

**ECONOMY REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
29th SEPTEMBER 2021**

REPORT TITLE:	MASS TRANSIT
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides Members with an update regarding the business case development which has been undertaken to date for the delivery of a mass transit system in Wirral and seeks approval for Wirral Mass Transit Phase A to be included in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) submission in October 2021.

The Wirral Plan 2021-2026 sets out the Councils vision to secure the best possible future for its residents defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. This proposal directly supports the following key themes within that plan:

- A cleaner, greener borough which celebrates, protects and improves our environment and urgently tackles the environmental emergency;
- A prosperous inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations; and
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families.

This matter affects Bidston and St James Ward, Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward, Cloughton Ward, Liscard Ward, New Brighton Ward, Seacombe Ward and Wallasey Ward.

This matter is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee is recommended to:

- (i) Note the progress made in the development of the Wirral Mass Transit business case to date, and request that a further report be brought forward to a future meeting of this committee following completion of the business case work in early 2022; and
- (ii) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to work with the LCRCA to include Wirral Mass Transit Network Phase A in LCRCA's BSIP submission to the DfT in October 2021.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To ensure that the Council continues to progress the development and delivery of the Mass Transit scheme which is a catalyst scheme to support regeneration as identified in the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.2 To ensure that the Council progresses a high-quality public transport scheme which will deliver increased levels of sustainable travel required to address the Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to '*a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030*'.
- 1.3 To ensure that the Council has the opportunity to benefit from the funding that is available to the LCRCA as part of the BSIP, and to raise the profile of Wirral's Mass Transit scheme with the Department for Transport (DfT).

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Council could decide not to progress a mass transit system. This is not considered to be appropriate as a 'Do-nothing' scenario completed in the business case process found numerous issues would arise regarding the planned development and regeneration in Wirral, and the success achievable by these developments will be limited.
- 2.2 The Council could decide not to approve the inclusion of the Phase A Mass Transit Scheme in the BSIP. This is not considered to be an appropriate option given that the scheme is included as a catalyst scheme in the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and the emerging Local Plan, and supporting sustainable travel is in line with our commitments to address the climate emergency, improve the health of our residents and encourage alternative modes of transport to the private car.
- 2.3 The Council could request inclusion of an alternative tram-based scheme within the BSIP. This is not considered to be an appropriate option as the opportunity as part of the BSIP submission is specifically to fund Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) schemes and therefore funding available through BSIP could be used for other purposes. In addition, the development work for the Mass Transit project has identified that BRT is the most appropriate option to meet the predicted demand in the short-term.
- 2.4 The Council could not approve the inclusion of the Phase A Mass Transit scheme and wait until a further funding opportunity arises for submission of the 'full' Mass Transit Scheme. Given the need to ensure there is a high-quality public transport offer for the occupants of the Northbank development programmed to open in Autumn 2023 the funding opportunity offered through the BSIP submission could enable funding to deliver Phase A to meet this timescale. In addition, the current business case work has not identified a demand for the full Mass Transit scheme at this point in time, and this will be dependent on the delivery of future elements of the regeneration programme. As such, any funding application for the 'full' Mass Transit scheme at this stage is likely to be unsuccessful.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 'Mass Transit' is defined as any transport system or mode which can move lots of people across a city or town and neighbouring areas. Mass Transit often refers to a high-quality public transport mode providing regular frequency, high capacity, and highly legible services (often with instantly recognisable branding and distinct routes with clearly defined interchange points). Importantly Mass Transit can be formed of one or more of a number of potential modes (from a rubber-tyred bus to a steel-wheeled tram or tram-train), each with their own levels of guidance, propulsion, power and segregation but can also include ferries and cycling. The Government Gear Change Cycling Strategy published in July 2020 noticeably identified cycling as a form of mass transit.
- 3.2 A high-quality mass transit service that attracts users must take into account the following key factors:
- Road space priority – successful services offer advantageous and predictable journey times when compared with car journeys;
 - Service information – static and live information for users;
 - Ticketing – simple payment methods and integrated ticketing structure;
 - Connections with other services – integration where possible;
 - Air quality and emissions – reducing emissions e.g. electric buses or hydrogen buses;
 - Network and service branding – comprehensive identity;
 - Funding and legal – collaborative working across partners with robust governance and financial management; and
 - Data sharing and analysis – user and performance data to inform service changes.
- 3.3 A Mass Transit network for the 'Left Bank' area of the borough, centred on Birkenhead town centre, Wirral Waters and Seacombe has been discussed for several years and is recognised as an important facility in enabling sustainable regeneration within Wirral. As part of the transport strategy to support the Wirral Waters development, Peel has developed a concept known as Streetcar, which is proposed to use lightweight tram vehicles to connect the development with the existing Merseyrail network.

