

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY**  
**6 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**TRANSPORT INITIATIVES AND ISSUES - UPDATE**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report is to update Members in relation to transport initiatives and issues affecting Exeter. In doing so, it also acts as a progress report in relation to the paper presented to this Committee on 21 January 2010 and Executive on 9 February 2010, entitled "Transportation Strategy: Measures to reduce carbon emissions / proposed City Council input to DCC Local Transport Plan 2011-16", which formed part of a suite of papers in relation to reducing carbon emissions in Exeter. In this report, the annotation "**KM**" against a topic means that it was identified as a Key Measure in those papers.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Responsibility for transport rests with numerous organisations, including the Department for Transport (DfT), Devon County Council (DCC) as Local Transport Authority, and private operators like First Great Western and Stagecoach who run the trains and buses.
- 2.2 Exeter City Council is involved in transport issues in a number of ways:-
- (a) As local planning authority, we plan the location of development in relation to transport networks. The Council's spatial planning policies have informed DCC's latest Local Transport Plan, and conversely DCC produced a body of evidence to support our recently adopted Core Strategy. A product of this collaboration is the Devon Metro proposals (**KM**), discussed below at paragraph 3.2, whereby it is proposed to serve Exeter's new development areas by an improved rail system.
  - (b) Also as local planning authority, we endeavour to ensure that new development is designed to maximise use of sustainable travel modes. See section 6 of this report.
  - (c) We provide some transport infrastructure, notably facilities for cycling and walking, and off-street car parks.
  - (d) We respond to consultations from government and elsewhere (see for example paragraph 3.3).
  - (e) Other specific transport-related functions, outside the scope of this report, are the enforcement of on-street parking under an agency with DCC, and the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles.
- 2.3 It will be seen from the content of this report that in many cases Exeter City Council's involvement in projects is as more than a mere consultee. Much of our input into transport issues is in influencing decisions made by DCC and others to ensure that Exeter's interests are promoted.

### 3 RAIL

- 3.1 This Committee has previously resolved to endorse DCC's Devon Metro proposals, and to support the principle of working with DCC and other stakeholders to lobby for rail improvements.
- 3.2 A summary of the Devon Metro proposals (**KM**) is included as Appendix 1. They include new stations at Newcourt and Marsh Barton and, in the longer term, Monkerton/Hill Barton. DCC has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with First Great Western and Network Rail to develop these proposals, and is currently working through the rail industry's approval process for the new stations. The first planning application is likely to be submitted in 2013.
- 3.3 First Great Western's franchise ends next year and the Council engaged fully with the recent consultation process in a number of ways. Our own response to the consultation was submitted following its approval by this Committee on 8 March 2012. In addition, we contributed to a region-wide response submitted by TravelWatch South West, and liaised with Devon County Council, the Exeter Chamber, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the city's MPs to ensure that a consistent message was sent to the Government. This message focussed on delivery of the Devon Metro proposals for local services, and progressive improvement of intercity services to a clockface pattern, with two services each hour to Paddington, one fast and one serving more intermediate stations.
- 3.4 The Invitation to Tender (ITT) was issued in July, and specifies the existing level of service as the starting point for the new franchise, with the exception of some through services (not affecting trains between London, Exeter and Plymouth). It specifies the service for each route by number of trains per weekday and at weekends, first and last trains, and minimum number of calls at intermediate stations. It includes trains currently operating in excess of the existing specification, such as the early morning weekday train from Paddington. This is actually the only train whose arrival time is specified (it will be extended to Plymouth and arrive there by 10am). Elements of Devon Metro are included as priced options, but will nevertheless be given weight in assessing the competing proposals. The four shortlisted bidders now have until 25 October to submit their bids. A more detailed note on the ITT and related rail issues forms Appendix 2 to this report.
- 3.5 Meanwhile, we continue to press the case for improvements to Exeter's rail system at every opportunity. The Projects and Business Manager took part in a rail forum hosted by Hugo Swire MP, at which he was able to emphasise the need for more and better rolling stock on our local services. The recent announcement of rail industry funding<sup>1</sup> contains a number of proposals of potential benefit to Exeter:-
- Electrification in the Thames Valley additional to that already confirmed, which will make a larger number of more modern diesel trains available for cascade.
  - An encouraging reference to "gauge clearance" in the west of England which would be necessary to accommodate those trains; the Secretary of State for Transport had already indicated in correspondence following the rail forum that she foresaw the cascade of those vehicles to our area.
  - Birmingham-Bristol is suggested as a candidate for electrification for 2019-24, which would improve the business case for further extension of the wires. We will

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<sup>1</sup> High Level Output Specification (HLOS) for 2014-2019

work with other stakeholders to press for Exeter to be added to the electric network.

