

- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION **YES/NO** *(If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps)*

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Cabinet – 28th April 2005

**Strategic Rail Authority
West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy Consultation**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and
Economic Strategy**

Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the proposed response of the County Council.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) has undertaken a number of Route Utilisation Strategies investigating measures to improve 'pinch-points' in the rail network around the country. The rail network in the West Midlands has been identified as a 'pinch-point' and a draft West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy (WMRUS) has been published.
- 1.2 The Route Utilisation Strategies are designed to ensure the best use of the current rail infrastructure for the next 5 years to achieve an acceptable level of performance and reliability. They are essentially about the trade-offs between performance, the current number, spread and mix of services and the need for engineers to gain sufficient access to the network to maintain it to a reliable standard.
- 1.3 The SRA will be abolished by the Railways Act which has now received the Royal Assent. Its functions are to be split between the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail. The SRA has been charged by the DfT with completing both the WMRUS and the West Midlands Regional Planning Assessment (WMRPA) prior to its demise.
- 1.4 The Strategic Rail Authority has published the draft West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy and has invited comments with a deadline of 27 May 2005. A copy of the WMRUS is available.
- 1.5 The SRA is also currently working on a West Midlands Regional Planning Assessment which is looking at the development of the rail network to meet future needs over the next 15 - 20 years. It is anticipated that it will be published and comments invited during Summer 2005.

- 1.6 After the abolition of the SRA, the preparation and implementation of Route Utilisation Strategies and Regional Planning Assessments will be undertaken by Network Rail and the DfT respectively.

2. The West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy

- 2.1 A copy of the Executive Summary of the WMRUS appears as **Appendix A** to this report, which sets out the purposes, principles and key conclusions of the strategy.
- 2.2 A copy of a proposed response of the County Council appears as **Appendix B** to this report. The response mirrors the chapter headings of the main WMRUS document and comprises comments in respect of a series of questions which appear at the end of each chapter. In addition, the response contains some additional comments.

3. The Proposed Response

- 3.1 In terms of the process, the WMRUS has been managed by the SRA in a refreshingly open manner involving a large number of stakeholders.
- 3.2 The document appears to provide a constructive approach to addressing the current challenges facing the railways in the West Midlands. Accordingly, the proposed response has been drafted on the basis that the County Council is broadly supportive of the process and the conclusions.
- 3.3 The proposed response:-
- (i) Offers overall support for the strategy and for some specific recommendations.
 - (ii) Supports the investigation of several of the recommendations in the WMRUS designed to increase capacity and reduce overcrowding.
 - (iii) Makes suggestions of a number of further options which should be investigated, particularly those which would address the future travel needs of the Coventry Solihull Warwickshire Sub-Region.
 - (iv) Expresses some concerns about the strategic and policy context in which the WMRUS has been drafted.
 - (v) Registers objections to some specific recommendations.
- 3.4 Notwithstanding, a number of positive conclusions in the WMRUS which will benefit the county - such as the positive support for Coleshill Parkway and the proposals to increase services on the Stratford-upon-Avon - Birmingham Line - there are specific local issues of concern, as follows:-
- (i) The WMRUS contains proposals to withdraw the local service between Stafford - Nuneaton and to close Polesworth Station. The proposed response includes an objection to these proposals. In addition, as this is an issue of immediate concern, a detailed discussion of options to progress this objection is discussed in a separate report to this meeting of the Cabinet.

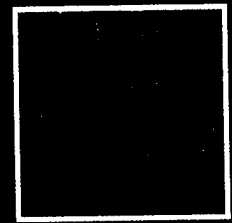
- (ii) The WMRUS contains a table of the top twenty least used stations in the West Midlands and eleven of these are located in Warwickshire, namely Bearley, Polesworth, Claverdon, Atherstone, Danzey, Wootton Waven, Wood End, The Lakes, Bedworth, Wilmcote and Hatton. With the exception of Polesworth, the WMRUS does not make any proposals in respect of the future of these stations.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The WMRUS appears to provide a constructive approach to addressing the current challenges facing the railways in the West Midlands. Accordingly, it is proposed that the County Council should, in accordance with the proposed response, be broadly supportive of the process and the strategy, whilst registering its objections to and concerns about some of the conclusions and specific recommendations.