Local Transport and Economic Context

- 3.4 Wirral, and the Left Bank area, is served by the highly successful Merseyrail network, the original mass transit network in the borough. However, the majority of the area of focus is only served peripherally by Merseyrail to the south and a large central area encompassing Wirral Waters, Seacombe and Liscard, is not served by Merseyrail at all. Wirral Waters sits on the periphery of Birkenhead, close by, but slightly disconnected at a relatively modest distance away and currently without legible means of connection. It is long established that a priority of the Wirral Waters is to prioritise means to access the Merseyrail network (for onward connections to Liverpool, the rest of Wirral and beyond), as well as access to Birkenhead.
- 3.5 Wirral Waters sits between Birkenhead and New Brighton, Wallasey, Seacombe and Liscard all of which have regular bus connections through the Wirral Waters site. Throughout most of the area unserved by rail, a high frequency bus network operates with routes between New Brighton, Wallasey and Liverpool, between

Birkenhead and Wallasey, and between Birkenhead and Liverpool, all operating at high frequencies. These bus services do not currently serve Wirral Waters well at present with very limited demand and only basic infrastructure provision.

- 3.6 Some areas of the Wirral Waters site are close enough to existing Merseyrail stations to be considered within a typical attractive walking catchment (e.g. less than 800m) but a significant portion of the Left Bank area sits within a challenging distance range between key producers/attractors and Merseyrail interchange, typically at a 1-2km distance which can feel too far to conveniently and regularly walk (for many) but near enough that a normal public transport fare would perhaps be perceived not to represent good value for money.
- 3.7 Wirral Waters represents an extremely large regeneration area and Enterprise Zone and represents a significant proportion of the total new development contained within Wirral's emerging Local Plan for the area. Although at present, the completed development quantum is relatively modest, much of the early development is well advanced in terms of planning and a significant amount of new development is expected to be in place by 2023. Other regeneration sites in the area, such as Hind Street, the Waterfront (incorporating Woodside), Birkenhead town centre, and Hamilton Park, all offer substantial future development prospects over the next few years. New Brighton and Liscard also offer significant opportunity for new housing development over the local plan period and beyond.
- 3.8 The Left Bank area of Wirral provides a combined Housing/Commercial/Tourism offer. Whilst much of the local plan housing allocation in the Left Bank is scheduled to be formed from Wirral Waters residential proposals, the development site also incorporates a significant commercial prospect with much of this clustered on Tower Road, Vittoria Dock to the south and at MEA Park to the west of the area. Major tourism expansions are planned as a result of the Eureka! museum development at Seacombe, the Dock Branch Park, which includes a museum and a substantial public space offer, and at Birkenhead Park and Woodside.
- 3.9 In parallel with the Mass Transit business case development, an Active Travel Strategy is also underway which has identified and made suggestions to address shortfalls in active mode connectivity, provision, facilities and signage in this area. A key interface for the design of the Mass Transit scheme will be in the treatment of on- and off-highway priority solutions as these will need to take full cognisance of the needs of active modes and the outputs from this parallel study.
- 3.10 The above considerations combine to present a particular set of local circumstances that must be fully accounted for in the development of an effective Mass Transit solution for Wirral and the Left Bank area in particular.

Mass Transit Delivery Strategy and Business Case Development

- 3.11 Building on the work produced for the Streetcar system, a wider Mass Transit network for the Left Bank area was a key proposal from the draft Wirral Strategic Transport Framework Action Plan, which identified a pipeline of transport investment priorities across the borough. To progress this, and as part of the supporting work for the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and the emerging Local Plan, Mott MacDonald was commissioned by Spring 2020 to produce a Delivery Strategy for the

identification, design, funding acquisition and delivery of a comprehensive Mass Transit network for Wirral. This is included at Appendix 1.