- Additional improvements in the Bristol area would also improve capacity on our cross-country routes.

3.6 Also, a western rail link to Heathrow is now proposed, which would improve access to the airport from the south west of England.

3.7 The Council is currently working with DCC, Network Rail and First Great Western on plans to improve the forecourt at Exeter Central station **(KM)**. The plans (included as Appendix 3) envisage removal of vehicles from the crescent, to enable improvement of the environment for pedestrians, since the majority of journeys to and from this station are made on foot. The Council is making a contribution of £185,000 to a scheme costing around £540,000 with the plans having been favourably received by Planning Member Working Group and the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee. These improvements are expected to be carried out in 2013, and will complement the significant improvements already carried out at this station by the rail industry under the National Stations Improvement Programme **(KM)**.

#### **4 OTHER PUBLIC TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENTS**

4.1 Exeter continues to buck the national trend of declining bus patronage, with Stagecoach South West reporting a modest 0.14% increase in passenger numbers in the year to April 2012. Fortunately therefore we have not experienced the service cuts that have affected some parts of the country. Much of the local bus fleet was renewed last year, with vehicles meeting the latest emissions standards **(KM)**.

4.2 Devon County Council has taken advantage of its successful bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund last year to invest in additional bus services to Exeter's employment areas. Sowton is now connected to Exmouth by route 58 throughout the day (to help part-time workers), and Marsh Barton has gained a peak time link (route 10) to Exminster, Dawlish and Teignmouth. Comprehensive plans are being developed to extend the bus network to serve future development areas, particularly to enable a frequent and reliable service to be able to operate between the city centre, Monkerton, the Science Park and Cranbrook **(KM)**.

4.3 Stagecoach will be extending the evening Park and Ride service from October to coincide with the opening of the John Lewis store. DCC's proposals for a new site at Alphington interchange were supported by this Committee in 2008 as part of a package of measures to improve the Alphington Road corridor **(KM)**, but have proved contentious during the planning process. The proposal nevertheless remains an important component of the city's transport strategy, being specifically promoted by policy CP9 in the recently adopted Core Strategy. It is anticipated that revised plans will be brought forward in 2013.

4.4 Three interactive versions of the crimson information "monoliths" are expected to be installed early in 2013. These will display real time train and park and ride information, to enable visitors and shoppers to see how their transport is running before setting off for the station or bus stop. Two monoliths in the city centre are principally being funded by developer contributions from Princesshay, with the City Council making a contribution to add interactive mapping. Separate developer contributions will enable provision of a third monolith in St Thomas.

- 4.5 Community transport is an important element of the transport system, and the Council supports the Ring and Ride and TaxiCard systems operated by Exeter Community Transport Association. These contributions have now been brought within the core grants process, considered by the Major Grants and New Homes Bonus Panel.

## **5 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND ROAD IMPROVEMENTS**

- 5.1 Improvements to junction 29 of the M5 and surrounding roads should be complete around the time of the committee meeting. This scheme is essential to delivery of the Science Park, Skypark and Cranbrook. **(KM)**
- 5.2 Likewise, the works to Sidwell Street and the surrounding area are on track for the opening of the John Lewis store in October. The strategy for managing traffic in the city centre **(KM)** had to be accelerated to prepare for the store's opening, and will in particular provide an improved environment for pedestrians in Sidwell Street and across London Inn Square into the High Street.

## **6 CYCLING AND WALKING (KM)**

- 6.1 The formation of the Exeter Walking and Cycling Steering Group (comprising officers from ECC, DCC and a representative of Sustrans) was reported to the committee in September 2011. That group continues to promote incremental improvements to the walking and cycling network, such as the recently opened link across Pinhoe Playing Fields. A small team has also been created to examine major planning proposals from a sustainable transport perspective. The team makes recommendations on issues such as permeability for pedestrians and cyclists, and has recently been joined by an officer from DCC's Transport Co-ordination team to look at public transport issues such as how buses will be routed through developments and where stops should be located. Many of the group's recommendations have been reflected in design changes and planning conditions, and the group also intends to perform a monitoring role in ensuring that proposals are actually implemented in a way which encourages use of sustainable travel modes.
- 6.2 The work of the group will be aided by the preparation of a Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which is the subject of a separate report.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 It can be seen that despite the significant number of different agencies involved in providing transport, Exeter City Council has a significant role to play in keeping the city moving in a sustainable way.

