



Transport Activists' Roundtable

North West

www.nwtar.org.uk

NW TAR CORE GROUP

Convenor:

LILLIAN BURNS

Director, TravelWatch NorthWest/
VSNW representative on 4 NW's
Regional Transport Group/
CPRE NW Regional Group
25 Heybridge Lane,
Prestbury Cheshire SK10 4ES
t: 01625 829492
f: 01625 828015
e: BrLln@aol.com

Members:

PETER COLLEY

Federation of Cumbrian Amenity
Societies/ NW Association of Civic
Trusts/Friends of the Lake District
12 Rawes Garth
Staveley Cumbria LA8 9QH
t: 01539 821629
e: colleygarth@btopenworld.com

JANET CUFF

Ramblers Association/ CPRE
33 Tatton Road North
Stockport SK4 4QX
t: 0161 431 7654
e: Janet.Cuff@talktalk.net

ADRIAN DUNNING

NW Association of Civic Trusts
11 Crombouke Fold, Worsley
Manchester M28 1ZE
t: 0161 790 9507
e: ajdunning@gmail.com

SANDRA DUTSON

NW TAR Treasurer/ Road Peace
18 Trafalgar Road
Salford M6 8JD
t: 0161 707 3546
e: smdutson@btinternet.com

FRANK KENNEDY

Friends of the Earth
60 Duke St Liverpool L1 5AA
t: 0151 707 4328
e: frankk@foe.co.uk

MELANIE JEFFS

Development Officer,
Greater Manchester
Transport Resource Unit
GMCVO, St. Thomas Centre
Ardwick Green North
Manchester M12 6FZ
t: 0161 277 1000
e: melanie.jeffs@gmcvo.org.uk

Our postal address is:
c/o Greater Manchester
Transport Resource Unit
St. Thomas Centre
Ardwick Green North
Manchester M12 6FZ

Mr. Michael Gallagher,
Director of Planning, Transport & Housing,
4NW,
Wigan Investment Centre, Wigan, WN3 5BA.

Thursday, February 19th, 2009

Dear Michael,

4NW Regional Transport Group member comments on draft RFA2 advice

Following the last meeting of the 4NW Regional Transport Group, it was agreed that members of that group would be given the opportunity to comment upon the draft Regional Funding Advice which was being tabled to the 4NW Leaders Forum. Although this draft advice was only circulated some 48 hours before it is due to be decided upon, giving a wholly inadequate time frame, I still wish to take advantage of the opportunity. My comments are as follows:-

1. The 4NW Leaders Forum are invited to choose between two options – one of which involves deferring the start of one Highways Agency's scheme, the A57/A628 Mottram-Tintwistle Bypass (and the associated local authority scheme, the Glossop Spur) by more than three years from the scheduled start date and one of which involves deferring Mottram-Tintwistle Bypass for three years, plus two other higher rated schemes for shorter periods, ie. the A5036 Access to the Port of Liverpool (by two years) and the A556 (M6 to M56) Improvement (by one year). Both deferment options are recognised as being risky because of the inflation cost increases that would be incurred.

The RFA paper acknowledges that the Mottram-Tintwistle Bypass is the weakest of the Highways Agency's schemes in terms of strategic justification and points to the fact that *"it will have a significant impact on the natural environment"*. And it highlights the inexorable rise in costs. It says it:

- *"is not part of a strategic route improvement" and "represents a local bypass"**
- *"is not a priority for either the Northern Way Growth Strategy or the 2006 RES"**
- *"may conflict with the provisions of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and Planning Policy Statement 7"*
- has escalated in cost by 141% to a *"central estimate of £270 m"*., ie. by £158m., in two and half years. (However, it could in fact - based on the quoted official figures - rise by a further £45 m. to £315 m). *

* (Quotes and figures from pages 5, 53 & 54 of the 4NW RFA2 advice paper)

Bearing in mind the lack of a robust case for this scheme, the increasingly poor value for money it represents, the fact that the route only carries 10,000 vehicles per day (2001 & 2007 figures) and the fall in HGV numbers from 28% in 2002 to 17% in 2007, it is perfectly valid to put forward the proposition that there should be a third option tabled, ie. removing this scheme from the RFA listing. By doing so, the over-budgeting would be addressed in one fell swoop. The region needs to defer £208.5 m. and to find an extra £7.1 m. for Metrolink Phase 3. The lowest outturn cost of the Mottram-Tintwistle scheme is £223 m.

continued ...

2. Although abandoning the HA's Mottram-Tintwistle Bypass (and Tameside's Glossop Spur) ought to be a serious contender for a solution to the over-budgeting problem, it is not an 'official' option that has been placed before the Leaders Forum for consideration. It is to be hoped that they do consider it, but there is no guarantee that they will.

Option A appears to be a politically-sensitive way of making the delivery of the Mottram-Tintwistle Bypass less certain. The longer the delay before it could start, the greater the cost increases for this very environmentally damaging scheme. The fact of the matter is that it does contravene the statutory purposes of the National Park and there are other more sustainable – and cheaper - ways of tackling the problems of the area, many of which are due to locally generated traffic.

In the event of it not being scrapped, a significant delay to this scheme could be supported in the hope that before it could be delivered thinking would change and alternative proposals put forward by the A57-A628 Corridor Alliance, of which the North West Roundtable is a part, would be properly and fully tested and, hopefully, endorsed.

3. Option B is the least favoured option because it makes assumptions about the economic importance and the priority rating of the three Highway Agency schemes, without adequate and robust evidence to back those assumptions.

All of the three schemes have sustainable development implications. Page 8 of the RFA2 report points out that since the RFA listing was drawn up, the North West Climate Change Action Plan has been launched and also climate change has become an EU priority. The report does not mention the Climate Change Bill. It should. It does, however, mention the DfT's latest report *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System* which particularly emphasises the need to tackle CO2 emissions.

Providing more road capacity generates more traffic movements and they create more harmful emissions. It is hard to see how building both the A57/A628 Mottram-Tintwistle Bypass (which, as described on pages 52 and 53 of the report includes a link road to the A57) and the Glossop Spur will alleviate the air pollution problems in the Longendale Valley. Similarly, the A556 (M6 to M56) would be anything but an 'Environmental Improvement' (as its title claims) because, amongst other things, it would add to the problems of the Air Quality Management Areas already declared in the immediate vicinity. Meanwhile, no economic impact assessment has been carried out for the A556 scheme and yet it is being widely asserted that it would produce significant economic benefits. Nor have all other options been explored first – as required under the NATA appraisal process – including proposals that came out of the MIDMAN Multi-Modal Study for heavy and light rail improvements/ extensions in the same corridor.

Any delay to any of the road schemes in the RFA listing would be supportable simply because delays always present the opportunity for reflection and re-evaluation. But, basically, the RFA process has again been too rushed and insufficiently transparent. Important decisions that will affect many people's lives are being based upon assertions and insufficient evidence and inadequate emphasis is being placed upon climate change and the need to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions. This is not good enough and the process must improve in future.

I would be grateful if these comments can be passed on to the 4NW Leaders Forum. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

LILLIAN BURNS

Convenor, North West Transport Roundtable/ VSNW rep. on the 4NW Regional Transport Group