



Cheshire & Warrington Local Transport Body

Date of Meeting: Friday 6 April 2018
Report of: Roy Newton
Subject/Title: Sustainable Travel Access Fund

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The C&W LEP was awarded £5 million as part of Local Growth Fund (LGF) to fund projects as part of the sub-region's Active Travel Investment Strategy. Local authorities were invited to submit bids for funding towards schemes in line with the intentions set out in the original LGF bid.
- 1.2. Bids were received for 8 schemes totalling around £7.5 million. Following assessment of the bids and discussions with authorities on the scalability of some of the schemes to maximise the outcomes within the available budget, the following distribution of the funds is proposed:

Scheme Name	Promoting Authority	Bid (£'000s)	Proposed Allocation (£'000s)
Wilmslow Strategic Cycle and Walking Route	Cheshire East Council	850	500
Northwest Crewe Cycling and Walking Link	Cheshire East Council	1200	1100
A5117 Cycle Route, Ellesmere Port	Cheshire West & Chester Council	380	380
Sutton Way Boulevard, Ellesmere Port	Cheshire West & Chester Council	640	640
Station View and Canal Towpath Enhancement	Cheshire West & Chester Council	2739	680
Trans Pennine Trail upgrade	Warrington Council	600	600
Chester Road promenade route	Warrington Council	600	600
Burtonwood to Omega shared use path	Warrington Council	500	500
Total		7509	5000

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Local Transport Body is asked to endorse the proposed distribution of the sustainable travel access fund, subject to satisfactory business cases being developed.

3. Background

- 3.1. The C&W LEP was awarded £5 million as part of Local Growth Fund (LGF) to fund projects as part of the sub-region's Active Travel Investment Strategy. The Strategy for Cheshire & Warrington is a package of essential transport infrastructure designed to overcome walking and cycling barriers to the key economic destinations in the Cheshire and Warrington sub region. The package aims to deliver high outputs against a relatively low level of investment, most significantly in terms of improved access to employment, housing, training and education and provides health, congestion and environmental benefits.
- 3.2. The outcomes the Strategy is aiming to achieve, through the implementation of sustainable transport programmes ,can be quantified through economic evaluation:
- Providing a reduction in car kilometres which in turn provide reductions in noise, transport emissions, congestion and accidents.
 - Increasing physical activity which reduce mortality rates, levels of absenteeism and in turn reduce costs to the NHS.
 - Supporting people into employment which results in increased economic activity (Gross Value Added (GVA)) and a reduction in benefits claimed.
- 3.3. The C&W LEP invited the three local authorities to submit bids for funding in line with the intentions set out in the original bid with a particular interest in bids for projects that:
- are strategic;
 - are scaleable;
 - link to other schemes and initiatives (e.g. The Enterprise Zone);
 - help to reduce congestion;
 - improve links to employment sites and residential areas;
 - increase physical activity;
 - support people into employment; and
 - help to reduce pollution.
- 3.4. It was also important that projects fitted with the priorities of the Strategic Economic Plan and ideally provided a balance of schemes across the sub-region.

4. Submitted Schemes

- 4.1. Bids for funding were received for the following schemes:

Wilmslow Strategic Cycle and Walking Route – The project would deliver a high quality strategic cycling and walking link through Wilmslow which fills key existing gaps. This will create a coherent route connecting key economic development sites in the Cheshire East Science Corridor, improving access to a key Local Plan site to support delivery of 1500 new jobs and improving access to the Manchester Airport Enterprise Zone (complementing SEMMMS A6 Manchester Airport Relief Road). The project will entail: upgrading pedestrian / cycle links between Wilmslow station and Royal London site to address access barriers and support delivery of 1500 new jobs; filling key gaps and provision of an off road route along the A538 corridor between Wilmslow and key employment sites including Waters and the Manchester Airport Enterprise Zone; and providing an improved direct route from key residential areas west of Wilmslow to key employment locations including Alderley Park, Waters and Manchester Airport Enterprise Zone.

