

TR040011 Portishead Branch Line (MetroWest Phase 1)

Application by North Somerset District Council for an Order Granting Development Consent

Additional Submission to the Planning Inspector by the Portishead Busway campaign Ref:20025232

At the hearing on 12th January 2021 James Willcock of North Somerset Council stated that a bus service was not suitable instead of trains because the journey time by bus was 1 hour, whereas by train it was 23 minutes.

This may have been correct when consideration was given as to how best to provide a service from Portishead initially. However that was 20 years ago and there have been many changes to infrastructure since then. The Avon Motorway bridge has been made into four lanes and is a “smart” motorway now. Bus priority measures have been installed on the Portway as part of the Portway park and Ride. £310m has been spent on the Greater Bristol Bus Network and the Metrobus.

Supposing a bus lane was laid along the disused rail track from Quays Avenue Portishead, to Junction 19 and the M5 northbound. Buses would cross the river on the motorway, possibly using a bus lane, and take the first exit (Avonmouth), and the priority bus lane along Portway. Then head to Temple Meads using the Metrobus route.

At present the X5 bus is scheduled to take 36 minutes, during the rush hour, to go from Sainsburys in Portishead to the Bus station in Bristol. A bus from the Portway park and ride is scheduled to take 18 minutes during the rush hour to reach Temple Meads. The distance from Quay's Avenue to the Portway Park and Ride is 6 miles. At 30mph this should take 12 minutes. A total of 30 minutes from Portishead to Temple meads.

This is slightly longer than the planned train time but buses can both start and end their journeys elsewhere. A bus that starts at the far end of Portishead and goes into the centre of Bristol may well be a more attractive commute than a car to the station and a long walk from Temple meads.

The cost of laying a single track bus lane for 3.65km from Quay's Avenue to Junction 19 would be under £2m. This does not include the purchase of the track from Portbury station to junction 19 which the Council does not own. I suggest that this bus lane could be created for under £10m.

It is a requirement that the proposal be assessed for both climate change and best solution. The changes to our roads since this was done mean there are compelling reasons for these assessments to be carried out again.

1. The best way to reduce CO₂ emissions is not to burn the fuel. The work required to

reinstate the railway, at £116m, will clearly burn far more fuel than £10m of work to provide a bus service.

2. £10m to provide a service is clearly better than £116m for the taxpayer.
3. Buses can offer a better service because they can start and end their journeys wherever there is a suitable road.
4. There will only be one train an hour, but a bus could run every few minutes if there was enough demand. It will cost another £55m to increase the frequency of trains.
5. Provision of a new bus lane would allow a direct service to Cribbs Causeway and via the Metrobus routes services to other parts of Bristol, such as the University of the West of England and Emersons Green. Trains can't do this.

By Barry Cash 23.1.21