

Date: 16 February 2022
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By email only

Dear Mr O'Hanlon

Applicant: North Somerset District Council
Development Consent Order application for Portishead Branch Line – MetroWest Phase 1
Application Reference: TR040011

I write in response to Mr Cash's letter of 31st January 2022. The Applicant wishes to make the following points.

During the DCO examination Mr Cash made representations about a proposal for a busway scheme which entailed placing rubber mats over the railway tracks and sleepers along the existing operational freight railway, and operating buses on the railway while continuing to operate freight trains to and from Portbury Dock.

Towards the end of the DCO examination Mr Cash then introduced a different busway proposal which he described his representation of 21st January 2021 doc ref REP4-066, as "*.....a single track bus lane for 3.65km from Quay's Avenue to Junction 19*"

Since the close of the DCO examination Mr Cash along with Mr PG Virden, made representations on 24th November 2021 to the DfT under the name of Portishead Busway Campaign regarding a busway proposal which is doc ref TR040011-001641. This document describes the proposal as "*.....a dedicated busway along the 3.5km derelict Portishead rail spur up to the M5 (Junction 19), thereby avoiding the Portbury Hundreds (A369) bottleneck; buses would then join the motorway, come off at Junction 18 (Avonmouth) and take the Portway priority bus lane into Bristol....*".

The Applicant's response to the representation of 24th November 2021 is set out in doc ref TR040011-001683 and since 24th November 2021 Mr Cash has not raised any new points.

Mr Cash claims his proposal "*...would cost no more than £10m to implement*". However, no evidence has been provided to support such a claim.

Mr Cash's proposal is very limited in terms of the benefits it could generate, given the only intervention he has suggested is to build "*... a 3.5km busway along the old rail-line from Quays Avenue, Portishead to Junction 19 of the M5...*".

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Mr Cash's proposal would not fundamentally tackle the very poor transport network resilience problem of the Portishead to Bristol corridor, arising from the traffic congestion and traffic impacts:

- a) at and through Junction 19 of the M5,
- b) on the M5 between Junction 19 and 18 (the Avonmouth bridge)
- c) into and out of Bristol City Centre

Mr Cash's proposal is limited to providing bus journey time savings at one location only, by providing an alternative route for buses to the Portbury Hundred (the road from Junction 19 of the M5 into Portishead). The bus journey time savings arising from such an intervention would be extremely modest. Mr Cash's proposal would not provide any interventions to address the traffic congestion and traffic impacts listed in a), b) and c) above.

In order to provide access onto the M5 buses would have to navigate through the M5 Junction 19 roundabout which suffers with systemic congestion and over the M5 Avonmouth bridge between Junction 19 and 18 which is one of the largest bottlenecks on the whole M5 motorway.

The A369 between Portishead and Bristol is dissected by the M5 at Junction 19. The A369 between Portishead and Bristol comprises a single carriageway highway in each direction. Severe congestion at Junction 19 affects the operation of the main M5 carriageway, with traffic queuing back onto the mainline (e.g. in the southbound direction during the PM peak), causing major safety issues. Furthermore, due to the very high volumes of long-distance traffic on the M5, any incidents on the M5 very quickly overwhelm the A369 corridor, causing 'gridlock'. The section of motorway between Junction 18 and 19 (the Avonmouth bridge) is one of the busiest sections of the M5 and is also one of the most susceptible sections of the M5 to accidents and incidents due to the absence of natural shelter from high winds and the gradient of the motorway, both of which are due to the bridge. The impact of any incidents is exacerbated by very high volumes of seasonal traffic in the spring and summer, with the M5 a significant national gateway to the far South West (Devon & Cornwall).

Mr Cash's proposal would not provide any journey time saving for buses through Junction 19 roundabout, over the M5 Avonmouth bridge or any additional journey time savings for buses into and out of Bristol. Furthermore, Mr Cash's proposal would be very susceptible to poor journey time reliability because of the combination of the seasonal M5 traffic peaks and the indiscriminate nature of accidents and incidents on this section of the M5.

Given the journey time saving arising from Mr Cash's proposal would be extremely modest and the improvement to journey time reliability would also be extremely modest, the potential for Mr Cash's proposal to yield modal switch would be equally extremely modest. This would result in only extremely modest quantifiable benefits, over the long term.

It would be very unlikely that Mr Cash's proposal would be able to produce a positive business case (compliant with the DfT Transport Assessment Guidance). Mr Cash's proposal would not fundamentally tackle the very poor transport network resilience problem of the Portishead to Bristol corridor. It would be very unlikely to produce a positive business case. It is not a realistic proposition that could be taken forward by local government, through major consenting, funding and governance processes for delivery.

The Report to Inform the HRA that accompanied the DCO Application considered all reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Scheme (Examination Library document reference: AS-027). As explained above, although Mr Cash has made representations regarding proposals for busways both during and subsequent to the Examination, none are considered to be reasonable alternatives to the DCO Scheme for the purposes of the HRA being undertaken by the Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely



James Willcock
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