



Light Rail Transit Association

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To:
M4 Corridor Around Newport Public
Local Inquiry

Evidence for the proposed Cardiff Capital Region Metro to fulfil the Role of the proposed M4 Newport Relief Road (revised and updated 06/02/07)

The Problem: The Light Rail Transit association (LRTA) recognises that there is a problem of congestion on the M4, particularly focussed on the Bryn Glas tunnels at Newport. The LRTA further accepts that this is an impediment to the economic prosperity of South Wales as a whole. The LRTA, however, believes that there are better methods to address the issues than the proposed Relief Road.

Role of the Metro: The Light Rail Transit Association (LRTA) believes that the proposed Metro is vitally important for mobility in the region to create the requisite connectivity to ensure that the proposed investment flourishes. Investment in transport is not an end in itself, but it is necessary to ensure that business services, products and staff can be conveyed to the requisite destinations, in an environmentally responsible manner.

Sources of Traffic: Within south-east Wales there are 2 main sources of traffic along the M4 that feed traffic towards the Bryn Glas tunnels. The first of these is the Chepstow/Severn Tunnel Junction/Magor/Rogiet axis, and the second is the Abergavenny/Pontypool/Cwmbran axis. To relieve the M4 greatly enhanced Park and Ride facilities, new and/or expanded stations, and additional train turn-back facilities are needed.

Changes to M4 Severn Crossing Tolls: It has been announced in the last few weeks that the M4 bridge tolls will be reduced or abolished in the next few years. This has the potential to substantially increase road traffic from and to England. The LRTA believes greatly improved Park and Ride facilities, and train services should be provided near the Welsh end of the Severn crossings to alleviate M4 traffic flows, and parking facilities in Welsh destinations such as Cardiff and Newport. The Metro should incorporate such provision.

Seventy-five years of campaigning for trams and light rail



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Freight Traffic: The need to accommodate freight traffic, particularly along the South Wales Main Line, must be recognised. Enhancements, such as fly-over junctions may be needed, particularly in the Newport area, whereas Cardiff already has such provision.

Environmental Matters: The natural scenic and environmental assets of the Gwent Levels and Wetlands face a substantial threat from the proposed M4 Relief Road around Newport. Major enhancements to the South Wales Main Line, the line to Hereford, and others could alleviate motorway congestion to such an extent that would eliminate the need for the proposed Relief Road. Additional stations, and enhanced track and signalling would be required. In this manner the economic prosperity of the Region could be enhanced, without damaging the environment.

Health Issues: Rail transport, particularly with electrified traction, produces far less harmful emissions than road transport at the point of use. This not only includes vehicle exhausts, but also includes 'The Oslo' factor of road surface and tyre degradation products. The National Health Service is already under great pressure from many sources, and anything that can be done to alleviate that pressure should be adopted. The Metro has a vital role to play in reducing sickness.

Demographic Changes: It is well documented that young people today are increasingly turning their back on the car as their primary means of transport. Electronic media have become the status symbol the driving licence once was for teenagers. The proportion of the population under 25 with a driving licence has fallen at least 10% over the last 10 years. For many young people the costs of running a car are prohibitive. Car sharing, and rapidly developing self-driving vehicle technology will both contribute to a decline in the next 10 to 15 years in the number of separate vehicles on the road. These factors will tend to alleviate road congestion in general, including on the M4 around Newport, in addition to an enhanced Metro.

The Solution: The Welsh Government (WG) is currently seeking expressions of interest from prospective tenderers for the next Wales and Borders rail franchise, due to commence in 2018. The franchise will incorporate creation and construction of the next stages of the Metro. The exact dates for the issue of invitations to tender, and the date for submission of tenders are not yet in the public domain, but are likely to be during 2017. The LRTA believes that the tender specification should stipulate that tenderers must include methods to alleviate the M4 congestion in their bids, by proposing rail alternatives. Metro funds would probably need to be augmented, by re-allocation from a cancelled M4 Relief Road project, to provide the necessary additional capital outlay. Tenderers will also be under a general legal requirement to minimise environmental impact. The WG has stated very clearly that it is looking to the market for innovation with economic best value, and the public must hold WG to account on that pledge.

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