- 3.12 The Mass Transit Delivery Strategy set out the various stages involved in this process and identified a robust set of tasks to be completed to develop the network and progress towards delivery, and practical timescales to achieve this. This considered that a mass transit network that incorporated Wirral Waters, but also serviced other key regeneration zones within Birkenhead town centre, and extended north and south to some of the more transport deprived residential communities in areas such as Seacombe and south of Birkenhead town centre, would be of enormous benefit to the regeneration of Wirral as a whole.
- 3.13 A mass transit network is considered to be needed due to the absence of feasible high-quality public transport alternatives in large parts of the borough and including several key regeneration zones. In some cases, such as Wirral Waters, there is a need to overcome an existing impasse in which large-scale development, in large and predominantly vacant areas currently unserved by public transport, is challenging due to sustainable accessibility concerns, but at the same time provision of public transport has not been previously considered feasible due to lack of demonstrable demand. A further historical barrier to development of a high-quality mass transit public transport solution, has been the lack of an identified funding source and/or financing package for the scheme.
- 3.14 In Autumn 2020, Mott MacDonald was further commissioned by the Council to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Wirral Mass Transit Network. This work is ongoing and to support this work a project team was established, formed of representatives from Wirral Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Peel Land & Property. The commission considered two phases:
- Delivery of a Wirral Mass Transit system focusing initially on supporting access to Wirral Waters at North Bank/Tower Road (Phase A). Phase A was agreed by the project team as requiring to be in place by Autumn 2023 to meet the needs of the occupiers of the new developments along Northbank, such as Legacy; and
 - Delivery of an 'Ultimate' Network, extending the outputs of Phase A, to serve the wider Left Bank area, including areas to the south of Birkenhead (Tranmere and Rock Ferry) and to the north of Wirral Waters (Seacombe, Liscard and New Brighton), as well as other areas within Wirral Waters.
- 3.15 An important point to note, however, is that as part of the options appraisal work the identification of the Phase A mode would not prejudice the mode for the ultimate scheme.
- 3.16 The first stage of the business case process would ordinarily be to complete a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC); however, due to the significant amount of work already undertaken through the development of the previous work completed by both Wirral Council and Peel Land and Property, many of the Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) requirements for an SOBC have already been fulfilled and therefore it was agreed that the scheme proceeded immediately to OBC stage for the initial phase of the Wirral Mass Transit Network. There was, however, a requirement to 'fill gaps' between the requirements for an SOBC and OBC, and this required the completion of three accelerated studies:

- Funding and Finance study looked at ways in which funding and revenue can be generated for the scheme and the various options for financing this;
- Demand Study looked at the potential demand that may be generated to use the proposed network in terms of current and newly generated development trips; and
- Options Appraisal Report (OAR) which forms a key initial stage of the Outline Business Case process and provides a comprehensive and clear answer on the ultimate preferred option for the Wirral Mass Transit Network, in terms of mode, route choice and type of system. The OAR also facilitates the progression of multiple dependent stages of work including a parallel Engineering Study and the other OBC components in progress.

Emerging Study Outputs-Evidence Review

3.17 The business case work collected during the initial Stage 1 (Accelerated Studies) workstreams, and the analysis and appraisal work undertaken, have allowed the project team to form a preferred scheme for a preferred mass transit solution in Wirral. This is summarised as follows:

3.18 Objectives:

The Mass Transit system for Wirral's Left Bank area should:

- Generate inward investment to the area;
- Generate sufficient capacity to support planned economic development, creating new transport capacity to serve development sites currently underserved by the existing network;
- Increase connectivity to, from and within the area;
- Provide attractive, sustainable alternatives to the private car;
- Integrate with, and complement, existing modes of transport including Merseyrail, local bus services, and walking and cycling networks;
- Improve safety, and the perception of safety, for people travelling within the area; and
- Engender transformational change in the quality of environment and the means of movement in the area.

3.19 Funding and Finance Study:

- Funding for the ultimate system is likely to be composed of part government funding (potentially devolved to the City Region Combined Authority), part direct City Regional funding, and part local developer, resident or user contributions;
- There is no current funding source identified for the central or regional government grant components (although there may be potential to access funding from the recent Bus Back Better Strategy funding and other potential sources concerned with levelling up and COVID recovery); and
- The local funding component is most likely to be sourced from developer contribution mechanisms as a result of land value uplift associated with the scheme.

