



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Rapid Transit Study Presentation from DRD
Date:	9 April 2008
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Relevant Background Information

In early 2007, the Department of Regional Development, Regional Planning and Transportation Unit commissioned a study into Rapid Transit schemes for the Belfast Metropolitan Area. The remit of the study was to consider pilot routes for Belfast in particular the proposed EWAY and CITI schemes. The study is nearing completion and representatives of DRD will be in attendance to present the main findings to the Committee.

Key Issues

The aim of the DRD Rapid Transit study was to carry out further analysis of possible route options and the most appropriate type of technology for the development of the system. The findings from the study will inform the work of DRD in relation to securing approval for the project and making submissions for funding under the Programme for Government.

During the initiation of the study DRD consulted with Belfast City Council officers to clarify the position in relation to the Council Transport Policy and aspirations embodied in the recent responses to the draft BMAP. Through this consultation the need for a fully integrated modern public transport system for Belfast was highlighted including analysis of pilot Rapid Transit routes in terms of the potential for cross city connections and broader connectivity across the different public transport modes. The broader issue of an absence of a proposal for the north of the city and clarification of proposals for the south were also raised.

It is hoped that the findings will clarify a number of issues in relation to:

- The modification of the proposed CITI Route which in draft BMAP crossed the Musgrave Channel and the Bombardier site
- A revised CITI route and the connections to Titanic Quarter, D5 (IKEA etc) and the City Airport
- The potential for extending the CITI route to serve Queens University and the EWAY route linking to Royal Hospital and the wider potential of WWAY.

- The transport assessment and economic evaluation in relation to the potential for light rail or bus based technology. The projected passenger numbers need to justify the expenditure on different transport system, although the final decision will be made by the Assembly.
- The past announcements have identified Rapid transit bus based technology as the preferred option with high quality bus stops, off board ticketing and high frequency service.
- Whether or not the system developed initially could be modified or upgraded to light rail in the future should the demand increase or technology change.
- The detailed options in relation to the routes through the city centre and the priority that can be afforded to public transport
- The potential alignments for the WWAY Rapid Transit scheme beyond the Royal Victoria Hospital.
- The next steps for DRD in relation to detailed design and route alignment study of EWAY and CITI to identify and optimise patronage. DRD have previously indicated that consultation in relation to cross city connections will take place with city centre businesses
- The Programme for Government, Budget and Investment Strategy Northern Ireland.
- The provisional budget allocation for the development of a Rapid Transit Schemes over the period 2008 – 2018 and the anticipated contributions from the private sector to the development of the proposed alignments
- The timetable for the progression of the different route options and their implementation

Members may also wish to consider the implications in relation to the following issues, which will require further consideration as part of the next stage of the study:

- The final form of technology (guided bus or light rail), capacity and the longer term potential in relation to the continued development of the city;
- The integration of the proposals with the current city centre public realm initiative;
- The relationship with the city bus re-routing study and the potential to remove lay-over facilities from the City Hall environs; and
- The implications of the proposed Bankmore link scheme which would affect the potential for the rapid transit connectivity to the South of the City and Queen's.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report

Key to Abbreviations

CITI – City Centre Titanic Quarter proposed rapid transit route
 WWAY – West of city proposed rapid transit route
 EWAY – East of city proposed rapid transit route
 BMAP – Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan
 DRD – Department for Regional Development