



Catrin Ellis **Associates**

M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures Programme

M4 CEM Stakeholder Consultation Workshop – Cardiff

15th March 2012

Transcribed Report



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

ARUP

About the M4 CEM project group (Welsh Government and their contractors, Arup)

The M4 CEM project group has been working on developing the M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures Programme since it was initiated in 2009. As well as developing proposals put forward in the Consultation Document, published on March 6th, 2012, the group has produced a number of interim reports and more detailed studies. Many of these are available to download by visiting www.m4cem.com

The Group is also delivering measures which have been identified as providing some relief to the problems of safety, capacity and resilience in the M4 Corridor. Sections of steel central barriers have been replaced with concrete ones to improve capacity and resilience. In addition, a Variable Speed Limit system has been introduced between Junction 24 at Coldra and Junction 28 at Castleton. The Welsh Government has also deployed traffic officers on the M4 who deal with routine incidents on the network and undertake general traffic and road management to minimise disruption to road users.

About the facilitators

The M4 CEM Engagement Programme is designed and delivered by Catrin Ellis Jones, of Catrin Ellis Associates (CEA) in line with the needs of the M4 CEM Management Team, comprising staff from the Welsh Government and Arup. CEA is an independent business with many years experience in facilitation, training, partnership working and consensus building in Wales, the UK and internationally. Part of the facilitation team at this event were James Martin-Jones (CEA) and M4 CEM team members from Arup. Contact: catrinellis@yahoo.com / m.07725721519

About this Report

The workshop used plenary and small group working. This report produced by Catrin Ellis Jones of Catrin Ellis Associates, is a full transcript of all written notes made to record participants' contributions throughout the day. Each section starts with an explanation of the task (in the grey box).

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Aims of the M4 CEM Consultation workshop

To give participants an opportunity to:

- have their questions answered and voice initial responses to the outline plans and options for the M4 CEM, and
- help participants develop their thinking prior to making their own written submissions to the consultation, or submitting a response on behalf of an organisation

Opening session: Welcome and introduction to the day

Martin Bates, the Welsh Government's Project Director responsible for progressing this Public Consultation Exercise, welcomed participants and made the following remarks.

To set the scene I am going to repeat a quotation from the Minister with responsibility for Transport, Carl Sargeant, who said ***"We're all aware that congestion is a problem on this part of the M4, so easing the flow on the M4 between Magor and Castleton is a key priority for the Welsh Government and a commitment in the prioritised National Transport Plan."***

There are display boards around the room repeating some of the information from the Consultation Document. Consultation and/or engagement requires participation and as said on the cover of Newsletter 2 and repeated on the first board: ***"We need your help to shape a **strategy** to reduce traffic congestion on the M4 Magor to Castleton"***.

Several of you have already contributed through the earlier Stakeholder Workshops, the last of which was in November last year. The exhibitions and workshops have helped the Welsh Government prepare for this consultation, by shaping and refining our understanding of the transport problems people experience in the M4 Corridor between Magor and Castleton, and exploring the benefits and barriers associated with different approaches to solving these problems.

The Welsh Government, via the Consultation Document, is now seeking the public's views on;

- a) The 17 Existing Transport Related Problems
- b) The 15 Goals of the M4CEM Programme
- c) The Public Transport Measures whose main aim is to reduce traffic on the M4~ these may give wider benefits to society as well; and
- d) The Highway Infrastructure Measures – 4 options, whose aim is to increase highway capacity and improve resilience and safety.

The identified Problems and Goals which have come out of the earlier workshops are wide-ranging, and reflect the complexity of the challenge which the M4CEM Programme

is seeking to address. From the work to date Welsh Government recognises that no single solution delivers all the Goals.

There has already been some publicity in the media, but this has centred on the Brynglas Tunnels rather than on the Public Consultation itself. On behalf of the Welsh Government, I would assure you that no decision has been taken on the way forward. This consultation is your opportunity to let the Welsh Government know how you think the existing problems should be addressed.

During your deliberations today I would like you to keep in mind a second quote from the Minister, which says: ***"Improving access to our schools, hospitals and workplaces is essential if we are to improve efficiency and productivity and in turn make us more competitive."***

"Improving Access" in my opinion means that doing nothing is not an option. However, it can include improvements to both Public Transport and Highway Infrastructure.