3.20 Demand Study:

- Prospective demand numbers for the system are potentially significant but are reliant, in the early years, on established development trips as well as new development. This implies an incremental approach to delivering system capacity is required;
- The demand numbers in the short-term (development build-out up to 2025 – noted as a high side assumption for the targeted delivery date of 2023 for Phase A (short-term)) are capable of being accommodated by a range of modes including bus-sized vehicles on a relatively high frequency, intensive route; and
- An attractive, rubber-tyred transit solution, supported by improvements to walking, cycling, stop environment and public-realm would appear to be very capable of serving the short-term 'Phase A' requirements.

3.21 INSET Sifting:

- The long-term mode appraisal has led to the conclusion that the ultimate mode should be a high-quality, tram-type vehicle, with a Trackless Tram scoring most highly due to flexibility, and relatively advantageous cost and deliverability considerations;
- A fixed tram-link has not been ruled out, but an engineering study is required to understand the relative feasibility of this compared to more flexible modes;
- Removing uncertainty over works required on bridge crossings would be key;
- The long-term routeing appraisal suggests a wider network extending to New Brighton via Liscard, Seacombe Ferry, Cammell Lairds via Hind Street and between Conway Park and Wirral Waters via Dock Branch Park;
- The short-term mode appraisal has found that tram-type modes are not considered to be deliverable to meet short-term timescales of 2022-2023 (to serve new development) and thus a rubber-tyred bus-based solution is more deliverable for this timescale, supported by improvements to walking, cycling, public realm and stop environment;
- The short-term solution should be incrementable, scalable and convertible to the ultimate longer-term solution, with the maximum of efficiency and with investments made in the short-term providing meaningful and long-lasting benefits; and
- The priority linkages for the short-term network include Woodside/Hamilton Square, and Conway Park/Europa Boulevard to Tower Road and Northbank, but should also complement and enhance the existing services that provide access across Wirral Waters towards Seacombe, Liscard and New Brighton, to capitalise on the significant existing bus markets that exist through these corridors and can underpin the early viability of the network.

3.22 **Mass Transit Phase A (Short Term)**

Phase A is envisaged as the first phase of the Wirral Mass Transit system rollout and has been devised to address the requirements of new development likely to be in place by 2023 and shortly thereafter. This new development is, from the demand study work, expected to be concentrated in and around the Northbank and Tower Road areas of Wirral Waters, with the Eureka! museum development at Seacombe and certain new residential and commercial development within Birkenhead town centre and Wallasey. It is proposed that Phase A Mass Transit will include:

- A full re-cast of the existing bus network serving Wirral Waters to create three new bus-based mass transit routes. This would be accompanied by a newly branded network and a new network map and information portfolio;
- New vehicles, currently envisaged to be similar to Belfast Glider although these could incorporate the latest Hydrogen technology currently being procured by Merseytravel for their fleet as a zero-emission solution;
- A series of green Mobility Hubs to replace bus stops within the central part of the network and to provide an elevated, attractive, legible and integrated multi-modal approach to sustainable transport within the area;
- A micro-mobility offer of an e-cycle and potential e-scooter scheme across the Left Bank area, including at the new mobility hubs, with consideration of innovative models of incentivised or subsidised deployment or pricing;
- Public realm, route and signage enhancement linked to the walking and cycling strategy; and
- Elements of on-street transit priority at key pinch points.

3.23 The key concept of Phase A is to provide fully zero emission vehicles that look and feel as high quality as a tram, with easily recognised branding and infrastructure to attract and serve new users effectively. Appendix 2 shows an example of the type of new vehicles that could be dedicated for this purpose, the Glider service provided by Translink in Belfast, as featured in the DfT Bus Back Better – National Bus Strategy for England.

3.24 Work on the development of the business case for the Phase A Mass Transit System is ongoing and completion of the business case is expected in early 2022.

Mass Transit Ultimate Network (Conversion of the Short Term Network)

3.25 During future phases of the Wirral Mass Transit delivery, we envisage that the Phase A system will convert in phases to the ultimate envisaged mode, and the development/expansion of the network, including the use of further key off-street alignments around the network. This is anticipated to commence when the anticipated level of new development/demand becomes certain enough to justify the investment.

