

**South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Regional Transport
Sub-Committee**

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

12 February 2024

Chairperson: **Councillor D.Price**

Councillors: E.Thomas, A.Stevens, R.Sinnott and
W.F.Griffiths

**National Park
Representatives:** M.James

**Officers In
Attendance:** S.Davies, D.Thomas, D.John, D.Griffiths,
A.Eynon, S.Aldred-Jones, G.Jones, K.Tillman,
L.McAndrew, B.George, C.Bate, O.Dolan-Gray,
R.Lewis, L.White and C.Plouman

1. **Chairs Announcements**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests received.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 July 2023 and 9 October 2023, were approved as an accurate record.

4. **Transport for Wales Regional Priorities Overview - Rail and Bus Services Update**

The Committee received a presentation from Transport for Wales (TFW) in regards to Swansea Bay and West Wales Regional

Transport Overview; specially the South West Regional Transport Study.

It was explained that the study commenced in November 2023; therefore, it was still in the early stages of development. Members were informed that the aim of the study was to produce a list of opportunities to improve the desirability of multi modal transport across the Region; taking into account bus data overall, but also working with each Local Authorities to understand local knowledge.

Following the analysis of bus data, Officers intended to overlay that information with an understanding of car usage; including travel patterns and destinations, as well as analysing private transport destinations and routes reflected accurately in the bus corridors. In order to overlay that further, Officers were going to look into the active travel network, both existing and proposed, to try and understand where there were points of interception between the networks; and also where there were opportunities for improvement. In addition, it was planned to tie this in with the rail network, and any areas for development; determining if Officers could pick up any improvements within the developments, at this early stage, to try and make multi modal transport more desirable to the public.

A discussion took place in regards to the timeframes associated with the study. As previously mentioned, TFW had commenced the study in November 2023; and had made significant progress to date in analysing the bus data. It was confirmed that Officers had started drafting the report of bus data, and once finalised will share with each Local Authority; it was anticipated that the report would be completed by the end of this financial year.

It was explained that the data sets and forms of modelling mentioned, were accessible at Local Authority level; however, Local Authorities would need to pay consultancy fees to access the information. It was noted that TFW hold licences for data of this nature, and therefore were able to collaborate on the behalf of Local Authorities.

Members were provided with detail in regards to the bus data that TFW had started gathering and understanding. It was explained that City Swift was a database in which all bus operators fed into, providing real time information; this was the database that TFW were accessing for the study. Officers highlighted that they had utilised data from October 2022 to October 2023; ranking the data into demand, profitability, unwanted dwell time and concessionary.

Officers went through the approach and study output, which was captured as follows:

- Prioritise bus routes by passenger demand and dwell time;
- Identify the areas where journey speeds are slowest
- Identify the greatest need of improvement to deliver the greatest benefit

The presentation detailed an example of bus route ranking. Reference was made to the combining of dwell time and demand, which highlights the areas which have the most passengers but also were impacted by the most demand.

TFW colleagues explained how to obtain a regional perspective. It was noted that this initial approach was focused on high density areas; Swansea Bay bus routes had dominated the initial ranking and analysis due to the data using absolute numbers. The presentation went on to explain that to counter this, and provide a regional perspective, the analysis had been repeated with the exclusion of bus routes that engage with Swansea bus depots.

The Committee were provided with examples of the output of the study, and how the information can be used to further investigate improvements to bus routes.

It was noted that from TFW's analysis there had been a consistent theme with all bus routes, in that it was in the evening where the serious delays actually occur.

Members were informed that TFW had crossed referenced with INRIX data in regards to the areas that had a slow average speed, in order to identify if this was a congestion issue or if it was specific for the bus; through this they will have a bit more information to assist with engagement with the Local Authority.

A conclusion was provided in regards to the output. It was stated that this project was trying to give a regional perspective of the bus network, bring local knowledge and data together to create a solid starting point on how to improve the bus network, and identify the problems and start the process for finding solutions.

