



Campaigning for rail at the core of an integrated transport network for Bristol, Bath and the West of England

Improvements to the number 2 bus route (A37/A4018)

Summary

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FoSBR) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed improvements to the number 2 bus route (A37/A4018). We support this 'whole route' approach to improving public transport and active travel.

We recognise that the competing demands of improved bus priority and increased safety and attractiveness of cycling and walking are almost impossible to reconcile with the need to retain access for private motor traffic.

One reason we campaign for improved local rail services is that these have their own dedicated right of way and do not have to make such compromises in order to offer an attractive alternative to the private car.

FoSBR sees rail as the essential core of an integrated transport network. We are therefore very disappointed to see that no consideration has been given to improving integration between bus and rail services in this scheme.

The A4018/A37 route passes close to two important train stations, at Clifton Down and Bristol Temple Meads, and a proposed new station at Henbury. It seems that the design process has completely ignored the possibility of improving interchange at Clifton Down, or of providing for it at Henbury. Bus/rail interchange at Bristol Temple Meads is also very poor. This problem has not been resolved in the recent Temple Meads masterplanning exercise.

Henbury

The location of the proposed new train station at Henbury was chosen in 2015.

The original station, closed in 1964, adjoined the B4055 Station Road and would have allowed for direct bus/rail interchange with services 1,2,3 and 76, making the station a very useful transport hub for the surrounding area.

However for various reasons an alternative location was chosen 400m to the east. The area around the new location is currently being developed with, it would seem, no consideration for interchange between buses and trains.

Assuming that it is not practical to re-route bus services closer to the new station at this stage, consideration should at least be given to the possibility of introducing new bus stops as close as possible to the new station, with clear pedestrian routes to minimise the difficulty of interchange here. The best location for such improvements may fall within South Gloucestershire.

Clifton Down

Clifton Down station is one of the region's busier train stations, and has potential to be much more. It is ideally located to form an important local transport hub.

Services 1 and 2 pass the station, but stop about 70m south of the railway.

Access from Whiteladies Road is poor. Passengers needing step-free access have to follow an extended route around the gym building which spans the station and then cross a service yard. For passengers heading towards Bristol Temple Meads and connections to the rest of the national rail network, a further diversion past the 'Steam' pub is required so that they can access the platform from the western end. This route is approximately 300m from bus stop to platform.

Able-bodied passengers may, if they can find it, use a shorter route via a narrow passageway past the entrance to Clifton Down Shopping centre.

There is much scope for improvement here. Recent traffic changes at Cotham Hill may allow the bus stops to be moved north, closer to the station. This could help catalyse other improvements to better realise the potential of this underused asset.

Bristol Temple Meads

We understand that the geographical constraints of Temple Meads station make it difficult to get buses near enough for good interchange. But services passing the station should stop as close as possible to minimise walking distances.

Southbound buses on the No.2 route stop on Temple Gate, some 200m from the station entrance. Northbound services, however, stop on Victoria Street. This stop is over 400m from the station entrance, too far to be considered an accessible walking distance. A new, closer location, perhaps on Temple Gate, should be found.

A further opportunity may present itself as the proposed new entrance to Temple Meads is developed to the south of Bath Bridge. New bus stops here could potentially bring buses to within less than 100m of the new station entrance.

Conclusion

Integration between modes needs to be front and centre of the planning process, but is absent here. If we are to build 'a more inclusive and connected city', it cannot make sense to ignore one of Bristol's greatest under-used assets – its suburban rail network.

This project shows clearly that in many places along the A4018/A37 route there is not enough road capacity to give buses, cars, bicycles and pedestrians the space they need. Proper integration between buses and trains would give people better choices and benefit both modes.

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