

5.0. Stephenson Link – Supplementary Bid

Introduction

Ongoing major residential, industrial and leisure services along the A19 corridor require new and improved public transport services and facilities to improve accessibility, encourage social inclusion and to support economic activity in the corridor.

The Stephenson Link is a multi-modal public transport project designed to serve the A19 corridor by linking several complementary initiatives into one holistic scheme.

The four main elements of the original scheme are:

- A new Metro and bus Interchange at Backworth (now named Northumberland Park) to serve new housing and retail development;
- A quality busway and dedicated bus service between a new ferry landing on the north bank of the Tyne and Backworth, serving the A19 corridor developments and Percy Main Metro;
- A refurbished transport interchange at Percy Main Metro to improve interchange quality;
- A new ferry landing on the north bank of the Tyne to improve the quality of interchange and improved cross Tyne links.

Funding for this multi-modal public transport project was procured as a successful Major Scheme bid with the first Tyne and Wear LTP bid. Funding has also been provided by private sector contributions and other sources (SRB).

Due to significant advancement in both the scale and delivery of employment, leisure and housing developments on the corridor (advancements beyond that envisaged in the original Major Scheme bid) Nexus wish to further improve the Stephenson link through the provision of:

- a new ferry vessel to improve the quality of service and guarantee an efficient cross Tyne ferry service;
- additional Park and Ride capacity at Northumberland Park to meet a growing need for Metro Park and Ride capacity.

This supplementary bid is consistent with the original Major Scheme bid as it takes forward two new complimentary individual projects on the A19 Corridor but retains these projects within the holistic Stephenson Link project.

This supplementary bid is for funding to enhance public transport provision and use on the corridor and not to fund a shortfall in delivering the original Major Scheme bid.

This bid will be subject to a detailed assessment using New Approach to Transport Appraisal (NATA) in line with DfT requirements. A full AST appraisal will be submitted subsequently. A qualitative summary is given in this document as to how these schemes perform assessed against NATA objectives.

Background & Scheme Objectives

The original Stephenson Link LTP Major Scheme bid appraised the feasibility of providing a busway link along the A19 corridor between a proposed new Metro station at Backworth and an improved cross Tyne ferry landing at North Shields. The busway is designed to provide a fast link through the corridor through effective traffic management measures plus a new reserved route.

The Stephenson Link scheme objectives can be summarised as:

- to improve the access of public transport dependent residents of the Tyne and Wear sub-region and in particular to North and South Tyneside to the major employment opportunities that currently exist and the significant additional opportunities proposed for the corridor;
- to develop a link in conjunction with the development of the Metro system and the cross - Tyne ferry to improve the strategic public transport accessibility within the North and South Tyneside area;
- to facilitate sustainable economic regeneration within the context of the North Tyneside UDP;
- to reduce car dependency and attract more trips onto the public transport network through the provision of high quality transport links and interchanges;

- to improve the accessibility of the public transport network for disabled and encumbered passengers.

The Stephenson link has therefore been so designed to delivery a service that is:

- able to contribute to meeting economic development and social objectives;
- mode competitive, and in particular will compete with the private car;
- fully accessible and easy to use;
- environmentally friendly;
- safe from both a personal and technical viewpoint.

This supplementary bid is consistent with the objectives of the original bid and enhances those parts of Stephenson Link already delivered and planned for delivery. The

schemes were not included in the original Major Scheme bid as at the time of the bid (July 2000) problems with ferry reliability were not so apparent and there was no master plan for the full development of the corridor that identified the potential for significant Park and Ride. Additionally the scale and progress of development on the corridor is more advanced than originally envisaged when the original Major Scheme bid was submitted.

Serving Employment Growth in the Corridor

The substantial growth in the A19 Corridor is revealed in the table below, where employment opportunities are projected to increase threefold within the next 10 years.

	Previous estimate number of existing jobs	Revised estimate number of existing jobs (as at Nov 03)	Revised estimate number of future jobs (as at Nov 03)
Colbalt Business Park	2,500	6,000	12,000
Atmel Site	500	500	5,500
New York Industrial Park	500	500	650
West Chirton North	750	750	750
West Chirton Middle	700	700	700
Silverlink (Retail & Business)	1,500	1,500	1,500
Tyne Tunnel Estate	1,500	850	8,000-12,000
West Chirton South	500	650	650
Maritime Industrial Park	0	0	2,500
Royal Quays	1,500	1,500	1,900
TOTALS	9,950	12,950	34,150-38,150

Such an increase in employment will create significant and growing demand for travel which Stephenson Link seeks to serve in a sustainable manner as employment projections are realised.

