



- 1. A regional network already there:** It has been well established that the West of England has a problem with congestion and air quality. The Joint Transport Study showed that the public primarily want to see improvements in the provision of public transport. FOSBR has a vision for a regional public transport network that starts with the existing 28 suburban rail stations, extending it by adding intermediate stations and bringing existing freight lines (Portishead, Henbury and Thornbury for Phase 1, 2 and 3 respectively) back into passenger use. We see rail as the natural, already-existing backbone to a cross-regional network, and would urge that bus schemes serving areas out of reach from rail should link into the rail network with effective rail-bus interchange at stations and be seen as complementary. Rail is increasingly a popular mode of travel with young people and the natural choice for visitors to the region as it is the only mode with a single network.
- 2. Capacity:** We would contest Network Rail's assertion that the rail network is used up to capacity. Four-tracking on Filton Bank will unlock capacity, and passing loops and extra platforms at stations can also be introduced to allow fast trains to overtake slow. We would urge WECA to make sure that key rail schemes such as Bristol East Junction are brought forward. We have seen, during the course of MetroWest Phase 1, that junctions such as Parson Street can be remodelled to improve capacity, and that although timetables are tightly linked across the national network, the approach using RailSys can yield several different model timetables (such as the six different scenarios in Phase 1). Eventually, single tracks such as on the Severn Beach line can be redoubled. Finally, the capacity of a given service can be improved by adding extra carriages, or introducing larger carriages such as the new Class 166s, and in a decade or so we anticipate that London-underground style "moving block signalling" will enable trains to run with less time between them. So the assertion in the Joint Transport Study that, as only 6% of Bristol commuters take the train, the rail network does not have the capacity to make a significant difference, does not need to be true. Standing by a rail line, even with trains every 10 minutes or so, should make it obvious that, if slow trains are provided with adequate passing loops, the trains should be able to run more frequently. Maybe the future is more stopping trains (which are still far faster than the car) with occasional fast trains to connect the region, with freight trains only at night.
- 3. Part of a national system:** The main advantage for rail is that it is connected to a national network and it could be said that this interconnectivity is also its weakness, at least at the planning stages, for the reasons given above. But once a new service is up and running, the Department for Transport will generally take the running costs into the next franchise (for the Severn Beach Line, gradually over five years), thus potentially releasing revenue funding for the next phase. Extra trains have been introduced to fill gaps in the timetable (such as the evening service on the Severn Beach Line) or semi-fast trains can be coaxed to make more stops at intermediate stations (as has been done at Parson Street).
- 4. Interconnectivity:** Another strength of rail is its capacity to connect several modes. Cycles can be used on a train, and passengers can connect between trains and buses at interchanges, assisted by real-time information. Folding cycles, Yo-bikes, taxi-boats on waterways and landscaped "golden miles" can all interchange seamlessly and cleanly to rail stations, as outlined in the Sustrans-led Good Transport Plan.
- 5. The far future:** A sustainable future must involve a shift from private to public transport. People use broadband to work from home but also should be thinking in terms of living near their place of work and at the least planning to live where they can commute by public transport. But this will only be possible if a regional transport plan should make sure that all centres of habitation will be within walking distance of a bus and cycling distance of a train station, and that in general cars should be banned from shopping and commercial centres. Trains are the future in Europe: why not here?