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Dear Sir or Madam

### **West of England Joint Spatial Plan Technical Evidence Consultation**

I am pleased to attach Railfuture's response to the Transport Topic Papers of this Consultation. Our comments are cross-referenced with the page and section numbers in the Documents.

If anything requires clarification, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Bray  
Railfuture  
Secretary, Severnside Branch

## WED 007 Topic Paper 8 (Transport)

### Table 1.1 JLTP3 Objectives, page 7.

1. Railfuture supports all of the listed objectives and would specify safe, well defined pavements as an essential element of the objective to enhance the public realm. This is because most journeys by public transport include a significant amount of walking.

### 2.4 Key principles, page 9.

2. We certainly agree with the stated requirement to maximise the effectiveness of sustainable travel choices and encourage greater use of sustainable modes including rail. However, the improvements to sustainable travel must be implemented before highway capacity is increased, otherwise the aim to minimise car-based travel is unlikely to be achieved. New rural and suburban housing developments have tended to attract people accustomed to a high level of motoring. This needs to change, if necessary through greater use of park and ride.

3. An excellent example of a new town well served by public transport is Cranbrook, Devon, where a station on the Exeter-London Waterloo line was opened in 2015. The development also includes a community centre and variety of shops, which should reduce the need for trips by car to nearby towns.

4. The massive growth in rail travel in the Greater Bristol area over the past 20 years (see table in our reply to Section 3.2.1 below) is strong evidence that rail has been successful in attracting people from cars. Unlike buses, trains do not have to compete for space with other vehicles and offer higher speeds and levels of comfort. It is very often quicker to make a journey involving a combination of rail with walking, cycling or bus than to travel by bus throughout.

### 2.4.1 Sustainable travel choices, page 10.

5. The strengths of each mode should not be considered in isolation. For example, walking and cycling are not necessarily just local journeys but are often an element of a longer trip made by public transport, as evident from the numerous bicycles parked on Temple Meads station.

6. Nor is the value of rail limited to accessing urban centres. With 27 stations in the Greater Bristol area, the local rail network is useful for inter-suburban travel as well.

### 2.4.2 Mitigation of traffic impacts, pages 10-11.

7. We would emphasise that the proposed highway improvements should be delivered only after the enhancement of sustainable travel choices.

### 3.2.1 Quality of travel choices, pages 13-14.

8. The third paragraph on page 14 gives the impression that the growth in travel by bus use is more significant than the increase in rail patronage. One could be forgiven for thinking that rail has been damned by faint praise in the final sentence. Although there has been a drop in usage of Severn Beach line stations between 2016/17 and 2017/18, this was due to reliability problems with the Class 166 trains which have now been resolved. The long-term trend has been a doubling or tripling

over the past 20 years of recorded rail journeys at stations in the Plan area (see table below).

At some stations the increase has been phenomenal, eg at Parson Street from 1,888 recorded journeys in 1997/98 to 138,996 in 2017/18; and at Patchway from 6,507 to 110,632 over the same period.

**Estimated passenger journeys according to Office of Rail and Road Station Usage Files.**

Unitary area	Stations in area	1997/98	2017/18
Bath & North East Somerset	4	2,913,391	7,199,980
Bristol City	12	4,096,061	13,028,004
North Somerset	5	1,005,632	2,516,022
South Gloucestershire	6	1,506,271	4,160,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9,521,355</b>	<b>26,904,906</b>

9. The statistic on page 14 of only 2 % of workers living in Bristol commuting by rail is misleading because Bristol’s commuter hinterland extends well beyond the boundaries of the Joint Plan area and many of these longer-distance commuters are rail season ticket holders. Capacity has long been a major issue on peak hour train services in the Bristol area, which hardly suggests an insignificantly used network.

10. We accept that autonomous driverless vehicles may well result in more vehicles on the roads; awkward bus journeys involving two or more routes may be the most vulnerable to modal shift in favour of the car, particularly if the interchange involves a wait at, or walk between, stops with minimal weather protection. Local rail journeys may be less vulnerable because their speed is likely to be competitive with road travel, particularly in the peak hours.

11. The development of autonomous cars will necessitate improvements to public transport because driverless cars are definitely not the answer to road congestion.

3.2.4 Social impacts, pages 16-17.

12. Enhancement of the local rail network, supported by good bus connectivity, can improve access to employment for people living in less affluent areas, eg from south and central Bristol to jobs in North Somerset.

13. As nearly all trips by public transport involve an element of walking, this is a sensible way to combat obesity and other conditions resulting from sedentary living. By contrast, door-to-door travel in autonomous or electric cars would tend to reinforce inactive lifestyles.

14. We agree that fears about road safety can inhibit people from walking or cycling. In principle we support extension of safe cycling routes to reduce the danger to pedestrians from illegal pavement cycling.

15. Air quality in Bath and Bristol would be helped by the completion of the deferred sections of Great Western electrification, from Bristol Parkway and Chippenham to Temple Meads. In the longer term, electrification of suburban rail

routes and a light rail or tram system for the Bristol area would also help reduce pollution.

### 3.2.5 Environmental impacts, pages 17-18.

16. We would certainly support measures to improve access to areas of natural beauty by sustainable modes. This would indeed help the rural economy because visitors arriving by public transport, bicycle or on foot are likely to spend more in local shops and eating places because they cannot carry provisions on the scale that can be accommodated in a car.

### 4.6 Economic, environmental and social impacts, page 44.

17. We agree that tackling congestion will reduce the costs of moving goods. We would add that there is a need to promote modal shift of freight to rail, for instance by the proposal in the Draft Bristol Transport Strategy for conveyance of light freight by passenger train, with onward distribution by sustainable non-motorised vehicles.

18. A social impact often overlooked is the isolation which can affect people living in neighbourhoods designed for car-based living, eg people who have had to give up driving; or widowed persons whose late spouse was the only driver in a household. It is vitally important that public transport is enhanced from the start of new housing developments, not years or decades afterwards, and with safe walking routes such as well defined, lit pavements in streets.

## **WED 008 Emerging Findings Transport Report**

### Charfield station, pages 35-38.

19. Railfuture strongly supports the provision of a station at Charfield. We agree with the Transport Objectives in Table 8.1, including the enhancement of transport links both in the Bristol and Gloucester directions. We would support either of the two short-listed sites, although our preference is for the Central site, which Table 8.6 suggests has medium to very high value for money. Table 8.7 suggests that the Central site may be cheaper.