Delivering Stephenson Link

Substantial progress has been made in delivering Stephenson Link following funding being secured within a successful Major Scheme bid within the first Tyne and Wear LTP bid. Refurbishment of Percy Main station was completed in March 2003. A new ferry landing at North Shields became operational in May 2004. Services on the dedicated bus route will commence operation in late Autumn 2004. Works have commenced for construction of a new Metro Station at Backworth (Northumberland Park), and the station is expected to open for use in Autumn 2005. Thus the scheme will be fully operational by Autumn 2005.

Supplementary Bid Justification

Plan Partners believe the opportunity exists now to further improve Stephenson Link Scheme by the introduction of a new cross Tyne ferry and provision of additional Park & Ride capacity at new Backworth (Northumberland Park) Metro station.

The schemes were not included in the original Major Scheme bid as at the time of the bid (July 2000) problems with ferry reliability were not so apparent and there was no master plan for the full development of the corridor that identified the potential for significant Park and Ride. Additionally the full development potential of the A19 corridor on North Tyneside has been realised in the last couple of years and developments and planned developments are greater than originally planned.

This supplementary bid is not changing the scope of the original Major Scheme bid, but is complimentary to and enhances the original bid. Plan Partners has sought to secure funding contributions for replacement ferry from other sources, including Single Programme, ERDF, and Action Team for Jobs. These have been unsuccessful. Nor is

sufficient funding available for these schemes within the LTP block allocation as this is committed to delivering schemes consistent with LTP strategy.

Improving Cross Tyne Ferry Services

Scheme Description

A significant objective of Stephenson Link is to provide swift and sustainable access to job opportunities on the A19 Corridor from South Tyneside. An important link in the chain is the cross Tyne ferry service that operates between North and South Shields at the mouth of the River Tyne. High levels of performance are set for ferry operation; 99% of journeys to operate and 95% to operate punctually. One of the ferries that operate this service is now 28 years old and is reaching the end of its useful life. Plan Partners require supplementary LTP capital funding to purchase a new ferry vessel to ensure improved public transport provision within the A19 Stephenson Link corridor.

Two ferries, the Pride of the Tyne and Shieldsman, currently operate the Cross-Tyne ferry service. It is a statutory requirement that each vessel is dry docked annually to allow for inspection by the Maritime Coast Agency (MCA) prior to the vessel receiving its annual passenger certificate. A combination of annual inspection and routine maintenance requires the vessel to be out of service for 80 days per year. This prevents a full service of operation with one ferry. The Shieldsman ferry can no longer provide a reliable transport link across the river and its unreliability puts more pressure on the newer second vessel which will eventually affect its performance and reliability.

Policy Context

The Stephenson Link scheme has been conceived and developed within the context of national, regional and local policies as identified in previous Major Scheme submission. The scheme is very supportive of most of these policies and does not undermine or detract from any of them and should assist in achieving local objectives as

set out in the LTP and North Tyneside UDP. Thus the scheme is well founded both in conceptual terms and in terms of its detailed specification and this supplementary bid is consistent with previous bid.

Problems and Opportunities

The North/South Shields ferry service is operated under the 1970 Port of Tyne Act which transferred the assets from the Port of Tyne to the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority. The Act permits the operating authority to alter the timetable, however when no ferry service is operating an alternative means of travel is required, in this case a replacement bus service. If Partners were unable to provide a new ferry to take over operation from the Shieldsman, a replacement bus service would not be an attractive alternative link for those travelling between South and North Tyneside.

Traffic congestion and delays at the Tyne Tunnel inhibit easy access to jobs and services, and it is not currently possible for bus companies to offer a reliable timetable or frequent service. This would discourage residents of South Tyneside looking to access employment in North Tyneside. To cross the river by ferry currently takes 7 minutes. Due to the significant longer route and traffic congestion it can take up to an hour to make the similar journey by bus travel through the Tyne Tunnel at peak periods.

