

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY**  
**8 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**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. DCC have produced a body of evidence to support our Core Strategy at its recent Examination in Public, and our own spatial planning policies have informed DCC's latest Local Transport Plan. 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. It is also proposed to design bus priority into the road layout for the Monkerton development area, to enable a frequent and reliable service to be able to operate between the city centre, Monkerton, the Science Park and Cranbrook (**KM**).
  - (b) Also as local planning authority, we endeavour to ensure that new development is designed to maximise use of sustainable travel modes. A Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is being prepared, to ensure that new developments cater properly for sustainable modes of travel, and to set out a consistent approach to seeking contributions from developers towards the facilities needed to serve their developments.
  - (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 paragraph 3.4).

(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 At its meeting on 10 March 2010, this Committee received a report from a Task and Finish Group set up to consider rail issues. It 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 The Devon Metro proposals (**KM**) 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. First Great Western's timetable planners have also been working on how to accommodate additional stations in the timetable. Further afield, a detailed planning application is being prepared in respect of Cranbrook station with a view to construction commencing in 2012/13. A summary of the Devon Metro proposals is included as Appendix 1.

3.3 Meanwhile, First Great Western has announced that it will not be exercising the option to extend its franchise, meaning that it will end in 2013. TravelWatch South West is co-ordinating a region-wide strategy to ensure that the new franchise, expected to be for about fifteen years, delivers high quality inter-city services as well as reflecting local schemes such as Devon Metro. Electrification of the main line out of Paddington has now been confirmed as far as Bristol and Cardiff, but Ministers continue to talk of "progressive" electrification and we will work with other stakeholders to press for Exeter to be included in a subsequent phase.

3.4 To this end, officers are continuing to press the case for improvements to Exeter's rail system, including responding to consultations whenever there is a legitimate point to be made. For example, both the DfT and Transport Select Committee have consulted on the subject of High Speed Rail, to which we have responded, pointing out that although the merits of a high speed line to the Midlands and North are for others to debate, if it is pursued it must not be at the expense of rail in other parts of the country. This was picked up by the press, resulting in considerable support for Exeter's point of view.

3.5 More recently, we have responded to a consultation about rolling stock strategy. This was a valuable opportunity to express concern about the low growth forecasts contained in the strategy, which are likely to exacerbate the current shortage of diesel trains for local services, as recognised by the Task and Finish Group. We have also pointed out some of the London-centric attitudes in the document which fails to recognise that Exeter, Plymouth and even Bristol have any suburban lines (the Exmouth line, for example, is classed as "rural"). That said, there is much of value in the document's recommendations, notably that designs should be standardised and procurement "smoothed" to result in a steady supply of "go anywhere" rolling stock, at lower cost to the industry.

- 3.6 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 rail industry is currently investing £750,000 in this station under the National Stations Improvement Programme, including relocation of the booking hall to a more prominent position in the centre of the crescent of shops. A further £580,000 is being invested by the industry in St David's station **(KM)**. A sum was allocated to Central station forecourt in a previous ECC capital programme, and a new bid has now been submitted for a contribution to improvements, since it appears that they could proceed in 2012/13 following completion of works to the building.

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

- 4.1 Exeter's city bus services received a boost earlier this year, with the investment by Stagecoach in a fleet of 36 brand new buses. These have given the local network a more modern image and meet the very latest emissions standards **(KM)**, and represent a welcome vote of confidence in the city by the company.
- 4.2 Patronage on Park and Ride services continues to grow, and a Sunday service from Honiton Road was introduced in January. DCC are carrying out more work on their proposals for a new site at Alphington interchange, which 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.
- 4.3 Smart ticketing **(KM)** in Exeter is about to become a reality, with Stagecoach expecting to commence reading concessionary passes electronically during September (these passes are already in the form of smartcards). They propose subsequently to extend the concept to some of their own products, like Megarider season tickets,. Extension of the scheme to concessionary passes on all bus services in the South West is expected at the end of the year.
- 4.4 The concept will be developed further thanks to a successful bid to the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund, by a partnership of Local Transport Authorities and bus operators across the South West. The intention is to make public transport more attractive, and to open up the possibility of tailoring specific products to groups of individuals, for example to make it easier for them to access employment or training. Smart ticketing is not limited to buses, as all new rail franchises are including a requirement to adopt this concept.
- 4.5 Members will recall that the Competition Commission has been investigating the bus industry, and in its submission this Council commented on two fares-related issues. On one hand we have supported the concept of integrated ticketing whereby the same ticket can be used across the services of different operators, or even across different modes. It is sometimes overlooked that this already exists in the form of PlusBus, which enables travellers to add bus travel at either end of their journey when buying a train ticket. The Commission's provisional findings support the extension of integrated ticketing, and its full report is due later in the year. The other concern raised by Members has been the level of bus fares locally, and on this subject it is good to note that although some fares have increased during the year, the price of an Exeter DayRider has actually come down, effectively reducing the cost of some return fares within the city, as well as benefitting anyone who travels on more than one bus route in the course of a day.