JOHN DEEGAN
Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy
Shire Hall
Warwick

13th April 2005



Consultation West Midlands

Route Utilisation Strategy

Executive summary

Improved rail capacity is a central element of the Government's plans for effective delivery of its objectives. The aim is to provide properly performing train services that accommodate aspirations for growth in a way that maximises overall value for money and is affordable.

The passenger demand for rail travel in the West Midlands, and especially into Birmingham, has grown by 44% since 1995, through the region becoming more prosperous; population and employment changes; improved rail services and because of congestion on the roads. There is also growing demand for freight on rail into and through the West Midlands. There has been considerable investment in rail in recent years for the West Midlands. New trains and new infrastructure have been provided to provide better services and to relieve congestion but growth continues to put pressure on the available network capacity.

A Route Utilisation Strategy has been developed for the West Midlands region to ensure that best use is made of available capacity and to address the following issues:

- Performance on the rail corridors into Birmingham is poor. The Strategy examines the structure of the timetable to identify where this could be changed to deliver better performance;
- There are significant commuter flows into Birmingham and there is crowding during the peak periods, although over a shorter time and to a much lesser extent than in the South East. The strategy considers how crowding can most effectively be managed;
- Further passenger and freight growth is forecast and plans need to be put in place to take this potential growth into account; and
- There are a number of train operators in the region, and it is believed that centrally coordinated changes to the specification of train services developed in this Route Utilisation Strategy can lead to more efficient operations and a better service to customers.

In developing this Route Utilisation Strategy, the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) has worked with the Department for Transport (DfT), regional and local authorities, the West Midlands business community, passenger operators, freight operators, passenger representatives and freight users. Network Rail and Centro have been closely involved throughout, especially in the development of options for evaluation. There has been extensive regional participation through a series of informal workshops and dialogue on key issues. Additionally we have drawn information from wider planning processes such as multi-modal studies, performance initiatives led by Network Rail and local authority/developer initiatives. We have ensured that linkages with other strategies have been taken into account, within the SRA, the rail industry and the regional planning context.

During the evolution of this Route Utilisation Strategy the Government White Paper on the Future of Rail was published, setting out structural changes to improve the rail industry. The SRA is to be abolished but the functions it undertakes will be transferred to other organisations. It is envisaged that the Route Utilisation Strategy process will continue, as it is recognised as being important for the efficiency of the rail network. The Secretary of State made clear his wish that the work that had been carried into this Route Utilisation Strategy should be completed, under SRA leadership. Future Route Utilisation Strategies will be carried out by Network Rail.

The Route Utilisation Strategy (the Strategy), sets out the options for change and describes the approach that the SRA intends to adopt, subject to consultation responses to this draft, to balance the needs of improving performance with service patterns more closely matched to predicted levels of demand. In proposing changes, it seeks solutions that are affordable and which give best value to both the taxpayer and railway users. The Strategy is focused on the medium term through to 2011 and identifies solutions that make best use of the existing rail network, so that scarce funds for investment can be focused where they are most needed. It looks to manage change within existing budgets.

The Strategy takes account of firm plans for changes to the railway infrastructure, including those under way as part of the West Coast Strategy. It builds on changes in the local service pattern introduced in December 2004 on the Solihull – Birmingham – Kidderminster corridor and planned for December 2005 on the Coventry – Birmingham corridor. It looks at Network Rail's renewal plans and identifies the opportunities these give for useful incremental change in conjunction with the service growth and change proposed. The Strategy is linked to the published SRA West Coast Strategy, and outcomes from this West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy will be included in future developments of the West Coast Strategy (June 2003).

