWR to share and consider recreating similar videos across region.</p> <p>National Highways (NH):</p> <p>Richard Leonard from National Highways - Network Planning Director from National Highways gave an update.</p> <p>It was fed back that an interim settlement has been announced for National Highways. It confirms a multi-year commitment for the RIS. It will be informed through the Comprehensive Spending Review exercise. NH commended the SIP, in particular chapter 7. M4 to Dorset Coast publication has been shared with Ministers. The good working relationship with the STB was flagged. The housing figures and motorway networks produce some constraints - either missing or junctions are at capacity. National Highways is working with stakeholders.</p> <p>It is felt the M4 Dorset Coast stakeholder engagement has been poor with BCP. National Highways will have a separate conversation with BCP.</p>
10.	Paper D - Confidential matter not available