## **8 RECOMMENDED**

That the report be noted, and that Members offer their continued support for the Council's improvement in initiatives designed to enable and encourage more sustainable travel.

Ross Hussey  
Projects and Business Manager

**Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

“Transportation Strategy: Measures to reduce carbon emissions” – ECC 2010.

Devon Metro Appraisal Report – DCC 2011

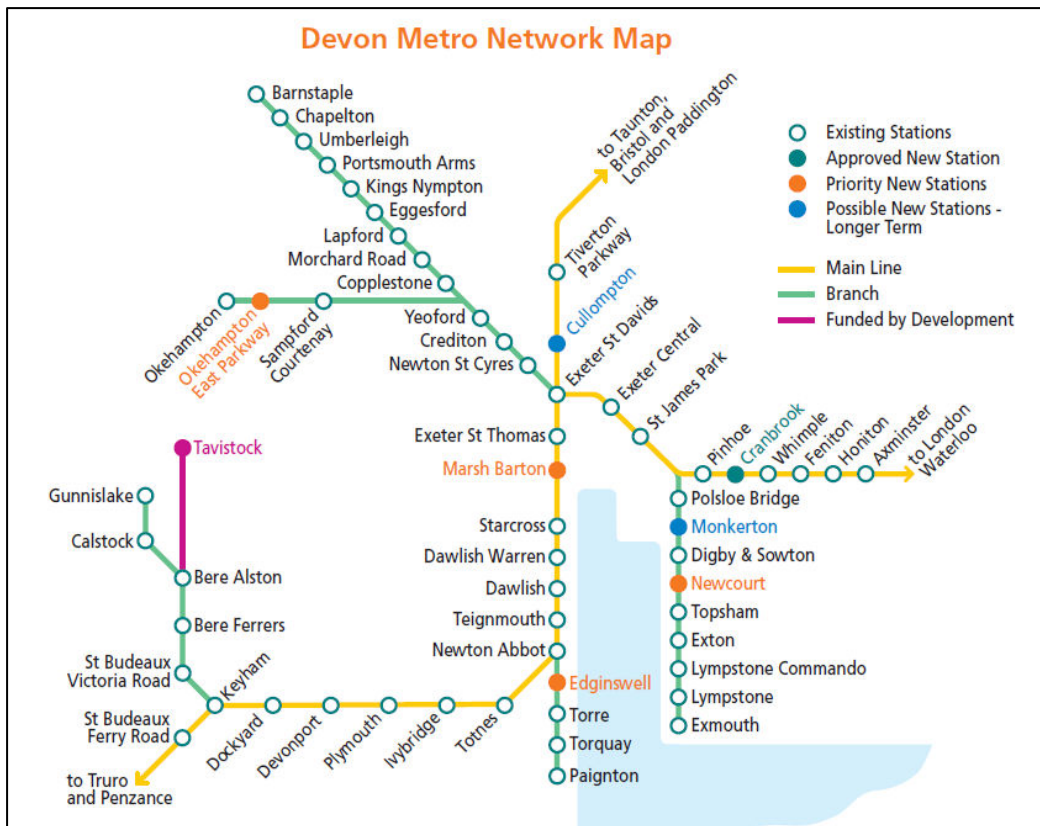
High Level Output Specification (HLOS) for rail, 2014-2019 – DfT 2012

Invitation to Tender for the Great Western Franchise – DfT 2012

Stagecoach South West Annual Report – May 2011 to April 2012

## APPENDIX 1

### Devon Metro proposals



#### Short term aims

- 4 car trains in the peaks
- New stations at Cranbrook, Newcourt and Marsh Barton
- 30 minute local service frequency on the Paignton line

#### Longer term aims

- 30 minute frequency to Cranbrook, Honiton and Axminster
- Further new station at Hill Barton
- 15 minute frequency on the Exmouth line
- 15 minute frequency on the Paignton line

## APPENDIX 2

### Great Western Rail Franchise – Invitation to Tender (and related issues)

#### Timescales

The start of the franchise has now been delayed until 21 July 2013 (previously April). Bids have to be submitted by 25 October, and the successful bidder will be announced early in 2013.