Within the West Midlands Strategy, the effects of uncoordinated change in recent years on the rail network are drawn together. Changes in demand, service patterns and frequencies, rolling stock, train driving techniques, train regulation and signalling operation have all had an effect on the available route capacity and the spread of any service disruption.

The Strategy proposes making better use of existing train services. This is done by reducing some and increasing others. Services are amalgamated or split where demand or performance justifies this, but no extra services are sought on the congested parts of the network. Rising passenger demand is generally met by longer trains where justified and freight demand by more and better use of standard hourly timetable paths across the region.

The anticipated benefits of the proposed strategy are being refined in conjunction with industry partners. We believe the proposals recommended in this Strategy could deliver significant benefits including:

- Improved services into Birmingham in the peak by some reallocation of rolling stock;
- Better management of growing peak demand through encouraging passengers travelling to work in Birmingham to use trains with spare capacity earlier or later in the peak, rather than concentrating their journeys on the busiest hour when trains arriving in central Birmingham can be crowded. The document discusses how this might be achieved through use of pricing mechanisms for train services and for car parks;
- Longer peak trains where these are value for money and affordable and, where appropriate, longer station platforms;
- A better mix of services on the Birmingham to Coventry corridor;
- Changes to services between Leamington Spa and Birmingham, routeing all long distance CrossCountry services via Coventry and Birmingham International Airport, and freeing some capacity via Solihull to help improve operating performance, particularly as freight volumes grow;
- Extending some existing services from Birmingham to provide a higher frequency to Kidderminster and Stratford-upon-Avon in the off-peak;
- Requiring more services to call at Bromsgrove in the off-peak;
- Changes to services on the Shrewsbury – Wolverhampton – Birmingham corridor to improve performance and to meet stakeholder aspirations, including, possibly in the future, the operation of a peak Shrewsbury – London service;
- Changes to the services between Wolverhampton and Walsall, Birmingham – Rugeley – Stafford and Stafford – Nuneaton to integrate with West Coast changes and ensure efficient use of rolling stock;
- A review of the hours of train operation and engineering access and train services to get a better balance;
- Identification of a freight bottleneck between Water Orton and Landor Street that is a major cause of poor performance and which could limit freight growth rates by 2008. This is linked to an opportunity to revise the specification of Network Rail planned track and signalling renewals;
- Recognition that better use could be made of the route between Walsall and Rugeley Trent Valley, to provide for freight growth and for engineering diversions as well as meeting growing local passenger demand. This requires removal (at a low cost) of a capacity bottleneck; and

- Confirmation that otherwise sufficient route capacity exists to meet expected freight growth in the West Midlands up to 2011.

In addition to these we consider a new station at Coleshill would be compatible with the proposed strategy and would benefit the West Midlands by improving access on the eastern side of Birmingham. Although the SRA is not in a position to fund this station, it supports in principle proposals for such a scheme with private sector funding and is discussing commercial arrangements for train services with the promoters.

These anticipated benefits have been identified within the constraints of the existing infrastructure and the size of the current rolling stock fleets. They are designed to deliver an affordable match of capacity to demand and improve the performance of the railway. It has not been possible, however, to meet the aspirations of all stakeholders, particularly those that could require additional infrastructure or are inconsistent with the value-for-money and affordability objectives that the SRA has set for its capacity utilisation work.

Work on further developing and refining options will progress during the consultation period of the Route Utilisation Strategy. As stakeholder responses are received, the Strategy will be amended where appropriate and a final version will be published when conclusions have been reached.

There will be a small number of disbenefits of the strategy compared with current service patterns:

- Changes to peak fares could, in limited circumstances, cause minor shifts of demand away from rail and could restrict 'high peak' growth;
- The Strategy envisages some reallocation of rolling stock from less well used services. A small number of passengers will be adversely affected by this change;
- The Strategy (subject to some further evaluation) considers changes to local services on the Coventry – Birmingham and Wolverhampton – Birmingham corridors which could reduce local journey opportunities between some pairs of lightly-used stations; and
- The direct rail service between Walsall and Wolverhampton would be withdrawn because of low usage, as would the local rail service between Stoke and Stafford.

