

**CAMBRIDGE TO HUNTINGDON RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM  
(Report by Director of Operational Services)****1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To consider the proposals by Cambridgeshire County Council for the 'Cambridge To Huntingdon Rapid Transit System' (CHRTS).

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Improvements to public transport in the A14 corridor were proposed in the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS). An early private sector proposal (SuperCam) for a guided bus running from St Ives to Cambridge now has been abandoned leaving the current County Council proposal as the only one being taken forward. A copy of the County Council's consultation document is attached to this report as Annex A.. This initial consultation is a precursor to the County Council submitting an application under the Transport and Works Act (TWA).
- 2.2 The basic guidance technology is already in use in the UK in the Leeds Guided Bus Way and is proposed for the Leigh Guided Busway in Greater Manchester. The County Council proposal is for a much higher quality system, which is fully accessible and heavily reliant on IT technology for both guidance and ticketing.
- 2.3 The County Council have opted to advance a guided bus scheme as Government have indicated that they will not support the more expensive light and heavy rail alternatives. The proposed scheme also offers the opportunity for CHRTS vehicles to run on ordinary roads as well as the guide-way and for any operator meeting the quality threshold to run vehicles on the guide-way.

**3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The council needs to consider a response to the current consultation in the context of the position it might wish to take in respect of the County Council's TWA submission, to be made in the autumn.
- 3.2 Without committing itself to supporting the CHRTS the District Council has been successful in persuading the County Council to extend the scope of the proposed scheme to take in Huntingdon Railway Station and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital as part of the basic route. Measures to facilitate the on-road running in Huntingdon are identified in the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Market Town Transport Strategy.
- 3.3 The District Council is active also in contributing to the environmental assessment of the proposal and the development of a 'urban design guide' to ensure that stops and associated facilities are properly integrated with their locality.
- 3.4 To help inform the District Council's consideration of the County Council's proposals we have engaged Jacobs Consultancy.

#### 4. CONSULTANT'S OPINION

- 4.1 The consultants have reviewed the proposals against a selection of relevant strategies and policies including national, regional and local objectives from CHUMMS; the district council's strategic and medium term objectives; and the deposit draft of the county Structure Plan. They have reviewed its financial and economic viability by reference to the modelling work undertaken by the County Council's own consultants.
- 4.2 Generally, the county council have cooperated with Jacobs and made material available for inspection. Our Consultants have not, however, been given full access to some of the most recent modelling work and their report of necessity is therefore based on the baseline (July 2002) proposal together with two more recent appendices submitted to the Department for Transport.
- 4.3 A copy of the Executive Summary Jacob's report is appended (Annex B). In summary their conclusions are –
- CHRTS proposals broadly contribute to this council's goals, strategic objectives and policies but may have a slightly negative impact on some environmental objectives;
  - the base CHRTS route alignment must extend to Hinchingsbrooke Hospital via the railway station (this is now secured) and care will need to protect the built, historic and natural environment; and
  - there appears to be no rational case for opposing CHRTS on economic ground – this will also be tested by the Department of Transport.
- 4.4 The consultants conclude also that
- (a) Taking into account their findings, the District Council will have to consider whether it wishes to formally support or object to the (TWA) proposal. Either course of action will have obvious implications for the Council. but provide mechanisms to protect local interests in relation to the scheme and its impacts.
- (b) Raising an objection or multiple objections, will require resources to be allocated in order to present the case in detail for the possible objection.
- (c) Jacobs Consultancy's view is that the scheme cannot be opposed on economic viability grounds (subject to the conclusions to be drawn by the Department of Transport) based on the recent submissions.
- (d) The approach to the TWA could be in terms of either written representations, or through appearance at the inquiry, resources would again be required for the latter."
- (e) An area of potential concern identified by the consultant relates to impact on the built, historic and natural environment. This relates not only to the guide way section (the subject of the TWA) but to other road improvements.

## **5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION**

5.1 Cabinet are invited to consider the findings of the council's consultants and to take a view on the response to be made to the County Council's consultation. It is suggested that this could be on the basis of:

- (a) Support in principle for the proposal.
- (b) Significant concern about the impact of the proposal on the built, historic and natural environment.
- (c) Unless these concerns can be resolved, the Council would lodge objections to the TWA.

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