

Integrated Transport Thematic Group Meeting

Wednesday 13th January 2011, 10am, Committee Room 1

Attendance

Chair: Cllr Martin Forshaw (WLBC), Ian Gill (WLBC), Gillian Whitfield (WLBC), Ashley Weir (LCC), Denise Nowell (LCC), Roger Bell (OPSTA), Steve Coveney (CLPCT), Dominic Carr (WLBC), Martin Trengove (CVS) Tim Gornall (LCC),

1. Apologies

Tony Moreton (LCC), Andrew Varley (LCC), Geoff Wilding (Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust), , Francis Carragher (Edge Hill), Peter Blakey (WLBC), Richard Watts (LCC), Greg Swift (WLCVS)

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting on the 16 June 2010 were agreed as an accurate record

3. Matters Arising

- Skelmersdale rail link business case development.

Dominic Carr gave an update regarding the progress on the proposed rail link to Skelmersdale. He advised that since the last meeting Council officers had progressed work on the project. Consultants Steer Davies Gleave were appointed in June 2010 to conduct a feasibility study to investigate if there is a case for further investment. He also explained that the proposed rail link has been highlighted for the proposed Local Transport Plans for Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester due to be published in April. He explained that Council officers are awaiting the completion of the report by the consultants and when this work has been completed the Council will prepare a report to make all Members aware of the findings. Lancashire County Council and Merseytravel have agreed pay for additional work to be completed. This additional work known as a Guide to Rail Improvement Projects (GRIP) examines the costs of proposed routes in more detail. For any scheme to be taken forward by the DfT they must go through this GRIP process.

Action- When the Feasibility Study has been published a report be taken to Member's explaining the results of the report

4. New item- Community Rail Designation of the Preston to Ormskirk Line

Ian Gill gave an overview explaining that the DfT were looking to designate the Ormskirk to Preston line as a Community Rail Line but that due to a lack of support by some parties the DfT have withdrawn from the designation. Ian explained that this matter has gone on for some time and that the Borough Council remains very supportive. After initial concerns were raised by OPSTA and some Parish Council's, discussions have taken place which have been positive and hopefully will help move this forward. Ian explained that the DfT will reconsider the designation of the line if objections to the scheme are removed.

Roger Bell the chairman of OPSTA discussed the history of the designation explaining why OPSTA have objected. Roger also explained that OPSTA still do not believe that designation offers any real improvements and that West Lancashire Borough Council and Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council need to play a more engaging role in the future. He explained that OPSTA are planning to conduct a ballot of their members to consider removing their objection to the designation. He stressed that this is not an endorsement.

Ian Gill agreed that by removing their objection the designation is more likely to come forward, however this does not guarantee the designation will happen.

Roger Bell also expressed concern regarding LCC's commitment to West Lancashire and the Ormskirk to Preston and Southport to Manchester rail lines. Roger also said that until West Lancashire and Sefton are more vocal it will be difficult to get improvements on these lines.

Ian Gill strongly disagreed and said that he does not believe LCC are anti West Lancashire and that they have worked well with West Lancashire on several projects.

Roger Bell said that he supports the Council's detailed response to the Lancashire Local Transport Plan 3, although he is concerned that LCC do not prioritise rail in West Lancashire.

Ian Gill does not accept this view but accepts Rogers's comments.

Tim Gormall said that as he is not directly involved with rail provision and cannot comment on behalf of the County Council.

5. Action plan progress: review and update

As agreed at the last meeting Densie Nowell has been forwarding copies of Bus Service Changes to Dominic Carr who forwards them on to all Councillors.

Roger Bell explained that he would like to see a scheme set up on the Ormskirk-Preston line promoting Ormskirk as an attraction similar to the scheme on the Southport to Manchester line promoting Southport as a destination.

Tim Gormall explained that the public transport budget is under review. He advised of the withdrawal of the 315 service from Ormskirk to Southport. He explained that as the revenue to cost ratio is 18% it falls well below the 40% required. The main impact of this cut on residents will be in Downholland, Barton, Haskayne and Shirdley Hill travelling to Southport.

Chair confirmed that this is disappointing but that the Council will make required comments. However he understands that the service needs to meet the required criteria.

Roger Bell to attend meeting with Merseytravel to push for marketing strategy for rail info in West Lancs

6. Update on Phoenix Business Plan Development

Dominic Carr explained that following on from the last meeting a report was taken to Cabinet in November 2010 and it was agreed that WLBC officers would approach officers at LCC to investigate whether an alternative scheme was viable. County Council agreed to this request and officers originally looked at possible alternative schemes to the Phoenix Bus, however, it was decided that due to the high set up and running costs there was no scope to carry forward such a scheme. Therefore they are examining the possibility of a Demand Responsive Transport System. To date officers have contacted and obtained figures for the Skelmersdale Job Centre Plus who have agreed that they believe there is a real issue that local residents cannot access the industrial estates in Skelmersdale due a lack of suitable transport. He explained that this system would operate on a demand responsive basis involving the use of taxis/minibuses as appropriate and that as the system would not require permanent vehicles there would be reduced running costs. He explained that they were hoping to get a pilot scheme running by summer which would demonstrate whether this scheme was viable or not.

Action- Offices to continue to work with LCC to investigate the alternative Demand Responsive Transport System and that when a pilot scheme is ready to be up and running a report be taken to Cabinet to seek authorisation for funding

7. Information Exchange

Nothing to report

8. Any Other Business

Ian Gill explained that Council officers have been looking into the possibility of introducing a 'Wheels to Work' scheme within Skelmersdale. However after initial investigations officers have discovered that many schemes in the North West have failed due to a lack of available funding. Officers believe that operating the scheme with the use of scooters is unviable and may present specific operational problems within Skelmersdale. However they do believe that a scheme involving cycles may be viable.

Tim Gormall and Denise Nowell to look into wheels to work project and feed back to group.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Meeting to be scheduled after summer.

Action- Dominic Carr to schedule the next meeting