The next steps were highlighted to the Committee:

- Engage with local government colleagues and stakeholders to understand the routes and local needs

- Understand operational cost savings that could be achieved by improving the bus route infrastructure
- Use mobile phone network data to develop approach to look at future bus routes

TFW colleagues provided detail in regards to how this work would align with the Regional Transport Plan (RTP) process; and how simplifying a complex problem could inform RTP and programme development for improvement over the coming years.

Reference was made to the transport modelling capabilities, specifically with regards to the South West and Mid Wales Transport Model. It was stated that the model was owned by Welsh Government but managed by TFW, and covered West and Mid Wales; specifically it had an increased level of detail around the key urban settlements. Officers highlighted that the model was representative of highways and public transport demand for the region; it uses the base year of 2019, and forecasted to 2027 and 2042.

It was recognised that the data was pre Covid, therefore an exercise was undertaken last year to update the model with post Covid data; this exercise had now been completed, with data gathered from 2022.

The presentation included information regarding what the model was capable of producing. It was explained that the model had quite a few uses; Officers highlighted examples of what it had been used for to date, including the Swansea Bay and West Wales rail improvements.

A discussion took place in regards to the types of data that was available from the model. It was noted that the associated baseline data, such as mobile phone data, can be tailored to suit different needs; Local Authorities might want to undertake some form of modelling, but to suit different requirements, and that was something that can be achieved. TFW encouraged Members to provide any ideas they have to the team.

It was confirmed that Local Development Plans had formed part of the transport modelling exercises in the past, and this needed to be undertaken in regards to this particular study. TFW colleagues highlighted that they would provide further detail on National Park links.

5. **Regional Transport Plan - Case for Change**

Members were provided with the Case for Change, which was the next part of the process in developing the Regional Transport Plan (RTP).

Officers explained that the Implementation Plan for the RTP was approved at a recent meeting of the Corporate Joint Committee, and submitted to Welsh Government; the next stage of the process was to develop a Case for Change. It was stated that the Case for Change was a document which set out the regions current position and why change was required; it also included a draft of the engagement strategy, and the process in regards to the integrated impact assessment that follows on from the various consultation exercises.

Concerns were raised in regards the timescales associated with developing the RTP, as had been previously mentioned in past meetings.

It was noted that the Case for Change linked to a number of other strategy documents; and specifically was driven by opportunities in regards to the transport strategy. Officers added that the document set out the gaps in the industry, and provided a direction of travel for the next stage.

Reference was made to the Rail Journey Data detailed within the Case for Change, which was included as Appendix 1 of the circulated report. It was noted that the table currently only included rail trips from Swansea; however, Officers had been working on updating this table to include single trips to the four main stations in each of the Local Authority areas. Members were informed that the overall trip data was captured from 2021/22 financial year; the data from 2022/23 financial year will be issued at the end of February 2024.

A discussion took place in regards to the next steps of the RTP process. It was noted that the Case for Change would need to be approved by the Corporate Joint Committee, and then submitted to Welsh Government for approval. The challenging timescales associated with the development of the RTP was reiterated; Officers would need to discuss this further, in terms of what could be delivered within the specified time frame. It was mentioned that the dates were not confirmed; however, Officers were currently working towards developing the initial draft of the RTP by May 2024, the final draft of the RTP by October 2024, and the final RTP by March 2025.

A formal amendment to the recommendation, contained within the circulated report, was proposed and seconded:

'That the Regional Transport Sub-Committee endorse the Case for Change in respect of the Regional Transport Plan, subject to the inclusion of additional rail journey data; and that it is submitted to the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee for approval and onward submission to Welsh Government to meet the requirements of the Regional Transport Plan mandate'

It was determined that the Committee were in support of the amendment to be considered by Corporate Joint Committee.

6. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items received.

CHAIRPERSON