

Railfuture response to Hertfordshire County Council's Transport Vision 2050 – Public Consultation on a new Local Transport Plan for Hertfordshire, 2016

Q1 – Who are you submitting this response on behalf of? A company/organisation.

Q2 – Please state the company / organisation you are responding on behalf of. Railfuture.

Q3 – Are there any other challenges and opportunities we should take into account in our future transport strategy? The challenge of maintaining strategic resilience of transport networks in the face of major and unplanned disruptions over the long term caused by eg extreme weather, infrastructure failures, security issues.

Q4 – Do you agree with the LTP Objectives and Principles identified? Yes.

Q5 – Do you support the adoption of a Transport User Hierarchy Policy? Yes.

Q6 – Do you support the adoption of a policy to deliver a step change in cycling in larger urban areas? Yes.

Q7 – Do you support the adoption of a policy to do more to facilitate and support shared mobility? Yes.

Q8 – Do you support the adoption of a policy to enhance public transport connectivity between towns with bus priority measures? Yes. We note that the Bus Priority Network shown in Fig.7 on page 19 of TV2050 uses existing roads between Watford and St. Albans, broadly the A405, not the existing railway route.

Q9 – Do you support the adoption if a policy to implement a Priority Traffic Management Network? Yes.

Q10 – Do you support the policy to develop a series of local Growth and Transport Plans? Yes.

Q11 – For each of the major schemes please state whether you agree or disagree with their inclusion in the new strategy in principle:

MS1 - Sustainable Travel Towns (Watford, Stevenage, St Albans, Hemel Hempstead) Agree.

MS2 - Access Improvements to East Hemel Hempstead No opinion either way other than to note that where there is any overlap between these improvements and the Bus Priority Network shown in Fig.7 then such improvements must incorporate bus priority measures as integral to that Network.

MS3 - Hertford Bypass & Sustainable Travel Town No opinion either way other than to note that where there is any overlap between a bypass and the Bus Priority Network shown in Fig.7 then such a bypass must incorporate bus priority measures as integral to that Network.

MS4 - A414 Corridor Junction Capacity Upgrades No opinion either way other than to note that where there is any overlap between these upgrade schemes and the Bus Priority Network shown in Fig.7 then such schemes must incorporate bus priority measures as integral to that Network.

MS5 - Hertfordshire Bus Rapid Transit Network Agree to the Hemel Hempstead-Hertford route shown in Fig.10 as east-west public transport links are poor and merit significant improvement, and it appears to be consistent with the route shown in Fig.7 for the Bus Priority Network and.

Disagree strongly with the Watford-St. Albans route shown in Fig.10 as the scale of new housing anticipated will unavoidably generate large numbers of new trips to and from London and it would therefore be entirely wrong as a matter of policy principle and counter-productive in practice to downgrade the existing rail link via Watford Junction, and as it also appears to be inconsistent with the on-road Bus Priority Network route shown in Fig.7 – note our response to Q8. We see no evidence of optioneering to enable proper comparisons to be made between bus/rail/light rail, while such analysis as has been done, acknowledged as only ‘high-level’, does not appear to include the disbenefits to existing rail passengers or the potential for increased local emissions from replacing electric trains with (probably) diesel buses. In the latter context we note that 5 of the county’s 30 Air Quality Management Areas are in the towns of St. Albans and Watford and in the general vicinity of the suggested BRT between them.

There appears to be only a generalised working assumption that a mode shift of 15% from car use can be achieved. This contrasts with the 10% achieved in London after all its sustained investment over the past 15 years at least in a vastly more dense and varied public transport network; we therefore have to regard such an assumption as nothing less than heroic.

Q12 – Please let us know any comments you have on the major scheme options: It would in our considered view be the height of folly to disinvest from the modern electrified Abbey line railway and spend an estimated £90 million on a busway where experience elsewhere is that they can only bring limited benefits in terms of journey-time savings and the desired mode shift from private cars – one of the four cardinal principles of TV2050 – and are a long-term maintenance liability. That long-term (post-2031) prospect, if confirmed, would have the short- and medium-term effect of casting an investment blight over the existing railway, undermining any efforts to engage with key stakeholders to develop the present public transport offer.

For comparison, a similar sum would probably buy sufficient rail enhancement infrastructure to transform patronage, and corridor mode shift, with a higher-frequency turn-up-and-go level of service. Similarly, the minimum £250 million being contemplated for the Jack Oldings roundabout upgrade could probably buy either a grade separated junction south of Watford Junction station to enable through London Overground services to and from St. Albans Abbey station, or a light rail system or tram/train with extension to St. Albans City station. Those investment comparisons are not presented as binary choices but point to the potentially wider socio-economic as well as transport benefits awaiting similar levels of investment in an on-line upgrading of an existing public transport asset, benefits most closely aligned with securing TV2050's declared objectives and principles which we have endorsed.

Q13 – Limiting future levels of traffic growth and improving walking, cycling and public transport provision will be very hard to achieve without policies which encourage less car use and help to enhance provision of and investment in more sustainable modes. What policies should Hertfordshire consider adopting to achieve this? Manage the demand for limited road-space in and around Hertfordshire's six Primary Urban Centres, plus Luton, via price mechanisms – eg decriminalised parking schemes and parking permit zones, workplace parking levy – to enable greater priority for walking, cycling and road-based public transport, and improved access to rail-based public transport, by creating ongoing revenue streams to support continuous investment in those sustainable modes.

Q14 – Have you any other general comments you wish to make on the new Local Transport Plan for Hertfordshire? We welcome the general policy thrust of TV2050, a healthy departure from LTP3 and a broadly appropriate response to the five major challenges and six drivers of change identified.