

ITEM: 12

REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY (“WECA”)

DATE: 30 OCTOBER 2017

REPORT TITLE: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY TRANSPORT FUNCTIONS

AUTHOR: ELAINE SEAGRIFF, INTERIM HEAD OF TRANSPORT, WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY (WECA)

Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the planned programme of work and timetable for the key aspects of WECA’s transport functions highlighting key decision points in the near future.

Background

- 2.1 As reported to the WECA meeting on 15th March 2017, when WECA was formed certain transport related functions transferred to it by operation of law. These ‘Integrated Transport Authority’ (ITA) functions relate to transport operations and services, including, Concessionary Travel, Supported Bus Services, Community Transport Grants and Local Bus information (including Real Time Information (RTI)), and also wider duties such as the production of a Bus Strategy, the development of the Key Route Network (KRN) and a number of other integrated transport planning activities. The current status and planned programme of activity for each of these functions is set out in turn below.

ITA Functions

- 3.1 Previous working arrangements relating to the ITA functions have been carried forward for 2017/18. There is now a short window to review these, learn from others, and agree management and performance monitoring arrangements to be in place for next year and onwards. For each of these ITA functions objectives will need to be clear and consistent across the area and opportunities to optimize arrangements need to be investigated. Options will be developed – in liaison with the council officers – for providing these functions going forward, with the identification of legal or management constraints, pros and cons and costs and benefits. Given practicality of making any changes and consequential potential impact on budgetary processes it may be necessary to carry over existing arrangements to 2018/19 with new monitoring arrangements in place. This will be confirmed by as soon as possible so as not to have a significant impact on local authority budgets for 2018/19 financial year.
- 3.2 An evaluation and monitoring methodology will be proposed to ensure consistent assessment of options and monitoring of delivery against desired outcomes. An initial view of this will need to be in place by the end of the year.

Concessionary Travel

- 3.3 WECA is now the Travel Concession Authority for the region and therefore has a statutory requirement to deliver at least the minimum statutory national Concessionary Travel scheme, providing free travel for eligible residents from 09.30 to 23.00 Monday to Friday and all day travel on weekends and bank holidays. In order to ensure the consistent delivery of this statutory obligation, at the WECA meeting in March 2017 it was agreed that the 'Diamond' Travelcard scheme be continued for 2017/18 and be delivered as it was previously but with WECA commissioning this delivery from the three constituent councils.
- 3.4 A short piece of work is about to commence which will look at how these services should be administered as there may be benefits in streamlining the process and improving consistency. There is a need to confirm management and monitoring arrangements for the current financial year and 2018/19 onwards. This piece of work, with recommendations, will be complete by early 2018.

Supported Bus Services

- 3.5 WECA now has joint powers for the provision of socially necessary bus services with the constituent councils. This means that both WECA and the constituent councils can use the relevant powers in the Transport Act 1985 with the approval of the other organisation but cannot use the powers unilaterally. Despite this, the nature and role of these services will need to be considered through the development of the bus strategy (see paragraph 3.16) which is a responsibility for WECA to progress.
- 3.6 A short piece of work is about to commence which will look at how these services should be monitored and provided. A bus services framework will be developed, taking account of good practice: this will be completed by early 2018 to determine arrangements for supported bus services in 2018/19. A number of services supported by the three councils were due to expire in 2017/18. At the WECA meeting in March 2017 it was agreed to extend these contracts by one year, which will cover up to September/October 2018. These will also need to be reviewed for 2018/19.

Community Transport Grants

- 3.7 WECA is now responsible for the payment of community transport grants. To ensure a consistency of service for the user and to give certainty of payments to community groups, for 2017/18 WECA commissioned the three councils to continue to deliver these services in line with current arrangements. A decision for 2018/2019 will be required by early 2018.
- 3.8 A short piece of work is about to commence which will look at how these services are provided, should be monitored and deployed going forward.

Bus Information

- 3.9 WECA is responsible for the production of a bus information strategy and the provision of bus information. RTI and the TravelWest website are currently managed by Bristol City Council (BCC) on behalf of the four councils (including North Somerset).
- 3.10 Currently the production and updating of roadside timetable displays, data verification, local management of Traveline and publicity leaflets for contracted bus services are functions carried out by the individual councils.

- 3.11 Given the need to ensure continuity of service provision to the users of these services the WECA meeting in March 2017 agreed that the three councils be commissioned to continue to deliver these services in 2017/18 with BCC continuing to lead on the re-procurement of the RTI contract.
- 3.12 A short piece of work is about to commence which will review options and recommend how best to take this forward in future years.
- 3.13 The Committee report for Item 11 (Business Case Funding for Infrastructure Projects) covers the councils' current contract for the provision and maintenance of the bus RTI system.

