

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY STEERING GROUP (RTSSG)

MINUTES OF THE 20th MEETING

Tuesday 5 February 10.00AM - Room 605, Clarence Court.

Present:

Mr Geoff Allister	Acting Chief Executive, Roads Service – Joint Chairperson
Mrs Doreen Brown	Deputy Secretary, Regional Planning and Transportation – Joint Chairperson
Mr Philip O'Neill	Acting Chief Executive, Translink
Mr Jim Aiken	Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company
Mr Brian White	Director of Ports and Public Transport
Dr Andrew Murray	Director of Network Services, Roads Service
Mr Bob Cairns	Director of Engineering, Roads Service
Mr David Carson	Public Transport Performance Division
Mr Mike Thompson	Director, Regional Planning and Transportation Division

In attendance:

Mr John Irvine	Roads Service
Mr Kevin Monaghan	Roads Service
Mr Gregor Kerr	Regional Planning & Transportation - Secretary

ACTION

1. Apologies

Mr Tom McCourt, Mr Frank Clegg, Mr Pat McBride.

Mr Allister asked that Mr O'Neill convey the group's congratulations to Mr Clegg on his receipt of an MBE in the New Year's Honours List

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the nineteenth RTSSG meeting of 11 September 2007 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising not covered in Agenda

None

4. BMTP

i. Public Transport Partnership Board Update

RTSSG 20/01 plus QBC Tracker.

QBC Programme

The group discussed the QBC Delivery Programme update. Mr O'Neill said that the QBC programme remains on track and that, where bus priority measures have been implemented, Translink data suggest that passenger numbers are strong. Other major schemes (M1/Westlink) have had an impact on bus speeds and journey times. Mr O'Neill said that more innovative solutions would be needed to guarantee journey times into the city centre.

Mr Thompson noted that overall bus speeds were falling and asked if a comparison could be given to car journey speed to see the relative change. Mr Irvine said that Queen's University were carrying out a study on the Newtownards Road QBC and that this should be available in March.

It was agreed that it was still difficult to gauge whether progress was on target. A report of progress against the QBC programme, including an indication of necessary changes to the programme and Budget impacts, will be presented to the next meeting.

**Philip O'Neill /
Tom McCourt /
Kevin Monaghan**

City Centre Traffic Management Project

Mr Monaghan said that the Feasibility Options Report for the City Centre, being prepared by Arups, would be submitted to the Roads Service Board in February and that the Preliminary Options Study on the City Centre Ring (Southern Section), being prepared by Owen Williams, is nearing completion.

The importance of a joined-up approach, with involvement from all of the key stakeholders in the city centre, including rapid transit and public transport in general, was stressed. It was reported that representatives of Translink, Ports and Public Transport Division and Regional Planning and Transportation Division participate on the City Centre Change Working Group. Translink is also represented on the Traffic Management Project Working Group.

Park and Ride

Planning Service's minute on parking enforcement, RTSSG M20/03, was noted. Mr Allister will raise the issue again at the next Roads Service / Planning Service joint Directorate meeting.

The high level of use of the Sprucefield and Blacks Road Park and Ride schemes was noted and its future beyond the M1 / Westlink scheme discussed. The group agreed that the

Department should support the use of Park and Ride as a sustainable transport alternative to reduce city centre congestion.

It was agreed that Terms of Reference for a project to consider maintaining the two Park and Ride should be prepared and submitted to RTSSG chairs by end February 2008.

**Tom McCourt /
Kevin Monaghan**

Funding of Cairnshill Park and Ride

Mr White confirmed that the final Budget 2008-2011 does not include funding for a Park and Ride service at Cairnshill until year three (2010-2011).

Having clarified Translink's position, Mr O'Neill and Mr Aiken withdrew from the room to allow discussion.

Following discussions of the options, it was agreed that a working group, convened by Brian White and with Roads Service nominees, will give further consideration to the issue, particularly the three options:

Brian White

1. deferral of opening;
2. a "no-cost" service provided by Translink; and
3. offering the provision of Park and Ride services to the market.

The working group will report its recommendation to the RTSSG chairs by the end of February 2008.

Mr O'Neill and Mr Aiken rejoined the group.

5. Other RTS Issues

i. RTS Review

Mr Thompson updated the group on the RTS Review. Mr Aiken noted that the timescale for the Review was ambitious, particularly given the likely stakeholder interest. Mr Thompson explained that the timescale was planned to allow the Review to inform the next Comprehensive Spending Review Cycle.

It was suggested that the Review extend the RTS to 2018 to match the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland funding period.

Mrs Brown said that there was already political interest in the review with a recent debate on the split of funding allocations between highways and public transport. The Regional Development Committee was also very keen to be involved in the review process.

ii. Rapid Transit Feasibility Study

Mr Thompson reported that the study was complete and that the report would be presented to the Minister in the next 1-2 weeks. To inform the Minister's decision making, a study visit had been arranged to Rapid Transit Systems in the Netherlands.

Mr Thompson said that a dedicated project team would be required to deliver Rapid Transit.

Mr O'Neill and Mr Aiken asked about the City Centre issues. Mr Thompson replied that the current team was represented on the City Centre Change Working Group and that all necessary protection had been applied for through the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.

iii. Sub-Regional Transport Partnership Board

It was reported that the SRTPB was functioning well and that there was good engagement between Roads Service and Translink at the operational level.

iv. Draft Budget

Mr Carson reported that there were high capital allocations allowing the purchase of 13 replacement and 7 new trains, as well as allowing the Coleraine to Londonderry track relay to start in 2011 and for a Ballymena – Coleraine track life extension.

The revenue allocations, however, were disappointing and could result in cost pressures for Translink.

It was agreed that care should be taken to avoid major road works occurring on routes at the same time as bus substitutions on rail lines.

**Mr O'Neill
John White**

7. AOB

8. Dates for next meetings

The following dates were agreed:

- 12 June at 10.00am;
- 9 September at 2.00pm; and
- 9 December at 2.00pm.

**Gregor Kerr
Secretary RTSSG
Regional Planning and Transportation Division**