

March 2008

Dear Councillor,

Please vote on 1<sup>st</sup> April to reject the Emerson's Green to Ashton Vale Bus Rapid Transit proposal. The text below makes the case against BRT and asks you to consider an alternative proposal by the Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance which could be put to the BRT board.

**-The Final Cost - Is BRT a cheap option?**

BRT was chosen as the preferred Rapid Transit in the GBSTS study (Sept 2005) because it was the only option the Government was prepared to fund on grounds of cost. The chosen route is no longer a cheap option as its estimated cost has risen from £25.5m (GBSTS Final strategy ) to £71m today. Engineering problems and 'pinch points' along the Railway path, in the Harbour Conservation area, the Prince St Swing bridge and the New Cut mean that the cost will probably rise even further. Construction of the scheme is unlikely to start for at least a couple of years, so the final bill could easily be £100m. 10% of the initial cost plus 50% of any cost increase between start and finish of construction has to be met from local funds.

**-BRT is yesterday's transport choice – where are the BRT networks?**

No UK city has built a BRT network within its dense urban fabric. Three cities have a BRT route using a main road. Birmingham removed their only route. Transport for London is no longer buying bendy buses for Central London. BRT is more suited to new developments and cities with wide main streets where space can be made available for a larger vehicle. Government policy is now one of 'modal neutrality' which means that when a Rapid Transit funding bid is made to the Dept for Transport, at least one realistic 'alternative' to BRT has to be presented. This gives us the opportunity to put rail based options forward as 'alternatives' as long as the cost is not greater than BRT.

**-No mandate for BRT from the Bristol public nor public consultation to date**

**-Bus measures need an Integrated Transport Authority to be effective (see last paragraph)**

**-BRT routes conflict with the Council's green spaces and landscape policies**

**-No evidence has been produced that it will achieve modal shift**

No figures have been produced from similar urban BRT schemes.

**-Involves reorganisation of local bus services**

The proposal involves the running of re-routed existing bus services in addition to BRT buses down the Railway Path (22 peak) and along the New Cut (13 peak). Seven routes running through East Bristol and five through Hotwells will be diverted to the BRT route. Using the BRT route, eight bus routes will pick up at only four stops between Staple Hill and the City Centre. This is moving buses away from people.

### **-How reliable will it be?**

Boarding will take the same amount of time. As there will be no overtaking along the BRT guided section and 13/22 buses an hour at peak times plan to use it, a jam of buses could develop from any minor hold up. In the centre, there will be no special BRT lane or priority, only existing bus lanes and streets and BRT buses will join the queue of buses waiting to get into the Centre.

### **-It may harm Bristol's chances of becoming Cycle Demonstration City**

Bristol stands to lose its chance to become the UK's first Cycling Demonstration City which offers the best funding yet on offer from National Government for cycling. The Council is making a strong bid for increased funding to promote cycling and develop new cycle routes and infrastructure supported by Bristol companies and local organisations including the Primary Health Care Trust.

**We believe our alternative package will achieve more public transport improvements for less cost than the Emersons Green BRT as proposed. In addition to providing an alternative to the proposed BRT route, our scheme has wider environmental, transport and regeneration benefits while retaining the Railway path as the country's premier cycle route and popular local amenity. The package includes:**

- 1. Showcase style bus lane along the M32** and continuing along the Avon Ring Road to Emerson's Green which could be used by all buses including an express bus to the Northern Fringe and any Park and Ride buses. (We see no need for expensive BRT bendy buses or concrete guided routes).
- 2. Light rail vehicles (trams)** running on renewable fuel along the Long Ashton Park and Ride to the City Centre section using the existing and new rail track. This should be cheaper than BRT. At Ashton Gate there could be an interchange with a reopened Portishead to Temple Meads line. The route would be extended on land already reserved for LRT to Cabot Circus, and if required to Temple Meads where a bus/light rail interchange could be provided. A light rail consortium is offering this as an alternative to BRT on this route, for consideration by the BRT board, in compliance with Department for Transport requirements. A cyclepath/footpath could run alongside the tram and connect with the Connect 2 Sustrans route and a proposed Bedminster Down to Ashton Vale cycleway.
- 3. Package of measures for Emersons Green area to be agreed with South Gloucestershire Council.** Transport/ Travel Plan for the new housing/ Science Park area with integral cycling and walking routes to local employment sites. Re-establish a Winterbourne rail station. New circular bus route connecting Bristol Parkway, the new station, Frenchay Hospital, UWE and the Science Park using the Avon Ring Road bus lane. Bike hire scheme at all sites. Employers to provide a works bus to the Science Park to serve S.Gloucestershire and East Bristol communities.
- 4. The creation of a West of England Smartcard system** covering bus, rail and light rail, a comprehensive public transport information website/information point and a bus priority enforcement team once an Integrated Transport Authority is established. Cross ticketing and interchange at Cabot Circus to integrate light rail/bus station and Northern fringe bus services.