



Bristol Transport Strategy (BTS)

Response 1 November 2018

Summary

- The BTS fails to take cycling seriously as mass urban transport
- The cycling proposals are not specific as to their nature, place, timescale and implementation
- Cycle routes need to be safe and segregated from motors, including buses, on all but quiet roads, and most of the existing cycle network needs upgrading
- Cycling infrastructure is needed now, or in 5 to 10 years, it must not be delayed until expensive, uncertain, long term MRT proposals have been decided on
- We support the MRT proposals, in principle, but they may, or may not, be realisable and must not detract from building a AAA cycle network now
- We support removing City Centre, and other, parking and new Multi Modal Hubs, which are transport interchanges not simply Park and Rides
- We support the Workplace Parking Levy and Congestion Charge but they must fund cycling (and walking) as well as MRT
- Cycling delivers bangs per buck quickly and easily compared to MRT
- Fewer photos of politicians posing with children cycling in a playground and more of those children riding to school on new segregated infrastructure

General comments

Introduction

We are pleased to see the BTS. We wonder whether a more specific plan rather than a general strategy would be appropriate or perhaps a plan could follow the BTS. As we understand there will be no Bristol Transport Plan we have to treat aspects of the BTS as a plan as well as a strategy.

We fear the document is strong on aspiration and intention but short on commitment, sequence and dates. It does not read like a document written to be implemented. It has some promising aspects but is very weak in other respects and on specifics.

Active travel

We regret there is an apparent lack of realistic ambition. Two thirds of Bristol commutes are 5 miles or less, easily cyclable. The BTS does not build constructively on Bristol's vibrant cycling culture and those parts of the existing cycle network which are of high quality by proposing to join them up. We welcome the Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan and the Bristol Cycle Strategy which are both proposed. We suggest one or both of these documents needs to include a plan, with specific routes and projects, which will be implemented as and when funding allows.

We welcome the inclusion of the cycle network map on page 52 but the document needs a commitment to build the routes or, at least, the most important of them. On the public transport map on page 48 an existing and new "primary cycle network" are shown. It is, unfortunately, not possible to make out the cycle routes on this digital map and paper copies of the document were not made available. Bristol does have a history of putting lines on a map and pretending that is a cycle route; we fear many of the routes in this "cycle network" may be of that nature.

Some extremely substandard routes are included in the so called "existing primary cycle network" (see below). We make no comment on the proposed routes because it is not possible to read the map in sufficient detail, beyond saying that they appear numerous, which we welcome provided the new, unlike the existing, routes are of a satisfactory standard for unaccompanied 10year old to ride to school.

Reference to reallocating road space from motor traffic to cycling and walking is conspicuous by its absence from the BTS. This is notable as such policies are becoming common in transport documents in other cities. There are limited hints that this might be done but nothing explicit; this is weak and Twentieth Century in its thinking.

The emphasis in the BTS is on long term, expensive options (eg Mass Rapid Transit, Underground) not on affordable, shorter term options (neighbourhood treatments, segregated cycle routes). Metrobus cost £240m and has taken 12 years so far, a three line underground would be £4billion plus and take at least 30 years, may be much longer. Cycling and walking schemes cost millions and take a few years.

There is no recognition that Bristol's existing cycle network is mostly sub standard. There is a network of routes on a map but many of these are inconvenient, frightening, indirect, dangerous, conflict with pedestrians, difficult to follow, poorly surfaced, not joined up, have barriers and generally are little used as a result. There are some very good sections but with the exception of the Bristol Bath rail path they are too short to constitute valuable routes. Many existing routes are not socially inclusive or accessible to all.

The BTS undervalues cycling as a mode of transport. That is surprising in a city where 10% of journeys to work are made by bike. Cycling is mass transit; it moves large numbers of people through a small space in a short time. The fact the author of the BTS does not "get" cycling as a form of transport is evident in that it is not seen as enabling "Housing, jobs and regeneration"; it does, otherwise so many Bristolians would not be cycling to work! And 32,000 of the planned new homes are in Bristol and 22,000 new jobs are in Temple Quarter so within normal cycling distance of each other. This, with respect, is the thinking of a transport planner in 1968 not 2018.

Cycling also enables sustainable growth. This is not recognised by the BTS. In fact by moving talented and innovative individuals around the city, quickly (unlike walking),

flexibly (unlike a bus), with negligible impact on others (unlike a car) cycling is already aiding Bristol's economic prosperity.

