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For the attention of Jodi Savickas

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25 October 2018

Dear Ms Savickas

### **Draft Bristol Transport Strategy Consultation**

I am pleased to attach Railfuture's response to this Consultation. Our comments are cross-referenced to the pages and numbered Outcomes of the Consultation Document.

I hope this is helpful. If anything in the Railfuture response requires clarification, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

***Nigel Bray***

Nigel Bray  
Railfuture  
Secretary, Severnside Branch.

## 1. Executive Summary (pages 2-4).

1.1 Railfuture supports the Outcomes listed in the document, particularly Outcomes 3, 4, 10 and 11. We agree with the philosophy of promoting sustainable modes of transport with a view to reducing car dependency, improving air quality and achieving better health for residents, commuters and visitors.

1.2 However, we believe the potential for rail to contribute to these outcomes has been underestimated by the Draft Strategy, which appears to see the solution primarily in terms of buses and a proposed Underground system. We would not disagree with James Freeman, MD of Stagecoach West of England, (quoted in the *Western Daily Press*, 24 October) that Bristol needs a better bus service nor with his assessment that congestion is the main problem facing bus operations in the city. We believe that rail can play a major part in tackling congestion because trains do not have to compete for space with cars and lorries.

1.3 Bristol is not only a major hub in the UK rail network but also has 12 railway stations within the City boundaries, considerably more than most UK cities of comparable size including Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool and Sheffield. This number will increase as a result of MetroWest Phase 2, which is committed to new stations at Ashley Down and Henbury, the latter being on the border with South Gloucestershire. A new station at Portway is scheduled to open in 2020 and there is a very strong case for a station at Ashton Gate (4.5).

1.4 On page 4 the Draft Strategy makes the important point that Bristol's transport corridors carry large numbers of people from within and outside its boundaries to the city centre. The Bristol journey to work area for inward commuting extends at least to Cardiff, Cheltenham, Swindon, Taunton, Warminster and points in between. Rail is ideally placed to serve much of this huge commuter hinterland because of its speed advantage over congested roads and because of the number of stations in the city itself. Moving large numbers of people quickly, comfortably and safely is a key strength of rail both for cross-city and longer work journeys.

## 2. Challenges- issues with transport implications

### Health (page 8).

2.1 We agree that poor air quality is a major cause of ill health. Completion of the deferred electrification from Chippenham and Bristol Parkway to Temple Meads would make rail a cleaner and more attractive mode in the city, as would electrification of the Henbury, Portishead, Severn Beach and Weston-super-Mare lines in the longer term or the use of battery trains. Other corridors could be served by light rail where appropriate.

2.2 We also agree that lack of exercise is bad for people's health. Most public transport journeys involve a degree of walking. The walk to a railway station is usually longer than to a bus stop but in most cases the overall journey is likely to be quicker than the equivalent trip made by bus. If more stations are opened as envisaged in the Draft Strategy, more people will be within walking or cycling distance of a station. It is well known that young people increasingly favour public transport and many would prefer not to have to own a car at all.

## Sustainable Growth (pages 11-12)

2.3 We agree that self-driving vehicles are likely to increase congestion, resulting in a greater need to promote public transport. They would not necessarily provide faster journeys than by walking to a station and catching a train. They may well cause modal shift away from buses, particularly where a journey involves catching more than one bus. Because their main advantage is convenience, autonomous cars would reinforce sedentary lifestyles, with the health implications referred to on page 8. Greater use of park & ride at railway stations could combine the flexibility of private transport with the speed of rail.

### **3. Stakeholder Engagement (pages 13-14).**

3.1 The Congestion Task Force ought to include representatives from the rail industry, particularly GWR as the principal train operator serving Bristol, if it does not already do so. It would also be useful for public transport user groups to be represented because of their local knowledge and contact with passengers.

### **4. The Strategy**

#### Outcome 3 (Reduced excess lorry and van traffic), page 21.

4.1 We welcome the intention to enable and explore measures to achieve modal shift away from road freight including the use of rail. Where bulk freight is concerned, sidings at Bristol East Depot and Kingsland Road need to be safeguarded to complement the regularly used rail freight facilities at Avonmouth and the Freightliner depot (Bristol Railport).

4.2 Does “intercity freight” (your use of the lower case) refer to the time-sensitive parcel traffic conveyed on long-distance passenger services by East Midlands Trains and branded as InterCity Railfreight? GWR already carries seafood from Penzance to London on direct trains. We would recommend that the City Council and WECA approach train operators and InterCity Railfreight with a view to developing fast parcel services to Temple Meads as this could reduce van movements into the city, particularly in view of the Clean Air Plan imperative from the Government. InterCity Railfreight favours local distribution by power-assisted bicycle trailers, which would meet the Strategy’s specification for “onward distribution by sustainable modes.”.