Cross Tyne links to the east of Newcastle are limited and there is currently major peak period traffic congestion in and round the Tyne Tunnel. Whilst it is planned to dual the Tunnel, it is unlikely that this will be accomplished in the near future with the outcome of a public enquiry awaited. The improvement of cross-Tyne public transport opportunities will help ease this congestion and thereby help in increasing the attractiveness of development in the corridor. There is potentially a traffic congestion problem in the corridor itself as employment increases. This will depend upon a number of factors but could, in due course, stifle development.

If Partners wished to cease running a ferry service altogether between North Shields and South Shields, it is our understanding

that an enabling procedure would need to be passed through Parliament revoking the statutory requirement to provide a service.

North Tyneside, on the north bank of the Tyne offers a major and growing opportunity for inward investment to provide for needed employment. Unemployment on North Tyneside is currently 4% as oppose to 3.0% nationally (April 2004). Significantly however, unemployment on South Tyneside is currently running at 6.5%, more than double the national average. Additionally, on the south bank of the Tyne, South Tyneside faces a shortage of employment land and therefore relies heavily on employment opportunities in adjoining areas (including North Tyneside) to provide for its residents. The cross Tyne ferry provides a unique link between South Tyneside and North Tyneside near the mouth of the river.

The Stephenson Corridor is the main area of employment development within the North Tyneside UDP and offers good employment opportunities for South Tyneside residents.

It is important that the opportunity should be provided for residents in these areas to take up new job opportunities and benefit from the enhanced access to job opportunities generally. This will be required to ensure that the local labour market is able to function properly with the planned influx of jobs.

The opportunity exists for development of the Stephenson corridor to drive local regeneration, but only if the employment opportunities are open to local people. Without good quality access by public transport to local areas, this opportunity will be lost, and the regeneration impact which is so badly needed in the local area will be dissipated over a wider area, where needs are much less acute.

There is also a need to ensure that new development is sustainable. The creation of about 25,000 new jobs in addition to the 10,000 already in existence will create a major centre of employment. Without public transport to serve this area and ensure new opportunities are accessible as recruitment takes place, the development will become unsustainable with adverse impacts in the long term as a workforce with high levels of

car dependence is created. This may well lead to the area becoming choked with traffic congestion as employment grows. A limited opportunity exists to prevent a local vicious spiral of car dependency developing.

The opportunity also exists with the scheme to integrate a number of public transport and public transport feeder modes through the scheme. With four multi-modal interchanges (Backworth, Percy Main and North Shields and South Shields Ferry Landings), a range of new travel opportunities will be created. Whilst travel demand may not exist at present, the creation of these interchanges with suitable through-ticketing arrangements is likely to offer opportunities to access new facilities for those without access to a car which have previously not been possible or have been very inconvenient.

The problems which the introduction of a high quality public transport mode in the corridor could be expected to address include:

- access to jobs in the Corridor by non-car available residents from North and South Tyneside;
- unsustainability with the possible long-term choking-off of employment in the Corridor;
- in the long-term, efficient and commercial public transport provision in the corridor;
- extended travel opportunities generally within North Tyneside and, to some degree, within South Tyneside;
- protection of the A19 corridor for long distance, strategic travel movements.

Capital Costs

The capital cost of a new ferry is £2m (detailed costings to follow as part of NATA appraisal)

Benefits

Economic

Beneficial

Benefits of reduced operating cost, as new ferry will require less operational staff.

Reduced maintenance costs

Additional revenue of guaranteed quality and reliability of service

Increased user benefits with removal of slower alternative journey time by bus

Wider economic benefits of supporting development in corridor in sustainable manner

Environmental

Beneficial

A new modern ferry vessel will have an immediate effect on the environment by reduced emissions and lower fuel consumption. Improvement in journey ambience of new ferry (which compliments recent new ferry landings).

Safety

Beneficial

A new ferry will meet all new and existing regulations laid down by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

Accessibility

Beneficial

Ferry quickest and easiest public transport method of crossing river adjacent to river mouth – river is a significant barrier to travel and severs North and South Tyneside.

