

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY STEERING GROUP (RTSSG)
MINUTES OF THE 24th MEETING
TUESDAY 13 March 2009, 2.00PM - Room 601c, Clarence Court.

Present:

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| Geoff Allister | Chief Executive, Roads Service – Joint Chairperson |
| Doreen Brown | Deputy Secretary, Regional Planning and Transportation – Joint Chairperson |
| Jim Aiken | Director of Corporate Affairs, Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) |
| Bob Cairns | Director, Engineering, Roads Service |
| Tom Clarke | Planning Service (Department of the Environment) |
| Ciarán de Búrca | Director, Rapid Transit Division |
| Catherine Mason | Group Chief Executive, NITHC Translink |
| Andrew Murray | Director, Network Services, Roads Service |
| Philip O’Neill | Acting Chief Executive, Translink |
| Mike Thompson | Director, Regional Planning & Transportation |
| Brian White | Director, Ports and Public Transport |

In attendance:

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|-------------|-------------------|
| John Irvine | Roads Service |
| Tom McCourt | Roads Service |
| Gregor Kerr | RTSSG Secretariat |

ACTION

1. Apologies

Frank Clegg, Translink; Ciaran Doran, Public Transport Performance Division

Ciarán de Búrca, the new Director of the Rapid Transit Division, was welcomed to the group.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting of were agreed.

3. Matters Arising not covered in Agenda

- i. Sub-Regional Transport Plan Partnership Board – safety concerns over parking at / near well used Goldliner stops. John Irvine reported that he had passed these concerns on to teams who would deal with them at the local level.

4. Public Transport Partnership Board Update

- i. Park and Ride
Philip O’Neill highlighted the PTPB’s concerns over the achievement of the Park and Ride targets in the Transport Plans. Of the 6500 spaces to be created in the Belfast area, 2000 had been created to date (from a base of 1200 in

2002). Outside Belfast, 1500 spaces had been created against a target of 3000. On some arterial routes, large Park and Ride sites may not proceed meaning that some corridors will be better served by Park and Ride than others. NITHC and Road Service are both facing capital pressures which may further affect their ability to deliver Park and Ride schemes.

Tom McCourt reported that the Department of Finance and Personnel had approved the Cairnshill Park and Ride Business Case. Roads Service will now seek tenders for the work and seek the necessary funding. If funding is secured, work could start in August 2009 to be complete in the Spring of 2010.

Brian White said that he would need to know the extent and timing of QBC from Cairnshill P&R to the City Centre before going to tender for services.

It was agreed that the PTPB should consider possibilities to exploit the Millmount Park and Ride site as a conventional bus-based Park and Ride in the interim before Rapid Transit is introduced.

**Philip
O'Neill
Tom
McCourt**

ii. Sprucefield / Black's Road

Tom McCourt said that temporary planning permission had been received that would allow the Sprucefield site to continue for the next year. Discussions were continuing with the developer and Planning Service about the future, permanent location of a P&R site at Sprucefield.

At Black's Road, the site was already owned by DRD and the service would continue. Since the re-opening of the Westlink, the site remained at 85% capacity, indicating that people's travel habit may have changed to include a P&R element to their journeys.

iii. Quality Bus Corridors

The Group discussed progress on the QBC programme. There had been an increase in average bus speed on QBCs for 2008 compared to 2007. This may have been artificially high as some schools were off when the speeds were measured. The overall trend, however, remained downward with 2008 speeds below 2006. John Irvine said that this decrease in average bus speed reflected a general decrease in traffic speeds.

The group's consensus was that this downward trend was neither desirable nor acceptable. Following discussion of possible options, the group agreed that the Public Transport Partnership Board should be asked to examine the effects of creating an "end to end" QBC with bus lanes from Cairnshill park and Ride to the City Centre along the Saintfield and Lower Ormeau Roads. This should include all the benefits, disbenefits, costs and the degree of modal shift which could be achieved by creating such a QBC.

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Tom
McCourt**

Given the budgetary constraints that the Department is facing, the study should also provide a comparison with a range of other options to match resources. It should allow RTSSG to determine the affordability and desirability of an "end to end" QBC approach before seeking Ministerial approval for such an approach. The group agreed that ideally QBC measures

serving Cairnshill would be in place before the P&R site opened although it was acknowledged that this would be difficult to achieve.

iv. Glengall Street

Catherine Mason asked about progress on the Road Traffic Order which would make the City Centre end of Glengall Street one-way and facilitate Ulsterbus services from the Europa Bus Station. Philip O'Neill said that Road Service was working with objectors to have the objections withdrawn.

6. Other RTS Issues

i. Accessible Transport Strategy

Mike Thompson said that the Regional Development Committee had been briefed on the draft Action Plan which was now in the Executive cycle. Following Executive approval, the draft would be published for public consultation.

ii. Rapid Transit

Ciarán de Búrca said that since taking up his post as Director he had been meeting with key stakeholders, including Translink, Road Service and the East and West Belfast Partnership Boards. The challenge of delivering Rapid Transit could be considered under four headings.

- i. Infrastructure – given that some anticipated development in Dundonald and at Glenmonagh may not proceed as had been anticipated, the team were re-examining route options for East and West Belfast. Initial plans for Rapid Transit in the City Centre had been prepared but issues around priority for public transport and shared kerbside space would have to be resolved. The future expansion of the network beyond the pilot routes was also being considered. The need for an accurate, up to date transport model for Belfast, which could be used for all City Centre transportation schemes, was highlighted.
- ii. Vehicle – a distinctive, tram-like vehicle would be required. Design consultants would be retained to design a Rapid Transit Vehicle for Belfast.
- iii. Legislation – the team were working with the Departmental Solicitor's Office to determine what primary and / or sub-ordinate legislation would be required to operate a BRT system in Belfast.
- iv. Operator – the Strategic Investment Board and KPMG were carrying out a market testing for Rapid Transit.

iii. RTS Review

Mike Thompson said that the Discussion Paper had been revised following NITHCo and Road Service comment. It had been discussed by the Integrated Transport Stakeholder Group and the Regional Development Committee and was now in the Executive cycle. Once the Executive approve the Document, the Minister will make a Statement on it in the Assembly.

The Review team will continue to meet with key stakeholders as a draft

Revised Strategy is prepared. The team aim to publish the draft for public consultation before the summer.

7. AOB

Local Transport Plans

Philip O'Neill said that NITHCo / Translink had been approached by ILEX about the transport plan they had prepared. It was noted that a number of similar "Local Transport Plans" are being produced by community and other groups.

Both Translink / NITHCo and Road Service had provided input to ILEX in the preparation of their Transport Plan and it was agreed that it would be beneficial to see the final version. The group noted, however, that the Department remains committed to the three plans prepared to implement the RTS; the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan and the Sub-Regional Transport Plan.

8. Date for next meeting

9 June 2009 at 2.00

20 October 2009 at 2.00

Gregor Kerr
Secretary RTSSG
Regional Planning and Transportation Division

March 2009