



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast Rapid Transit Proposals – Public Consultation
Date:	13 December 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

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 project on the 12 October 2011 for a three month period ending on the 6 January 2012.
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	<p>DRD propose to implement Belfast rapid transit system on a pilot network of three routes linking to Belfast city centre. The preferred alignments for the three pilot schemes are identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- CITI – Queens Quay to Queens Road within Titanic Quarter, returning via Station Street and Bridge End.- EWAY- 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.- Westway – Grosvenor Road, Falls Road, Andersontown Road, terminating at a Park and Ride site near Dairy Farm and/or McKinistry Road Roundabout. The lower Falls Road/Divis Street link is included as a next best option.

	<p>The three proposed Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) routes will feed into a core city centre loop comprising May Street, Donegall Square South, Howard Street, Fisherwick Place, Wellington Place, Donegall Square North and Chichester Street, Victoria Street and Oxford Street.</p> <p>The proposed draft Council response is outlined in Appendix 1 along with a map of the route options. A summary of the main issues is outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council generally welcomes the proposals to develop a pilot rapid transit system linking Titanic Quarter, east and west Belfast into the city centre as the first step towards the introduction of rapid transit in Belfast. However, the omission of pilot route proposals for north and south Belfast is of concern. The Council would request commitment from DRD to take forward the planning and design for the extension of the rapid transit network to ensure an equitable high quality public transport system is implemented throughout the city. - The Council would recommend a sustainable corridor approach to ensure bus rapid transit proposals fit into the existing public transport network. In particular further clarification on how the Metro corridors on the Upper Newtownards Road and the Falls Road could integrate with proposed system. - The Council would support the need for an integrated ticketing system between different public transport operators which is affordable. - The Council recommends close engagement with local businesses along the proposed routes to ensure that servicing and parking requirements are addressed. - The Council would request commitment from DRD that resources will be made available to implement a high quality, effective bus rapid transit system in Belfast.
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3	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
3.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations considerations attached to this report.

4	Recommendations
4.1	To consider the draft response to the public consultation on the route options for the Belfast Rapid Transit project and if appropriate agree a response.

5	Decision Tracking
Submit response – 6 January 2012	

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