

## **SW Transport Discussion Document**

The SW FSB was the first area to produce its own Transport policy and much of the current national policy is based on the SW document. Now that we have a new Policy Development Officer in London, it is likely that the national policy will be reviewed. This is therefore an excellent opportunity to review the SW Policy, updating it to reflect small business needs and aspirations for the next 5 years.

SWAPU will be discussing this at its meeting on June 19<sup>th</sup>. I am away the first 2 weeks in June, so need your feedback by May 15<sup>th</sup> to summarise it for SWAPU.

### **General principles**

Which is more important to your business, the reliability of a journey in time, or how fast you can travel?

### **Climate Change or Congestion or both!**

Transport is a very controversial issue at the moment and is likely to continue that way. Many government policies are directed at reducing transport use and/or making transport use more efficient.

There seem to be two drivers for this – one is climate change and the other is congestion.

Carbon dioxide emission from transport vehicles of all kinds is a major contributor to the greenhouse gases that are causing climate change. Reduce those emissions and you reduce the quantity of greenhouse gases and hopefully global warming.

Congestion – what do we mean by this. I would suggest that it means different things to different people, but basically it is that the weight of traffic is such that we cannot get where we want to go as fast as we would like. Congestion occurs at certain places and at certain times of the day.

Is congestion a problem for your business? When? How is it a problem? Can you quantify the cost to your business?

Living in Bristol, I have observed that roads can be practically deserted and a journey that may take 30mins in the rush hour, can take 10 or 15mins during the day. What is your experience?

One answer to congestion is to build more roads. Some would say we pay so much in road taxes that we should have the roads we need. Others would say that building more roads just creates more traffic as more people use them. What do you think?

Given that much of the congestion is in and around cities, is it feasible to build more roads to reduce congestion? How?

How do we manage/deal with congestion on motorways? Road pricing? Making vehicles wait on slip roads by the use of traffic lights – this is actually starting to happen? What do you think about these? Any other suggestions?

What about single carriageway roads in rural areas? What should happen about congestion on these roads caused by slow moving vehicles?

Another approach is to vary time of travel so as to miss the times when places are busy. How feasible is this for a business? Will the increase in flexible working help? What causes problems?

In London a congestion charge has been introduced. It is highly likely that this will happen in SW cities including Bristol within the next few years.

What do you think about that? How do you think it should best be managed? Why?

To reduce the impact congestion charging has on small businesses the FSB has called for:-

- a) Exemptions for essential users, such as construction and maintenance traffic.
- b) Special provision for visitors from rural areas, where there is no alternative.
- c) Reduction in UBR to compensate for the increased tax take.

What do you think about these?

Increasingly congestion is caused by lengthy road closures following an accident. The Police say that under Human Rights legislation, they are required to investigate any road incident causing serious injury or death as thoroughly as they would a murder. It has been suggested that if they had to pay say £50,000 per hour for a road closure, they would improve their investigation methods so as to reduce the time the road was closed.

What do you think about this?

Government policy is to try and reduce the number of journeys made by car and to increase the number of occupants. Do you think this policy is a good idea? Why?

What about rural businesses?

To reduce the number of car journeys, they are using the usual carrot and stick approach, but at the moment the stick is probably more obvious than the carrot. They are reducing the number of long stay car parking places in

the towns and cities and dramatically increasing the cost of such places. In many places they are starting to charge for short term parking, or increasing these charges.

What do you think about these changes? What effect, if any, are they having on your business? On your staff? On your customers?

The other big changes are in the road system itself. Across the SW, we are starting to see the introduction of High Occupancy Lanes, bus lanes, bus gates and 'showcase bus routes'.

High Occupancy Lanes are a lane on a dual carriageway, which is reserved for vehicles carrying two or more people. Is there one near you? How has it affected your business?

What about businesses in rural areas where car sharing is not really an option? Should they have some kind of exemption on these roads?

The 'carrot' is improvements in public transport. The idea is that if public transport is more reliable, more convenient and more comfortable, more people will use it. What do you think about this?

The FSB says that often a vehicle is a tool of the trade and we cite the example of a carpenter carrying a front door and his tools to a job on public transport. Could you use public transport? How would using public transport affect your business?

The FSB has found it gets more attention when we are able to make constructive suggestions. How would you reduce congestion? How would you reduce the number of vehicle journeys?

'Bus Lanes', bus gates and 'showcase bus routes' or as they are otherwise known 'red routes', aim to improve the reliability of public transport by making buses more reliable. This is achieved by giving them priority over other traffic. Does this affect your business? How?

'Red routes' ban all parking for any reason along their length for specified times or 24hours. Loading bays can be provided where there is no rear access to premises to permit deliveries and collections. Small businesses have been very strongly against these red routes, yet in Bristol, the value of property along the route seems to be increasing. (NOTE – think VR needs to take a walk along the red route in Bristol and find out what is happening!)

Longer term, the government has stated that it will stop taxing fuel and charge us according to where we go and when. This idea is called Road user charging.

