



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast Rapid Transit – Public Consultation on Route Options
Date:	25 October 2011
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Department for Regional Development (DRD) launched the Public Consultation on the route options for the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) project at a reception in Belfast City Hall on Wednesday 12 October 2011.
1.2	In 2007, DRD commissioned transport consultants to undertake a feasibility study looking at possible routes and technologies for rapid transit in Belfast. The study concluded that a bus based rapid transit system is the viable option for Belfast rather than light rail technology. In addition the study identified a pilot network of three routes connecting East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter through the city centre. The Department carried out further consultation in January 2010 on policy proposals for the bus based rapid transit system.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The public consultation on the route options for Belfast Rapid Transit opened on 12 October for a period of three months, closing on the 6 January 2012.
2.2	Route option studies and assessments have been carried out by DRD on the pilot network of three routes connecting East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter through the city centre. It is essential that the BRT routes are able to physically accommodate bus lanes which will enable the system to operate reliably. The detailed assessment has resulted in the identification of the most suitable (preferred) routes to be taken forward to further investigation and detailed design.

2.3	<p>The preferred routes identified through assessment are as follows:</p> <p><u>CITI</u> – Queens Quay to Queens Road within Titanic Quarter, returning via Station Street and Bridge End.</p> <p><u>EWAY</u> – East Bridge Street, Albertbridge Road and Upper Newtownards Road, terminating at a park and ride site near Quarry Corner. The Newtownards Road (lower) is included as the next best option.</p> <p><u>Westway</u> – Grosvenor Road, Falls Road, Andersonstown Road, terminating at a park and ride near Dairy Farm and/or McKinistry Road Roundabout. The lower Falls Road/Divis Street link is included as a next best option.</p> <p><u>City Centre</u> – The core city centre BRT route has been subject to a separate design process and has been previously published as part of the Belfast On The Move transport masterplan. All the connecting services will feed into the city centre loop using May Street, Donegall Square South, Howard Street, Fisherwick Place, Wellington Place, Donegall Square North and Chichester Street, Victoria Street and Oxford Street.</p>
2.4	A map of proposed routes is attached as appendix 1.
2.5	The Department has requested responses in determining the preferred route options. The Council has previously supported the principle of the pilot Bus Rapid Transport proposals as an important step towards the delivery of a modern public transport system for Belfast and the wider region.
2.6	In previous responses, the Council emphasised the need to ensure rapid transit is a driver for regeneration throughout Belfast, providing high quality access to and linkages between jobs, hospitals, schools and colleges in different parts of the city. The Council also highlighted the omission of the route proposals for the north and south of the city and the need to roll out a high quality public transport system linking all areas of Belfast.

3	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
3.1	A draft Equality Impact Assessment is being carried out as part of the process.

4	Recommendations
4.1	It is recommended that Members note the content of the presentation from DRD on the route options for the pilot Belfast Rapid Transit system in advance of a draft formal response to the proposals being brought before the Committee in December.

5	Decision Tracking
Consider draft response to public consultation – December 2011	
Submit response – 6 January 2011	

6	Key to Abbreviations
DRD – Department for Regional Development	
BRT – Belfast Rapid Transit	

7	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Map of proposed routes	