

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR)

Statement to WECA Committee and West of England Joint Committee

31 January 2020 at 10am, City Hall, Bristol



1. Services truncated at Filton Abbey Wood

FoSBR requests that WECA put strong pressure on DfT and the rail operators to **resume daytime stopping services from Weston super Mare across the city to Bristol Parkway in the May 2020 timetable**. These trains now stop short at Filton Abbey Wood. We question whether the four-tracking of Filton Bank missed an opportunity to remodel Filton Junction and thus bring about the full benefits of the extra two lines.

2. MetroWest Phase 1

We are pleased to see that the DCO application for the Portishead line has been formally accepted by the Planning Inspectorate and trust that WECA will continue to give this scheme unwavering support. We note that there are still no plans for a station at Ashton Gate, despite the expansion of the Ashton Gate stadium and other development plans in the area. We ask WECA to at least ensure passive provision is made for this.

FoSBR continues to urge WECA to urgently conclude negotiations and implement MetroWest Phase 1A, initially **half-hourly from Temple Meads to Avonmouth and hourly to Severn Beach**, in the May 2020 timetable.

We trust that the Portway Parkway project is still progressing towards an opening date in December 2020.

We welcome the news that work has started on remodelling Bristol East Junction and ask that WECA initiate discussions on **extending double-tracking on the Severn Beach Line**.

MetroWest Phase 1A should be considered as WECA's highest priority contribution to combat climate change and air pollution, and if implemented by May 2020 would fall well within the current timescale of Bristol's Clean Air Plan.

3. MetroWest Phase 2

We understand that YTL are investigating the possibility of a direct connection from the proposed Brabazon Arena to Bristol Parkway across the E-W chord on the Filton Diamond to link the proposed station at North Filton. We think this adds urgency to resolving the problem of road access at St Andrew's Gate, as the Henbury Loop seems like an obvious onward route for trains originating at Bristol Parkway. **Again we continue to urge WECA to hold talks with Bristol Port Authority to resolve the problem of this level crossing**, which is a significant obstacle to improving rail services in North-West Bristol.

In the meantime we continue to seek assurance that Henbury station is future-proofed for through running onto the Henbury Loop.

4. Joint Spatial Plan/JLTP4

According to the MD of First West of England, MetroBus journeys that should take 35 minutes are taking an hour and 35 minutes. MetroBus proves, if proof were needed, that no single mode of transport can solve our transport problems. We need an integrated system, with cycling, walking, buses and rail all playing their part.

Rail services don't get held up by roadworks. FoSBR suggests that sustainability criteria for Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) should include present and potential rail station access and not depend solely on MetroBus provision.

FoSBR continue to recommend that the JSP, JLTP4, and the ongoing WECA rail study should include our updated FoSBR Plan for Rail proposals for stations at Coalpit Heath, Long Ashton/Flax Bourton, Chittering for Severnside, Horfield, Uphill/Locking, and to **include the remodelling of Westerleigh Junction** to enable the delivery of the Thornbury Line, perhaps initially as a Park and Ride from Tytherington Quarry.

In the mean time **we continue to press for the reinstatement of the footbridge at Pilning** to allow use of both platforms and a meaningful service here. This station has huge potential to serve the growing industry in the area.

In the light of declarations of a climate emergency by WECA, Bristol, South Glos and B&NES, **it seems unfathomable these authorities are still planning and building road schemes whose only effect will be to encourage the use of the private motor car**. In South Wales, a £1.6 billion road scheme has just been cancelled and in its place ambitious schemes for Cardiff Crossrail, electrification of valley lines and a new Cardiff Parkway have emerged.

We need that kind of vision here. We believe it would be possible to grade separate Westerleigh Junction, for example, for less than the cost of building a new motorway junction. **Cancel M4 Jct 18a and other major road schemes, and spend the money to increase capacity and allow local services to run alongside the newly accelerated London trains.**

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