This Strategy will inform the SRA, its partner stakeholders and its successors on:

- The passenger service specification for new, extended or revised franchises;
- How to alter passenger Service Level Commitments during franchise terms and for controlling the exercise by franchisees of their timetable development and access rights;

- Representations to the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) assessing proposed access agreements between Network Rail and train operators, including those from open access operators;
- Decisions on discretionary grants so as to promote the development of services and facilities in a manner consistent with strategies;
- Rolling stock and other strategies;
- Decisions identifying those parts of the network where infrastructure changes (often as part of a renewal scheme) might deliver improved services that are both value for money and affordable; and
- Strategic park and ride proposals for existing and new stations.

It will also provide the 2011 baseline position for the SRA's Regional Planning Assessment (RPA) for the West Midlands, a study that commenced in Autumn 2004 and that covers long-term demand between 2011 and 2031.

When finalised, the Strategy recommendations can be delivered through:

- New franchise specifications;
- Modifications to existing franchise contracts with operators;
- Modifications to Network Rail's renewal programme for infrastructure; and
- The rail industry working closely with regional groups such as Centro and local authorities to co-ordinate transport plans and regional investment.

Consultation

Strategic Rail Authority West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy

Draft Response

The County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy (WMRUS). The Council has and continues to place a high priority on rail in delivering its transport policy and has made substantial investment in providing improved rail facilities.

Whilst disagreeing with some of the findings in the draft document, the Council is pleased to commend the approach to the process and the consultation to date. In the Council's view, this reflects favourably on the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) staff involved in the WMRUS and the linked Regional Planning Assessment.

The County Council comments as follows:-

1. Background

Question 1. Has the process adopted led to consideration of appropriate options for use of the existing network? Have any key opportunities been missed ?

In the context of the WMRUS as a short-term strategy, the options considered are broadly appropriate. However, the Council is concerned that the Midland Main Line Rate Utilisation Strategy (RUS) and the West Coast Main Line RUS have been treated as substantial constraints on the WMRUS. These documents were based on previous SRA targets which were not entirely consistent with the Government's wider transport objectives. The current restructure of the rail industry is designed to ensure that the railway industry's activities reflect its role in delivering wider policies. As the later document, it was hoped that the WMRUS would address the short-comings of the earlier strategies rather than perpetuate them.

For example, a total focus on increasing rail passenger journey miles does not take into account that some passenger journeys have much greater value (frequently those in urban areas) in meeting the Government's congestion reduction targets than long distance journeys. Specifically, the transfer of a large number of short journeys to rail would remove a greater number of vehicles from the roads. Similarly, the opportunities for the railways to contribute to the delivery of social inclusion policy objectives need to be recognised in an appropriate allocation of rail network capacity. This inconsistency was highlighted in a report by Centro, the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executives (PTE), published last year, which showed that the reliability of the local rail network in the West Midlands fell by as much as 10% following the introduction of Virgin Cross Country's high frequency timetable.

It is also important that the WMRUS remains flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and that any short term actions can be revisited once the performance and costs of the network are stabilised. It is understood from contacts with the SRA that these are the intentions and it would be helpful if this was made clear in the document.

Similarly, it is suggested that the WMRUS should not act as a check on radical thinking in the up-coming West Midlands Regional Planning Assistant (WMRPA), as short term operational issues should not constrain aspirations for the longer term development of role of the railway in the interests of its existing and potential customers and also its role in delivering wider objectives such as reducing congestion, improving accessibility and promoting regeneration.

Question 2. Has an appropriate balance been maintained between performance improvement, service provision and engineering access ?

The balance proposed is generally appropriate in the short-term context.

