

**WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL
TRANSPORT BOARD - SCHEME
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

Worcestershire County Council

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Worcestershire Local Transport Board - Scheme Strengths and Weaknesses

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CONTENTS

		Page
1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	Background	4
1.2	Candidate Schemes	4
1.3	Purpose of Report	4
2	STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN SCHEME PROPOSALS	7
2.1	Overall Value For Money	7
2.2	A4440 Southern Link Road	7
2.3	Worcestershire Parkway	7
2.4	Hoobrook Link Road	8
2.5	Pershore Northern Link	8

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT) in November 2011 confirmed the intention of the Government to devolve major transport scheme funding from the DfT to Local Transport Bodies (LTBs) by 2015. The primary role of LTBs will be to decide which investments should be prioritised in their area, to review and approve individual business cases for those investments and to ensure effective delivery of the programme.

1.1.2 The Worcestershire Local Transport Board (LTB) will therefore now manage the development and delivery of major transport schemes in Worcestershire. The Worcestershire LTB consists of members from Worcestershire County Council, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Birmingham and Solihull LEP and Worcestershire District Councils. Representatives from Network Rail / Highways Agency and Worcestershire Transport Operators will also form part of the LTB, but in a non-voting capacity¹.

1.1.3 As part of this process, the DfT requires LTBs to publish and submit to them a prioritised list of transport schemes by July 2013, for the funding period from 2015 to 2019.

1.1.4 Parsons Brinckerhoff has been commissioned by Worcestershire County Council, as the Accountable Body for Worcestershire LTB, to act as the Independent Transport Advisor to the LTB. The role of the ITA includes developing a suitable process for the prioritisation of major schemes, carrying out this process and providing independent advice and support to the LTB.

1.2 Candidate Schemes

1.2.1 In order to be considered for funding for the 2015 to 2019 period, scheme promoters were required to submit candidate schemes to the LTB by 31st May 2013. The following four schemes were submitted (the promoting authority is shown in brackets):

- **A4440 Southern Link Road**, Worcester (Worcestershire County Council)
- **Worcestershire Parkway**, near Worcester (Worcestershire County Council)
- **Hoobrook Link Road**, Kidderminster (Worcestershire County Council)
- **Pershore Northern Link**, Pershore (Wychavon District Council)

1.3 Purpose of Report

1.3.1 During the course of this project, a considerable amount has been learnt about the candidate schemes. We have also been able to draw on our experience from

¹ The LTB structure and members is detailed in the Assurance Framework Section 2.3 (included in Appendix 1).

assessing similar schemes being put forward for consideration by other Local Transport Bodies. This note offers brief comments about the programme as a whole, and provides some commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of the submitted scheme proposals.

- 1.3.2 The report should be read in conjunction with the *Worcestershire Local Transport Board – Major Scheme Prioritisation Report (August 2013)* which details the outputs from the scheme assessment and prioritisation processes.

SECTION 2

SCHEME STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

2 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN SCHEME PROPOSALS**2.1 Overall Value For Money**

2.1.1 One of the DfT requirements for the programmes of devolved funding for Local Transport Major Schemes is that they clearly demonstrate good value for money. DfT have indicated that they would expect LTB programmes to deliver, overall, a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of 4 or greater. This will need to be borne in mind as the individual scheme proposals are developed and Business Cases prepared. In light of this, opportunities for value engineering, which could reduce scheme costs without reducing benefits, need to be examined for all schemes within the eventual LTB programme.

2.2 A4440 Southern Link Road

2.2.1 The Southern Link Road proposal is well grounded in the established planning framework for South Worcestershire and it complements the existing approved scheme for improvement of Ketch roundabout and dualling towards Norton junction. However, the current scheme proposal is costly, and as a consequence the BCR is perhaps lower than has been seen for similar schemes elsewhere.

2.2.2 Whilst it is clear that the testing of options has been undertaken in relation to the dualling at the railway bridge, it is suggested that further option testing be undertaken, for example in relation to the form of the intermediate junction (currently shown as a large roundabout, but could conceivably be a traffic signal layout), and a comprehensive Options Assessment Report be prepared. This would enable consideration of other key factors which affect the cost and BCR, such as land take, and incorporate value engineering. At this stage it is also suggested that a detailed scheme public consultation should be held.

2.2.3 Given the constraints in the timing of scheme delivery imposed by the need for a long railway possession, it is suggested that this Options Assessment stage, and the subsequent preparation of a Programme Entry Business case, be progressed as quickly as possible.

2.3 Worcestershire Parkway

2.3.1 The Parkway Station represents a strategic opportunity for improving rail access over a wide geographical area.

2.3.2 Given the location at the crossing point of the two rail lines, there is little choice about the siting of the facility and the outline access proposed seems appropriate. Although this site is in a rural location, it is in reasonable proximity to the new development areas proposed to the south of Worcester, and it recommended that opportunities for

developing a safe cycling route to the station from these areas be further explored during the scheme development.

2.3.3 Our experience of working with the rail industry suggests that a focused effort will pay dividends in moving the project forward. In particular, it will be beneficial to develop close working relationships with the Train Operating Companies at an early stage.

2.3.4 At present the proposal is to phase delivery, with a first phase involving a platform on the Oxford to Worcester line, and the first part of the eventual car park. The second phase, to follow in the next funding period, would involve two platforms on the Bristol to Birmingham line, and expansion of the car park.

2.3.5 It is suggested that the potential for delivering the complete station as a single project be retained as an option, this having some benefits in reducing “transaction costs”. Also, with the current Cross Country franchise being extended to November 2019, there is a strong case for pursuing the whole project, at least to the point where an obligation for Cross County trains to call at the station can be negotiated with the DfT for them to include in the specification for the replacement franchise.

2.4 Hoobrook Link Road

2.4.1 The Hoobrook link is a well-developed proposal which is clearly fundamental to supporting regeneration of brownfield land in South Kidderminster. It will provide an important link between the A442 Worcester Road and A451 Stourport Road corridors, giving relief to the inner ring road.

2.4.2 Given the approved Local Pinchpoint funding, it is important to move to submission of a Business Case as quickly as possible. In doing so, the technical work already undertaken to support the scheme seems sound, but there could be merit in giving greater emphasis to the sustainable transport links offered from surrounding residential areas to the new employment sites by virtue of the pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities at the major junctions.

2.5 Pershore Northern Link

2.5.1 While the location of the Northern Link is clearly defined by the existing junctions at either end, and the engineering work progressed thus far has examined options for the railway bridge and link alignment, there remains work to be done to define the traffic context for the scheme. Provision of the scheme would open up options for traffic management on Wyre Road and Terrace Road. Measures to effectively manage traffic in these locations could maximise usage of the new link as a route to and from the A44, and assist in mitigating the existing capacity and safety problems on these routes.

- 2.5.2 The scheme does not specifically provide improvement to the A44 Pinvin Crossroads, although it is recognised the scheme may provide some benefit by reducing turning movements to and from the side roads in this location. It is suggested that the further assessment of the scheme required for the Business Case stage considers whether further improvement to this junction is required.
- 2.5.3 It is suggested that an Options Assessment Report should be prepared to provide clarity on such issues and clarify the basis on which a Business Case would be prepared. In parallel with this, the other data which would be required to complete the Business Case will need to be progressed.