



Annex 16

Communications Plan

travelwest 

Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils
working together to improve your local transport

Communications Plan

The North Fringe to Hengrove Package MetroBus (NFHP) (the Scheme) is one of three MetroBus schemes which together deliver a MetroBus network for the West of England area.

This communication plan sets out the communications framework that supports the NFHP as part of the MetroBus network as it moves forward from the development and planning stages to delivery and operation.

This plan covers the elements of Who (Stakeholders), What (key messages), When (timescales) and How (communication channels).

Good communications has formed an important part of the development of the MetroBus network. Public consultation was first carried out in 2005 as part of the Joint Local Transport Plan consultation programme at a concept level. Stakeholder engagement has continued since then with public consultation consisting of advertised public exhibitions, stakeholder presentations, regular reports to the Joint Transport Executive Committee, preplanning consultation, formal planning consultations, media news releases, leaflets, meetings with stakeholders and decision makers, social media contact and more. The statutory processes for the planning permission have required significant public consultation.

As the NFHP moves to the delivery phase communications need to go through a process of change, from engagement and gathering feedback used to inform the development of the Scheme to information provision relating to its the physical construction and mitigation of any disruption caused during the construction. Informing residents of the benefits of the Scheme and promotion of the use of the MetroBus network will gradually take priority, working in partnership with the operator(s).

In addition to MetroBus, the TravelWest programme (comprising the four West of England councils of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire working together on Major Transport Schemes) includes the MetroWest rail projects, aspects of the Cycle City Ambition Grant, Better Bus Area and Local Sustainable Transport Fund. It is important that MetroBus communication demonstrate the integration between these projects.

Operation

MetroBus is a joint-funded, cross boundary, West of England project and this will be acknowledged in all communications, which will follow the agreed communications protocol for West of England TravelWest schemes.

As Scheme construction reaches completion the communications priorities will move to focus on operation and providing information about services.

During this time there are likely to be opportunities, working in partnership with the operator(s), for: information on the smartcard; promotion of the vehicle; the service routes; the level and frequency of service. Information on service frequency will be

hosted on TravelWest.info site allowing a simple migration of information from one page to another.

At this stage it is not known how the services will be launched. Routes and IT will need to be tested and driver training carried out, so a 'soft launch' may be appropriate, ahead of a major media event to take place later.

The West of England has already established the name "MetroBus" locally as part of the wider TravelWest brand covering the area. A single visual identity will be visible at all construction locations and will include the TravelWest logo with website address, Department for Transport logo, MetroBus logo, contractor's logos and contact details.

MetroBus has a recognised web presence as part of the Travelwest.info site which is established as the go-to, single source for travel information across the West of England area. The single source will allow a simple migration of information from the 'project' pages of the site to the 'travel information' pages as services commence.

Who: Stakeholders

A full and comprehensive stakeholder list for the NFHP and the MetroBus programme has been established, including supporters and opponents, and will continue to be refined and edited as the Scheme progresses.

The communications team will support formal project engagement with statutory stakeholders as required to ensure the construction process runs smoothly. In addition, these contacts will be added to the general stakeholder list in order that they receive general information issued about the schemes.

Key business/industry stakeholders include the Department for Transport, Network Rail, Bristol Airport, Business West and bus operators.

Consultees/stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Key Decision Makers including the Leaders of the four councils and Chief Executives
- Local MPs
- Local Members
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Joint Scrutiny
- Parish and Town Councils
- Neighbourhood Partnerships
- Neighbouring authorities
- Local rail and transport groups
- Local businesses on routes
- Local residents
- Local interest groups; and
- Statutory Authorities.

Please see the accompanying Stakeholder Analysis Plan for full details.

What: the Communications Plan

The Communications Plan for MetroBus is based on the following principles:

- Specific communication activities are focussed at the right level for particular stakeholders. Different types of stakeholders will have different concerns and require either a different level of information or have different interests in the project.
- Concerns of potential objectors are addressed as far as possible.
- Benefits continue to be promoted and supporters kept updated.

The community engagement principles that were established at the start of the development phase of the projects are as follows:

- Early engagement of stakeholder groups in rapid transit scheme development to inform and influence the process.
- Regular engagement and feedback through scheme development programme.
- Building long-term relationships with community groups throughout the different stages of the project.
- Regular meetings with other stakeholder bodies.
- Regular informal and formal communication with local decision makers.