The fact riding a bike does not require wide tarmac roadways or tracks, concrete flyovers, ugly multi storey storage buildings, and goes where an individual wants, when they want (in contrast to public transport) are advantages not disadvantages. The BTS does seem to be written by someone interested in building big things (roads, busways, tubes) rather than smaller interventions which move large numbers of people more efficiently.

If we want large numbers of people cycling for every day transport we need a commitment to the principle of getting routes constructed not to the idea of encouraging cycling by promotion. To get people to travel by bus the Council built Metrobus they didn't say buses are nice etc etc. We also need a commitment to continuous routes segregated from motors, including buses. We need a commitment to specific routes (eg Gloucester Road/A38). Cycle parking, both at home (including for flats) and cycle hangers, and at destinations, including secure compounds, needs to be provided.

The BTS needs to prioritise cycling and walking interventions as they deliver most bangs per buck quickest. The key to getting people cycling is to make it feel safe (ie separating them from motors, including 15ton buses). At the very least there is a need to "beef up" the disappointing cycling proposals in the BTS.

MRT

We are generally well disposed to bus/MRT/underground proposals as they have the potential to reduce motor traffic enabling cycling, although it depends on the detail. Bus and MRT routes must incorporate cycling provision separate from motors, including buses, and, preferably, pedestrians. Our fear is that, as Metrobus included significant road building, as does Callington Road, some of these schemes are not really sustainable transport at all, let alone active travel. We are not in favour of road building, which creates congestion, rather than relieving it, even if it is presented as enabling better bus routes.

MRT will work best if it runs from transport hubs or multi modal park and rides, on the City edge, which allow people who have driven (or cycled, walked or bussed) there to transfer to other modes. Those other modes need to include safe segregated cycle routes as well as a bus which does not stop until it reaches the city centre (Metrobus or one form of MRT) or, even, if money permits, an underground. This will work well if parking is removed from the City Centre, there is a welcome mention of this in the BTS, but no commitment. We welcome a new Parking Strategy if it replaces City Centre car parks with multi modal hubs.

There are considerable details of the MRT proposals (eg routes see page 62) but very little on the cycling. Our suspicion is this means there will be few, unambitious cycling schemes which will be fitted in only where they don't get in the way of motors, including buses. And an additional fear is that will mean no cycle routes where there might be an MRT route in future. That means we will not get a coherent network of routes where people want to cycle.

It is important that surface MRT routes are not built at the expense of space for walking and cycling. That could have an adverse effect on people's ability to cycle (and walk) or to travel other than in a motor car. Cycling (or walking) cannot be for every journey but neither is MRT. It lacks convenience; buses, unlike cycling do not go

where a person wants, when they want; (nobody waits for, or misses, a bike!). It also involves additional cost (fares) compared to active travel.

Many journeys in Bristol are orbital not radial; ie from one suburban location to another, not to or from the City Centre. The MRT proposals do not address this. Orbital trips are mostly individual journeys where there is not the demand for any form of collective travel. For most of these journeys cycling is the only alternative to motoring. Cycling needs to be enabled with safe routes, segregated on busy roads, and low traffic neighbourhoods, which will also enable walking for the shortest journeys.

MRT services to be worthwhile, and to enable Bristolians to use them, will need to be very frequent, preferably every 5 minutes, minimum every 10. Bristol is not London or Hong Kong, the population of the Greater Bristol urban area was 617,000 in 2011. There are, at most, a few routes, and perhaps only certain times of the day, where, and when, there is likely to be sufficient demand for a MRT system. The main demand in a city our size is for individual journeys.

Careful planning is needed to ensure MRT is not an expensive white elephant. We also need to assess Metrobus realistically and critically, and, when the main M1 service has yet to start operating, we can not do that, at present. We submit that £240million (the cost of Metrobus) could have transformed Bristol as a city for cycling and walking, benefitting many more people than Metrobus. Please understand we are not criticising Metrobus merely saying Bristol could have got bigger transport impacts for less cost with active travel.

There is mention in the document of improvements to existing bus services. This is something people wanted at the BTS launch, not MRT or an underground. We appreciate the structure of public transport makes it difficult for the Council to improve bus services, which they don't control, and easier to build bus infrastructure but that, in our view disadvantageous, structure should not lead to wrong decisions or priorities. Please do what can be done to improve bus services over, say, the next 5 to 10 years rather than focusing resources on planning an underground which may, or may not, be built.

Roadspace

Safe cycle infrastructure will require some reallocation of road capacity, particularly at "pinch points" and prioritizing people movements not vehicle movements. It will not however require the extensive building of new roads; unlike surface MRT (eg Metrobus and South Bristol Link, Callington Road Relief route) which has, at least so far in Bristol, been reasonably characterized, as primarily new roads with a secondary new bus service rather than visa versa.