There will probably be much discussion today about various aspects of this consultation; but in order to get your views heard, I would ask that you complete the on-line Response Form – as well as the questions themselves, there is room for comments and I would assure you that they all are read.

Catrin Ellis Jones, the workshop facilitator, introduced the aims and objectives of the day. She noted that this workshop is about helping you develop your thinking on the M4 CEM proposals through discussion and exploration of the proposals with others, having any questions answered by the project team, and thus helping you to respond to the consultation questions afterwards. It is also an opportunity for Welsh Government to hear participants' initial feedback.

To ensure that your views are given full consideration, it is necessary for individuals and organisations to provide responses to the questions posed in the Consultation Document and Response Form. The various ways in which responses can be submitted were described, e.g. using the response form, a written submission, or online at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations, or accessing the consultation via www.m4cem.com. The advantages of responding online were outlined (enables respondents to update anytime during the consultation period, ease and convenience).

Session 2: Context and introduction to the M4 CEM – key points from Sections 1, 2, and 6 of the Consultation Document (CD)

Allan Pitt, Consulting Planner at Arup, referred to the context-setting sections of the M4 CEM described in the Consultation Document (CD, p 4 – 7). This presentation was followed by discussion at tables and then by a Q&A session in plenary.

Plenary feedback

Q = Question; A = Answer; C = Comment

The measures already taken – notably what has been done in terms of strengthening the central barrier, and the introduction of the Variable Speed Limit – have improved safety, capacity and resilience. But we recognise that more still needs to be done. There is also an ongoing problem of access to/from Caerleon; and more data collection is also needed.

There is a perception that the Brynglas tunnels are one of the key problems in terms of current traffic flow. But widening or rebuilding these is problematic in engineering terms, given the potential risks to buildings in Brynglas. As a result, the most practical solution would be an M4 relief road, as this would deliver better long-term benefits than seeking to improve the current M4 corridor.

Session 3: Identifying the most important Problems & Goals

Allan Pitt presented the transport-related problems encountered within the M4 Corridor, Magor to Castleton. These are based on traffic data, and have been the subject of review by local people and stakeholders during earlier dialogue on the M4 CEM. He referred to the sections of the CD on pages 8–19. He also described how in response to each problem, a number of goals had been set which if achieved would solve the problems. The Goals are listed on p 20 of the CD.

The facilitator invited participants to review the list of transport-related problems on p.18 of the CD and the list of M4 CEM goals on p.20, and to refer to Q1a and Q2. Each participant was invited to list her/his top 4 problems and top 4 goals. Comments and questions on these were then briefly shared in plenary. Discussion reverted to tables, comparing participants' selections of problems and goals, and these too were shared in plenary.

This session was followed by a break for refreshments.

Plenary feedback - initial comments and questions on Problems and Goals

C: The data is not fully robust or up to date – it does not include the effect of measures taken over the last year or two, nor does it take account of the effects of the road works during the same period.

A: There is some new data coming in now on accident information and flows that is likely to indicate that safety has improved as a result of recent measures.

C: Shouldn't the CD make this clear?

A: It does to some extent – e.g. the dates of traffic data are provided; and there is a reference to the Variable Speed Limit (the VSL, introduced in June 2011); and there is a reference in the FAQ to accident and safety improvements since the introduction of the VSL. The plan is to update this information during the consultation period as new data becomes available.

C: The speeds indicated on the new VSL electronic signs are mandatory (not advisory), but drivers are not clear about this. The information screens at the motorway edge could/should be used to make this clear. The VSL signs are confusing also because there is an additional set of electronic signs providing advisory speeds limits.

C: Goal 3 - We appreciate that WG has provided subsidies to keep railway lines open; but there is a loop coming round from Ebbw Vale that terminates at Newport Central but has not been reopened. Not extending it to Newport means that you have to go all the way back to Cardiff to get there.

A: The challenge is that that particular stretch of line can only be operated at 10mph, and trains need to come onto main line access Newport Central, thereby causing disruption to the main line service. This could compromise the half hour frequency of the Cardiff-London service.

C: Our understanding is that this frequency could be accommodated, and that the real challenge is the need to make the Ebbw Vale line a dual line – which is a perfectly deliverable proposition, but would require investment. It would enable the Ebbw Vale line to offer a 15 minute service, and the impact on this would be profound and greatly alleviate pressure on Junction 28.

