

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Department for Transport
Great Minister House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

21st December 2017

Dear Secretary of State,

It is with great pleasure that the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership alongside the West of England Combined Authority and the Councils of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire submit a funding bid to the Large Local Major Scheme Fund for the construction of MetroWest Phase 1 rail project.

We want MetroWest to be the flagship scheme for delivering local rail networks. To this end we greatly welcome the £80m of Transforming Cities funding allocated to the West of England Combined Authority and the opportunity for future bids. Working with the constituent councils and through the West of England Combined Authority Committee we will explore focusing investment on further developing the Bristol suburban railway network beyond MetroWest Phase 1. As part of this we are engaging closely with Network Rail on improved planning, funding and delivery arrangements and adopting a new programme approach to bring greater flexibility.

For MetroWest Phase 1 we see the Large Local Major Scheme bid as critical to providing the additional funding needed now to deliver the Portishead part of the scheme. Support of the funding application would mean the project helps deliver continued housing growth in Portishead, Keynsham and around Bristol Temple Meads in Bristol. It will also help address national productivity and support employment growth in the Enterprise Areas and Zones of Bath, Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

Phase 1 will be delivered in two stages with Stage A in 2020 introducing half hourly services on the Severn Beach and Bath Spa lines with the possible extension to Westbury and Stage B in 2021 seeing the reopening of the Portishead Line.

Large Local Major Scheme funding will secure the delivery of Stage B. Stage A will continue to be progressed to deliver on time and as planned. If, however, we can secure the funding needed from the Large Local's fund then it is desirable to progress Stage B alongside.

In summary, MetroWest Phase 1 (Stage A and B) is expected to deliver:

- Improved commuting opportunities into the centres of Bath and Bristol
- Increased service frequencies at 16 existing local stations and the addition of 2 new stations to the national rail network at Pill and Portishead
- An increase to the UK passenger rail network of 14 kilometres
- Substantial quantified user benefits and non-user benefits with a BCR of 3.5
- Wide ranging unquantifiable social/ health benefits
- Extensions of the benefits provided by Network Rail's Western Route Modernisation Programme
- GVA of £264M in the first ten years

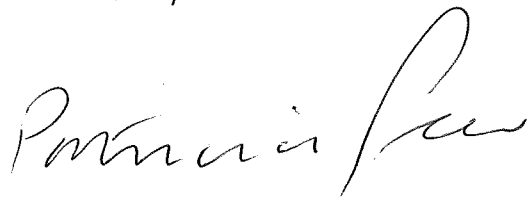
- 514 net new permanent jobs
- A substantial revenue surplus on the Portishead branch, benefiting future rail franchises
- New opportunities for the Greater Western franchise both in the short-term and when it is re-let in the early 2020's

We would like to take the opportunity to thank you for the support that your officials have provided to the project to date. Their advice and guidance has been particularly helpful around the relationship the project has with the Great Western franchise. We are keen that these discussions continue while the bid is being evaluated given our aspirations and the ideas that the Department has for extending services to Westbury (which would reduce the capital cost of the project) and the potential payment of a station access fund to further increase the local contribution available to support the project.

The next critical stage for the project is the submission of the Development Consent Order application in Summer 2018. As you will be aware, a critical part of this application is a funding statement and therefore we would like to work with your officials to resolve any technical queries around the bid within this time frame.

Finally, may we thank you for the continued public support you have given for the schemes, including its inclusion and reference in your recently published Rail Strategy and Great Western Franchise consultation document.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Greer', written in a cursive style.

Patricia Greer

Chief Executive

West of England Local Enterprise Partnership and the West of England Combined Authority