Question 3. Do you agree with the conclusions reached and the changes proposed ?

The Council has concerns in respect of some of the specific conclusions and changes and these are detailed in the responses to Question 21, 22 and 23. Having said that, there is broad agreement with the overall thrust of the strategy.

Question 4. Is there more information and analysis that you would like see included in future Route Utilisation Strategy consultation documents ?

The Council would expect to see a clearer analysis of the policy background linked to the Government's transport objectives and targets. Comment has been made earlier in the response to Question 1 regarding the possible mismatch between the activities of the railway industry and the Government's objectives for the whole transport system. In particular, there appears to be little weight given in the document to the railway's role in delivering the Government's 'Shared Priorities' of reducing congestion and improving accessibility, air quality and safety.

It is essential that the railways are not continued to be considered in a vacuum as solutions which are good for the railway business are not always good for society as a whole. The success of Virgin West Coast in increasing patronage is noted, but it appears appropriate to question whether the correct balance has been achieved between the implementation of the revised West Coast Main Line timetables and maintaining high quality local services.

Additional Comment

Para 1.2: The Council notes the use of 'perceived' describing the "need to improve operational efficiency ..". Surely the need clearly exists. If this is not agreed, there needs to be an explicit statement of what is being said.

2. The Context Of The West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy

Question 5. Have appropriate boundaries been chosen ?

The Council appreciate the difficulties in setting appropriate boundaries and is in broad agreement with those chosen. However, the Stratford-upon-Avon - Leamington Spa route is not covered in the strategy and this is not acceptable without any explanation. It is noted that the route will be included in the WMRPA for discrete discussion and there does not appear to be any justification that this approach has not been followed in the WMRUS. The route does serve two of the most well know tourism destinations in the world, namely Stratford upon Avon and Warwick, and these attract substantial numbers of tourists (domestic and overseas) with London. If these could be persuaded to travel by rail instead of private cars there would be a significant reduction in road congestion together with local environmental benefits.

Question 6. Are the linkages correctly identified ?

The Council is concerned (as detailed in its reply to Question 1) that the Midland Main Line RUS and the West Coast Main Line RUS have been treated as substantial constraints on the WMRUS and also (as detailed in its reply to Question 4) that the essential links with the Government's wider objectives and targets are not discussed.

Question 7. Is the timeframe covered appropriate ?

The Council agree that the timeframe is appropriate.

3. Current Capacity, Demand and Delivery

Question 8. Do you agree with the assessments of current demand for passenger and freight traffic ?

The assessments appear to reflect current demand.

Additional Comment

It would be helpful if Tables 3.2 and 3.3 included the average daily use of the stations as this is probably the yardstick by which most of your wider audience would judge station use.

Question 9. Are there additional issues that you would like to see discussed ?

The County believes that the role of rail within the sub-regions should also be discussed more fully. The sub-regions have a number of unique transport needs which are not provided for by radial services to and from Birmingham Centre.

The Council wishes to see a sensible balance struck between the securing the level of performance and the quantum of service. It does not agree with an entirely risk-averse approach to performance. Passengers want both a frequent service and an acceptable level of performance. It does appear appropriate for some additional research to clearly establish passengers' views on the correct balance. The Council suspects that performance weighs less than the rail industry currently assumes.

Question 10. You are invited to comment on current engineering access practices.

No comment is offered, save that there may be a more appropriate balance between weekday and Sunday maintenance which will allow a better level of service to be offered on Sundays.

Question 11. You are invited to provide your views of current poor performance, where caused by the timetable (rather than by infrastructure or rolling stock failure).

The Council's view is that the current poor performance is mainly due to infrastructure and rolling stock failures rather than the timetable.

4. Forecasts Of Change - Wider Demand

Question 12. Have all the important external drivers been identified ?

A number of important drivers appear to have been identified, but the Council is very concerned that there is no mention of the railway's role in delivering the Government's 'Shared Priorities' of reducing congestion and improving accessibility, air quality and safety.

