

## Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

### Statements and questions to the Board

25 February 2026

#### 1) David Redgewell

To note the same set of questions went to the Peninsula Transport Board on 12 February 2026 and many of the points raised are specific to the Peninsula and have been responded to by them.

##### Question 1

With the storms Bram ,Gareth and Chandra,  
in south west England effecting the Regional Rail and Road network with the Penzance to London Paddington/ Bristol Temple Meads station, and Birmingham New street line, with washout of the tracks at Saltash, Dawish sea wall, the wall it's self and a sink hole near Parson Tunnel.flooding at flooding at Hele and Taunton the Somerset level near castle cary,  
Cutting off the main Railway infrastructure to south west England  
With flooding at Axminster on the London Waterloo to Salisbury, Yeovil Junction Axminster Exeter Central,  
On the south western main line  
The St Earth to St ives,  
Par to Newquay,  
Liskeard to Looe.  
Exeter St Davids station to Barnstaple and Okehampton routes were all closed

We still have Branch lines closed Liskeard to Looe, Exeter St Davids station to Barnstaple,  
The Railway replacement services failed to operate or were delayed by flooding on the M5 and Devon Express way ,  
Lord Peter Hendy Railways minister and secretary of state for Transport Hydi Alexander mp for Swindon and south west mp  
Has ask for a Regional Transport plan like Transport for the North and Northern power house rail  
The west and East Midlands Transport plan

With passengers standing on inter city cross country train Arriva 1sq capital service from ,Penzance Truro ,Plymouth Exeter St Davids station, Tiverton Parkway, Taunton, Bristol Temple meads station, Bristol Parkway Cheltenham spa, Birmingham New street, York, Leeds, Manchester piccadilly Edinburgh Waverley and Aberdeen whilst 6 train units sit off lease in Derby work

We have 175 units are welcomed but still not in service exact 2 units out of Plymouth Laira Depot,

And the 165 ,166 158 units have still not been released to for the metro west railway service from Bristol Temple meads station to Filton Abbey station, Bristol Parkway station, Yate Charfield for Wotton under Edge, cam and Dursley, Gloucester central, Cheltenham spa Ashchurch for Tewkesbury Worcester Shrub Hill Worcester Forgate Street service

Or the Bristol Temple meads, Bristol Lawrence hill, Bristol Stapleton road, Ashley Down Filton Abbey wood, extension to Filton North for the Arena Henbury for cribs causeway and Bristol zoo and Extend to Avonmouth Dock

We have cut to the Region coach Network,  
London victoria coach station to Taunton, Exeter bus and coach station, Okehampton,  
Launceston, Newquay bus and coach station, and Penzance.

507 service.

Now service 35 Swanage bus coach and railway station to Poole bus and coach station,  
Bournemouth Transport interchange, Ringwood meeting house Lane bus and coach station London  
Heathrow Airport London victoria coach station service withdrawn

and service 32 From Salisbury coach station to London victoria coach station via  
Southampton coach station.

So what progress is being made on a Regional Transport plan for Peninsula Transport Board  
and Western Gateway Transport Board,

With local authorities and Greater south west partnership and west of England mayoral  
combined transport Authority and North Somerset council/ Somerset

Devon and Cornwall Plymouth Exeter and Torbay.

To get financial for our Region

### **Response:**

The Western Gateway is currently working on a Resilience study, recognising the importance of it to  
the future security of mobility in the region.

The study will first look to identify and visualise risk of current and future climate hazards across the  
region (+20km beyond), including things like flooding (surface, river and sea), extreme temperatures  
and wind. These will then be overlaid on to the strategic transport network (major roads, rail,  
airports, ports, major rail and bus stations, as well as supporting infrastructure such as electricity  
sub-stations) to identify areas of vulnerability.

This will provide Local Resilience Forums, asset managers and transport planners with improved  
information to plan for mitigation, adaptation and, where necessary, emergency response.

We have regular catchups with Peninsula Transport about our respective studies to ensure resilience  
of the wider region is inherent within the two studies.

### Question 2 .

What progress is being made on access for all Railway and interchanges schemes at Par  
, Bodmin Parkway for Bodmin Town centre, Wadebridge bus and coach station and Padstow bus and  
coach Terminal, castle cary for bus links to the Town , Festival and Shepton mallet,

Dorchester South Interchange with

Dorchester west and Yeovil Junction for the Bournemouth Central to Exeter Central St  
Davids Plymouth route .

Weston super mare for the cheddar valley, Cheltenham spa and Stroud. and Pokestone  
railway station where Bournemouth christchurch and Poole have withdrawn £10 million of match  
fund to south west Railway and Network rail wessex Route md Lawrence Bowman and supported by  
mp. Tom Hayes

Access for is a very important to the public Transport Network in south west England,  
including the new bus and coach station interchange in Taunton. and Royal parade in Plymouth  
Railway station and. Ferry ports across south west England

David Redgewell South west transport Network and Railfuture.