Northwest Crewe Cycling and Walking Link – This project would deliver a strategic cycling and walking link into the heart of the North West Crewe development area

providing connectivity from Crewe and Nantwich to: 1600 new jobs and 1750 new dwellings; the Bentley strategic employment site (currently employs 4500 staff); Leighton Hospital and other existing residential areas. The project entails extending the high quality Connect 2 pedestrian / cycle shared path from the A530/A532 roundabout northwards along the A530. Network Rail is widening the Boulderstones Bridge on the A530 and this project capitalises on the opportunity created by widening of this bridge. The route then links into the Bentley employment site and runs parallel to the alignment of the Leighton Spine Road and Link Road. The route ends by linking into Leighton Hospital and providing key routes into existing residential areas in North West Crewe.

A5117 Cycle Route, Ellesmere Port - The A5117 cycle route (National cycle route 5) is a 4.5 km cycleway that links Ellesmere Port and Chester (via the existing canal towpath at Cheshire Oaks) with the University of Chester's Thornton Science Park campus, Essar Stanlow Oil Refinery, Encirc and new strategic Portus cluster employment site encompassing energy intensive industries. The scheme was originally proposed as a Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF2) extension scheme, unfortunately the scheme was not previously progressed due to a failure to secure the necessary capital funding from previous funding bids. The scheme is now considered essential to provide and improve sustainable access to this campus and research facility, and wider businesses. CWaC is also leading on taking forward demand assessments to introduce a regular passenger rail service between Helsby and Hooton, including the potential for new stations at New Bridge Road and Thornton Science Park. The cycle route significantly increases the catchment areas and demand for this service, enhancing the business case. Highways England through their designated funds programme are considering cycle and pedestrian improvements at M56 junction 14, subject to this scheme being approved. This could provide a continuous route from Frodsham & Helsby to Ellesmere Port & Chester

Sutton Way Boulevard, Ellesmere Port - The project will provide a new 3 metre wide shared pathway along a mile long key corridor in Ellesmere Port called Sutton Way, connecting into a wider network, providing local residents with low cost sustainable access to a wide variety of opportunities for work, education, sport and leisure. Sutton Way has been recognised as a major route in the Spatial Concept for the Town in the Vision and Strategic Regeneration Framework of the Ellesmere Port Development Board, linking the town centre with the 'western fringe' and new residential development. The Scheme would also connect Chester via the already upgraded Stanney Lane; providing access to the canal and create a contiguous route to Chester via the canal and to the A5117 (subject to separate bids) for employment and further education opportunities at Thornton Science Park.

Station View and Canal Towpath Enhancement - This project combines the enhancement and maintenance of a 2.2 km stretch of the canal towpath between the A41, Ellesmere Port and Chester along with a significant access improvement to the canal towpath in Chester. This includes the provision of a fit for purpose foot-bridge over the railway line at Station View in Chester. This helps link the towpath cycle route to the new Chester Business Quarter and the also improves access to and from Chester Railway Station. It also includes an enhanced access point to the towpath in Chester at the Westminster Road Canal Bridge and new access at Pearl Lane. Upon completion an interdependent scheme to install a toucan crossing and canal ramp access linking to National Cycle Network Route 56 at Westminster Road can be facilitated as the new bridge improvements will allow for traffic diversions, enhancing sustainable travel opportunities to access employment, education and leisure facilities. The existing bridge weight and traffic restrictions have generated diversionary routes for bus services, whereby it is estimated operators have lost approximately 4,000 trips per annum, accumulating additional mileage and costs, with

increased environmental impact from emissions while affecting journey time reliability. The new bridge will also be future proofed for potential electrification of the railway.