Wider Transport Vision

- 3.14 There is the need to develop a new transport vision and high-level strategic direction for the WECA area to support the wider West of England Strategy, to be aligned with the emerging Joint Local Transport Plan building on the evidence base developed through the Joint Transport Study (see Item 12 (West of England Joint Transport Study) of the Joint Committee). This will inform and be supported by strategies including a bus strategy and the creation of a KRN, as discussed below.
- 3.15 Meanwhile, there are a number of workstreams underway where there is a clear need for full transport planning integration. Working with colleagues, key current areas include:
- Input to housing proposals including the HIF bid for Bristol Temple Meads and the preparation and funding for the next stages of work;
 - Input to consideration of options for Clean Air Zones and other environmental initiatives and possible funding sources;
 - Input to and support of development of the final Joint Spatial Plan; and,
 - Memoranda of Understanding with Network Rail and Highways England.

Bus Strategy

- 3.16 Building on the new ITA powers, there is a need to review the overall bus strategy for the region. In particular, this should consider options to improve performance in the region. This would support and feed into the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) consultation for spring 2018.
- 3.17 An overview document will be produced to support the JLTP consultation, assessing the effectiveness of the current bus network, clarifying objectives and the challenge of meeting forecast growth in patronage (from the Joint Transport Study), and setting out possible options and areas of further work to develop the bus network, for example route network review, options for enhanced bus information, integrated ticketing and interchange strategy, and recommendations for future delivery mechanisms. Specific consideration will also be given to the need and scope for development of a bus network model.

Key Route Network

- 3.18 A piece of work will be undertaken to identify principles and criteria for defining the KRN, learning from good practice elsewhere as well as consideration of local and regional network analyses. These would then be applied to shape the KRN, to draw up a programme of improvements, maintenance protocols and enforcement regimes and identify any associated costs and requirements for the phased deployment. Working with constituent councils this will be undertaken in two phases.

Phase 1 (by early 2018) will:

- Establish the appropriate principles and criteria for the KRN;
- Map what this could look like (and prepare an initial exemplar map for discussion); and,
- Seek agreement with WECA and the three authorities (and NSC / HE as stakeholders).

Phase 2 (by spring 2018) will:

- Draw up a programme of improvements, including maintenance ownership and operational and enforcement regimes;
- Prepare and outline Transport Asset Management Plan, and
- Identify costs and requirements for phased deployment to constituent councils and transition arrangements.

3.19 Summary timescales

A summary of the key timescales for the aforementioned activities is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Outline Timescales

1. Decision on concessionary fares and community transport arrangements for 2018/19	Late 2017/early 2018
2. Supported bus services decision on continuing existing arrangements for 2018/19	
3. Monitoring ITA functions – new arrangements in place	
4. Decision on Integrated Transport and Maintenance Blocks of funding for 2018/19	
5. Draft Key Route Network proposals	Spring 2018
6. Memorandums of Understanding agreed with Network Rail and Highways England	
7. Bus Strategy consultation	Spring/summer 2018
8. Decision on the future management of supported bus services arrangements	Summer 2018
9. Decision on the future management of concessionary fares and community transport	
10. Agree Key Route Network programme and funding	

Consultation:

- 4.1 Public consultation will take place on a number of work areas discussed above as they progress.

Other Options Considered:

- 5.1 The above transport functions became the legal responsibility of WECA, or are required to inform or support these.

Risk Management/Assessment:

- 6.1 Key risks include those around financing the continued implementation of these functions, gaining agreement and public acceptability for specific elements, and risks around resourcing their development and delivery. Performance monitoring arrangements will be developed to ensure that risks are minimised.

Public Sector Equality Duties:

- 7.1 Where appropriate, feedback will be sought from affected communities and statutory consultees to meet the authorities' duties under the Equality Act 2010 for consulting on proposals.

Economic Impact Assessment:

- 8.1 The transport functions will be progressed to support the continued growth of the local and wider economy.

Finance Implications:

- 9.1 There will be a financial impact resulting from additional staff resources required to support the development of these work areas along with the commissioning of consultancy services.

Legal Implications:

- 10.1 The above transport functions are the legal responsibility of WECA, or others that we are required to inform or support.

Environmental Implications:

- 11.1 None arising from this report.

Land/Property Implications;

- 12.1 None arising from this report.

Human Resources Implications:

- 13.1 None arising from this report.

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked to note the above overview of the planned programme of work and timetable for the key aspects of WECA's transport functions.

West of England Combined Authority Contact: James White

james.white@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

Background Papers

None