### **Response:**

Access for all passengers is a key part of the Western Gateway's Rail Strategy. The STB has  
previously supported access for all bids for Yeovil Junction and Bournemouth stations. We  
have also been involved in and are supportive of the Strategic Station Studies for Dorchester

and Bournemouth. Proposals for Bournemouth station gate line capacity and facilities is also a current priority in the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP).

We are aware of a number of other stations which remain inaccessible for passengers requiring step-free platform access. We will support and advocate for proposals coming forward to address these issues. Station access improvements in WECA, BCP and Gloucestershire are explicitly supported in our SIP.

#### Question 3

With the police reform proposals for a south west police force covering the 7 county's and mayoral Combined Authority for Wessex ,Somerset, Dorset Wiltshire Bournemouth christchurch and Poole,

Devon mayoral combined Authority for Plymouth, Exeter, Devon and Torbay

West of England mayoral combined transport Authority with North Somerset council as a member and possible unitary Council for Gloucestershire Thames valley Transport for Swindon, Berkshire and Oxfordshire.will western Gateway Transport Board and Peninsula Transport Board support the consultation into the future of the British Transport police

Especially as no mayoral combined Authority have set up apart from the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council

#### **Response:**

On 26 January 2026, Central Government announced reforms to police forces across England. This includes abolishing the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) from 2028, with these powers and functions being transferred to mayors of Combined Authorities where these exist, or to local council leaders through Police and Crime Boards.

The reforms also make clear the intention to change and merge police force boundaries to reduce the number of overall police forces over England. This will be subject to an independent review by Central Government on these proposals, which has not yet been published.

There is a link between these policing reforms to wider Local Government Reorganisation proposals, including Central Government's intention to establish Mayoral Strategic Authorities across all parts of England. The governance of the proposed Police and Crime Boards, and the areas covered will need to reflect these changes as these proposals are developed.

British Transport Police is a separate force covering the railway network. While the force may be considered as part of the independent review proposed, Western Gateway are unaware of any immediate consultation or changes to British Transport Police as part of these proposals. We will take as an action to investigate and consider whether a response is appropriate. If so a response will be drafted for the Chair to send.

## 2) Rosa Kell

Chair and Board

It's appreciated that this Board covers a large and diverse area with particular challenges and the pull on you by the different areas to not be left unrepresented at these meetings is high.

At a recent meeting parts of the region was compared to Northumberland with as few as 50 residents in a square mile, this seems an exaggeration if you live within Bristol or Plymouth but in part correct if you live in the Mendips, Quantocks or in any of the many totally isolated communities.

I should like to ask the Chair and Board to give the bus passengers of the North, North West, North East and Mendip region of Somerset and Unitary Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Swindon reassurance at these meetings that their considerable weight is being fully applied by them when working with West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset, Somerset Unitary and First Bus and others interested bus and coach partners on the importance of maintaining the existing rural and urban bus, coach and rail networks.

Today I should like to speak in particular on the Mendip and Bristol and Bath area and ask you to protect it from being fractured after 31st July 2026 when new bus timetable changes are intended to be activated within West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and affecting the Mendips area of Rural Somerset. I refer specifically to negotiations currently being held with First WoE Buses and other operators for ongoing service after July 2026 and the WEMCA supported and commercial services

Again I refer specifically to the Bristol to Yeovil 376, Bristol to Bridgwater 375, Bristol to Taunton 374 and others buses and coaches that run along the A36 Wells to Bristol corridor; the 171, 172, 173, 174 Bristol to Bath, Bristol to Wells, Wells to Bath corridor and Bath to Wells and allowing Mendip passengers to interchange at Wells for departures towards Weston.

Also, the Chew Valley X91 and 99 from Chew Magna to Bristol via Bishop Sutton Chewton Mendip etc and

The 2V Radstock Midsomer Norton Old Down P&R and

The Flix Bus (via Taunton, Bridgwater past the airport ) along the A38 into Bristol

National Express coaches that run along the A38 to Bristol via the airport

Passengers need these bus & coach services for local basics shopping well as wider connections, they are essential for hospitals & appointments, education at Weston College and University Campuses in Bristol & Bath and the outlying campuses at Midsomer Norton and the wider west Country geographical area further out of Bristol and for work opportunities in Weston, Bristol, Bath, Bridgwater and further afield and the same in the opposite direction via the Wells interchange to other outlying southern areas

These services currently provide via Weston, Bristol and Bath and Castle Cary, Yeovil, Burnham & Highbridge all bus to rail access to the wider areas for jobs, health facilities and social movement & tourism opportunities

