

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FoSBR)

Statement to WECA Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 2nd December 2020 at 10.30 am via Zoom



1. Strategic Rail Investment Programme and Covid-19

FoSBR welcomes the 10 year delivery plan for Strategic Rail Investment that will be considered by the Joint Committee on 4th December. Obviously public finances in the future will be challenged by the large national debt being built up as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, but FoSBR considers it essential that public transport, including rail, is improved and that investment in infrastructure is essential for the future. Thus we commend the statement in the SRI report that 'The infrastructure works referenced within this report will contribute positively to the post-Covid-19 economic recovery'.

2. MetroWest Phase 1a - Severn Beach and Westbury lines

We are pleased to see continuing support for this service enhancement and that money from the Investment Fund is to be released for infrastructure improvements to accomplish this. FoSBR has called for a half hourly service on the Severn Beach (and other) lines for many years and at last there is a firm date for this to be delivered - by the end of 2021.

3. New Stations

We welcome mention of new (re-opened) stations such as Charfield, St Anne's Park, Saltford and Ashton Gate. However we are concerned that there is no reference at all to stations Constable Road, Thornbury or Coalpit Heath.

4. MetroWest Phase 2

The Henbury Spur line forms part of MetroWest Phase 2. Although mentioned in the SRI, FoSBR would welcome some clarity on when this might be delivered - particularly as we suggest it needs to be in place before substantial housing development has taken place at Filton airfield.

5. Ashley Down station

The 10 Year Rail Plan suggests that the proposed Ashley Down station could be delivered early, before the Henbury Line MetroWest Phase 2 works, and could be served by existing services on the Filton Bank route. The Henbury line is initially proposed to be an hourly service whereas the Temple Meads to Filton Abbey Wood

and onwards has a half hourly service. This raises the possibility of a half hour frequency at Ashley Down station from the time that it opens.

6. Henbury Loop

There is mention in the Rail Plan for a 'double junction at Holesmouth' and the 'remodelling of Holesmouth Junction'. This suggests that there are plans for opening up the route beyond Henbury station - which could form the basis for the Henbury Loop. However further works, to allow vehicle access to the docks, would still be needed for a Henbury Loop service to be created. FoSBR once again urges WECA to consider how this could be accomplished, including further negotiations with the Port Company.

7. Westerleigh Junction

We are pleased that there is reference to enhancement of Westerleigh Junction, to be developed by 2030 and delivered by 2045. The junction, as presently configured, restricts the number of trains that can travel on the Gloucester to Bristol line and impacts MetroWest Phase 2 which intends to increase the frequency of the Yate service. FoSBR also has a long term ambition for re-opening the Thornbury branch line, trains for which also pass through Westerleigh Junction and Yate. Use of the singled Westerleigh oil depot line should be considered.

Tony Lloyd, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FoSBR) www.fosbr.org.uk