

April 22 2006

## Local Transport Plan Consultation

LTP overall aims of reducing congestion, pollution, accidents and increasing accessibility means that planning and resources should be devoted to public transport, including rail. This is stated throughout the LTP and yet funding has been placed against road improvements not rail. We note that larger schemes, the Rotherwas Access Road has been costed at £500k p.a. for three years, the Outer distribution to £150k p.a. 2009-11, and park and ride for £500k p.a. No money has been set aside for rail improvements. Hereford has been identified as an area of housing growth in the regional plan, this will be due largely to its perceived good rail links, *not* its good road links. Herefordshire Council should devote more energy and money to maintaining and improving the rail service, not the road.

Rail targets have been set but with no action set for achieving them. The 15% increase in rail is a good ambition (HC9) but there are no plans to carry this out. Many trains are currently very crowded and this has a natural depressing effect on passenger use. The cost of tickets also serves to depress use. The LTP states that the Newport-Paddington link is likely to be more important with the poorer connexions at Malvern, but there is a cost implication for passengers here, it is far more expensive going this route. It is essential that we keep the west-east link.

While we welcome pro-active Council moves to make Ledbury and Leominster fully accessible to disabled we feel the greater need is for improvements to Hereford station. The £100k for two years Hereford Station Access is desperately needed. As discussed at our meeting recently the forecourt needs to be made pedestrian and cyclist friendly and a walking route developed and signed to the town centre. We also need a transport interchange along the lines of the one at Taunton Station where bus passengers can wait out of the rain with real time information. The current situation with two bus stops, no shelter, no real time information and no town buses after 4.0 p.m. is not good enough. We cannot wait for the Edgar Street Grid development for something so important. The station as it is, is dangerous, confusing and a very poor first impression for visitors to Hereford.

The hourly service Leominster-Hereford is a great improvement and has already increased use by local commuters. To some extent this has been achieved due to the support rail receives from the Welsh Assembly. We would like to see a similar political and financial support from Herefordshire Council. Council staff should plan their meetings around the train station and rail and bus transport details given on all Council literature publicising events. Use it or lose it.

We welcome the improvements planned for PROW, pedestrian and bus schemes. It is sad to see the buses so little used when many of the services are excellent. With the free bus travel for over 60s it is likely they will be used more. However, Council staff should use the buses as a matter of course and advertised walks and events planned around the bus service. Use it or lose it.

Stations at Rotherwas and Withington are unfeasible, especially if a £13m road is built there as is planned by this council. The Department of Transport are hardly likely to pay several million pounds on a freight station if a new road costing £13m has just been built. New stations are very rarely achieved, better to put energies into improving the ones we have though preserving the land is a good move and we support this.

## **Summary:**

- Money should be spent on improving the station access at Hereford, making it more pedestrian and cycle friendly, with a signed walk route developed into town. Money for this could be re-directed from the Rotherwas Access Road which is now very unlikely to be funded.
- A small transport inter change should be created at Hereford Station similar to the one installed with First Great Western help at Taunton Station.
- The Council should make stronger representation to the TOCs and the Rail Dept of the Dept of Transport for better timetabling, including later and faster trains from Birmingham.
- The Council should promote rail (and bus) more than it does, particularly with its own staff and literature produced advertising events.
- The Council should carry out longer term planning for twin tracking the west-east route, particularly with the para Olympics possibly being located in part in Hereford.