

**Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee –
City Region Board Fund Bid**

REPORT TITLE: Gloucestershire Mass Transit Transport Scheme

Date decision will be taken	19 th May 2022
Lead GCC Officer	Dr David Land
Purpose of Report	Request £850K City Region Board funding for Options Appraisal Report (OAR) and Strategic Outline Case (SOC) in order to progress the Gloucestershire mass transit transport scheme.
Recommendations	£850K City Region Board funding is approved for development works (OAR and SOC) for the Gloucestershire mass transit transport scheme.
Reasons for Recommendations	<p>The pressing need to deliver transformative transport decarbonisation in the county by 2030, as acknowledged by all councils. The delivery of a high-quality mass rapid transit system is a key measure to achieve the substantial modal shift necessary.</p> <p>The opportunity cost of funding this work is far lower than any comparable decarbonisation scheme that could be delivered in the county. There is nothing else that can have this much positive impact for this many people over such a large area as mass transit.</p>
Resource Implications	<p>£850K required to fund the OAR and SOC.</p> <p>Officer time.</p>
Background Documents	<p>Adopted Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP)</p> <p>Mass Transit pre-feasibility study</p> <p>Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2022</p>

Background

1. Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) is in the early stages of developing a potential mass transit scheme in Central Gloucestershire. The development of mass transit has been identified as a key intervention to address the climate emergency declared by all Gloucestershire councils in 2019 and also to help achieve the Gloucestershire 2050 Vision.
2. A Pre-feasibility study has identified several broad corridors in Central Gloucestershire where there is sufficient demand to introduce mass transit:
 - South West Gloucester to Gloucester city centre.
 - Gloucester to Cheltenham.
 - Cheltenham town centre to North West Cheltenham (potential extensions into North West and West Cheltenham development sites).
 - Cheltenham town centre to Bishop's Cleeve (with potential extension to Ashchurch).
3. Mass transit will provide a step change in public transport provision through the delivery of high levels of mode segregation and connection with other transport modes. This will vastly improve connectivity – travel times, accessibility, frequency and affordability - in Central Gloucestershire, increasing access to employment, education and other services. This in turn will drive economic development through a marked increase in the ability for employers and employees to connect, attracting a stronger pool of workers to the county by delivering sustainable access to jobs, services, leisure and retail facilities.
4. With transport accounting for 32% of all CO² emissions per capita in Gloucestershire in 2018, decisive and transformative action is needed now to generate significant modal shift away from the car and help achieve Gloucestershire's climate target on time. All seven Gloucestershire councils declared a climate emergency in 2019 and signed up to the Gloucestershire's Climate Change Strategy which includes a commitment to deliver a carbon neutral county by 2050 (now brought forward to 2045).
5. At the Climate Leadership Group on 13th April 2022, the group received a detailed assessment of the need to address transport decarbonisation within Gloucestershire if we are to achieve the zero carbon ambitions expressed by both the County Council and District Councils. The delivery of a high quality mass rapid transit system as soon as possible was acknowledged by all those present as a key measure to achieve the modal shift necessary within the county and it was recommended that GEGJC should give consideration to the provision of funding to enable the next stage in the development of the mass rapid transit system to go ahead.
6. Numerous case studies have shown that mass transit provides mobility, can shape land use and development patterns, generate jobs and enable economic growth, and support public policies regarding energy use, air quality and carbon emissions.
7. A bus rapid transit (BRT) mass transit system has been identified as the preferred form of mass transit, as it is appropriate for the level of demand identified and flexible.
8. Mass transit is key to economic growth in Gloucestershire as it will improve connectivity, thereby increasing productivity and accommodating sustainable future growth. A study in the USA, showed that planned public transportation investments would yield a 2 to 1 return

while helping to generate income for local businesses, its workers and their neighbourhoods.

