

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE
13 SEPTEMBER 2017

1(B) QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

2. Adam Thompson to ask the Chair:
East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Proposal

How will people who live in East Reading and currently make use of the buses that pass through Cemetery Junction be able to use them when they bypass East Reading via a flyover over Kennet Mouth ?

Specifically as a blind person who currently uses the Thames Valley Park shuttle buses to get to my employment in the park how is it anticipated that I will be able to access my employment if the TVP shuttle buses use the MRT ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

The East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) scheme is a segregated fast track public transport, pedestrian and cycle route that will support enhanced accessibility and continued sustainable growth in Reading, Wokingham and the wider area.

The MRT route is proposed to link the A3290, (and the separate Wokingham Borough Council promoted new park & ride facility), to Napier Road, Reading town centre and the railway station. The MRT scheme is a key element of the wider sustainable transport strategy for Reading and the A329 corridor, and is being promoted by Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council and Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

The scheme will provide substantial benefits to Reading and the wider area by providing an attractive sustainable alternative to the private car. The benefits of the new route include:

- Significantly improved public transport connectivity between Reading town centre, east Reading and beyond.
- Increased public transport service frequency, capacity and reliability; and significantly reduced journey times.
- Facilitating and managing in a sustainable way the significant levels of economic growth and housing delivery planned for Wokingham Borough and Reading town centre.
- Reduced traffic congestion in east Reading, particularly on the congested A4 London Road and Cemetery Junction.
- Improved air quality in Reading's Air Quality Management Area through reducing use of the private car.
- Promote healthy living, well-being and active lifestyles by promoting walking and cycling.
- Provide ecological enhancements along the route, increasing biodiversity and species diversity.

The provision of bus services is at the discretion of the bus operating companies who will refine services by reacting to demand over time. The Council has been in contact with bus companies throughout the development of the East MRT scheme and it has been assumed that services using the East MRT scheme will mostly be express variations of existing services, and there will still be a significant level of bus service provision on the London Road corridor, including at Cemetery Junction, when the East MRT scheme is in place.

It is anticipated that the future provision of busses serving East Reading and beyond will be considerably greater with the MRT scheme in place than the current level of service, given the significant levels of development proposed in Reading town centre and Wokingham Borough, and the considerable journey time savings provided by the MRT route which will enable operators to provide more frequent services without incurring additional operating costs.

3. John Sharpe to ask the Chair:
East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Proposal

Why is the measured reduction in two way flows along the A4 London Road as measured by the permanent automatic counter data, from 38,000 to 35,000 or an 8% reduction per day, in the period 2007 to 2015, dismissed by the consultants Peter Brett Associates in paragraph 3.4.2 of the Transport Statement ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

As stated in my previous answers, the objective of the MRT scheme is to sustainably manage forecast growth in Reading and Wokingham. A slight reduction in historic vehicular trips does not alter the fact that traffic flow and air quality data shows that the London Road corridor and Cemetery Junction in Reading suffers from significant levels of congestions and poor air quality. It is therefore clear that significant improvements in sustainable transport are required to cater for the future levels of growth proposed for the wider area.

4. John Sharpe to ask the Chair:
East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Proposal

Why has the Kings Meadow Vastern Road roundabout been omitted from the [Environmental statement Appendix 8-2 Accident clusters](#) ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

The Vastern Road Roundabout itself does not form part of the East MRT scheme or planning application, except for a section of inbound bus lane on the approach to the Roundabout on Kings Meadow Road.

However, improvements to the Vastern Road Roundabout are being progressed separately by the Council including crossing improvements to Napier and Reading Bridge in partnership with local businesses and the development proposals for Thames Quarter.

5. Linda Trenchard to ask the Chair:
East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Proposal

Which buses has it been confirmed will make use of the MRT, and which of these buses have routes that currently pass through Cemetery Junction ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

As stated in my answer to the previous questions, the provision of bus services is at the discretion of the bus operating companies and the Council has been in ongoing dialogue with the bus companies throughout the development of the scheme.

Express variations of the current public transport services are anticipated to use the MRT route.

- Thames Valley Park P&R
- Winnersh Triangle P&R
- Thames Valley Park shuttle service
- Reading/Woodley express service
- Reading/Wokingham/Bracknell express service
- Rail Air Coaches

As stated in my previous response, it is anticipated that there will still be a significant level of bus service provision on the London Road corridor, including at Cemetery Junction, when the East MRT scheme is in place.

6. Susan Gray to ask the Chair:
East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Proposal

How much money has been spent so far in developing this project? This includes but is not limited to funds allocated to external consultants and time allocated to the project by internal council staff ?

Over what period will the various parts of the Thames Valley path be closed ?

Thames valley path east of Kennet Mouth

Horseshoe Bridge

Thames Valley Path west of Kennet Mouth

During the period of proposed construction from 2019 to 2022 there will be considerable congestion and pollution generated, with up to a maximum of 120 HGV vehicle movements per day, Environmental Statement 8.5.9. For how long will the MRT need to be operational in order to compensate for this additional congestion and pollution generated during the construction period before any net benefit is achieved ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

The capital cost of the MRT scheme is estimated to be £24m, of which £19m has been allocated from the Local Growth Fund from central Government and the Council intends to fund the remainder from Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy contributions from the private sector.

Development of the scheme to date has been funded by grant funding allocated by central Government specifically for transport schemes, with spend to date of approximately £250k. This includes costs associated with development of the scheme design, business case and preparation of the planning application. Council officers' work on the development of the scheme has been undertaken by as part of their range of responsibilities and this time has not been recorded separately.

Plans for the construction for the East MRT scheme are currently being developed to minimise any disruption to the Thames Path as well as access via the Horseshoe Bridge. The proposals will be set out within a Construction Management Plan which will be agreed with the Planning Authorities for Reading and Wokingham. The MRT scheme will provide a segregated and accessible cycling and walking facility that will be available in addition to the existing Thames Path and Horseshoe bridge.

As previously mentioned, the objective of the MRT scheme is to sustainably manage forecast congestion and pollution by providing an attractive alternative to the private car. As set out within the planning application, there will be a level of disruption caused during the construction period, however this will be far outweighed by the overall benefits of the scheme.