3.26 The options appraisal process, for both the modes and routes in all phases, was undertaken using Mott MacDonald's in-house Investment Sifting and Evaluation Tool (INSET), which is based on Green Book compliant Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA). Overarching themes and assessment criteria were agreed by the project team and the sifting process identified Trackless-Tram as the highest scoring mode for the Ultimate Mass Transit Network. This was closely followed by other steel wheeled modes varying in capacity, length and cost characteristics only. The Trackless-Tram represents a rubber-tyred version of a tram, capable of running on highway or dedicated priority running space. Weighting scenarios, where deliverability is weighted more highly, showed that bus-based modes, micro-mobility (e-bicycle/e-scooter) and active travel modes also scored well.

3.27 Further exploration, through the business case process and associated feasibility studies, is required to confirm the preferred mode and routes for the ultimate network solution for Wirral Mass Transit.

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

- 3.28 In February 2020, the Prime Minister announced £5 billion of new funding to overhaul bus and cycle links for every region outside London. This 5-year funding package has subsequently been followed by the launch of a new Cycling Strategy 'Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking' in summer 2020 and a new long-term strategy for buses in England 'Bus Back Better' published by the Department for Transport published in March 2021.
- 3.29 'Bus Back Better', the new long-term strategy for buses sets out the vision and opportunity for delivering improved bus services for passengers across England, with the aim of getting more people travelling by bus, first back to pre-COVID-19 levels and then to exceed these levels, through making 'buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper'. The strategy follows and builds on the Government's February 2020 £5bn commitment to support bus and cycling improvements, with £3bn of this earmarked for improving buses outside of the capital. The remaining £2bn of the government's £5bn 2020 funding commitment is targeted towards greener, active travel, such as walking and cycling.
- 3.30 The £3bn bus funding commitment announced in February 2020 will initially be invested in:
- Supporting new and increased services – with at least £300m of funding to support the sector recovery from the pandemic in 2021/22;
 - Giving Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) the skills and people they need to deliver this strategy – with £25m of the £300m allocated in 2021/22;
 - Bus priority schemes to speed up journeys – with the first schemes delivered in 2021/22; and
 - Accelerating the delivery of zero emission buses with £120m in 2021/22.5
- 3.31 Whilst it has not yet been announced how this funding will be allocated, the 'Bus Back Better' strategy document does set out a series of commitments and plans that LTAs and bus operators must make in order to access the transformational funding from April 2022. As part of this process, the submission of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is required to be submitted by the LCRCA in October 2021. The BSIP requires local transport authorities to work with bus operators to come up with bold plans for improving their local bus services and encouraging more people to use them.
- 3.32 Of particular relevance for the proposed Wirral Mass Transit scheme, the Bus Back Better strategy confirms its support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and other schemes which sit between conventional bus and light rail, citing the opportunity that such schemes offer in bringing the benefits and user experience of light rail but at a much lower cost. The Bus Back Better strategy states:

'BRT could be a game-changer for bus networks... We think Glider-style BRT has great potential, and our ambition is to see the development of proposals for up to five Glider-style systems in England's towns and cities. We will work with local authorities and operators as local Bus Service Improvement Plans are produced to identify potential locations for system trials. These services could be protected from other competition

through bus franchising powers (which are flexible and can cover routes at a local level, not just wider geographies) – so they could be tendered like rail or light rail services.'

- 3.33 Whilst exact details about how the national bus funding will be allocated, and more detailed timescales are yet to be announced, including those aspects specific to the targeted five BRT systems, this funding source appears well-aligned to the proposed Wirral Mass Transit scheme. The project team continues to meet regularly with LCRCA, regarding the allocation and submission requirements to access this funding as part of its BSIP submission in October 2021, to ensure that the Phase A components of the Wirral Mass Transit scheme are suitable for funding and the LCRCA are proposing to include Wirral Mass Transit Phase A within the BSIP to demonstrate the LCRCA's level of ambition in this area.
- 3.34 This fund is less likely to be suitable for future phases of the Wirral Mass Transit solution, given lead times for their development. However, this potential funding source demonstrates the government's ongoing support for BRT schemes, which is an encouraging indication that similar funding pots will be made available in the future which may better suit the timescales for delivery of future phases of the proposed Wirral scheme, and we will continue to monitor this closely.