Q: What about frequency enhancements on the Abergavenny line, including re-opening Caerleon Station?

A: A new station at Caerleon would provide wider regional benefits to the public transport network but may not significantly reduce traffic currently using the M4. Please refer to public transport overview available on-line (www.m4cem.com) for a set of illustrative public transport measures aimed at reducing traffic congestion problems on the M4 between Magor and Castleton.

Q: Could the train be split, with one half going into Newport, and the other into Cardiff?

A: It would still not be possible to increase the frequency.

C: It is surprising that the carbon footprint of the M4 is not identified as one of the Problems for the M4 CEM. This should be considered in the context of the WG CO2 emissions strategy.

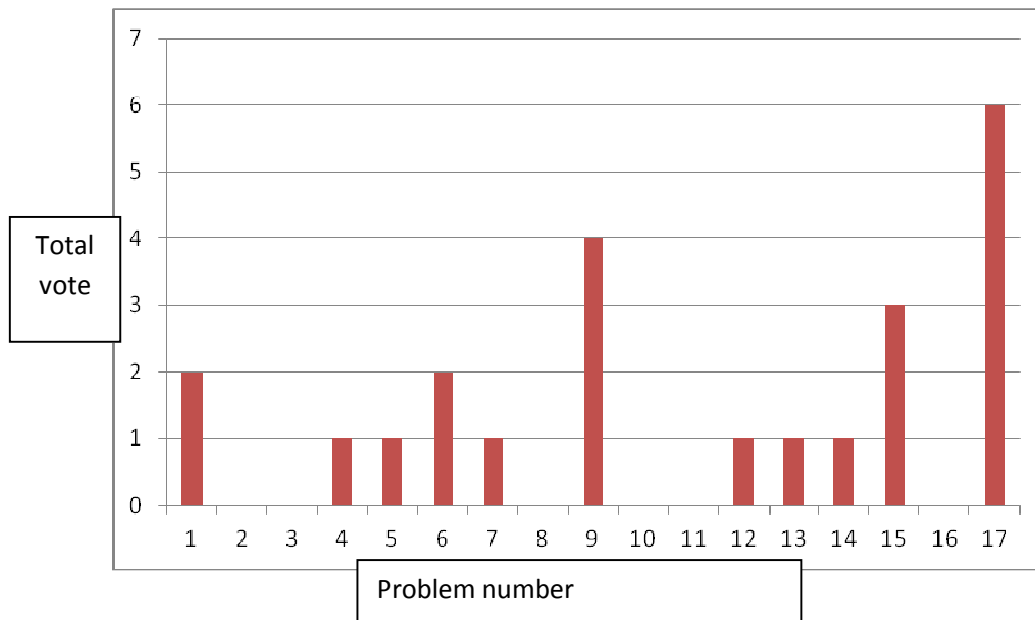
A: This issue is to some extent encompassed within the Goals.

C: Yes, but if we are asked to prioritise key Problems, the carbon footprint issue is not listed.

A: Fair point – suggest that this issue be raised as a comment.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

Problems: participants [individually] selected four problems they regard as the most important to address. The number of votes for each priority problem are added up and represented in the diagram.



Both table groups identified Problem 17 – *The existing transport network acts as a constraint to economic growth and adversely impacts the current economy* – as the most important problem needing to be addressed. The groups suggested that the problems on the existing transport network acts as a constraint to economic growth not only in M4 corridor, but that it adversely affects the hugely and nationally important, South Wales economy.

