

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny
Committee held on Thursday 21 July 2022 commencing at 10.00 am at the Cabinet
Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.**

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Robert Vines	Cllr Sajid Patel
Cllr Roger Whyborn	Cllr Alastair Chambers
Cllr Matt Babbage (Chair)	Cllr Chloe Turner
Cllr Paul McCloskey	Cllr Paul Baker (Vice-Chair)
Cllr John Murphy	Cllr Vernon Smith

Substitutes: Cllr Patrick Coleman

Apologies: Cllr Nicky Packer, Cllr Gina Blomefield and Cllr Stephen Hirst

Attendance via Video

Conference: Cllr Paul McCloskey

In Attendance: Colin Chick (GCC)
Luisa Senft-Hayward (GCC)
Dr David Land (GCC)
Laura Powick (GCC)
Gareth Edmundson (CBC)

28. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Nicky Packer, Stephen Hirst and Gina Blomefield.

Cllr Patrick Coleman substituted for Cllr Blomefield.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2022 were approved by the Committee.

31. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

, Luisa Senft-Hayward, Transport Planning Team Manager, provided the Committee with a presentation on Zero Carbon Visioning – Mass Rapid Transport as a focal point for a new public transport network in Gloucestershire. David Land, Principal Transport Planner, was also in attendance at the meeting.

The Committee was advised of the following in terms of ambitions to decarbonise transport:

- 34% of all CO2 emissions in Gloucestershire were transport related, which rose to 43% when taking into account motorways and rail.
- Gloucestershire's target was to achieve net zero emissions by 2045, with a 80% reduction by 2030.
- An emissions gap had been calculated by taking into consideration national action to reduce emissions, such as banning petrol and diesel car and van sales in 2030, and GCC's ambitions for decarbonisation.
- The emissions gap represented carbon emitted over and above Gloucestershire's targets.
- An analysis of transport emissions in Gloucestershire highlighted that 60% was derived from car travel, with trips over 20km, which accounted for just 15% of all journeys, representing 60% of car emissions.
- These longer journeys were harder to replace via public transport.
- Bus and rail had the highest potential to replace the most emitting trips, whilst cycling could be an alternative for trips up to 10km alongside better infrastructure and the use of e-bikes.
- A number of ambitious actions would be required in order to close the emissions gap, including reducing 7.5% of car trips; increasing the use of public transport by 100%; and increasing the amount of car km by electric vehicles (EV) by 100%.

Members were informed of the following regarding bus patronage in Gloucestershire:

- Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan determined that the number of bus journeys needed to be maintained at pre-Covid levels.
- Currently, numbers were 30% below pre-Covid levels.
- These figures highlighted just how ambitious the target was to increase the use of public transport by 100%.
- Data indicated that bus patronage was much higher in urban areas, with only Gloucester achieving the England and Wales average for journeys to work by bus.

The Committee was presented with proposals for a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system in Gloucestershire. It was noted that:

- The reasons for a MRT system included decreasing bus service reliability in Gloucestershire and increased journey times, as well as supporting the decarbonisation of transport.

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- A number of actions would be required to raise the profile of buses in Gloucestershire and to prepare for future bidding opportunities.
- A number of flagship projects were currently being delivered as part of this, including the Arle Court Interchange Hub, Rural Mobility fund and Bus Priority at signals.
- The ambition was for a full integrated MRT system, alongside a fully developed express bus network; high quality interchange/ modal integration; for all areas to be accessible by public transport; simple and affordable fares; and clear and simple information on the system.
- Members were shown an example of what the MRT system could look like.
- Work to date included a pre-feasibility study and feasibility study, which was due for sign off in July 2022.
- Next steps included a strategic assessment and initial option assessment in 2023/24 and a strategic outline case in 2023/24, followed by further business case development.
- Should all go to plan, construction could commence in 2027 at the earliest to be operational by 2030 in order to have an impact on closing Gloucestershire's emissions gap.
- In conclusion, MRT could benefit the whole of Gloucestershire; could increase demand for public transport; and was key to supporting sustainable growth in the County.