Programme

- 3.35 The key milestones and headline dates for the Wirral Mass Transit study are currently anticipated to be as follows:
- **September 2021** – appoint Multi-Disciplinary Consultant and Architectural Consultant.
 - **October 2021** – indicative results of Value for Money case of Phase A.
 - **October 2021** – LCRCA to submit Bus Service Improvement Plan to DfT, to include Capital Funding Bid for Phase A.
 - **November 2021** – issue draft Strategic Case for the Ultimate Mass Transit Network.
 - **November 2021** – issue draft Economic, Financial, Commercial and Management Cases for Phase A.
 - **December 2021** – issue final Five Case OBC for Phase A.
 - **October 2021 to January 2022** – Ongoing work to include responses to clarifications from DfT, updates to the Phase A OBC and Ultimate Mass Transit Network Strategic Case, and support with Wirral Council Gateway Submission; and
 - **January 2022 onwards** – further work, as required, through the procurement of the construction contractor and subsequent delivery phases.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The development of the business case work has been funded by the LCRCA. Funding to progress the Engineering Study has been identified through the Capital Programme. No further funding is required at this stage. Any further funding required would be the subject of a future report to Members.
- 4.2 Currently there is no identified funding stream for delivery of Wirral Mass Transit Phase A or 'ultimate network'. However, inclusion within the LCRCA BSIP

submission may provide an opportunity to access funding for Phase A of the Wirral Mass Transit Network.

- 4.3 No information is yet available regarding the capital costs of the short-list of options being considered for either the initial phase (Phase A) or future phases (ultimate network). This detail is currently being developed as part of the Financial Case being prepared for the initial phase (Phase A) of the scheme.
- 4.4 Looking further ahead, an understanding of the capital costs of the proposed options for the ultimate, core mass transit solution will also be required as the future phases of the scheme progress, so that it is possible to ascertain the affordability and true funding requirements of a preferred option for the full scheme. Further work will be required to establish this information.
- 4.5 From the work undertaken to-date it is currently anticipated that the scheme will likely require a funding package based on multiple sources, which could include for example:
- Central government funding;
 - Local government or devolved city region grant funding;
 - Locally raised revenues; and
 - Developer contributions.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has statutory duties as defined by the Highways Act 1980, Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, Road Traffic Act 1988, Local Government Act and the Traffic Management Act 2004. Any Mass Transit System operating on highway would require technical approval by the Interim Assistant Director – Highways & Infrastructure to ensure these statutory duties were complied with.
- 5.2 There are sections of the proposed route and areas where the mobility hubs may be located which are outside the highway boundary and in the ownership of Peel Land and Property. The Council is currently in discussions with Peel Land and Property regarding these sections, which it may be beneficial for the Council to adopt as part of the highway network. A legal process would be required to enable this adoption to take place.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 A joint project team, led by Wirral Council, has been established involving officers from the LCRCA and Peel Land & Property. Existing staff resources across both Neighbourhood Services and Regeneration and Place Directorate will support the development of the project, with additional resource required from specialist transport business case advisors.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failure to agree to the inclusion of the Wirral Mass Transit to be submitted in the LCRCA BSIP could be impact on the successful delivery of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and the emerging Local Plan. Mass Transit is identified as a catalyst project to support regeneration across Left Bank.