- 4.6 DCC and ECC are jointly working on a project to display real time transport and other information on some of the “monolith” information points in the city, largely funded by developer contributions from Princesshay. A key outcome of this is to encourage use of public transport by making information available before setting off for the bus or rail station. Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HaTOC) has received a report into the operation of the current information system at bus stops, and has asked DCC’s Cabinet to investigate funding to enable it to be adequately maintained, extended and improved.
- 4.7 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, with funding decisions being made by the Grants Committee.
- 4.8 Responsibility for all concessionary fares schemes passed to upper tier authorities on 1 April 2011. DCC was already administering the mandatory national scheme for most Devon districts, including Exeter. In addition, despite severe pressure on its budget, DCC has continued to operate a discretionary companion pass scheme for disabled passengers across the county. In relation to Exeter’s scheme whereby 16 to 18 year olds in full time education received discounted travel, members will recall that ECC forward-funded the continuation of this scheme for the remainder of the 2010/11 academic year, although there is no replacement Devon-wide scheme.

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

- 5.1 Improvements to junction 29 of the M5 and surrounding roads commenced in May, following a successful final funding bid. This scheme is essential to delivery of the Science Park, Skypark and Cranbrook. **(KM)**
- 5.2 The strategy for managing traffic in the city centre **(KM)** has had to be accelerated to prepare for the opening of the new John Lewis store. Executive resolved in July to support the principle of reducing traffic flow outside the store, as did HaTOC, which has resolved to carry out the necessary stakeholder and community engagement and to pursue the associated traffic orders.

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

- 6.1 Exeter’s designation as a Cycling Demonstration Town ended in March, having achieved an impressive network of new infrastructure and a step change in the number of people cycling, exceeding the scheme’s own targets. Exeter has seen an increase in cycle trips of over 40% since 2005, as measured by counters at various locations, with around 20% of secondary school children now cycling to school against a national average of 3%.
- 6.2 New planning applications continue to be examined to ensure that proposals are as cycle-friendly as possible, including for example good quality cycle parking.
- 6.3 Walking routes have generally been promoted by the Exeter Walking Project, a partnership between ECC and DCC, coordinated by the sustainable transport charity Sustrans. Achievements of the partnership include the Green Circle walking route around the city, and more recently the improvement of the Sir Alex Walk path between Countess Wear and Topsham. However, for the last few years the focus has been more on facilities which benefit both walkers and cyclists as well as people with

disabilities, such as the shared use paths across Wonford Playing Fields and King George V Playing Fields.

- 6.4 In the light of this, the Exeter Walking Project team has been reformed into an Exeter Walking and Cycling Steering Group (EWCSG). Its terms of reference (see Appendix 2) include considering and promoting individual schemes, as well as developing the Walking and Cycling Strategies for Exeter which are intended to form appendices to the proposed Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document. The joining up of sustainable travel modes is consistent with what is happening at government level, with the introduction of a Local Sustainable Transport Fund, and at DCC where the Cycle Exeter team has been replaced by a Sustainable Transport team. That team's first achievement has been a successful bid to the new fund for £5m over five years, focussed on journeys to work in three broad locations within the county, including Exeter/Exmouth.

## 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 securing improvements for Exeter. Currently there are numerous challenges to face, but conversely these bring opportunities for improving Exeter's transport systems to improve the environment and reduce congestion, to the benefit of everyone in the city.
- 7.2 Therefore, the Council's involvement in transport issues in the coming year will focus on:-
- Influence – working with DCC and others on projects affecting the city, and responding to government consultations with a view to achieving the best outcomes.
  - Policy – ensuring that a sound planning policy framework is in place, to engage developers fully in catering for all travel modes within their developments, and to secure appropriate contributions to facilities which will serve those developments.
  - Information – ensuring that the public are aware of all travel options available to them, not just how to get around by car.

## 8 RECOMMENDED

That the report be noted, and that Members offer their continued support for the initiatives designed to encourage more sustainable travel, and the delivery of an ECC transportation function designed to promote the long term interests of the city.

