

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FoSBR)

Statement to WECA Scrutiny

Weds 7 October 2020 at 10.30am via Zoom



1. **Covid-19** – FoSBR note that passenger ridership is returning to the Severn Beach Line and other regional lines, and that GWR are now recommending the promotion of rail travel with appropriate public safety measures. FoSBR would urge WECA to publicise the continuing government investment in maintaining local rail service frequency and encourage car commuters to return to rail travel. FoSBR also note the government policy of investing in infrastructure to restart the economy and commend the MetroWest programmes as a means to do this locally in the West of England.

2. **MetroWest Phase 1 – half-hour services from Severn Beach to Westbury and the reopening of the Portishead Line**

a) FoSBR welcomes the continuing investment by WECA in MetroWest Phase 1, and would like to state its full-hearted support for the scheme. FoSBR notes that the Development Consent Order process is starting with hearings in October.

b) MetroWest Phase 1A (half-hour services from Severn Beach to Westbury) should still be considered as WECA's highest priority immediate contribution of local rail to air quality, and if implemented in 2021 would fall well within the current timescale of Bristol's Clean Air Plan.

3. **MetroWest Phase 2 – services from Temple Meads to Gloucester and reopening of the Henbury Line**

a) We welcome the continuing investment in the Henbury line, including the plans for Ashley Hill station, and note the long-term benefit of the scheme to public transport but also the immediate value of this investment producing jobs.

b) We appreciate the need for value for money at this time, but point out that the City Deal funds have been committed and that building the Henbury Line now will incentivise buyers and developers to build out the 8,000 homes in the Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood Scheme more rapidly, which in turn will deliver the ridership and modal shift that North Bristol needs.

c) Whilst we welcome MetroWest Phase 2 hourly service to Henbury in its current form, we note that a half-hourly service is technically feasible and also that it was the 40-minute service on the Severn Beach Line that was decisive in delivering the ridership of 1.4 million that the Severn Beach Line currently enjoys. We commend the light rail plans promoted by the Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance, particularly the suggestion that both MetroWest and the WECA mass transit plans should form part of a more ambitious and integrated rapid transit scheme.

4. **Suggestions for public transport alternatives to further road building**

a) FoSBR note that although there is considerable rail investment, that WECA is persisting in progressing most of the JLTP4 road-building schemes, notably the South Bristol Orbital and the Coalpit Heath and Winterbourne bypasses, despite strong local opposition and WECA's stated aim of preventing climate change. FoSBR continue to commend feasibility studies into a rail station at Coalpit Heath, where there is room for a passing loop, and a new station at Corsham, as promoted by Wiltshire Council. As for the south of Bristol, FoSBR recommends that the proposed WECA mass transit scheme should include a light rail link to Radstock, and commends the light rail and traffic management plans drawn up by the Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance (TfGB) and presented by TfGB to the WECA meetings this week.

b) FoSBR continue to bring WECA’s attention to the fact that further road-building not only destroys the environment but also brings more cars onto the road and undermines public transport. We commend the instatement of the Bristol Bridge bus gate and pop-up cycle lanes in Bristol, and urge that the Living Neighbourhoods suggestions be acted on, as well as the more ambitious Traffic Management Plans and Parking Plan as promoted by the Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance.

5. Integrated transport planning

a) FoSBR notes that in the Appendix 1 list of investments, the road, rail, bus and cycling schemes do not seem to be structured according to any overarching plan. FoSBR notes the investment in two separate rail studies (Greater Bristol Area Rail Enhancements and Strategic Rail Investment) and suggests that these two plans and other current rail projects be brought into a more coherent and intentional rail investment programme, including bus-rail interchange and the proposed mass transit schemes. We commend the organisation of the West Midlands Rail Executive and suggest that WECA initiate talks and visits with these and other ITAs in the UK to learn how to deliver schemes to budget and on time.

b) FoSBR welcomes the new extensive WECA Local Cycling and Walking Investment programme and suggests that a similarly detailed plan, with maps, is drawn up for rail and bus services, including rail-bus interchange. FoSBR would urge BCC to ensure that future MetroWest rolling stock is not only zero-carbon but has cycle hire and extra space for bicycles for local services as well as cycle lockers at multimodal exchange hubs.