The new vessel would be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and allow for wheelchair users to access the ferry service without any difficulties and fully conform to health and safety initiatives.

Integration

Neutral

As existing ferry operation part of integrated public transport operation serving North and South Tyneside and the A19 Corridor promoting sustainable travel.

Improving Metro Park & Ride

Scheme Description

A new Metro interchange station is to be constructed at Backworth funded mostly by developer contributions. This station will be located within a new leisure and commercial development on the A19 corridor, but with homes also within a walk catchment. The new station will act as a bus/Metro interchange and is the northern terminus for the Stephenson

Link dedicated bus service. The opportunity to provide a Park and Ride provision has been identified to further enhance the multimodal nature of this important new station with developer funding delivering a limited P&R facility. Partners Park & Ride Strategy has identified a shortage of P&R capacity at stations on the Metro loop in North Tyneside. The opportunity exists to increase the provision of P&R at Backworth through the erection of a multi storey car park on the site currently identified for surface P&R parking.

Policy Context

The Stephenson Link scheme has been conceived and developed within the context of national, regional and local policies as identified in previous Major Scheme submission. The scheme is very supportive of most of these policies and does not undermine or detract from any of them and should assist in achieving local objectives as set out in the LTP and North Tyneside UDP. Thus the scheme is well founded both in conceptual terms and in terms of its detailed specification and this supplementary bid is consistent with previous bid.

Problems and Opportunities

When the Metro system was build 20 years ago a number of purpose built Park and Ride sites were developed as multi-modal interchanges. These were located on main corridors into Newcastle City Centre aimed at encouraging motorist to leave their cars once they began to hit congestion approaching the City Centre.

As the Metro system has expanded and been developed so the opportunity has been taken to significantly improve and increase the number of formal Park & Ride sites as the market for P&R has increased. Usage at Metro Park & Ride sites is increasing following the introduction of

improved and safer parking facilities and an increase in the number of parking spaces.

Specific research undertaken amongst Park & Ride users and outputs from continuous Metro Passenger User Profile surveys have been used in the development of a Metro Park & Ride Strategy and Business Plan.

Partners strategy for the development of Metro Park & Ride is based upon the belief that the provision of non-central Metro Park and Ride sites is an essential part of a local transport policy that allows the effective integration between car and public transport. We control a number of Metro Park & Ride sites and see these as being a vital resource in terms of making public transport attractive to car users.

We appreciate that if we are to persuade car users to leave their cars at one of our P&R sites then the service offered and quality of that car park should be of the highest standard. As a result we actively market only those that are deemed to be large enough and offer high standards in terms of safety and security.

An opportunity now exists to maximise the value of development planned to take place at Backworth where a new Metro station is planned. This has primarily been conceived to serve local needs, but it provides a new opportunity to create a northern ‘anchor point’ for a corridor-based transport link at a multi-modal interchange. A significant new Park & Ride facility will both serve as a new link for car borne commuters onto the Stephenson Link but also provide a wider link onto the Metro system.

There is a shortage of Metro Park & Ride capacity on the “ coastal belt” of North Tyneside with the number of spaces and average occupancy for these stations shown on the table below.

	Number of Spaces	Latest Figure on Average Occupancy %
Whitley Bay	80	84
Tynemouth	34	100
Shiremoor	22	100
Monkseaton	25	88
Cullercoats	12	100

These figures suggest suppressed demand for Park and Ride on the “ coastal belt” of North Tyneside. A new Park & Ride facility will ease this suppressed demand and reduce pressure on existing sites.

Capital Costs

£3.75m (detailed costings to follow as part of NATA appraisal).

Benefits

Economic

Beneficial

User benefits of reduced journey time to access locations on A19 corridor via interchange.

Wider economic benefits of supporting development in corridor in sustainable manner.

Environmental

Slightly Beneficial

As traffic abstraction from corridor and new quality car park provided.

Safety

Beneficial

Safe and secure new station and car park.

Accessibility

Beneficial

Improved P&R provision, easy access from P&R to Metro Platform, Metro Station DDA compatible.

Integration

Strongly beneficial

Quality improvements, increased options for interchange, encouraging modal shift, increasing efficiency of planned interchange and dedicated bus service, significant increase P&R facility on land already dedicated for P&R, promoting sustainable travel.