APPENDIX 16.4
Sustainable Transport Measures

A4. Creation of a Sustainable Transport Corridor across the Silver Jubilee Bridge

A4.1.1. The possible elements of a Halton-wide Sustainable Transport Strategy following the introduction of the Project are detailed below. The strategy elements are based on using the spare highway capacity on the SJB, following the opening of the New Bridge for public transport, cycling and walking. This will allow for direct improvements to cross river sustainable modes and also the integration of those modes across Halton. This will allow, for the first time, a fully integrated sustainable transport system across the Borough.

A4.1.2. The creation of additional capacity on the SJB following the opening of the Mersey Gateway will create an opportunity for the SJB Bridge to be adapted to become an integral part of a strongly defined Halton Sustainable Corridor and network connecting Widnes and Runcorn centres and providing access to defined transport nodes and wide areas of the borough and locations in the surrounding hinterland such as Merseyside, Warrington and Chester.

A4.1.3. Following the opening of the Mersey Gateway, the SJB will be modified and adapted to be a cross river transport facility restricted to use by scheduled bus services, taxis, pedestrians and cyclists between Runcorn and Widnes. The SJB will be designed to incorporate the following:

a. Clearly identified sustainable transport corridor defined by signage and distinctive surface treatments and urban realm including landscaping;
b. Two carriageways (north and south bound) for buses and local traffic movement across the bridge;
c. Clearly defined and signed two way cycle route; and
d. Clearly defined and signed two way accessible pedestrian route with seating areas at regular intervals on the bridge.

A4.1.4. To improve the overall safety and security of pedestrians and cyclists crossing the SJB, the following measures are proposed:

a. 24 hour Closed circuit TV monitoring of pedestrian and cycle movement;
b. High levels of lighting covering the pedestrian and cycle route for activity outside daylight hours or when lighting;
c. Stopping places with seating to be provided; and
d. Free telephone help points.

A4.1.5. The SJB in comparison with the proposed new crossing will provide pedestrians and cyclists with a short crossing of the Mersey to established centres of activity and with connections to an established network of pedestrian and cycle routes. The SJB will afford high levels of surveillance and associated safety and security at all times.

Connections between SJB and Widnes and Runcorn Centres

A4.1.6. High quality visible and clearly defined linkages for buses, pedestrians and cyclists will be created to enable the sustainable transport corridor to be connected and integrated to the West Bank, Widnes Centre, and Runcorn Centre including Runcorn Railway Station and Runcorn Old Town. .

Creation of a Halton Transit Network

A4.1.7. The existing network appears to be fairly stable and comprises the following:

a. A distinct local network to Halton;

b. Cross boundary connections to the surrounding hinterland including Liverpool, Liverpool Airport, Warrington, and Chester;
c. Can utilise existing highway infrastructure to be easily connected and integrated with designated Mersey Gateway regeneration areas particularly in the West Bank, Astmoor and Rock Savage/Clifton areas.

A4.1.8. To promote greater understanding and awareness of the bus network from within the community and unification of the network as a whole one straightforward opportunity that can be taken forward would be to create a branded network encompassing Runcorn and Widnes with the re-prioritisation of the SJB being the catalyst to create this. This relatively simple step is important in obtaining an understanding of the network and thereby enhancing ridership.

A4.1.9. The network name and branding could be applied to all aspects of the transit system covering infrastructure, facilities, and encompass taxis, cycling and pedestrian movement. Branding could appear on for example route signage for pedestrian and greenway routes.

A4.1.10. Suggested names for consideration include the following:

a. Halton Transit Network;
b. Network Halton;
c. Halton Transport Connections;
d. Cross Mersey Speedway;
e. Halton Flyer;
f. Silver Service; and
g. Jubilee Flyer.

Quality Partnership or Contracts

A4.1.11. Both Quality Contracts or a Quality Partnership between Halton BC and the area's bus operators are possible ways of injecting vitality into the bus network and influencing a growth in patronage to meet strategic sustainable objectives within the borough and this part of the Merseyside City Region. In particular, a partnership or contract can be used to underpin and pump prime the network.

A4.1.12. This matter does require further detailed examination by Halton BC to include a wider strategic evaluation of the costs and benefits of the approach that would best suit Halton, particularly in relation to achieving specific high frequency targets on the core bus network that would operate on a turn up and go basis.

High Frequency Strategic Bus Corridor for Local Services

A4.1.13. The creation of a strongly defined, strategic bus corridor connecting Runcorn and Widnes and incorporating the SJB and Runcorn Busway and Key Nodes/Interchange Points is proposed.

A4.1.14. This would form the main bus artery through the Borough, connecting key nodes and interchange points and all four quadrants of the Borough. This would form the core, high frequency network for the Borough. Importantly it would provide connections between areas of low car ownership and deprivation such as Murdishaw and Halton Lea to key centres and existing and proposed employment and regeneration such as Astmoor, Kingsway and Riverside areas.