4.3 Use of the planning system to mitigate the impact of freight in future industrial developments should include safeguarding land for rail sidings where appropriate.

#### Outcome 4 (Visibly integrated and convenient public transport), pages 22-23.

4.4 We strongly support the MetroWest project and would ask the City Council to work with WECA to expedite its delivery. If Ashton Gate, Constable Road and St.Annes stations are added to those planned for MetroWest, Bristol would have 18 railway stations within its boundaries. There is enormous scope for developing Bristol’s heavy rail network to reduce congestion and car dependence, regardless of whether a light rail or underground system is built also.

4.5 Rail is ideal for transporting high volumes of passengers to special events. A station at Ashton Gate would be well placed for Bristol City F.C. home matches and the Ashton Court Balloon Festival. Bristol Sport and the University of the West of England (UWE) support the need for the station, which needs to open as soon as

possible after the Portishead line is reopened. The stadium typically attracts around 15,000 football supporters and the first two rugby games of the 2018/19 season produced a total of 38,336, well above expectations. Ashton Gate stadium has the largest conference venue in the South West and is able to hold five outdoor concerts per year. The plans for a basketball arena and hotel complex close to the stadium strengthen an already compelling case for a transport hub at the proposed station site, which is within walking distance of a number of major businesses.

4.6 If the Bristol Arena is built at the Brabazon Hangar site, this would strengthen the case for a Henbury loop passenger service to link with West Bristol directly.

4.7 We welcome the commitment to improved integration between transport modes in the interests of seamless journeys. Integration is important because all modes have their key strengths. For rail these are speed and vehicle capacity. Whilst buses can penetrate closer to the origin or destination of journeys, they are highly vulnerable to road congestion and driver shortages.

4.8 An example of best practice is the display of imminent bus departures in the concourse of Temple Meads station. Reading Buses have screens on the bus showing the next 10 or so train departures as it approaches the main railway station. Through ticketing including rover cards allowing unlimited travel by bus and train is essential.

## Outcome 5 (Safe Walking Routes), page 24.

5.1 We support the Bristol Walking Strategy to improve walking links to stations and would also commend the Station Travel Plans developed by Gloucestershire County Council to encourage access on foot, by bicycle or bus to stations in that county. Accessibility of stations needs to be improved, eg at Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road, which lack step-free access between platforms. Parson Street lacks step-free access to either platform.

## Corridors (pages 32-35).

6.1 We consider that the Draft Strategy focuses too much on existing roads and the proposal for an Underground system. It largely ignores the potential to expand the local rail network, eg to Emersons Green alongside the cycle path via Fishponds and Mangotsfield; or a Henbury loop service.

6.2 Although rail has limited penetration of the A38 corridor within the city, Montpellier and Redland stations are within easy walking distance of Cheltenham Road. Redland station is currently served by two bus services, one of which runs via Gloucester Road; interchange could be improved by timetable synchronization and real time bus information on the station platform.

6.3 The dismissive comments about a tram system on page 33 are in contrast with the praise for Nottingham's extensive tram network, which is integrated with heavy rail and bus services, on pages 9 and 41. Light rail could reduce the cost of reinstating completely closed routes, as in Nottingham and the West Midlands.

6.4 The proposed Underground system may take decades and vast sums of money to plan and construct. A rubber tyred system as suggested would use more energy than rail because of the increased friction between vehicle and track. The suggestion for an Underground route from the city centre to Bristol International Airport makes

no sense. This would be a completely new route of about six miles and passengers with onward train connections would have to make their own way from the central Underground terminus to Temple Meads. It would be better to construct a branch from the nearest point on the Bristol-Taunton main line to the airport because trains could run directly to Temple Meads and beyond. In view of the altitude of the airport, serious consideration should be given to using tram trains which can use conventional Network Rail track, as in Sheffield.

6.5 We oppose the Callington Road Link because it would foreclose future reopening of the Bristol-Radstock line. Whilst the trackbed has been breached in the Whitchurch area, it runs through a densely populated area and it should be feasible to reopen the line as light rail with some degree of street running. The intended purpose of the Callington Road Link, to release space on the A4 for bus rapid transit towards Bath, would appear to duplicate a MetroWest route.

#### Neighbourhoods and Residential Streets (pages 37-38).

7.1 The suggestion for releasing transport infrastructure land for housing should be treated with caution. In the past such a policy has led to the loss of rail corridors which would be valuable as reopened lines today. We would urge protection of sidings and the disused Avon Street freight branch from Lawrence Hill for possible future use.

#### Funding and Implementation Plan (pages 43-44).

8.1 For Outcomes 3, 4, 10 and 11, the Partnerships for delivery need to include train operators.

Railfuture Severnside, October 2018.