Trans Pennine Trail upgrade - This scheme will see the upgrade of the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) within Warrington between Knutsford Road (A50) and Chester Road (A5060). The present path is of poor quality, suffers from drainage issues, and is less than 1m wide in places which makes it less attractive for use by pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters. The project will widen the path to 3m, clearing back encroaching vegetation to improve visibility and personal security and will provide suitable crossing points at the main roads. The TPT is also a much valued tourist asset as it is used by over 100,000 visitors a year many of whom are using the trail as part of a long distance cycling holiday.

Chester Road promenade route - The Chester Road promenade route would run along Chester Road (A5060) in Warrington between the junction with the planned Centre Park Link scheme and the town centre. Most of the route would be alongside the River Mersey and would provide a safe and secure route which would be attractive to pedestrians and cyclists. At the northern end the route would link with the access road into the Centre Park employment area (which has over 2,200 employees), and would also link with two possible routes into the southern end of Warrington Town Centre - one alongside the west bank of the River Mersey to connect with Arpley Road, and the other using the existing wide pavement on Wilderspool Causeway bridge. At the southern end, the route would link with the Trans Pennine Trail which is one of the strategic cycle routes across Warrington. A design competition will take place in early 2018 to seek innovative solutions to providing a suitable cycle route in keeping with its prominent location. This will examine options for linking with the surrounding cycle network and ensuring a high profile and attractive cycle route serving the employment destinations in this area.

Burtonwood to Omega shared use path - This is a new 3.5m wide shared use path alongside Burtonwood Road/Clay Lane in North Warrington which aims to provide a safe, secure and attractive cycling and walking link between the west side of Burtonwood village and the commercial and employment growth areas of Omega, Gemini and Lingley Mere. The length of the proposed path is 2.4km. There is currently no path alongside the road due to its rural nature but the construction of Junction 8 of the M62 and the on-going growth of the Omega employment site has meant a significant uplift in traffic levels on this road. Pedestrians must walk within the unlit and busy carriageway between the village and Omega which is an unsatisfactory situation especially as many residents have taken advantage of the recent substantial job creation at Omega. The new path will also be very beneficial to existing and potential cyclists because it will allow them to avoid the intimidating high speeds of traffic and sharp bends on the route. In addition, the scheme will include a link to the east side of Burtonwood village using the existing Barn Lane; a non-vehicular lane which is also a public right of way. The need for the scheme emerged from the Burtonwood Transport study in 2015 which included a two stage public consultation exercise. Ongoing contact with the parish council and ward members has re-affirmed the need for this important link.

5. Assessment of Schemes

5.1. The schemes were assessed against the following criteria:

- Value for Money – in line with DfT criteria we would not normally expect to bud bids with BCRs less than 1.5. The LEP is particularly interested in schemes which have local funding contributions and/or which are eligible for ERDF.
- Deliverability/Risk – the C&W LEP is looking to support schemes which have a high certainty of delivery before March 2021

- Level of fit with the original bid criteria (which can be qualitative where quantitative information is not available), particularly:
- Strategic policy fit
- Impact on jobs
- New homes supported
- Growth in GVA
- Wider benefits: decongestion, health, environmental, accidents

5.2. Schemes were also evaluated on the basis fit with original bid criteria and value for money, deliverability and level of risk. A summary of the assessments is set out in Appendix 1.

6. Proposed Distribution of Funding

6.1. Bids were received for 8 schemes totalling around £7.5 million. Following assessment of the bids discussions were undertaken with authorities to focus the funds to deliver the greatest outcomes. Discussions were undertaken with Cheshire West and Chester about the Station View and Canal Towpath scheme. This would have consumed more than 50% of the available budget and hence would reduce the ability of the Fund to maximise the outputs of the whole programme. Furthermore the scheme did not have as good a BCR as most of the other projects. The majority of the funding required was for the replacement of the pedestrian bridge. Removal of the bridge replacement from the scheme considerably reduced the cost and increased the BCR, furthermore this also removed the need for Network Rail possessions and hence improved deliverability of the scheme.