A4.1.15. The route and key interchanges/nodes could be as follows:

a. Murdishaw;
b. Runcorn East Railway Station;
c. Halton Lea;
d. Castlefields;
e. Runcorn High Street;
f. Runcorn Railway Station;
g. West Bank;
h. Vicarage Road;
i. Green Oaks;
j. Ball 'o' Ditton;
k. Hough Green Railway Station;
l. Widnes Railway Station; and
m. The Coterie/Wilmere Lane.

A4.1.16. Opportunities to provide additional bus priority measures would be considered on this key corridor. The nodes would provide the following:

a. Opportunities to interchange between bus and bus or bus and rail;
b. Opportunities access existing or new employment areas;
c. Opportunities to provide improved interchange and connections between the core high frequency network, and generators and attractors situated off line from the key corridor; and
d. Facilities for the safe storage of cycles.

Design and Access Specifications for the Nodes

A4.1.17. The hierarchy of nodes would be defined depending upon the characteristics of the nodes and their relative scale and importance within the transport network. For example, the range of facilities, information and level of provision would be higher at a bus station facility than a group of bus stops at a key highway junction. Key design principles will be applied to the nodes as follows:

a. Efforts will be made to ensure nodes and users are highly visible from surrounding environs;
b. Pedestrian linkages to the nodes to be fully accessible and high quality
c. Shelter provision to be provided at all nodes;
d. All nodes to be clearly identified in terms of their respective names/identifications; and
e. CCTV coverage and free help line facilities to be provided.

Enhancement of the Local Distributor Bus Network

A4.1.18. Opportunities to develop or enhance and improve the visibility and role of lower frequency feeder bus services to connect with the core network and associated nodes will be examined, particularly if this can provide improved access and connections to designated regeneration areas, the town centres of Widnes, West Bank and the Runcorn campus site.

Door to Door Service

A4.1.19. The local distributor network will be complemented by the Halton Door to Door Service and be an integral part of the transport network. Expand the new "door2door" initiative to provide a 24 hour pre-bookable demand responsive service to provide enhanced transport links to major employment areas within eastern Runcorn (Daresbury Park, Daresbury Science Park, Manor Park etc.).

Halton Hopper

A4.1.20. Conversion of existing "Halton Hopper" multi operator ticket to SMART card technology. This would allow the card to be used in conjunction with road user charging regime. A proportion of the revenue generated through road user charging could be used to provide credits for low income families to use on the public transport network (via proposed new SMART card).

Non Local Buses

A4.1.21. Buses that serve areas in Halton and destinations outside such as Chester, Warrington, Liverpool Airport and Manchester provide important connections and add considerable value to the Halton Network. These services will be clearly defined in terms of information to show clearly how they can improve travel opportunities for Halton residents. There will also be a case for developing ticketing arrangements that facilitate cross boundary journeys without the need for multiple tickets and adherence to historical boundaries that still prevail to the disbenefit passengers.

Regeneration of the Runcorn Busway

A4.1.22. The Runcorn Busway is a unique piece of public transport infrastructure and forms a key part of the bus corridor discussed above. It is therefore integral to the opportunities that are presented by the SJB as part of a sustainable transport strategy.

A4.1.23. The Busway has the ability to support and facilitate transport connections for an extensive catchment area to the East of Runcorn, in particular residents of areas of Halton that exhibit social stress such as Castlefields, Murdishaw, Palacefields and Brookvale. The busway infrastructure and services that use it can underpin access to employment, education, shopping, health and leisure facilities in other parts of the borough and the adjacent hinterland.

A4.1.24. An inherent design aspect of the busway is the high degree of segregation of buses from general traffic, pedestrians and cyclists. This provides considerable operational advantages compared with conventional on-street running in other parts of the Borough. Another inherent design feature is that the busway is, to all intents and purposes, relatively obscured at the backs of properties and business premises. A number of stops and associated pedestrian routes are also not highly visible. These inherent design features compromise personal safety and can deter use of bus services and connections and interchange opportunities that the busway and associated services can offer especially outside daylight hours. Another issue is vandalism of stops and facilities and antisocial behaviour especially outside daylight hours again that can deter wider use and needs to be addressed.

Expansion of the Real Time Information for Public Transport

A4.1.25. Expansion of existing real time passenger information system to include all key transport nodes, community facilities and retail shops. It would be possible to link bus real time and train real time information systems, for example where bus stops are located near railway stations so that both modes are covered by for example people interchanging from rail to local bus services.

Generating Ownership by the community in the busway

A4.1.26. The busway is highly valued by the community in Halton and addressing ways of improving stations and introducing initiatives aimed at growing the use of the bus services that operate on the busway and the quality of vehicles that use it, would make a significant contribution to supporting the sustainable transport strategy for Halton. The approach that is proposed is as follows:

a. Improve the visibility of all stops on the busway;
b. Introduce distinctive and strong signage and associated passengers facilities using a common template used for LRT stations;
c. Improve the visibility of the pedestrian routes to the stops and street lighting;
d. Real time Information to be provided at key stops;
e. Ensure pedestrian routes to stops are fully accessible;
f. Critically assess the location of all stops and consider if they can be resited to improve visibility and promote safety and security;
g. Introduce CCTV and help points at all stops; and
h. Consider opportunities to introduce additional activity at stops, for example bus driver layover facilities where space permits such as Murdishaw.