These have provided a strong base of knowledge about the MetroBus schemes and a comprehensive stakeholder contact list on which to continue building.

The purpose of this communications plan and resulting communications is:

- To ensure that the wider West of England public are aware and informed that the MetroBus network is progressing and to encourage a positive response.
- To explain the benefits that MetroBus will bring to users, non-users and to the wider economic benefit of the area.
- To inform all resident and potential users of the specification of the MetroBus network that sets it apart from the background bus network and makes it attractive to users.
- To inform key stakeholders that the MetroBus network is progressing.
- To inform residents in the immediate vicinity of the network routes of timescales and any possible disruption during the construction phase and the mitigation measures in place.
- To inform all travellers of possible disruption and mitigation measures in place.
- To update all on progress throughout the construction and delivery phase.
- To work with the Metro Bus operator on advance publicity for the services.
- To manage any opposition to the schemes.

Communications will not only inform the audiences and stakeholders about the physical route and required works, but will include information about the vehicle, the

look and feel of the infrastructure (stops and shelters) and the various distinctive items that differentiate MetroBus from the background bus network.

Towards the latter stages of the work for Full Approval, the communications team has broadened the scope of communications to begin to illustrate the MetroBus user experience. Links with other transport schemes have been highlighted and these include the MetroWest rail improvements and the development of the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone and Bristol Temple Meads Station, Cycling Ambition Fund improvements and LSTF and Better Bus Area funding. This has ensured that MetroBus is clearly positioned as part of an integrated approach to transport improvements in the area.

How: the Communication Channels

A range of channels and opportunities are available to ensure information is distributed as widely as possible. These will include, but not be limited to the following:

- Committee Reports: These will provide formal and financial updates to elected representatives and thence to the local media and public.
- Website information: The www.travelwest.info/metrobus site will be the 'go-to' page for all MetroBus project information with links to other partner's sites as appropriate.
- 'Fly-by' computer visualisation video: This will follow the MetroBus along the route and be used to explain specific areas of work and the benefits they bring to the network.
- Media information and news releases: To be issued at key stages in the programme.
- Information provision: To include, at various times, newsletters, posters, emails, letters, personal contact, talks to stakeholder groups.
- Local stakeholder meetings: These will be held as required to engage with and inform stakeholders of progress.
- Social media: This will be used to disseminate information and correct misreporting as appropriate. The informal nature of social media can also help give the project a human face. Links will be provided to the website to encourage people to find further information.

Contractors will be expected to work closely with the core MetroBus communications team to ensure full and comprehensive information is available to residents during the construction phases.

Preconstruction meetings will be held in relevant areas and regular update meetings provided for Neighbourhood Partnerships, local ward councillors and community groups. Newsletters and press updates will be issued as required to ensure a regular flow of information during the build.

Links will be made between the contractors Community Liaison Officer and the MetroBus team to ensure consistent content and reach of the messages.

It is also expected that social media and “drive time” radio will be used for immediate daily updates which can be especially useful in the event of a change of plan or unexpected disruption.

When: project timescales

Communication is on-going and will not stop or start at any phase of the project. Instead, messages and channels will shift and develop according to need as the project moves from one phase to another.

The electronic MetroBus newsletter is issued approximately every six weeks, with updates produced as required. The mailing list can be tailored to groups or geographical areas to facilitate targeted communications. Paper copies are also produced and distributed in areas where research shows web usage is low. This includes the south Bristol area served by the NFHP.

Key media opportunities that will form the focus for both publicity and information are listed below: Timescales of these will be finalised as the project moves forward.

- Securing of Full Approval
- Appointment of contractors
- Commencement of work on site
- Achieving various build milestones
- Soft testing
- Scheme opening

There will be many, as yet unidentified, opportunities for additional communications. These could include human interest stories, such as the use of local staff and apprentices; movement and securing of flora and fauna; landscaping opportunities involving local schools and residents. The MetroBus communications team will work closely with the contractors’ Community Liaison Officers to identify opportunities and use them to ensure a regular flow of information.

The completion of work, opening of the route and start of services will be a major event. It will involve representatives from the DfT, local councils, the LEP, local residents and stakeholders and the MetroBus operator(s).

In summary

Communications for the NFHP and the MetroBus network will continue on the existing path, building on the strong base that has been established. Information provision to the wide range of stakeholders will continue to build a depth of knowledge about the delivery of the Scheme; strengthen understanding of the aims and objectives of MetroBus; and encourage usage of the MetroBus once operations start.