Putting in surface segregated MRT requires a huge amount of space, as we have seen on Nelson Street; it needs a buses only dual carriageway. In a city like ours, with narrow roads, that can only be done by closing existing roads to other motors, which is not always practical. Even the highest quality segregated Cycling Infrastructure takes far less space and is more flexible; much easier to build in a congested urban environment and with far less negative effect on that environment. There are effects on motor capacity but very modest compared to surface MRT. In order to build surface MRT we, in Bristol, have had to build new roads; this is making the problem better with one hand and then worse with the other; not a serious solution.

Cycling is an extremely efficient use of precious urban space. Bicycles, unlike buses, travel full. They do not need large amounts of dead, even dangerous, space around them, unlike motors of whatever species. Walking is the most space efficient mode of

transport, cycling the second, public transport (which also needs much more extensive infrastructure) third and motoring the least space efficient.

Funding

We support the proposed Workplace Parking Levy and Congestion (or Road User) Charging, in principle. We suggest funds raised should be available to pay for cycling and walking measures as well as public transport; this is an important omission which needs to be corrected. Provided that is done this is the most positive proposal in a disappointing document, and we support it whole heartedly.

We are concerned that the MRT proposals are completely unfunded and query whether, even with a new Workplace Parking Levy and, perhaps, Congestion Charge there will be adequate funds to pay for such ambitious and expensive proposals. The BTS proposes raising £1.5bn over 30 years, which means raising 5 or 6 times Nottingham's revenue from the WPL (£9m annually), we hope we're wrong but doubt that is politically or economically possible, and even then 2/3 of the cost of the Underground and MRT has to be found from other sources! We also query whether there will be enough passengers, paying high enough fares, to support MRT running costs and repay borrowings. Far better to enable active travel with its greater bangs per bang.

Timescale

There is no clear timescale for the proposals in the BTS.

The document has an 18year horizon. The very real risk is one, or possibly two, MRT/bus roads are built. Callington Road is an obvious possibility but that is at least as much a road as a bus scheme. The underground options could get kicked into the long grass and come to nothing as too expensive and difficult. Certainly the three mooted underground lines will not be completed within 18 years. Road improvements, eg Callington Road and M4 Junction 18A may well get built making congestion, air pollution and public health problems worse as more roads induce more motoring.

Implementation

The Implementation Plan in the BTS is exceptionally vague with the outcomes divided into 3 categories by time (short, medium, long). We welcome the fact the Cycling outcome 6 is seen as short to medium term as are some of the other sustainable outcomes, such as parking and walking. We are very concerned that the BTS does not identify schemes and projects. It lacks detail and commitment.

We are also concerned that there is a short term need for cycling schemes on some (all ?) of the MRT corridors. Understandably those MRT schemes will not start for 10 years or more. It is important that the cycling schemes are pressed ahead with in the meanwhile not delayed for MRT schemes which may or may not happen or may happen in a different form from that currently envisaged. An all abilities, all ages safe segregated cycle network, including upgrading much of the existing network, could be completed city wide in 5-10 years, given funding and political will. Please get on with it.

We are also concerned implementation of a AAA cycle network could be delayed by lack of Council, and Officer, resource. It would be a tragedy for such scarce resources to be spent on uncertain feasibility studies for distant schemes which may not be realised, in full or in part or as envisaged and studied. This reminds one of the 1970s and Bristol's abortive, part completed ring roads; don't let history repeat itself, the

City Council has form! The need to deal with the issues correctly identified is real and immediate.

Sustainability

It is self evident that cycling is second only to walking as the most sustainable form of transport and these two modes are vastly more sustainable than all other modes, including public transport. Cycling is also suitable for journeys much longer (generally four times as far in the same time) as walking. For this reason alone walking should be the prioritised option for journeys of 1-2 miles and cycling for journeys of up to 5-10 miles. The BTS does not reflect that.

Public Health

The BTS recognises the crisis in public health and the, sadly, high rate of obesity among Bristolians. It does not, equally sadly, make the obvious step to prioritising active travel (walking and cycling). It prioritises public transport, which has advantages over motoring but should not be done at the expense of active cycling and walking as is the case in the BTS.

Politics

Cycling is popular. It is notable that, increasingly politicians, seeking office, say they cycle everywhere; far more claim that than actually do cycle as their default mode of urban transport. Individual cycle schemes, like individual bus or road schemes, will excite political opposition, as change always does, but they will also garner support; usually much more support than opposition (eg the Mini Hollands – Councillors, Labour mostly, who supported those in London got reelected, those who opposed them didn't).

