

# Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FoSBR)

## Statement to WECA Committee

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 at 12.00 noon



FoSBR welcomes the start of the new half hour service on the Severn Beach line, from Avonmouth to Temple Meads, coupled with an increase in the number of cross-city direct services between Avonmouth and Weston super Mare. This is the start of achieving the aims of the MetroWest project. However there appears to be some dark clouds approaching other parts of MetroWest.

### **1. The Portishead passenger line re-opening:**

The delay to April 2022, of a decision on the Development Consent Order for this scheme, is regrettable. This will not only cause further delay but will also probably increase the cost of the scheme. We have concerns whether the revenue funding and capital top-up is still secure.

The reason for the delay is unclear with the main reason being given as 'to allow further consideration of environmental matters' – which one could hardly call explanatory! Thus there has been a whole raft of theories for the delay, including a suggestion from Liam Fox that it is due to opposition to the scheme from environment groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain. We do know that the Inspector has asked for more information on carbon budgets and this has been supplied by North Somerset Council. Worryingly, there is also a proposal to replace the rail scheme with a bus service which would run along the existing rail route for part of its journey to Bristol. We are opposed to this idea and consider that a rail service is the most efficient and environmentally friendly method of public transport between Portishead and Bristol.

Thus, despite the apparent set-back, we strongly urge both WECA and North Somerset Council to continue with the rail scheme and to ensure that there is sufficient money for its completion.

### **2. Portway Park and Ride:**

There have been many delays to the opening of this station. Recently it had been considered that it would open by the end of this year but then we find out that there have been delays in getting the final design (Grip 5) completed. Because of this, it now appears that the station opening will be delayed until spring 2022. We urge WECA to apply pressure so as to ensure that there are no further delays to this scheme.

Tony Lloyd, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FoSBR) [www.fosbr.org.uk/](http://www.fosbr.org.uk/)