Community Stop Initiative for the Runcorn Busway

A4.1.27. The development of “Friends of” railway stations in the UK is proving to be a highly successful initiative in terms of generating patronage and fostering a feeling of ownership in passenger facilities and services. ACORP the Association of Community Rail Partnerships is leading this approach in the UK following the success of a number of pilot initiatives including Handforth Station near Wilmslow in Cheshire.

A4.1.28. This approach or the toolkit that has been developed for community station partnerships is recommended for some or all of the stops on the Runcorn Busway as part of a planned initiative involving the community, bus operators, The Council and business interests including, Health authority, schools, retail sector, developers and key employers who could become involved through the sponsorship of stop names or passengers facilities including shelters or safety and security equipment.

A4.1.29. Friends groups can be established for bus stops in their community, for example at Halton Hospital, Murdishaw, Halton High School, and Runcorn East. Runcorn East Station offers the opportunity to establish a friends of Halton East Railway Station and adjoining bus stops.

A4.1.30. It is important that bus routes and services and pedestrian and cycle routes are highly visible and accessible in large employment areas and regeneration areas such as Astmoor and the West Bank to promote the following:

a. Safety and security of users; and
b. awareness of bus services and associated pedestrian and cycle facilities and routes.

A4.1.31. In this instance there is a case for reappraising the function of the busway in the context of the above provided for example buses and services can still provide the same if not better levels of accessibility and journey times are not increased. To this end the removal of a section of the busway can be justified if there are wider regeneration benefits to be gained and bus services can enhance accessibility and connectivity.

Bus to Rail Interchange

A4.1.32. Opportunities to improve passenger infrastructure and facilities to promote bus to rail interchange will be explored with the aim of increasing the profile of these nodes and to strengthen the role of these nodes as interchanges. This will include the following:

a. Resiting bus stops to bring them closer to the stations in the case of Widnes and Hough Green;
b. Introducing CCTV and help lines in the station environs; and
c. Improving taxi facilities and waiting areas for example at Widnes Station and Hough Green Stations.

Taxis

A4.1.33. Opportunities to introduce taxi ranks as integral elements of the nodes in Halton will be examined, particularly as taxi ranks can generate activity and therefore support safety and security. The taxi ranks could benefit from the proposed CCTV coverage and provision of help lines and high visibility design criteria that will be applied to the nodes.

A4.1.34. Taxis could incorporate branding that includes them as part of the overall Halton Transit Network which could be achieved through the Taxi plates at the front and rear of the vehicles.

Cycling and Walking

A4.1.35. Provision of a complete core network of key walking, cycling and riding routes. Programme of improvements to include route creation, signing and crossings. Identify longer-term 'aspirational connectivity' of routes over and above the core network and formalise in plan.

A4.1.36. Creation of viewing areas to view the New Bridge during construction. Include facilities (cycle stands, picnic benches, viewing scopes and information boards).

A4.1.37. Ensure cross-river provision for walkers and cyclists is maintained throughout any road closures on SJB.

A4.1.38. "Ring fence" a proportion of the revenue generated through road user charging to provide funding for maintenance of cycle lanes, off-road cycle provision and Greenways (including signing).

Secure dedicated funding for promoting and marketing walking, cycling and riding

A4.1.39. Launch a 'kick-start' promotional/marketing programme for walking and cycling based around the New Bridge opening. Create and distribute new area specific cycle maps including a map focusing on cross-river journeys. Promote the SJB as crossing point for national/regional/local

walking, cycling, riding routes. Ensure new routes such as NW coastal path use SJB. Look at ways to link existing routes to SJB (spurs/links/alternative routes)

A4.1.40. Secure dedicated funding for non-infrastructure measures (such as interpretation/route boards for walkers/cyclists, cycle parking facilities, mounting blocks for horse riders etc)

A4.1.41. Establish pilot borough-wide communal/pool bike scheme aimed at businesses/employers with pick-up/drop-off points at key hubs and facilities. In addition encourage cycle hire facilities aimed at leisure users to be established at country parks. Provide disability (hand-cranked) bikes at hire facilities and create suitable routes to be indicated on area cycle maps.

A4.1.42. Install secure cycle parking (lockers and/or cages) to meet increase demand and encourage development of bike locker user group for bus and rail passenger stations and stops and key transport nodes.

A4.1.43. Programme to establish 'cycle-trains' to schools. Promote and support schools/parents in setting up and running cycle-trains.

A4.1.44. Embed advice on safe use of cross river walking and cycling routes/facilities into education and training programmes run by the Road Safety team.

A4.1.45. Review/renew existing travel plans to include walking and cycling cross-river journeys.

A4.1.46. Incorporate walking and cycling cross-river journeys in new travel plans.

A4.1.47. Investment in specialist software to enable Mobility Management Team to offer a greater number of personalised journey plans.

A4.1.48. Enhance and expand the Cycle Buddy scheme and repeat on regular basis.

A4.1.49. Encourage more employers to offer 'Bike-for-Work' purchase scheme (promote/market scheme and support employers with advice on setting-up/implementing scheme).