Ross Hussey  
Projects and Business Manager

Roger Coombes  
Head of Operational Services and Transport

### ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

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

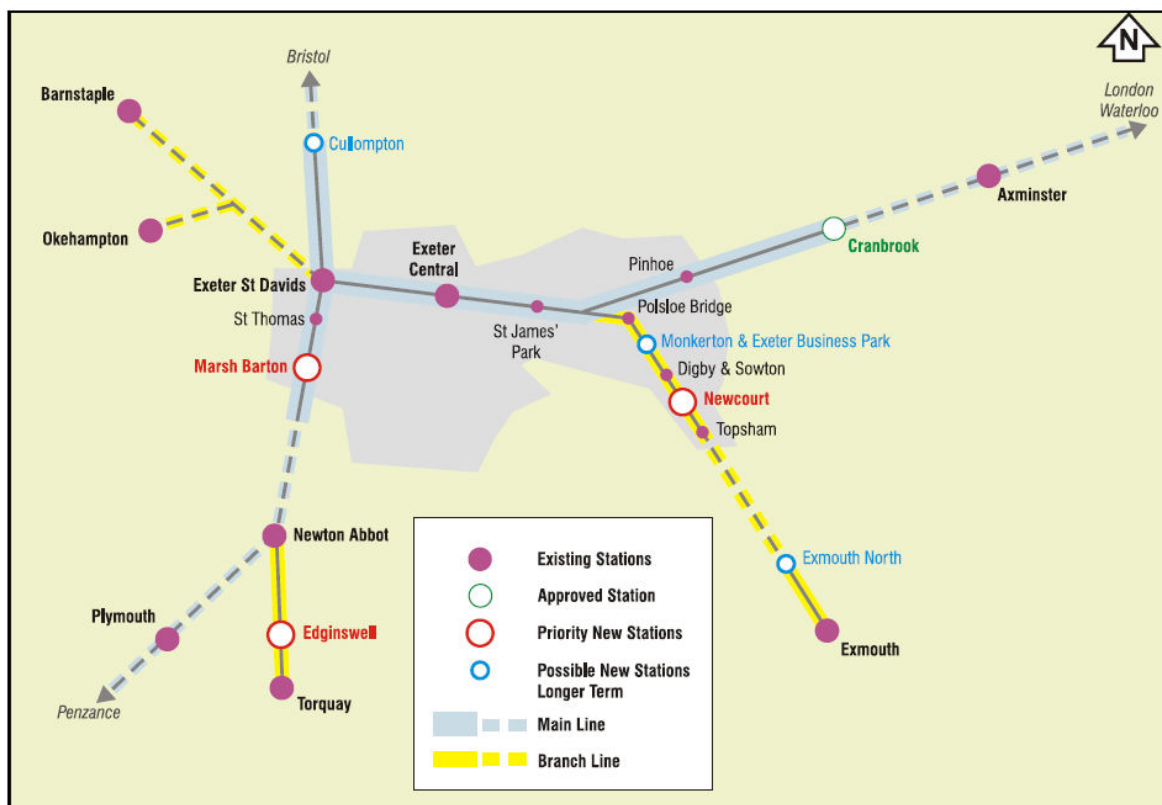
#### **Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

"Transportation Strategy: Measures to reduce carbon emissions" – ECC 2010.  
Notice of possible remedies, Competition Commission investigation of Local Bus Services.

High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future – consultation – DfT 2011.  
Network RUS: Passenger Rolling Stock draft for consultation – Network Rail 2011.

APPENDIX 1

Devon Metro proposals



Short term aims

- 4 car trains in the peaks
- New station on the Exmouth Line
- New station at Marsh Barton
- 30 minute local service frequency on the Paignton line
- Cranbrook station

Longer term aims

- 30 minute frequency to Cranbrook, Honiton and Axminster
- Further new stations on the Exmouth line
- 15 minute frequency on the Exmouth line
- 15 minute frequency on the Paignton line

**APPENDIX 2****Exeter Walking and Cycling Steering Group**  
**Terms of Reference**

1. The Exeter Walking and Cycling Steering Group (EWCSG) is a partnership of Devon County Council, Exeter City Council and Sustrans.
2. The EWCSG was formed in 2011 to take forward the previous work of the Exeter Walking Project (2001-11) and the Cycle Exeter project (2005-11), given the improved value for money offered by a combined approach to both modes of travel. The Group's focus is therefore on active sustainable travel and the provision of better infrastructure and access for cyclists and pedestrians (including disabled users).
3. The EWCSG will meet bimonthly and consist of appropriate officer representatives of DCC, ECC and Sustrans. Sustrans will coordinate meetings and provide minutes of meetings. DCC or ECC will host meetings.
4. The EWCSG will consider and help to develop the Exeter Walking Strategy, the Exeter Cycling Strategy, Local Transport Plan 3 and LSTF schemes, and other relevant strategic documents for DCC and ECC.
5. The EWCSG will make recommendations and review recommendations from elsewhere (including the Exeter Cycle Forum) for infrastructure improvements, both new schemes and maintenance of existing infrastructure. When appropriate the EWCSG will help decide priorities for programmes of work.
6. The EWCSG will help to promote or initiate campaigns, projects and events to encourage more people to walk and cycle.
7. The EWCSG will endeavour to ensure that the interests and needs of pedestrians and cyclists are considered as part of budget making and planning decisions.
8. The EWCSG will consider access for all to public transport and road transport facilities, such as stations, bus stops and car parks.
9. The minutes of the EWCSG will be available to DCC and ECC committees and members.