

Highways Committee

15 January 2010

Transit 15



Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of progress and future reporting on Transit 15 - a Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2) project to improve the reliability/punctuality of the bus network on seven key bus corridors across the county.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Transit 15 was included in the current Local Transport Plan (LTP2: 2006-2011) as a major scheme proposal, costing an estimated £6million. Development of the scheme started in late 2007 with the building of a database from bus journey time information from the 'real-time' system, identification of key bus corridors and the practical, physical improvements needed to remove or reduce delays to buses and improve punctuality for users on these corridors, risk analysis and mitigation. All of this work was required to enable Transport User Benefit Analysis (TUBA) to be undertaken as a requisite part of assembling a major scheme business case for major scheme funding approval to the Department for Transport (DfT) in November 2009.
- 2.2 In April 2009, the DfT proposed that in the event, cost of the scheme could be capped to under £5million, then the rigours of submitting and justifying a fully-fledged business case(necessary to obtain DfT funding) could be set aside and instead, funding could be immediately allocated through the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) process. Clearly, this was a tremendous opportunity for further public transport investment in the county, saving time and removing the risk of the business case being rejected. This funding route was approved through the RFA process earlier this year and the £5 million provided as a supplementary allocation to the LTP2 integrated transport block for 2009/10. However, having agreed to this financial freedom, DfT are keen to see early use of the funding provided.
- 2.3 The development of the Transit 15 project has involved a working group which has included the two main bus operators, Arriva and Go North East. Twenty seven separate scheme locations, where delays to buses regularly occur, have been identified for improvement and design work has been ongoing since last summer. All of the schemes have now been programmed to be implemented between now and

2011/12. A first tranche of 10 is proposed for what remains of this financial year and the early part of next financial year. Most of the programme will be dealt with in 2010/11 with a small number of schemes, in the more challenging and difficult locations, towards the latter end of the programme period in 2011/12.

- 2.4 The first scheme, where work has just about been completed, is the A693 Stanley Roundabout, serving the bus station. This improvement had already been consulted on last year and is needed to ensure that buses leaving the new bus station are not unduly delayed at the start of their journeys.
- 2.5 Subsequent schemes within the programme will continue to be developed and introduced as further assessment, detailed design and consultations are completed on an ongoing basis.

3.0 Statutory Consultation

- 3.1 Consultations are being carried out with people likely to be affected by the proposals, primarily those who live in the vicinity of each scheme as well as stakeholder groups such as the Parish Councils. To date, the process has involved provision of an explanatory letter to each resident, a plan of the proposed improvement, a project-briefing information sheet and reply-paid envelope for return of comments. In addition, layout plans have been made available on the County Council web site and a dedicated email address is provided for electronic response. Any comments received are logged and responded to as they are received.
- 3.2 In respect of affected Members, a similar information pack has been provided for the first tranche of schemes and this process will continue as the detailed designs (following consultation feedback) for further locations are completed. In addition, a display of layout plans for the first tranche was mounted in the Durham Room during October and November 2009, just prior to works commencing on the first scheme in Stanley. A similar display will be mounted for the second tranche of schemes in due course. Information on the objectives of the project and individual layout plans for schemes has also been available on the County Council's website since beginning of November.
- 3.3 Some of the schemes within the programme will require a Traffic Regulation Order, while others will not, dependant on the proposals for each location.
- 3.4 In the case of the former and in compliance with normal procedure, subsequent reports will be made to the Highways Committee detailing any objections together with the responses.
- 3.5 Furthermore, in the interests of keeping Members informed and for completeness in providing an ongoing overview of the whole project as it is implemented, it is intended to submit similar reports to the Highways Committee as well for those schemes where traffic orders are not strictly required.

4.0 Recommendations and Reasons

4.1 It is recommended:-

that the Committee note the progress made to date on implementing the Transit 15 project programme.

Background Papers

Illustration material has been placed in the Members' resource centre Local Transport Plan 2 (2006-2011).

Notes of Working Group meetings – transport planning scheme file.

Jacobs Consultancy - Reports on Transit 15:

- Identification of bus corridors and delays - April 2008
- Modelling methodology for calculation of initial BCRs – December 2008
- Modelling methodology for calculation of initial BCRs using microsimulation – January 2009
- Transit 15 : Input statement for major scheme business case – March 2009
- Transit 15 : Modelling progress report – May 2009

Correspondence from DfT dated 27 August 2009 – transport planning scheme file.

Briefing note issued to all County Councillors – circa September 2009.

Consultation information letter and briefing sheet.

Contact: Harris Harvey Tel: 0191 383 3459

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

£5million has been provided for Transit 15 by DfT through the Regional Funding Allocation and Local Transport Plan.

Staffing

Existing levels of staffing within Regeneration & Economic Development, supported by Neighbourhood Services design resource are sufficient to carry out Transit 15.

Equalities and Diversity

A more reliable bus service with reduced delays on key corridors to/from Durham City will aid equality and diversity.

Accommodation

N/A

Crime and Disorder

N/A

Sustainability

A more reliable bus service should encourage more people to consider using buses rather than private cars.

Human Rights

More reliable public transport will enhance human rights by improving the opportunity to travel.

Localities and Rurality

While the 7 route corridors are linking centres of population, there will be overall benefit to people travelling long distances from anywhere in the County.

Young People

Better public transport will encourage young people to use buses and provide more reliable access to education and work.

Consultation

People living near to the sites for improvement are being consulted by letter drop containing information and layout plans and reply-paid envelopes for return of comments. The County Council web site is a further means for people to access information about the project.

Health

N/A