The franchise will run for 15 years.

#### Initial service specification

Although the Government wants to make franchises less prescriptive where possible, quite a lot of detail is set out in the ITT:-

- Minimum number of trains between Paddington and Exeter, Plymouth and Penzance (weekdays, weekends, summer and winter), first and last trains.
- Minimum number of trains on the branches.
- Minimum number of calls at all stations. On the branches these are grouped so the operator could vary the stopping pattern but not reduce the overall number of stops.

In Exeter's case the above requirements reflect the current level of service as opposed to the current franchise spec. So, for example, the early morning weekday train from Paddington is included (but will be extended to Plymouth rather than Torbay as at present).

As well as the much-heralded reduced requirement to run through trains to Cornwall, there appears to be no requirement to run through trains from Paddington to Paignton. While this is not a serious issue for Exeter, those in Torbay are unlikely to be pleased.

#### Growth

Until 2016, the requirement is to maintain current service levels with the current amount of rolling stock (and indeed additional stock is unlikely to be available nationally).

From 2016, the operator will need to plan to meet the prescribed "crowding limit", which reflects the capacity of different types of rolling stock, together with a requirement that passengers should not be expected to stand for more than 20 minutes. Some leeway is allowed, namely exceeding the requirement by 4.5% in either peak or 3% in both peaks, evenly distributed across routes.

From 2019, bidders have to forecast demand and set out to what extent they will be able to meet it, until that becomes impractical because it would require significant infrastructure enhancement. In other words, operators will be required to meet demand where it can be accommodated purely by procuring additional rolling stock, but not where the network itself would have to be upgraded significantly.

#### Rolling stock

Bidders have to set out their proposals for procuring new or cascaded rolling stock during the franchise. Based on the recent announcement regarding rail investment, the most likely scenario is that for our local services, more modern diesel trains will be cascaded following the electrification of Thames Valley lines in 2016. This is what we have been pressing for.

For intercity services the most likely scenario is that HSTs (High Speed Trains, alias InterCity 125s) will eventually be replaced by “Meridian” diesels cascaded from the Midland Main Line. We might also see the new bi-mode “IEPs” (InterCity Express Project) coming as far as Exeter. We have no experience of Meridians in this area, but they are supposed to be a better version of the Cross Country “Voyagers”; less comfortable than HSTs because of the underfloor engines, but more reliable and much newer. They could be a better bet than the untested bi-modes.

### **Criteria for assessing bids**

There are various weighted criteria, those with the heaviest weighting being accommodating growth (17.5%), management and delivery of rolling stock (15%), and improving the customer experience (15%). Although value for money only has a weighting of 5%, bids will be subject to separate assessment in respect of value for money and affordability.

### **Devon Metro**

The following additional services from are included as priced options; actually they are more than that because whatever the bidder offers will be taken into account in the overall assessment of bids. These are basically the elements of Devon Metro that can be achieved on existing infrastructure.

- Exmouth Sunday service increased from hourly to half-hourly.
- Half hourly Newton Abbot to Paignton.
- Two-hourly Exeter to Axminster, in addition to hourly Waterloo trains.
- Daily services to Okehampton (currently only summer Sundays).

As a separate development, a new funding scheme for new stations has recently been announced, which DCC are investigating for Marsh Barton (Newcourt being funded through developer contributions).

### **Electrification**

The Midland Main Line was always going to be next, and Cardiff-Swansea makes perfect sense given that it is a continuation of the London-Cardiff run. The Government is looking at Birmingham-Bristol for electrification in the longer term and Birmingham-Plymouth is supposed to have a good benefit:cost ratio. Newbury-Exeter then becomes logical infill. Our best argument for getting electrification sooner is that London-Bristol trains will be entirely electric and will need a diversionary route, with the route via Westbury being the obvious candidate. If all of the above happens, Westbury-Taunton will look like obvious infill.

We can also be optimistic that the Waterloo line will be electrified at some point. The recent announcement of an “electric spine” reaching down to Southampton will extend overhead power into old Southern Region territory, and Network Rail are interested in replacing the old third rail system. Waterloo-Weymouth would be an obvious early candidate, as part of the route would already have been converted, and the power supply is acknowledged to be inadequate at the western end of the line. It would then make sense to concentrate on the long-distance routes south west of London, and electrifying the diesel route to Exeter would look like a priority over routes that already have the third rail electric system.