6.2. The Northwest Crewe Cycling & Walking Link and Wilmslow Strategic Cycle & Walking Route were more expensive than the majority of bids, with the Crewe scheme not having as high a BCR, albeit still a good BCR. Fully funding these schemes would reduce the ability to maximise the outputs of the whole programme. Whilst the Wilmslow scheme offered a higher BCR, discussions with Cheshire East Council indicated that the Crewe scheme was a higher local priority and was not as scaleable as the Wilmslow scheme. As a result of these discussions the following distribution of the funds is proposed:

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7. Next Steps

- 7.1. Following LTB endorsement of the schemes the Body wishes to support, the schemes will need to be taken forward in line with the LEP accountability framework. Funding distribution will be confirmed by the LEP Board in May and project sponsors will need to submit business cases when they are ready to the LEP's Performance and Investment (P&I) Committee who will consider and approve detailed appraisal information for pipeline projects prioritised for funding. P&I committee will also provide feedback to project sponsors for any projects that fail to pass the investment gateway stage. The LEP executive team will be available to support project sponsors with advice on business case development.

Appendix 1

Scheme Name	Strategic Fit	Outputs	Funding/ VfM	Deliverability
Wilmslow Strategic Cycle and Walking Route	Good strategic fit linking to key employment sites	Good outputs in terms of supporting numbers of pedestrians and cyclists and linked to job growth	Very high BCR. Council will underwrite any increase in scheme costs.	No private land required, no planning permission required. Risk mitigation on land issues. Could start next Jan and complete by Aug 2019. Scheme is scaleable.
Northwest Crewe Cycling and Walking Link	Good strategic fit. Complements Bentley Masterplan.	Good outputs in terms of supporting numbers of pedestrians and cyclists	High BCR.	Consultation already carried out as part of wider package of works. No land issues anticipated. Detailed design has already been undertaken on some elements and outline for others. Could be done in phases.
A5117 Cycle Route, Ellesmere Port	Good strategic fit, linking Ellesmere Port to Cheshire Oaks and Chester	Good outputs in terms of supporting access to jobs but lacks quantification of numbers of pedestrians and cyclists	Very high BCR	Can be broken into phases. No Land or planning permission reqd. Milestones seem optimistic.
Sutton Way Boulevard, Ellesmere Port	Good strategic fit linking town centre with the Western Fringe and residential areas and provide a link to Chester by joining up with Stanney Lane.	Good outputs in terms of supporting numbers of pedestrians and cyclists	Very high BCR	May be issues securing the land around the flats. 5 phases to scheme. Not programmed to complete until March 2021
Station View and Canal Towpath Enhancement	Good strategic fit linking Ellesmere Port and Chester	Good outputs in terms of supporting numbers of pedestrians and cyclists and supporting access to jobs	High BCR. Very expensive scheme. Replace of bridge comprising a significant element of the costs.	Need NR permissions and track access to build the bridge, therefore risks to delivery timetable. No land or planning Permission required. Can be delivered in phases.

Trans Pennine Trail upgrade	Good strategic fit, linking residential and employment sites, plus tourism route.	Good outputs in terms of supporting numbers of pedestrians and cyclists	Very high BCR	Scheme can be broken down into two elements. No planning permission or land required. Not forecast to start until May 2020
Chester Road promenade route	Good strategic fit linking to Centre Park Link and Trans-Pennine Way	Good outputs in terms of supporting numbers of pedestrians and cyclists	High BCR	Design competition may delay scheme but could provide great innovation. No planning permission required, but unclear about land ownership. Consultation not yet undertaken.
Burtonwood to Omega shared use path	Good strategic fit linking to the Omega site which now employs 7000+ and the Gemini retail park that employs 2000+.	Good outputs in terms of supporting numbers of pedestrians and cyclists	Very high BCR	Outline design completed, planning permission not required but multiple land owners.