9. A Gloucestershire Mass Transit Feasibility Study is nearing completion and is expected to be published in Spring 2022. Development funding is required to progress to the OAR stage in 2022/23 (also to include development of an Appraisal Specification Report (ASR)). This would be followed by an SOC in 2023/24. Construction could commence in 2027 at the earliest – depending on securing both funding and planning permission.
10. The OAR is costed at £300K and the SOC is costed at £550K. These reports will: produce an evidence base, establish options for mass transit, appraise options for mass transit, analyse the environmental impact, include an engineering / feasibility study and detailed transport modelling, as well as stakeholder engagement.
11. It is expected that mass transit will provide the following benefits in Gloucestershire:
 - a. Enhancing the local economy – greater connectivity across and through urban areas is central to attracting investment and accommodating future sustainable growth.
 - b. Reducing road congestion – mass transit is key to encouraging modal shift away from private vehicles, thus reducing congestion.
 - c. Increase access to jobs, education and services – mass transit provides a step change in public transport provision through providing high levels of segregation and connection with other transport modes. This will increase access to employment, education and other services for all and thereby increase productivity.
 - d. Reduce CO² emissions and air pollution – mass transit has been identified as a key intervention to address the climate change emergency declared by all seven Gloucestershire councils in 2019 and aims for carbon zero by 2045. Addressing the climate emergency is vital to protect future productivity.
12. Mass transit aligns with the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) as it will deliver digital and integrated transport connectivity, one of the key aims of the Plan. Mass transit is key to ensuring transport infrastructure meets the future needs of the businesses and people of Gloucestershire. It will also improve productivity through connecting people to jobs and services, helping to retain young talent and attract new investment (the key aim of the Gloucestershire 2050 Vision). It will also provide firms with a strong means of attracting new talent to the region.
13. The Draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) identifies a mass transport solution providing a reliable, quick and clean link between Cheltenham and Gloucester as a key investment priority, as part of the aim to create real alternatives to travel by car in Gloucestershire.
14. The recently adopted LTP outlines the ambition to deliver the concept of mass transit and identifies a potential Mass Public Transit Area.
15. Evidence of need/demand is illustrated via:
 - a. High population density/growing population – 38% of Gloucestershire’s population lives within Cheltenham/Gloucester (ONS, 2021).

- b. Poor connectivity/accessibility for non-car modes – a trip between Quedgeley and Cheltenham is 1 hour by bus and 24 minutes by car (Google journey times).
- c. High car ownership/high car trip rates – 81% of households in Cheltenham/Gloucester have access to a car, above the national average (74%) (2011 census).
- d. Congestion and delay/CO² emissions and air pollution – nationally cars account for 55% of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions (LTP).
- e. Constraint to economic development – several central wards rank amongst the 20% most deprived nationally (IMD). Gloucester is a Category 1 authority in the Levelling Up Fund index with issues around productivity.
- f. Constraint on delivering sustainable development/placemaking – LTP outlines a vision for a ‘City region’ with a reliable, sustainable transport network.
- g. Challenge of achieving Net Zero target – transport accounts for 32% of CO² emissions in Gloucestershire (LTP, 2018)

16. The recently initiated Interchange Strategy has the goal of integrating mass transit with interchange hubs across the county. These will provide focal points at which commuters and other travellers into central Gloucestershire from all other districts can make an easy, cost-effective, sustainable transition onto the central mass transit system. This may be via a park and ride process, or a sustainable connection or by buses serving rural areas accessing the mass transit segregated system. It is important that all of Gloucestershire’s residents – both urban and rural – can benefit from the mass transit system, including those in the Forest of Dean, Tewkesbury Borough, Stroud District and the Cotswolds.

Options

17. GEGJC agree to GCC’s £850K City Region funding request to progress the Gloucestershire mass transit OAR and SOC.

18. GEGJC decline the funding request.

Risks

Challenge / Risk	Potential Impact/mitigation
No capital funding stream identified at this stage.	Project still at an early stage and the project team will engage with the DfT and Western Gateway to identify opportunities.
Need for alignment between future development and mass transit.	The project team will work with all of the District Councils, in particular the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) authorities, to ensure that future development complements mass transit and maximises possible levels of demand.
Mass transit is considered the only solution to decarbonisation and economic growth.	The project team will work across the board with colleagues and stakeholders, including the carbon pathways team, active travel team, rail team and others, to ensure mass transit is a strong part of the change required, rather than a siloed activity.