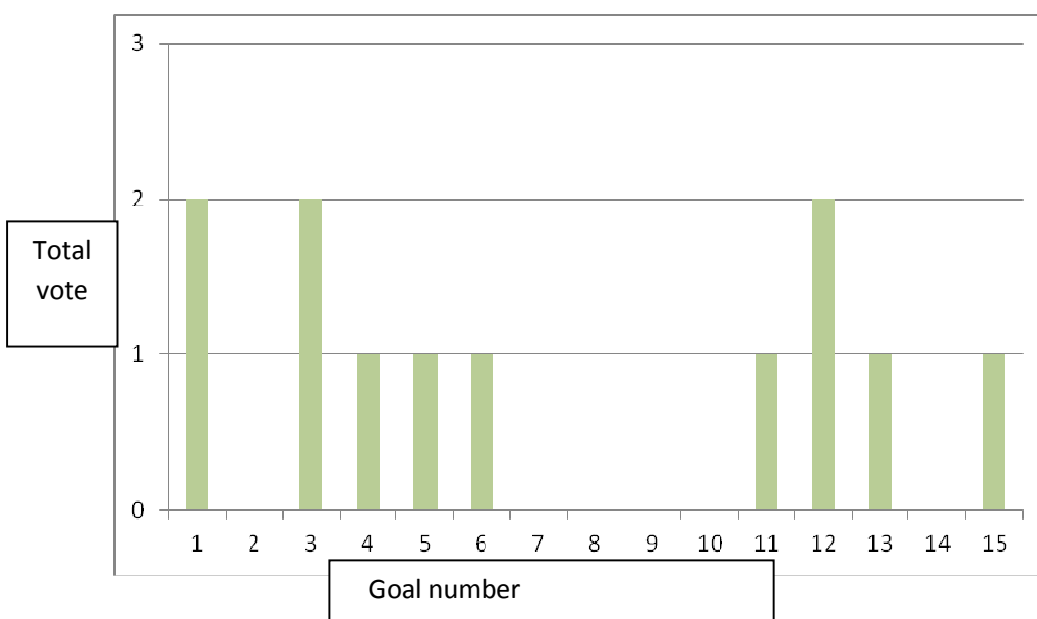
Problem 9 - *When there are problems on the M4, there is severe disruption and congestion on the local and regional highway network*; and Problem 15 – *There is a lack of adequate sustainable integrated transport alternatives for existing road users*; and Problem 1 - *A greater volume of traffic uses the M4 around Newport than it was designed to accommodate, resulting in regular congestion at peak times over extended periods*; and Problem 6 - *The M4 cannot cope with increased traffic from new developments* – gained the next largest number of votes.

One table group suggested that there are other problems that need to be addressed, which are not included in the list, namely:

- Reducing the carbon footprint associated with travel and transport – not just per vehicle per kilometre
- There is insufficient capacity for other forms of public transport through motorway junctions

Goals: participants [individually] selected their four top priority goals to achieve. The number of votes for each goal are added up and represented in the diagram.

Only one group undertook this exercise.



Only goals 1, 3 and 12 received more than one vote each:

Goal 1 – Safer, easier and more reliable travel East-West in South Wales – one group specified improving reliability and safety (over and above ease) is most important.

Goal 3 – More effective and integrated use of alternatives to the M4, including other parts of the transport network and other modes of transport for local and strategic journeys around Newport.

Goal 12 – An M4 attractive for strategic journeys that discourages local traffic use.

Participants' selections of M4 CEM Problems and Goals – reports back from tables on level of agreement, and comments/questions

The most support is for Goal 1. Some duplication between the Goals was noted.

Everyone agreed that Problem 17 is a key one (i.e. that congestion is an economic constraint).

Particular problems identified: 9 and 15.

On 15, perhaps a P&R at the Severn Tunnel junction would help address it

Session 4: Section 8 of the CD – Public Transport Measures

After an introduction by Dan Saville, Arup Director, to the overall approach to the CEM and to the Public Transport Measures in Section 8 of the CD, the participants were invited to agree answers to CD Qs 3a and 3b; and these responses were then shared in plenary.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

Responses to the following question: which of the public transport measures listed have the potential to reduce your use of the M4?

- A new station at Llantarnam and/or St Mellons.
- Through routes using trains/buses (i.e. integrated).
- Integrated public transport in Newport – through ticketing and proximity.
- Public transport from the Valleys.
- A fare structure for train journeys that is perceived to give good value for money.
- Park & Ride to the east of Cardiff – between Cardiff and Newport. This addresses the issue of single rail hub and has been successful elsewhere (e.g. Parkway stations).
- The potential of Caerleon station.

Plenary discussion on the initial introduction (which indicated that research on travel patterns on the M4 had led to the conclusion that public transport can only be part of the solution to congestion on the M4).

C: Some of the common measures could be delivered quite quickly.

A: Yes, we are looking to develop an overall long-term strategy; some elements of which could be delivered relatively soon.