Certainly cycling schemes are politically vastly easier to deliver than Congestion or Workplace Parking Charging at a level necessary to fund MRT; where the cost is immediate and very real and the benefit long term and uncertain. We might support it but is it not political suicide with the sizeable car dependent section of the community? Whereas the evidence is cycling schemes are popular save for the usual issue that in the immediate area of any scheme (road, bus or bike) locals will oppose it (so called "NIMBYS").

There is huge demand for cycling; suppressed by fear of urban traffic. The number one ask at the BTS launch on 26 September was for improvements to cycling infrastructure; that should be taken on board. 77% of Bristolians, according to Sustrans Bike Life report, want more protected cycle lanes built, even when this can mean less room for other traffic. Even Bristol City Council use a bicycle symbol to illustrate their transport spending; although we all know cycling is actually a small part of that expenditure!

Language

Language can be important. The BTS uses drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists repeatedly, not Bristolians or people. Most Bristolians drive, take the bus, walk and cycle; many do all four. It is true that a significant minority are car dependent and seldom travel by any other mode. The council should be endeavouring to tackle car dependency and enable walking and cycling. The BTS creates tribes within the document; that's not helpful.

Conclusion

Within about a decade and for tens, not hundreds, of millions of pounds Bristol could be transformed into a modern northern European city, with cycling and walking as the dominant modes for travel under 7 or 8 miles, including for most work and educational commutes. The City environment, air quality and public health could be vastly improved by these simple steps.

Cycling will not be for everyone, or every journey, any more than bus travel, trains or motoring are for all people and all trips. Longer journeys, journeys carrying goods and multiple people, will continue to be made by other modes, including motoring. Some people cannot cycle, as some people cannot drive.

People need access to homes and most businesses by vehicle; to that extent roads cannot be closed entirely to create busways or cycleways. Many, we hope more, journeys, particularly where speed and reliability are less of an issue, will be made by bus; not, one hopes, because there is no other alternative, but by choice. But beware you cannot turn a bus into a train, even if you rebrand it as MRT, it will still need to interact with motor traffic and be subject to delay.

Putting in safe cycle infrastructure is cheap, quick and easy, compared to surface Mass Rapid Transit, light rail or fast buses. It is far, far less expensive than surface MRT let alone the billions required to fund an underground railway. It will take years (3 years for the London East West Cycle Superhighway; one year construction) not a decade like surface MRT (12 years for Metrobus; four years construction) let alone a generation, or lifetime, like an underground (Crossrail was in the London Plan for 1948!).

Cycling, together with walking, is a reasonably quick, cheap and very practical part solution to Bristol's congestion and air pollution problems. It is not a magic bullet but it can alleviate the situation considerably. It is less politically challenging, quicker and cheaper than any other option.

We are concerned the BTS is a recipe for prevarication and no change for 10 to 15 years. It avoids the issues which are immediate and important. An underground, if realizable is great, but do the simple stuff now regardless.

Cycling Route Proposals

Our submission to the LCWIP stakeholder consultation contained proposals for cycling routes. We submit those for referencing in the BTS, in a similar manner to the referencing of MRT routes in the current draft, and for inclusion in the Bristol Cycle Strategy (or Plan).

<https://bristolcycling.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/LCWIP-BCyC-final13.8.18.pdf>

It is disappointing there is no mention of a Low Traffic Neighbourhood in the BTS. One can think of several areas of Bristol which would benefit from such a treatment.

Appendix

Specific comments on the wording of the BTS

We suggest the following specific additions, tracked in red below, be made to the BTS.

We also suggest the comments in italics below, which deal with specific errors or omissions, be taken account of.

Page 8

Outcome #6 | Cycling to be safe, [segregated from motors and buses](#), simple, accessible and convenient, either as an option for the whole journey or as part of a journey combined with public transport.

Page 8

Outcome #11 | More efficient transport corridors, [including space for cycling segregated from motors and buses](#), to move the largest number of people in the space available.

Page 41

The infographic, although commonly used, is thoroughly misleading. It assumes every bus travels full. In the UK the average bus carries 11 people, according to DfT Stats., which include London, the average elsewhere is 9. We don't have comparable or reliable bus occupancy figures for Bristol but have asked the Council for them.

More reasonably the infographic assumes each car, or bike, carries one person. To be comparable the infographic should, perhaps, contain 4, not 1, buses. Furthermore buses, like cars, do not travel in convoy but require space around them; the infographic does not reflect that. People on bikes, like people on foot, can move with relatively little space. That said buses, whilst not as space efficient as bikes, are more space efficient than cars, provided bus occupancy rates are reasonably high. It brings the case into disrepute if you exaggerate it, however.