These routes are, of course, also very essential for Bristol South conurbation along the A36 corridor for all basic shopping and access to larger stores, access to GP appointments, dentists, junior and secondary schools, employment opportunities and tourism in the Mendips and Chew Valley

Could the WesterGateway Board confirm it is working with the West of England Mayoral Authority, bus & coach operators, Unitary Somerset, North Somerset to ensure that Services continue after July 2026 at the current service level ensuring that there are no service disruption after 31st July 2026 within the Unitary Somerset area and that any proposed cuts are fully negotiated with unitary Somerset and passenger supporting groups as required by the Enhance Partnerships

Your support would assure the passengers using the 126 Weston to Wells along the Cheddar Valley [currently tendered for next 12months] 2V Bath Radstock Midsomer Norton the Chew Valley X99, 91, the Mendips 171/172/173/174, and 374/375/376 and 184 that there will be no service reduction at 31st July and that the bus travelling population of the Mendips will not have their access to jobs, students getting to schools, colleges and University campuses, connection to railway stations, basic shopping leisure and tourism affected.

It has been reported that West of England Mayoral Authority may wish to return to the DfT the train services from Bath to Salisbury, Weston to Taunton and Weston to Seven Beach. This is very concerning to the Unitary Somerset passengers as these local train services are essential for local transport and work prospect and their loss to the Mayoral control would also be a detriment to the areas prosperity.

Could the WesterGateway Board work with WEMCA to safeguard access to trains on these routes

Its appreciated that I have covered a wide agenda and that this Board cannot respond to all the topics I have raised prior to other authorities having made their decisions in mid summer, however assurances that it is working with those other parties and can input on them the weight of its authority is enough at this stage.

Its equally important to hear from you that in the Mendip area for the sake of stability for jobs, education exam results, mental & physical health, tourism and the general economy First WoE buses should be discouraged from changing timetables in the Mendips at 4th April. The End July (given WEMCA already announced their position is not a movable date) and again the end August when Unitary Somerset govment awards are likely to come on stream is unchangable, however a postponement from April to July gives enough notices to passengers to, if they have to, make alternative arrangements to accommodate changes.

It is worth mentioning that if a bus passenger cannot guarantee to get home at the end of the day by bus THEY WILL NOT venture out by bus.

**Response:**

We will pass on this statement to the West of England Combined Authority as the relevant Local Transport Authority for detailed comment on specific bus services and routes.

It was the intention of the 2026/27 Work Plan to undertake work on how the STB can help support local authorities with cross boundary bus services. Unfortunately due to the level of funding from the DfT being less than requested we have had to put this area of work on hold.

We will endeavour to work closely with all of our local authorities and Peninsula Transport on bus and rail services recognising we are uniquely placed to provide an overall and cross boundary perspective.

### 3) Bristol Rail Campaign

**Bristol Rail Campaign**  
Statement to Western Gateway  
Sub-National Transport Body  
Weds 25 February 2026



Bristol Rail Campaign welcomes the Western Gateway scoping of a freight terminal at the Suez Terminal (currently occupied by the SITA waste incineration plant) as supporting economic growth and modal shift to rail.

We are, however, concerned that it appears that since no additional infrastructure is proposed, freight trains would be required to reverse twice on the Severn Beach line, having a negative impact on the possibility of half-hourly passenger services to Severn Beach which are currently hourly.

We note that the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's (WECA) branch line study is examining increased service frequencies on the Severn Beach, Henbury and Portishead lines. We understand that the potential for services between the Severn Beach line, Henbury and Bristol Parkway are being examined as part of this. As well as there being a need for increased service frequencies in general, we strongly believe that services need to be extended from Henbury to Severnside to enable easier access to employment across a wide area.

Recent articles in local media and correspondence between ourselves and councillors show continued strong support across party for the extension of services from Henbury to Avonmouth, originally part of the Henbury Loop proposal. We recall that the decision to support a Henbury spur rather than the full loop was called in by Bristol City councillors in 2015. At the time, the main difficulty was the necessity of trains reversing at St Andrews Road to get from Henbury to Severn Beach and vice versa.

