

FROM THE TRANSPORT GROUP

Is airport expansion necessary?

This question is being asked throughout the region as the airport plans to double in size. The arguments in favour are based on government policy and the increasing appetite for air travel. The arguments against are mainly environmental. Such expansion could obliterate any savings in CO₂ emissions made through other regional measures, making the target of a 60% reduction by 2060 virtually impossible to achieve. The potential effect on congestion in Bristol of the doubling of the size of the car park does not seem to have been taken into account. The economic case has not been proven. Expansion may be good business for the airport and its car park, but we have been provided with little evidence of economic benefit to the region.

Back to the railways

The railways are battling to cope with a vast increase in demand, presumably due to the congested state of the roads. Even our ailing Severn Beach line is now packed to capacity in the rush hour. Passengers pouring out of packed trains at Temple Meads are becoming militant in their demand for increased capacity. Central government, which determines capacity, gives priority to the South East, though it is under strong pressure from the more northerly conurbations for increased investment in their rail networks. The West needs to exert similar pressure if our rail service is ever to meet the increasing demand and meet the mobility requirements of the increasing population envisaged in the Regional Spatial Strategy. This strategy does at least propose a planned development of the rail network, much of

which is contained in the Joint Local Transport Plan. However, finance is controlled by Central Government: Local Government has little influence over it. ***The strategy also proposes a direct rail link to Heathrow which could provide a more environmentally acceptable alternative to expanding Bristol International Airport.*** Let us hope this plan is not quietly forgotten.

Back on our local Severn Beach Line, a major breakthrough has been achieved, thanks to intense pressure from the Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways. Bristol City Council has allocated funding, for a three year trial period, to increase the service frequency. This shows that local authorities can influence rail service provision. Value for money arguments will persist but how does one ascribe value to a rail journey which results in one less car on our congested roads?

Its about time our local rail services were planned by the subregional authorities rather than by the Department for Transport in London, especially when the latter seems to believe that we can get by with buses.

The troubled gestation of a Transport Authority

Pressure for a Transport Authority for Bristol's travel to work area is increasing. Bristol City Council was on the verge of setting up a cross party select committee to look into this but the proposal was rejected by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. We hope this is just a temporary glitch.

Colin Jefferson
 Convenor, Transport Group
 email: colin.jefferson@uwe.ac.uk



LETTER to the EDITOR

From Stephen Petter

Dear Editor,

TEMPLE MEADS REDEVELOPMENT

I don't know if it's too late, but I consider we should continue to press Bristol City Council and the South West Regional Development Agency (the latter seemingly having more say over Bristol planning than our Council!) for an integrated passenger transport interchange at Temple Meads.

There are some ideal empty sites nearby - have they all been promised to speculative developers?

Continually we hear of the need for better public transport, not least to alleviate global warming, and we know that quick, convenient interchange is a cost effective way to shorten journey times and make public transport more convenient and attractive.

Almost everyone agrees, but our 'planners' and Councillors seem overwhelmed by the apparent complexity of doing what so many other towns succeed in doing. Or is it that they are totally subjugated by the developers?

Anyway, I hope people will keep pressing for this long overdue facility.