

DARLINGTON TRANSPORT FORUM

16th July, 2007

PRESENT - Councillors Copeland, Long, Robson, Ruck and Wallis.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Coultas and Dunstone, and R. Jacks, J. Robson, J.P. Rodwell and M. Walker.

Officers in Attendance – Richard Alty, Assistant Director - Development and Regeneration; Simon Houldsworth, Transport Policy Manager; Owen Wilson, Policy Officer – Transport Policy; John Johnson, Project Manager, Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor.

Representing Outside Organisations

Arriva North East

T. Batty

Darlington Association on Disability

G. Pybus

Durham Tees Valley Airport

G. Smith

Low Dinsdale Parish Council

M. T. O'Neil

Darlington and District Motorcycle Action Group

T. Hind

Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit

J. Spruce

Tees Valley Regeneration

N. Astell

Trade Union Council (TUC)

J.Clark and C. Moore

Whinbush Residents Group

K. Frid

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

2. CHAIR – IT WAS AGREED – That Councillor Long be appointed Chair of this Forum, for this meeting only.

(NOTE – Councillor Wallis took the Chair during consideration of items 6, 7, 8 and 11 to 13 below).

3. VICE-CHAIR – IT WAS AGREED – That Mr. J. P. Rodwell be appointed Vice-Chair of this Forum for the Municipal Year 2006/07

4. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Forum held on 19th February, 2007.

IT WAS AGREED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING – Pursuant to Minute 22/Oct/06, it was reported that the bus timetable information for the No. 26 Bus service was still incorrect for bank holidays. The bus timetables had been renewed but the bank holiday information had been deleted altogether. The Transport Policy Manager, within the Development and Environment Department, stated that a decision had been taken to delete the bank holiday information altogether and request passengers to telephone for times.

IT WAS AGREED – That the position be noted.

6. TRANSPORT FOR TEES VALLEY: ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS – WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08 – Jonathan Spruce, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, gave a presentation to the Forum on transport issues and solutions in the Tees Valley.

In order to provide an effective transport network in the Tees Valley the importance of a sub-regional multi-modal and multi agency network was identified. References were made to the issues currently affecting the Tees Valley network; the number of jobs reliant on an effective transport network; and the key challenges that needed to be met, which included the introduction of a long term strategy for trunk road networks and improvements to public transport.

The solutions to those issues included the provision of an integrated Tees Valley Bus Network; improvements to Tees Valley Heavy Rail; and the provision of high quality access to regeneration sites from the strategic road network. References were also made to the linking of the various Integrated Transport Systems that were currently in use in the Tees Valley; the delivery of Local Transport Plans; and the timetable for the improvements.

Particular reference was made to the new Governance arrangements for the Tees Valley Unlimited; its terms of reference; and its composition.

Following questions by Members of the Forum, it was reported that there were no plans, at this stage to extend the bus lanes, as it was the reliability of the services that needed to be addressed initially together with the management of the network.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report and presentation be noted.

7. CONNECTING THE TEES VALLEY – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) referring to the report of the Director of the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (also previously circulated), which had been presented to the Joint Strategy Committee on 8th March, 2007, updating Members of the Forum on the ‘Connecting the Tees Valley’ initiative.

Discussion ensued on the frequency of trains; the linking of bus and train services and times; integration of the bus and rail networks; and the inclusion of Bishop Auckland in the scheme.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report and presentation be noted.

8. TEES VALLEY METRO – Nigel Astell, Tees Valley Metro Project Director gave a presentation to the Forum on the feasibility work that had been undertaken on the Tees Valley metro scheme, principally by converting the existing Darlington to Saltburn rail line to tram/metro use.

An overview of the Metro Project was given; current Tees Valley Rail Services; current and planned rail services; the Tees Valley Metro and Connections; possible future extensions; benefits that the metro would bring; additional benefits for Darlington; key challenges and opportunities; progress to date; stakeholder involvement; and the key next steps. It was reported at the meeting that the economic growth in the Tees Valley would be facilitated by the development of a multi-modal package of transport facilities.

Discussion ensued on funding for the scheme; provision of park and ride facilities; guided bus ways; and the linking of the Bishop Auckland with the Tees Valley.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report and presentation be noted.

9. LOCAL MOTION 2007 – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting the latest research findings on the impact of the Local Motion, including information on reduced traffic on Darlington's road, carbon dioxide saved and a cost/benefit analysis of the project.

The submitted report outlined the background to the project and the outcomes of travel behaviour change, including traffic and cycle counts, public transport patronage and school travel. Particular references were made to the cost benefit of Local Motion Smarter Choice measures; benefits of reduced traffic on the road; and health benefits.

A presentation was given to the Forum summarising the activities in respect of the Smarter Choice Measures. It was reported that out of the 32,000 households targeted, 20,000 had been responded; 10,000 cycle and bus maps had been delivered to households; the Local Motion travel centre had opened in April 2006; a number of events had been held to promote Local Motion; a cycle loan scheme had been introduced; 11 easy access buses had been introduced; a multi-operator bus ticket had been introduced; and 7,100 households had been recruited as Local Motion members.

References were made to the before and after results from the research that had been undertaken which had seen a nine per cent reduction in car trips; 1,000 less car trips per day to/from school; and a four per cent reduction in peak hour traffic on main radial roads. It was stated that the largest single source of UK carbon emissions was from cars and the Government's target was to see a 60 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050. In the long term new technology may play an important part in achieving reductions in transport related carbon emissions, but in the short to medium term behavioural change offered the best chance of reducing the impact of transport on the environment.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report and presentation be noted.

10. DARLINGTON EASTERN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR – John Johnson, Project Manager, updated the Forum on the progress of the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor. It was reported that work on the sewers was now complete; the McMullen Road junction had been redesigned to save on disruption; the new road would come in above McMullen Road; major earthworks had started on McMullen Road and the A66; work was progressing on the A66 and would be finished by the end of October; and that the bridge would be delivered in sections and put together on site and lifted in place, which would mean that the A66 would only need to be closed on one occasion. The site was now fully open should Members of the Forum wish to view the development and/or the drawings for the scheme.

It was anticipated that the scheme would be completed on time although, due to the adverse weather conditions, the scheme was currently slightly behind schedule.

Following a concern raised by a Member of the Forum, it was stated that the design of the road and bridge, would accommodate standard widening at a later stage, should it be required.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report be noted.

11. THE OVAL DEVELOPMENT – Richard Alty, Assistant Director, Development and Regeneration outlined the Developer's proposed timetable for the Oval development in Commercial Street, Darlington. He reported that, provided the Developer was successful in resolving a number of outstanding issues, the car park would be built first, with work commencing before Christmas 2007 and it would be open by Christmas 2008. Once the work on the car park was complete, work would then commence on the main shopping centre.

IT WAS AGREED – That the position be noted.

12. ISSUES RAISED BY FORUM MEMBERS – Submitted – A number of issues raised by members of the Forum were circulated at the meeting, together with related responses .

IT WAS AGREED – That the responses given to the issues raised be noted.

13. FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS FORUM – IT WAS AGREED – That meetings of this Forum, for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2007/08, be held at 6.00 p.m. on the following dates:-

Monday, 22nd October, 2007;
Monday, 4th February, 2007; and
Monday, 21st April, 2008.