<p>Mass transit is not distinguishable from bus priority measures</p>	<p>Mass transit as a complete system has different objectives, different processes and different solutions (segregation, frequency, locations, economic development and so on), so whilst it needs to work in sync with the bus network, not be a competitor, equally, it needs to be considered as a different solution to a different problem than local buses.</p>
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Financial implications

19. A high level cost analysis has shown that constructing mass transit in all four indicative corridors is estimated to cost between £180-440 million for a bus type mass transit system and between £1.1-£2.2 billion for a light rail (LRT) mass transit system. These total constructions costs are based on initial cost ranges per route km which were taken from a number of case studies of similar mass transit schemes which have already been constructed. (The indicative cost ranges used were £5-10 million per km for BRT and £30-50 million per km for LRT).
20. Based on our current understanding of the study area and scope requirements (excluding any surveys), we are requesting £850K from the City Region Board Fund to support development of an OAR and ASR (2022/23) and an SOC (2023/24).
21. As part of the completed pre-feasibility stage of the project, a high-level analysis of scheme revenue and viability was undertaken using estimated patronage levels, and indicative fares and operating costs. This has shown that, if assuming a BRT type mass transit system, all of the corridors would provide a revenue surplus, with an estimated total year revenue surplus of £6.6-8.9 million, making BRT a viable option.

Climate change implications

22. At the Climate Leadership Group on 13th April 2022, the group received a detailed assessment of the need to address transport decarbonisation within Gloucestershire if we are to achieve the zero carbon ambitions expressed by both the County and District authorities. The delivery of a high quality mass rapid transit system as soon as possible was acknowledged by all those present as a key measure to achieve the modal shift necessary.

Equality implications

Has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed? Yes / No

23. This will be undertaken as part of the SOC process.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

24. A DPIA will be undertaken as part of the SOC work, before any consultations take place.

25. GCC will engage with landowners, stakeholders, local authorities and the public to gather feedback on mass transit proposals during the SOC and/or following development stages. Views and comments received during the consultation will be considered and summarised in a public consultation report.
26. The information given by respondents for any survey undertaken will be treated as confidential and in accordance with UK data protection legislation. Responses received as part of the consultations will be anonymised, stored and handled in accordance with GCC's policy on General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Social value implications

27. Procuring locally as much as possible means we can deliver added value: using local businesses and/or staff that are based in the area in order to deliver the mass transit scheme as a whole – ranging from the consultants delivering the OAR and SOC to construction firms actually building the scheme.

Consultation feedback

28. Consultation and stakeholder engagement will occur as part of the SOC and subsequent stages of development, such as any planning applications that may be required.
29. The GCC project team will develop strategies for improving engagement with seldom heard groups around infrastructure consultation. Our consultants will be tasked with developing a set of strategies which will be deployed in support of any consultation. Several different groups have been identified that are not often heard from during consultations, and actions will be undertaken to try and engage with these groups. Examples of some of these are outlined below:

Seldom Heard groups	Engagement activities
Commuters travelling through the scheme area Seasonal road users	Online information widely publicised through local businesses and media.
Time poor	Online information including recorded content available, including virtual event recordings. Postcard drops to local residents and businesses. Updates and engagement via social media. Design of the feedback survey will be concise and easy to use so people can leave feedback in a short time.
Those unable to access the internet	Option to request a hard copy of the consultation materials by phone or pick up a hard copy of the brochure and survey at public libraries. Ability to respond to the consultation by post. Postcard drops to local residents and businesses. Posters displayed in community facilities.
Disabled groups	Contact representatives of local disability groups.

	<p>Option to request hard copy consultation materials by phone.</p> <p>Ability to respond to consultation by post.</p> <p>Option to request documents in accessible formats.</p> <p>Posters displayed in community facilities.</p>
Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups	<p>Contact representatives of local community groups.</p> <p>Postcard drops to local residents and businesses and poster displayed in community facilities.</p>
Young people	<p>Online information including recorded content available, including virtual event recordings.</p> <p>Contact directly with schools, colleges and universities across the whole county.</p> <p>Design of surveys will be concise and easy to use so people can leave feedback in a short time.</p> <p>Updates and engagement via various social media outlets.</p> <p>Possibility for focus groups with a wide range of young people.</p>

Officer recommendation

30. Recommended that £850K City Region Board funding is approved for development works (OAR and SOC) for the Gloucestershire mass transit transport scheme.

Performance management/follow-up

31. Progress will be managed through regular reporting from consultants working on the OAR and SOC.

32. Oversight will be achieved through regular reporting via monthly GCC Cabinet member meetings. In 2020/21 through the pre-feasibility stage, we held three online meetings with Cabinet members to ensure members were aware of the scheme, the point of mass transit scheme, what it would bring to Gloucestershire, how it would help with climate change, and to allow for member contributions to the scheme development. We will reinstate these meetings for the OAR stage. Briefings were also provided to all District Councils, as will be the case in the future.