Page 45

We are surprised no mention is made of the potential of ebikes for the crucial "last mile" of freight deliveries. This potential has been recognised by transport minister, Jesse Norman.

Page 51

Connect the city for cycling

Build a comprehensive cycle network accessible for all

| [Ensure cycle routes are safe and segregated from motors including buses](#)

Adopt a simple and intuitive approach to cycle maps and signs and regularly audit

Ensure quality facilities are in place at the beginning and end of journeys, including secure cycle parking to match the growth of cycling in the city Fully integrate cycling into the wider transport network

| [Adopt design standards for cycling infrastructure Ensure that these standards are inclusive, accessible and safe](#)

Make cycling simpler and safer

Adopt a simple and intuitive approach to cycle maps and signs and regularly audit

| [Ensure cycle routes are safe and segregated from motors including buses](#)

Reduce and enforce motor traffic speeds to create a safer environment

Regularly maintain the cycle network, especially in winter months, ensuring safe cycling surfaces and well lit corridors

Make cycle training available to all citizens

It is also notable that walking is to made “safe, pleasant and comfortable” whereas no such commitment is made for cycling. Why? Is it the intention of the BTS that cycling should be unsafe, unpleasant and indeed frightening as it too often is at the moment?

Make cycling inclusive and accessible

Enable and encourage a new wave of people to cycling through use of loan bikes including ebikes

Extensive promotion of cycling, including people at a point of Transition e.g. new job, new school year, new university students

Use innovative technology to help encourage new people to cycle and support those who cycle regularly

Continue to research the different needs and motivations

That may affect levels of cycling and seek ways to enable cycling for

All [May be but only if that research is then put into practice. We have lots of research which is then ignored better to spend limited funds on doing not thinking](#)

Continue to work closely with organisations that encourage cycling

Recognise and support leisure and recreational cycling as a way to inspire more people to cycle and promote Bristol as a lively and attractive city

[Build inclusive cycle routes; ie free from motor traffic, including buses, and, in the main, pedestrians](#)

[Build accessible cycle routes without barriers which impede cargo bikes, trailers, disabled adapted machines etc](#)

Page 52

We welcome the inclusion of the Bristol Tube map for cycling but this needs to become a reality on the ground. At the moment most of the existing cycle network consists of lines on a map and requires extensive improvement for it to be truly socially inclusive for All Ages and Abilities Cycling. Barriers, busy junctions and busy roads all exclude the disabled, children, the old and the vulnerable from cycling. They disproportionately deter women. Legalised pavement cycling is slow and inconvenient for people on bikes and can be an annoyance and obstruction for people on foot.

Page 53

We are surprised by the cycling case study in the BTS. The Hengrove Family Cycling Centre is a worthwhile project which we whole heartedly support. It is not, however, primarily transport cycling. Does Bristol not have a transport cycling success story? Perhaps the Bristol Bath Rail Path? This reinforces the point that the authors of the BTS consider cycling to be a nice thing for people to do but not a serious means of movement around a city (more akin to skateboarding or parks football than driving or catching a bus!).

Page 54

- Safer Speeds – establishing and enforcing appropriate speed limits to create a road network that protects vulnerable road

users and separates fast moving traffic where appropriate

- Safer Roads - improving road layouts to improve our network
- Safer vehicles - working with partners to improve the safety of

the vehicle fleet

- Safer Road Use - education, training, and enforcement to

influence road user behavior

- [Safer Cycling Provision – establish a network of cycle routes which where it runs on busy roads \(over 2000 PCUs\) or on roads with speed limits above 20mph, is segregated from motors, including buses.](#)

Page 62

- **Cycle superhighways** to provide direct, continuous and safe cycle routes on key corridors, [\(including Gloucester Road/A38, Whiteladies Road, University to the Centre, to Whitchurch, South to Centre, Portway, enhance Bristol – Bath Rail Path, East Bristol, complete Festival Way and to Yate and Thornberry\)](#) as part of wider ambitions to deliver 200 miles of all ages and abilities cycle network.

Pages 66 & 67

We welcome the references to reducing junction mouth widths and to developing a child friendly city cycle network. It should be made explicit that a child friendly network will require segregation from motor vehicles, including buses, on all but the quietest roads and at busy, or multi lane, junctions.

Page 74

The mooted workplace parking levy and congestion charging are not listed as a source of funds for cycling (or walking come to that). This is surely a mistake? Why can't those funds be used for cycling? If it's not a mistake it is very worrying as it shows the lack of ambition. Can this please be corrected.

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