

New Bristol study could earmark further enhancements for local rail

Potential enhancements to suburban rail services in the West of England will be explored further in a new feasibility study getting underway in early 2017, commissioned by Bristol City Council.

The study supports the Mayor of Bristol's aspiration to do more to enhance local rail options and to build on the significant progress already made through projects such as MetroWest.

Crucially, this work will also align with the emerging Joint Spatial Plan and Joint Transport Study for the West of England, which opened for consultation on Monday (7 November).

The aim of the new study is to carry out a high level assessment to determine if a selection of Bristol-focused rail options could potentially form viable business cases in the future. The council will work with councillors, MPs and local campaigners to understand demand and opportunities. The study is likely to assess:

- New approaches for improving local rail frequencies;
- A further look at options such as the 'Henbury Loop';
- Consideration of new stations to serve Ashton Gate, Horfield/Lockleaze and St Anne's;
- Consideration of whether options are best delivered as a package or as standalone projects.

When the study concludes, more detailed investigations may take place to support future enhancements – subject to available funding opportunities. Options which are revealed as particularly challenging to deliver may be set aside, if it is felt that the technical or financial constraints are too great at that stage.

“ With rail capacity enhancements, such as Filton Bank four-tracking, underway, and the extension of the Great Western Mainline Electrification to Bristol Temple Meads expected to follow, Bristol is ready to attract new funding for local rail schemes to support housing and jobs, and to combat traffic congestion.

We are obviously disappointed with the recent government announcement to defer elements of the electrification programme, but we will be working closely with the Department for Transport and Network Rail to understand what this means for Bristol and to clarify the timescale for the work to be completed. However, we remain focused on MetroWest rail phases one and two which will deliver a major uplift in services and facilities, together with the newer trains being cascaded from the Thames Valley. We do need to look beyond this and to demonstrate our ambition for rail to government and other partners, which is where the study comes in. This includes turning Temple Meads into a modern travel interchange.”

Cllr Mark Bradshaw, Cabinet Member for Transport at Bristol City Council

The work will be undertaken during 2017 and the findings reported towards the end of that year.