Members discussed the information they had been provided with and asked questions of the presenters. In response to these queries, it was understood that:

- Officers would be looking to have conversations with the DfT regarding future funding opportunities.
- Officers were working with bus operators and the communications team on coordinated marketing for universal bus rates for October.
- Providing a comprehensive transport system in rural areas was a challenge which needed to be addressed; and that MRT would only work alongside an express service across the County, particularly for those rural to urban journeys.
- A positive spiral of bus demand was produced whereby the more people used bus services, the cheaper and easier it was to provide services; a negative spiral was currently occurring, particularly because of the Covid pandemic, but also as a result of driver shortages and costs.
- A bespoke hub principle was being proposed for rural areas, whereby main towns such as Cirencester and Coleford would become transport hubs.
- These hubs could provide access to taxi drop-offs; bike stands; demand responsive bus services; express bus services; and other facilities.
- Luton and Dunstable provided an example of a busway system which provided a quick and flexible way for residents to travel between housing estates, the hospital, the airport, university etc.
- In order to achieve growth and retain young people in Gloucestershire, the County needed to consider its public transport system in the most sustainable way possible.
- The public needed to be offered a comprehensive sustainable transport offer, including public transport, electric vehicles and cycling; an express bus

service would be required as part of this across the County and its boundaries.

- Officers were already working with the South West Transport Board on a coach strategy, using the transport network that already existed, and an interchange strategy would look at strategic and rural interchange hubs.
- The right transport mode needed to be identified for the right journey.
- Funding had been secured for the MRT strategic assessment and initial option assessment and strategic outline case.
- Noting the use of an app for demand responsive transport in Warwickshire, a demand responsive service would soon be launched in the north Cotswolds and south Forest of Dean, the success of which would come down to information and education on how to use the service.
- Following a comment that zero carbon emissions could not be achieved by 2045, officers agreed that a fundamental rethink was needed and measures would need to be bold.
- Interchange hubs could include park and ride, as well as cycle and ride.
- David Land was leading on an interchange hub strategy to identify locations which would be evidence led and would include smaller interchange hubs in rural areas.
- Following a request that GCC lobby for a new railway station that would serve Kingsway in Gloucester, it was understood that GCC was not responsible for allocating new development sites, and could only object or comment, with district councils responsible for developing local plans.
- Colin Chick, Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, expressed the view that traditional approaches to building developments were unsustainable; plans for growth were focused too heavily on the short term; developments should be designed to support their communities sustainably; and county councils should be given strategic planning powers again to enable an overarching strategic approach for the County.
- Colin Chick also advised that a previous route capacity analysis had indicated that Network Rail would only support one new rail station between Bristol and Gloucester, with the proposal at Charfield competing against a potential reopening of Stonehouse station.
- The member who asked the question about the rail station for Kingsway was advised to contact Stroud District Council to see if the option could be included in their appraisal report for the Restoring Your Railway Fund.
- The MRT feasibility study was still being worked on, and the following step was an options appraisal report to ensure all alternatives, such as light rail, had been considered.
- Funding for the feasibility study and options appraisal report had been secured through the Strategic Economic Development Fund, overseen by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee.
- A number of partners had been engaged with so far on the MRT scheme, and the wider public would be consulted with following the options appraisal report.
- An MRT business case would be developed in order to bid for Government funding as opportunities arise.

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- The ambitious actions to close the emissions gap were developed based on real world evidence, for example the aim to increase public transport use by 100% was based on public transport use in Oxfordshire.
- The justification of costs to provide a demand responsive transport system was explained, and it was understood that a back office team would be developing the route plans for the transport according to demand.
- Colin Chick provided his view as to rail capacity issues.

Members thanked officers for their presentation. The presentation slides would be circulated following the meeting.

32. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Committee noted the report.

33. WORK PLAN

District council representatives were asked to consider whether their council would volunteer to host a meeting of the GEGSC in early 2023.

The GCC Economic Dashboard would be circulated following the meeting and regular updates would be included in the work plan going forward.

The Committee noted the work plan.

34. FUTURE MEETINGS

The future meeting dates were noted.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 12.00 pm

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