Question 13. Have any key aspirations been missed (appropriate to a Route Utilisation Strategy and not requiring major infrastructure enhancement) ?

The Council would wish to see Stratford Parkway (at Bishopton adjacent to the A46) identified in **Appendix A**. The proposal has been discussed with the SRA and it is included in Warwickshire's Draft Passenger Rail Strategy 2005. The scheme has financial synergies with the Council's bus based Park & Ride for Stratford which will open in 2005-2006 and the Council are considering options with rail industry partners.

Additional Comment

Para. 4.6.2 - Stakeholder Aspirations for New Stations: The Council is concerned at the negative wording of the section relating to the proposal for a new station at Kenilworth. The main obstacle to delivering this scheme is the provision of a train service to call at the new station. The Council is continuing to work on this issue, at its own risk, and accepts entirely that it will have to submit, in due course, a robust business case covering all the financial, operational and infrastructure implications of the scheme. As this work is currently 'in progress' and being undertaken by the Council and its partners, it has difficulty in accepting the statement in this paragraph that "there is currently no business case or funding for the station" as presumably, the SRA have not undertaken a detailed assessment of its own. In this respect, the later comment in the paragraph that "the SRA has not seen a business case" is probably more correct. It does seem unduly negative to move from this point to conclude that the SRA does not support the development of Kenilworth Station. The Council's view is that it would be fairer to say that the SRA has not seen a business case and therefore does not currently support a new station at Kenilworth. This would be more consistent with the approach set out in

Appendix A: Stakeholder Aspirations', which does give the opportunity for new station aspirations to be developed and potentially prove themselves, rather than be pre-judged, as this paragraph appears to do in the case of Kenilworth.

Additional Comment

Appendix A - Stakeholder Aspirations: The reference to aspirations for new stations in Warwickshire should place Bermuda and Hawkesbury in Nuneaton & Bedworth District. Galley Common and Kingswood Road are the same proposal and is located in Nuneaton & Bedworth District.

5. Forecasts Of Change - Estimated Growth

Question 14. Have an appropriate range of passenger and freight been considered ?

It appears to be an appropriate range.

Question 15. Are there particular issues that you consider have not been fully developed in this analysis ?

The Council is not aware of any additional issues.

Question 16. What is your expectation of central Birmingham demand growth and change ?

The Council feels that the views of Advantage West Midlands, the Regional Assembly and Birmingham City Council may be more appropriate on this issue.

Question 17. Given the uncertainty around passenger demand, do you think we have the forecast right ?

The forecasts appear reasonably correct. However, given the uncertainty, it is essential that the WMRUS retains the flexibility to accommodate any variances.

6. Forecasts Of Change - Committed Schemes

Question 18. Are there any other schemes that are committed which you feel we should have included ?

No comment is offered, provided this question is asking about committed schemes, rather than schemes which the Council believe should be committed.

Question 19. Given the affordability constrains within the industry at present, are there any other aspects that you feel we should consider in the Strategy ?

There is an encouraging reference in Chapter 4 Para 4.7 to the opportunities for additional funding for the rail industry. The rail industry needs to engage with third parties more closely to identify financial and other synergies between related schemes. For example, there appears to be such opportunities in respect of the committed

double tracking scheme south of Coventry and the need for additional track capacity to accommodate a local service on the Leamington Spa - Coventry - Bedworth route (including the new station at Kenilworth). This proposal is discussed in more detail in the response to Question 20 below.

7. Strategic Options

Question 20. Are there options above which you might feel produce better capacity utilisation ?

Generic Options:- The Council is uncertain of the usefulness of debates about 'crowding' standards. Surely, the judgment in respect of 'overcrowding' is made by passengers when they consider whether to continue to use the train service or return to their cars. The 'bottom line' has to be the effect of 'overcrowding' on passengers numbers and technical definitions of overcrowding are not relevant.