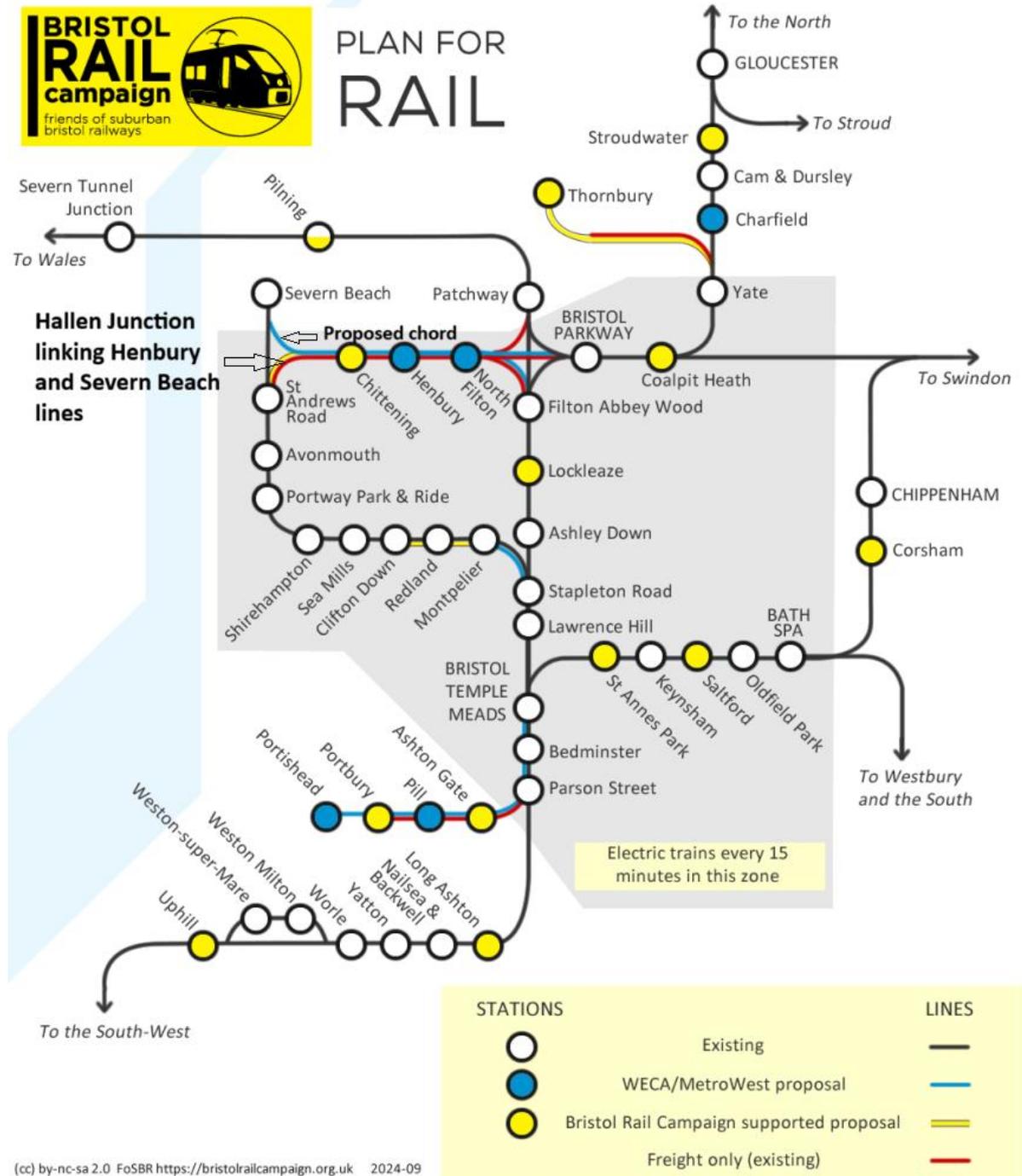
Since then, Network Rail have suggested that a north-east chord could be constructed at Hallen Junction which would enable passenger services from Henbury to turn north to join the Avonmouth-to-Severn-Beach line. The tracks would merge well south of the Suez Terminal, enabling freight trains from the new freight terminal to turn east to pass through Henbury without needing to reverse at St Andrews Road.

Given the port's understandable concerns about access being restricted if passenger services are extended from Henbury to Avonmouth, it should be noted that the provision of a chord at Hallen junction would enable service improvements while maintaining access to the port. It would enable access to the Severnside employment area directly from Bristol Parkway, the Western Innovation Arc, South Gloucestershire and further afield and would be a game changing investment for both sustainable transport and economic growth.

Bristol Rail Campaign therefore advocate that the delivery of the new Suez rail

terminal should be contingent on construction of the north-east Hallen chord.

Christina Biggs, Campaigns Lead, Bristol Rail Campaign [bristolrailcampaign.org.uk](http://bristolrailcampaign.org.uk)



**Response:**

The Bristol Rail Campaign’s concerns about the impact of a new rail freight terminal at Avonmouth on future Severn Beach and Henbury Line services and the need for a north east Hallen chord is noted. Initial work undertaken as part of the feasibility study indicated freight services can be accommodated. This is subject to more detailed work on the operational side to be undertaken as part of the further development of the business case for a terminal. No option will be ruled out at this stage.