## **Our reaction?**

Overall this is better than we dared hope a year ago (when all talk was of a very light touch), and roughly what we have come to expect more recently.

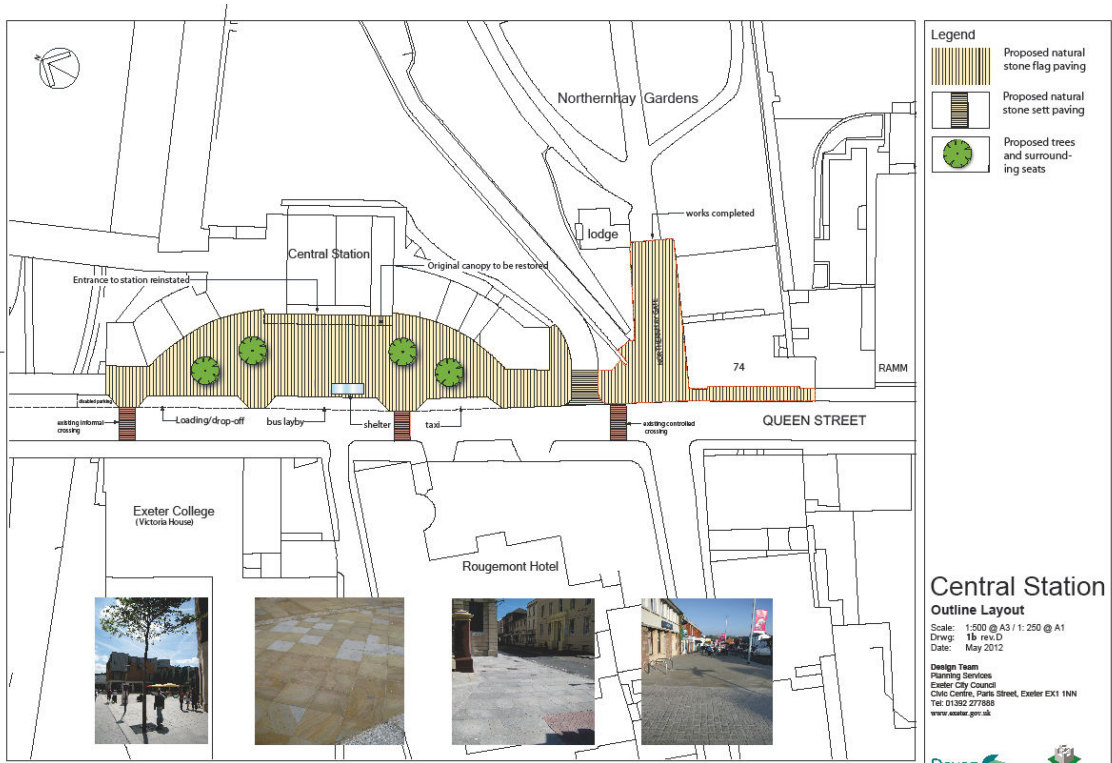
Inclusion of Devon Metro is good news, and although this doesn't cover the longer term aspirations which rely on additional passing loops, we weren't really expecting it to. It's looking increasingly likely that the better diesel stock from the Thames Valley will come this way following electrification, but this isn't certain so it's worth continuing to press for this at every opportunity.

The emphasis given to accommodating growth is also welcome, although it remains to be seen how this will work over a 15 year franchise. However, as long as the DfT sticks to the proposed spec, the franchise should at least get off to a better start than the current one did.

While we would like to see electrification from London to Exeter, the Midland Main Line was always going to be next. As indicated above, our best argument is based around the need for diversionary routes, rather than demanding that DfT should electrify our line, not someone else's.

# APPENDIX 3

## Central Station forecourt proposals



- Legend**
- Proposed natural stone flag paving
  - Proposed natural stone sett paving
  - Proposed trees and surrounding seats

### Central Station Outline Layout

Scale: 1:500 @ A3 / 1:250 @ A1  
 Drawn: 18 rev.D  
 Date: May 2012

**Design Team**  
 Planning Services  
 Exeter City Council  
 City Centre, Paris Street, Exeter EX1 1NN  
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