

West of England Scrutiny - 9 March 2015

Question from Ashton Gate Station steering Group

Thank you for your questions about a potential new rail station at Ashton Gate; answers to each question are set out below:

1. The 'Bristol New Stations High Level Assessment Study – Ashton Gate', published in November 2014, forecasts that a new Ashton Gate station could generate an average of 213 daily rail trips. The initial economic assessment produced a BCR (Benefit to Cost Ratio) of between 0.74 and 0.98, depending on the level of contingency applied. Government guidance suggests that a BCR of 2 would be considered high. We would therefore usually look to achieve a BCR of above 2 in an initial economic assessment of a new rail station but other factors would also be considered such as operational feasibility.
2. Recognised rail industry techniques were used to calculate the demand figures and the methodology is set out in the report. Bristol City Council officers are happy to continue dialogue with the Ashton Gate Station steering group but as the consultants' commission has now been completed it would not be appropriate to involve them unless further work on this was commissioned.
3. Passenger numbers have been forecasted using a range of techniques as set out in the report including the key elements you have listed. The report notes that demand for rail travel has grown significantly in recent years and sets out the annual forecast growth for a number of periods into the future, based on a range of factors such as rail industry predictions and local patronage increases in recent years.
4. The demand forecasts include consideration of local employment and leisure facilities. As you have noted, the report states that the potential impacts of the redevelopment of Ashton Gate stadium has not been included in the assessment given that demand for stadia is highly peak-orientated. The study tested a scenario taking into account additional employment at the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone which had a minor effect on forecast demand. Less peak-orientated demand from a potential conference centre at Ashton Gate could be considered in a future study.
5. Your comments on the potential for cyclists using local trains are noted. Data available at the time of the study suggested that catchments of the station would be local in nature and therefore most passengers would access the station on foot.
6. Yes, the station access option via Barons Close on the east of the rail line is considered to be the best option due to not having to cross the rail line, no new access road being required and no conflict with the MetroBus route.
7. The potential annual subsidy requirements for MetroWest Phase 1 will become clearer as the project progresses. Ashton Gate station is not included in the MetroWest Phase 1 project.
8. The former station site is considered to be no longer viable as appropriate access would be very challenging to achieve due to the highway layout around the site.