Christina Biggs and Tony Lloyd
Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways www.fosbr.org.uk

Figure 1 Pie-chart of Investment Plan allocations for June and October 2020 combined, in the WECA Committee reports pack for Friday 9 October 2020 (table of values below), mode allocations ours.

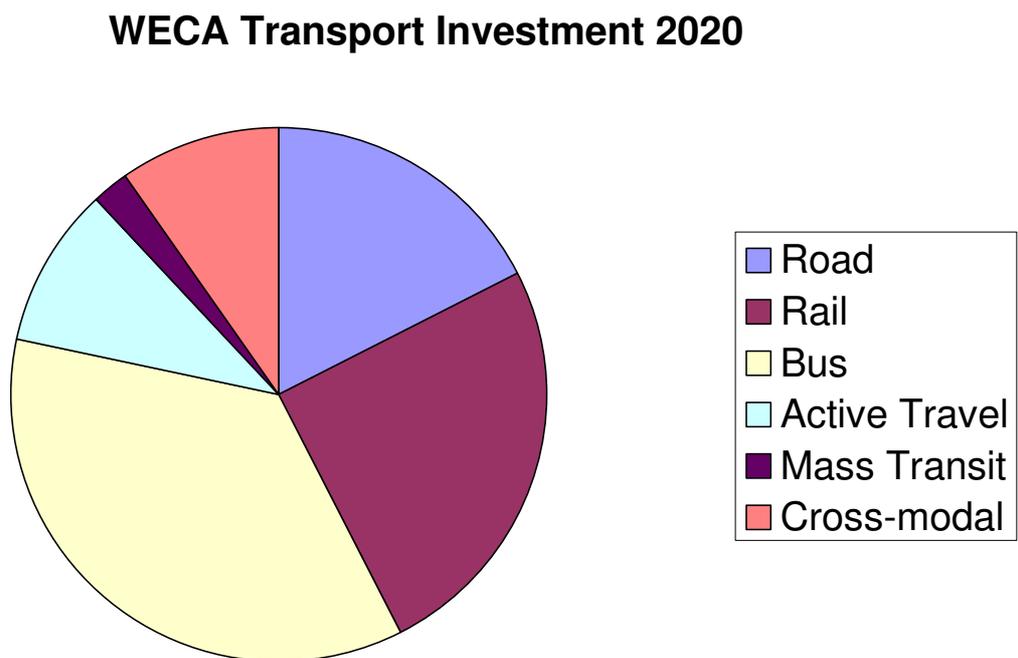


Table constructed from Appendix 1, page 188-189 of WECA Committee reports pack. The figures are multiplied by 1000 to be in pounds sterling for clarity and the allocation to mode of transport is ours.

WECA Investments by mode June 2020 + October 2020	Road	Rail	Bus	Active Travel	Mass Transit	Cross-modal
Southern Orbital	310000					
Mass Transit Options					552000	
East of Bath	100000					
A420 to Bath	400000					
Bristol Temple Meads		4000000				
Greater Bristol Area Rail Study		200000				
Coalpit Heath+Winterbourne bypass	826000					
Regional Operations						150000
Strategic Rail Investment		500000				
Access to Bath	400000					
Access for All		100000				
Housing Growth Mitigation	3200000					
Hick's Gate Roundabout	920000					
MetroWest Phase 2		16677000				
Charfield Station		2400000				
Yate Park and Ride			600000			
Strategic Park and Ride			1000000			
MetroWest Phase 1		11720000				
Mass Transit development study					3000000	
Integrated Smart Ticketing						600000
Local Cycling and Walking				2200000		
Future Transport Zone						11455000
MetroBus Consolidation			600000			
WoE Stations enhancement		1104000				
RTI upgrade			1118000			
Cribbs Patchway cycle links				6650000		
Cribbs Patchway MetroBus extension			44302000			
ITA functions						2000000
Short term bus enhancements			4200000			
On bus contactless			832000			
Great Stoke Roundabout	5818000					
Wraxhall Road Roundabout	13774000					
Emergency Active Travel fund				5259000		

	Road	Rail	Bus	Active Travel	Mass Transit	Cross-modal
£	25748000	36701000	52652000	14109000	3552000	14205000