Suggested Option 1:- The option of re-routing services with significant 'through' passengers around the conurbation should be considered. There are a number of potential 'by-pass' routes. This would release capacity on local radial routes into the centre of the conurbation. In this context, it would appear appropriate to assess the potential role of the 'International Connection' between the Birmingham-Nuneaton Line and the Rugby-Birmingham West Coast Main Line.

Suggested Option 2:- The option of retaining one Cross Country train per hour on the Solihull route calling at Warwick Parkway - which is well located in relation to the strategic highway network - should be considered. The proposal to re-route this train via Coventry needs to be assessed in a wider context. The County Council understands that this proposal is predicated on the potential of providing increased access to Birmingham International Airport. This does need to be tested thoroughly taking into account that many holiday flights depart before 0800 or arrive after 2100 and rail is not a realistic option for many air travellers as rail services do not operate throughout the night due to the requirements for infrastructure maintenance. The cost of the alternative for these passengers - i.e. rail tickets for a number of people plus the cost of overnight accommodation - would not be competitive with the cost of car travel and parking.

The proposal in the WMRUS to re-route further Cross Country trains via Coventry also reduces the opportunities for the introduction of a local service on the Leamington-Coventry-Nuneaton route which could be extended to Leicester to the north and Oxford to the south. This proposal would aim to cater for more realistic passenger markets by meeting a number of sub-regional and inter-regional transport needs thereby reducing congestion and promoting economic regeneration. As the SRA are aware, a study commissioned by Coventry Solihull Warwickshire Partnership representing the Sub-Region is investigating this option in detail and is due to report shortly. The Council requests that the SRA consider the findings of this study as part of the analysis of Option A2.4. Additional benefits of this proposal would be that it would relieve some of the current overcrowding on Cross-Country services and also lead to more productive use of public funds, in particular the subsidies paid in respect of the Coventry-Nuneaton service. In this connection, the County Council understands that there have been significant unforeseen reductions in passenger revenue when the Coventry-Leicester service was split at Nuneaton.

Question 21. Do you consider the conclusions reached appropriate ?

It is noted that a number of options are being analysed further and the Council will reserve its position until it is consulted on the findings. The following comments relate to those options for which the WMRUS makes a specific recommendation. The Council has limited its comments to the conclusions which have effects on travel by Warwickshire residents and non-residents to/from the county.

Table 7.2:- The reference in Table 7.2 to the proposed station at Coleshill mentions that it might require the deletion of some stops at Water Orton. The Council understands from its discussions with the SRA that there is no timetabling issue in accommodating stops at both stations and that any abstraction of demand at Water Orton will be identified once the demand profile for the new station has been established. Is it intended that the WMRUS is simply recording this position or is it attempting to start the discussions on this point early ?

Para 7.8:- Route Specific **Options A.** Rugby-Coventry-Birmingham
Key Issues/Bullet 2

The Council's concerns regarding the realism of catering for the travel needs of air travellers to/from Birmingham International set out above (in the response to Question 20 'Suggested Option 2') is relevant to this bullet point.

Para 7.8:- Route Specific OptionsA. Rugby-Coventry-Birmingham
Key Issues/Bullet 3

The Council's concerns set out above (in the response to Question 1) regarding the excessive focus on the needs of long distance services to the detriment of local services and whether this accords with the wider policy objectives - e.g. reducing congestion and improving accessibility - is relevant to this bullet point.

Option B2.3: Increase in frequency of Birmingham – Stratford-upon-Avon services to two per hour

The Council welcomes the support for this proposal.

Option K2.1:-Reduce Tamworth/Nuneaton - Birmingham passenger services to provide extra freight paths.

The Council supports the recommendation not to reduce passenger frequencies.

Option K2.2:-Coleshill Parkway

The Council welcomes the support for this proposal.

Option L1:- Options for Stafford - Nuneaton all day services.

