



Bristol, United Kingdom

Around one million people live in the West of England, with Bristol being the biggest major urban centre. In 2008 the Office for National Statistics estimated the Bristol unitary authority's population at 416,900. The population of the sub-region is set to grow by 19% by 2026. The prosperity and growth of the West of England has led to greater car ownership and increasing road congestion is a cost to the economy and is set to worsen over time with the expected rise in region's population. Despite economic growth the region also contains significant pockets of deprivation and disadvantage, which suffer from poor transport links.

Why might urban road user charging be introduced in Bristol?

It is estimated that, in the West of England, at least £2.67m (€3.15m) is lost to the economy each year due to time spent in congestion, and this is expected to rise to almost £6m (€7.06m) by 2016. The impact of in-

creased traffic levels in central Bristol area has badly affected public transport, impacting mainly on reliability and journey times. This has a direct effect on confidence and willingness to use public transport and acts as an impediment to promoting modal shift.

Measures sought under the UK National Government's Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) will be seen as a prerequisite before charging schemes are introduced. Such measures are to include key Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes, extensive bus network improvement schemes, rail improvements, new park and ride sites and improved routes and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

To provide attractive alternatives to the motor car, TIF investigatory work has confirmed the need for an extensive and wide-ranging complementary package of transport improvements measures totaling some £788m (€906m). Importantly, the authorities consider that many of the measures cited would need to be implemented before the proposed TIF road user charging and workplace parking schemes can go ahead.

What are the features of the proposed Bristol scheme?

As a means to address congestion and provide funding for a package of high quality alternatives to car use, road user charging schemes are proposed for central Bristol once significant additional public transport is in place. The operational details of these schemes are still under consideration but a weekday morning road user charge during the peak period of approximately 7-10am could be implemented, with a daily charge of around £4. Depending on the scheme adopted, road users would either pay each time they crossed a cordon or charging boundary or purchase an area licence covering travel within the charging area.

Outside central Bristol, the North Fringe area of Bristol also suffers from acute congestion. The dispersed nature of the key employment hubs in Greater Bristol, and the mix of businesses, housing and other land uses, makes the North Fringe area less well suited to a cordon or area-licence-type road user charging scheme. However it is recognised that these congestion 'hotspots' needs to be addressed and the suitability of a workplace parking levy has been investigated as part of the TIF development work.

How is the scheme being developed?

In October 2007 a document entitled "Our Future Transport" was submitted to the UK Government Department for Transport (DfT) by the West of England authorities. This document outlined the sub region's 20 year transport vision and the part that the Transport Innovation Fund could play in realising this vision.

Since this submission, consultation has been conducted with a range of stakeholders and extensive further technical work undertaken in developing the detail of the proposals. In January 2008, the TIF project received a big boost when it was awarded an extra £669,872 (€850,000) by the UK Government to continue with the technical work needed to develop the proposals.

Subject to political approval, the proposals would be submitted to the UK government as an outline business case for the £788m (€906m) package from the Transport Innovation Fund. Once, and if, this bid is submitted, extensive community and stakeholder consultation is to be carried out. A further three years technical refinement of the proposed transport measures and ongoing engagement will then follow.



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Conclusion

The prosperity and growth of the West of England has led to greater car ownership and increasing road congestion is a cost to the economy. This is set to worsen over time with the expected rise in region's population.

As a means to address congestion and provide funding for a package of high quality alternatives to car use, road user charging schemes are proposed for central Bristol once significant additional public transport is in place. Measures sought under the UK National Government's Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) will be seen as a prerequisite before charging schemes are introduced.

Once the proposals have been submitted to the UK government extensive community, stakeholder consultation will be carried out. A further three years technical refinement of the proposed transport measures and ongoing engagement will then follow. This will set the stage as to whether Bristol will accept some form of congestion charge in the near future.