- 7.2 Failure to secure funding for delivery of the Mass Transit network. Government strategy supports sustainable travel and increase use of public transport. The 'Bus Back Better' strategy demonstrates the ambition of Government in this area. By advancing business case development it is considered that any future funding bid has a greater chance of success as Government and the LCRCA place a considerable amount of emphasis on assessing funding applications on deliverability.
- 7.3 Failure to secure funding to progress Phase A in the required timescales to meet the occupation of the Northbank developments in Autumn 2023. The Council will work closely with the LCRCA to explore alternative funding opportunities.
- 7.4 Failure to secure support from the stakeholders. Extensive work has been undertaken to date with the LCRCA and wider stakeholders as part of the development of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework. Further work will be undertaken as part of the further business case development.
- 7.5 Failure to secure land required, that is currently outside the adopted highway. The council will continue to negotiate with any landowners to seek agreement that the land will be transferred to the Council for the purpose of the delivery of the Mass Transit System.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Wirral Council has a statutory consultation process that is required for the undertaking of work on the adopted highway which will require public consultation.
- 8.2 Consultations will be undertaken in accordance with the following guiding principles:
- It should be at a time when proposals are at a formative stage;
 - Must include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response;
 - Those consulted should be made aware of the factors that are of decisive relevance to the decision;
 - Adequate time should be given for consideration and response; and
 - The product of the consultation should be conscientiously taken into account by the decision makers in finalising their statutory proposals/ when the ultimate decision is taken.
- 8.3 Detailed engagement has been undertaken in the development of the preferred option including LCRCA and Peel L&P. Both the LCRCA and Peel L&P have attended project team meetings and have actively contributed to the work which has led to the identification of the preferred option for both Phase A and the ultimate network. The project team will continue to meet regularly as we move through the next stages of business case development.
- 8.4 The Wirral Mass Transit project is one of the catalyst projects identified in the Birkenhead 2040 Framework which was consulted on in early 2021. The project was positively received as part of this wider consultation and the development of a project specific public consultation strategy will be undertaken during the next phase of the project.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The Council has an obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty (Sect 149 2011) to show due regard to the duty and show due regard to mitigate any negative impacts that may affect people with protected characteristics under the Act.
- 9.3 Whilst there are no equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from the delivery may need to assess any equality issues and mitigate any negative impact that may emerge.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The project will enable increased numbers of journeys to be undertaken by sustainable modes, therefore reducing resident's reliance on the private car and reducing carbon emissions. Increasing cycling and walking and modal shift to public transport will help combat climate change. By encouraging and enabling people to travel more on foot and by cycle instead of private car harmful emissions will be reduced. Promoting active travel can result in reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter (PM) and CO₂ helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.
- 10.2 The provision of a high-quality public transport scheme will deliver increased levels of sustainable travel required to address the Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.
- 10.3 The provision of a mass transit system will reduce current and future congestion in Wirral. By reducing standing traffic, there will be reductions in Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter (PM) and CO₂ compared to the 'Do Nothing' scenario.
- 10.4 Wirral Mass Transit seeks to address issues with integration between modes by improving the interchange and better linking key hubs such as rail and bus stations to residential areas and employment sites. Making public transport more attractive is key to enabling modal shift.
- 10.5 Providing a holistic network, by integrating with other modes of transport and active travel, should make non-car journeys more efficient and viable. By reducing the number of private vehicles on the road, the network carrying capacity will increase and public transport can run efficiently and punctually which will improve the utility and attractiveness of the public transport network to residents, commuters, and visitors alike.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Mass Transit System is a catalyst project within the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and emerging Local Plan. In this context it is part of a wider regeneration programme to deliver a prosperous, inclusive economy to benefit local residents.
- 11.2 The Consultant commissioned to undertake the development of the OBC has produced a social value plan and is committed to working with the Council. This plan is provided at Appendix 3.
- 11.3 The project supports the reduction in energy consumption as it will support the Cool 2 target of 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.
- 11.4 Through any future procurement exercises we will be looking to maximise further social value activity through creation of local employment and training.

REPORT AUTHOR: Julie Barnes
(Julie Barnes, Strategic Transport Infrastructure - Lead Commissioner - Transport and Tech)
telephone: 0151 606 2365
email: juliebarnes@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Wirral Mass Transit Delivery Strategy
- Appendix 2 Belfast Glider Vehicle, Stop Infrastructure and Road-Space Allocation
- Appendix 3 Mott MacDonald Social Value Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Plan 2025
[Wirral Plan 2025 - Wirral Intelligence Service](#)

Gear Change Plan for Cycling and Walking – Department for Transport July 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>

Bus Back Better – Department for Transport March 2021
[Bus Back Better \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Birkenhead 2040 Framework
[Birkenhead 2040 Framework | www.wirral.gov.uk](#)

Draft Wirral Strategic Transport Framework Action Plan 2018
[Draft Wirral Strategic Transport Framework Action Plan 2018 | www.wirral.gov.uk](#)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
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None	
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