The Council wishes to register an objection to the withdrawal of the local peak services. This will reduce accessibility for a significant number of local residents and will curtail the development of rail services to meet both existing and potential travel demands. It is appropriate to question to what extent the poor level of service for many years has been instrumental in reducing the demand for local rail services on this corridor. The Council's view is that the WMRUS should be investigating improvements to the services with a view to attracting more passengers. To propose withdrawal of local services creates a blight on future development in the corridor based on sustainable transport links. In addition, the Council's concerns set out above (in the response to Question 1) regarding the excessive focus on the needs of long distance services to the detriment of local services and whether this accords with the wider policy objectives - e.g. reducing congestion and improving accessibility - shown be taken into account in the decision whether to progress this option.

In addition, it seems unrealistic to expect a useful comment until such time as details of the proposed replacement services are available. The Council would be concerned if the 'through' peak service from the Trent Valley to/from Coventry was not retained. The Council are currently seeking technical and legal advice on this proposal and seeks confirmation from the SRA that the current contacts with the SRA West Coast Team are the appropriate mechanism for making objections on this matter.

Option L2: Options for Stafford - Nuneaton all day services.

The Council also wishes to register an objection to the withdrawal of the local all day services and the closure of Polesworth Station. This will reduce accessibility for local residents and will curtail the development of rail services to meet both existing and potential travel demands. It is appropriate to question to what extent the poor level of service for many years has been instrumental in reducing the demand for local rail services on this corridor. The Council's view is that the WMRUS should be investigating improvements to the services with a view to attracting more passengers. To propose closure of local stations creates a blight on future development in the corridor based on sustainable transport links. In addition, the Council's concerns set out above (in the response to Question 1) regarding the excessive focus on the needs of long distance services to the detriment of local services and whether this accords with the wider policy objectives - e.g. reducing congestion and improving accessibility - shown be taken into account in the decision whether to progress this option.

In addition, it seems unrealistic to expect a useful comment until such time as details of the proposed replacement services are available. The Council are currently seeking technical and legal advice on this proposal and seeks confirmation from the SRA that the current contacts with the SRA West Coast Team are the appropriate mechanism for making objections on this matter.

Option M1: Options for Coventry - Nuneaton peak services

Option M2: Options for Coventry - Nuneaton all day services

The Council notes the comments and is keen to discuss these with the SRA and other partners in the context of the findings of the study commissioned by Coventry Solihull

Warwickshire Partnership representing the Sub-Region when these are published shortly.

Question 22. What are your views on the generic options: managing peak demand; car parking; freight; engineering access ?

The Council consider that all these options may have some merit and are worthy of investigation and it will reserve its position until it is consulted on the findings. However, it would not support any measures which encouraged existing rail passengers to use their cars or deterred potential passengers from using rail.

8. Proposed Strategy

Question 23. Does this draft strategy incorporate the most appropriate changes to capacity utilisation ?

The Council are broadly in agreement, bearing in mind the time available for implementation. The exceptions are L1 and L2, which are discussed above. There are a number of other options which concern the County, but it will reserve its comments until the consultations on the further analysis recommended in the WMRUS.

Question 24. Are the proposed implementation methods appropriate ?

It is suggested that the opportunities to secure funding from sources external to the rail industry should not be overlooked.

9. Infrastructure Implications

Question 25. Are there any other infrastructure options that should be considered ?

The County Council would expect that the infrastructure requirements which are recommended in the CSWP Sub-Regional Study (referred to in the response to Question 21 'Option M1 & M2') would be investigated.

Question 26. Which of these ideas do you consider worth investigating ?

The Council appreciates the value of investigating many of these ideas, but would particularly favour the progression of the following:-

Para 9.1:-

Lengthening Platforms - The Council would not wish to see short platforms used as a reason to reduce services to local stations.

Para 9.3:-

Route B Tyseley South Junction - The need for this improvement is very obvious to passengers and it would benefit operational efficiency over a wide area.