The busier the road and the time of day, the higher the cost for using that particular road. Rural users are likely to pay a very low cost per mile as they drive on relatively unused roads, whereas city centre drivers are likely to pay the most.

The technology to achieve this is being developed. Whereas with GPS it would not be possible to tell if you were using a motorway or a road running alongside it, the new 'Galileo' is supposed to be so good, it could spot which lane of a motorway was being used. Norwich Union is testing a system to log when and how a vehicle is driven as part of a test market of 'pay as you go' insurance.

What do you think about 'Road User Charging'?

The other way of reducing the climate change effect of transport is to use more efficient vehicles and/or run them on 'renewable' energy. Examples of renewable energy are oil from vegetable seeds such as rapeseed, electricity generated by wind power or from solar panels. Examples of more efficient vehicles are the Toyota Prius with both an electric and a petrol engine. However, the cost of the Prius is currently about £20,000 for a 1300cc engine.

In the SW the FSB has been calling on the public authorities to use only vehicles running on 'renewables' or efficient dual fuel vehicles. The idea being to expand the market for such vehicles and thus bring the price down.

What do you think about this?

The comment has been made that supply of such alternative fuels in the SW is very patchy and that alongside expanding the market, we also need to see the supply of fuel expanded.

What are your thoughts on that?

### **About more specific issues:-**

**Road Networks** - Small businesses are much more vulnerable to time lost as a result of road conditions, roadworks, poor road surfaces and inadequate road provision. The FSB has been campaigning for more reliable journeys and fewer road closures as a result of accidents.

What do you think?

However, for the South West to function as a region, the FSB has been saying that communications within the region need to be improved. Specifically we have been campaigning for a South Coast motorway and full dualling of the A303.

Do you agree?

Traditionally we tend to think of east-west routes as major roads tend to go to London. However, if we are to make the most of our ports and communicate effectively with the rest of the UK, north south routes like the A358 need to be improved. Do you agree? What other north south routes need improving?

Are there any other links you consider vital.

**Public Transport** - The FSB has always called for public transport to be improved before restrictions on traffic are introduced. Do you agree? Is it happening fast enough? What problems have you observed?

What about rural transport? Do we explicitly recognise that adequate public transport for businesses or their employees is unlikely to ever be provided in rural areas, seeking so different criteria or different solutions? Or do we down play the issue as it would make it harder to get permission for businesses in rural areas?

**Rail networks** - The FSB supports the case for increased investment in the SW Rail Network. SWRDA Region needs to be considered as a whole to reduce its peripherality. The FSB considers that only a fast, clean, reliable, affordable service is capable of providing a realistic, acceptable alternative to road transport, whether for personnel or for freight.

Do you agree?

Specific problems at the moment are the possible end of the Bristol to Waterloo route, poor service on the Exeter-Waterloo route and the risk of losing the line at Dawlish.

Do you have any views on any of these?

Are there any other routes or places that need action?

**Air Transport** - The FSB welcomes the introduction of low cost airlines and supports development of the SW Regional airports as a way of overcoming the Region's peripherality.

What are your views?

Specific comments welcomed from FSB Regions about local airports.

**Parking restrictions** – originally imposed for safety and to facilitate traffic flow, the FSB considers they should be reviewed following the construction of relief roads. Using such restrictions as a revenue raiser is an obscene corruption of their purpose.

Small businesses rely on publicly provided parking spaces for both their customers and their staff. Increases in charges and reduction in spaces reduces their ability to compete. Changing the parking before transport is improved is unacceptable.

The FSB therefore calls for a clear definition of a 'working vehicle' permitting the development of a 'timed disc' system for delivery and service vehicles, clarifying current exemptions.

The paras above are summaries of FSB's current position. What do you think about it?

**Traffic Calming** - The FSB would be pleased to work with local authorities to research those forms of traffic calming with zero or least effect on adjacent small businesses.

Do you have any experience of the effect of traffic calming on small businesses?

**Home Zones and Quiet Roads** – such areas should not include businesses and should take account of existing patterns of traffic flow.

Do you have any experience of the effect of 'Home Zones' or 'Quiet roads' on small businesses?

**Pedestrianisation** - the FSB is generally opposed to pedestrianisation, requiring local authorities to 'make their case' in each proposal. 'The case' must include evidence about the effect on small businesses, adequate alternative provision for deliveries, a shop mobility scheme and excellent parking facilities adjacent, suitable for 'mother and a buggy' provision. Do you agree with this position?

We have the example of one place in the South West where we can prove that pedestrianisation damaged the town. Do you have any evidence of good or bad effects?

**Road Works** – the FSB proposes that local authorities be treated like the utilities and required to compensate businesses disrupted by road works.

Prolonged disruption due to road works does cause members problems. One suggestion is that the utilities and Local Authorities be required to consult BEFORE roads works are planned in to any schedule so they can be rescheduled etc as a result of the consultation. What do you think?

Is there anything else you think should be done?

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1<sup>st</sup> draft – January 20<sup>th</sup> 2006

2<sup>nd</sup> draft – 17<sup>th</sup> February 2006 and Final draft as issued