Q: How do you generate figures for the impact of improved public transport on M4 flows?

A: We used roadside interviews to develop a pattern across the region.

C: A methodology of that sort could lead to the conclusion that it is not necessary to re-open a train station at Caerleon. However, re-opening a Caerleon train station could well lead to many new movements on the train.

A: Journeys from centre to centre work best for train travel. But the great majority of traffic movements on the M4 do not follow this pattern.

Q: Does the model you have used make an allowance for new movements resulting from additional train connections?

A: It is right that new movements would result from such additional rail connections. However, new rail journeys are outside the scope of the model because they are new journeys, and would not therefore relieve existing traffic on the M4. Research also indicates that additional rail connections would not significantly reduce the volume of traffic on the M4.

C: We understand the conclusion in the context of the M4 corridor that getting people out of their cars and onto the train is constrained. But access to trains is also constrained along this corridor. If there were more stations e.g. west of Cardiff, you could get more people onto trains, and that could make a significant difference.

A: We have modelled additional P&R facilities to public transport in this context – but again, the model indicates that such facilities would not materially reduce M4 traffic volumes.

Q: What is happening to the former steelworks site? Cardiff Airport is currently failing – why not develop an airport on that site?

A: The site was not considered to have the necessary orientation for airport runways, and housing is currently being constructed on part of the former steelworks.

Post meeting note: Only part of the steelworks site has been sold to developers. Tata Steel still own and operate the remainder.

C: Using this site for housing would be a terrible decision for the site: the orientation would be okay for an airport, and it would be located adjacent to the main railway line and to the M4. This is relevant to traffic flows.

Plenary feedback on Qs 3a and b

C: The best contributions could be made through P&R links to stations, and through modal integration (e.g. better transfers between public transport modes through smart ticketing, and by co-locating bus and train stations).

C: Improve public transport between Newport and Cardiff

C: Open a new train station at St Mellons and Llantarnam.

Session 5: Highway Option A : A new high quality road to the south of Newport

After a brief presentation and discussion of Highway Option A, tables discussed Q4a: and there was a short plenary discussion of points raised.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

Responses to the following question: To what extent do you think that Highway Infrastructure Option A will address your group's priority problems or goals?

- This option addresses Problem 17. It also addresses Problem 9, freeing up traffic around the M4.
- It does not really address Problem 15, but it does have some indirect benefits – e.g. less congestion for buses; and more capacity.
- It could help achieve Goal 12, with reduced junctions.
- Signage would be an important consideration in encouraging through traffic to take the optimal route.
- There is not currently much development to the South of Newport – there may be potential to make this area more desirable in development terms.
- There could be knock-on impacts on Junction 29 onwards due to increased congestion at this point. Junction 32 at Coryton already experiences congestion without any additional flow caused by improved (Junctions 23-29).
- It frees up traffic through to Junction 29 on the existing motorway for Valleys' traffic, and is therefore a great benefit for Newport; but it is possibly detrimental for Cardiff and further west.

Plenary discussion on the presentation

C: Problem 17 and Goal 1 figured strongly here. We felt that these are quite well addressed by Option A. In terms of the Problem 9 issue, Option A would offer benefits in alleviating disruption and congestion.

C: Option A would improve the situation for people trying to get into Newport, but it could have the knock-on effect of increasing pressure on traffic flows beyond Junction 29.

C: The queues at the Coryton junction are partly caused by situating supermarkets, hotels etc. there. This sort of development should be avoided at junctions - instead the emphasis should be on flyovers and loops to maximise traffic flow.

C: It is possible that WG could invest heavily in Option A, but still not reduce traffic congestion overall. The real strategic gap is in terms of land use planning, which rests with the Wales Spatial Plan. We still do not have the close coordination between different levels of government that we need. This is a real strategic risk for this programme.

A: There is a review of the planning system in Wales ongoing at the moment. This process should feed into this.

Session 6: Highway Option B: At grade junction improvements to the A48 Newport Southern Distributor Road (SDR)

After a brief presentation and discussion of Highway Option B, participants discussed the option at their tables in relation to Q4b - *To what extent do you think Highway Option B will address the problem and achieve the goals you have chosen?*, and this was followed by a short plenary discussion of points raised. This session was followed by a break for lunch.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

Responses to the following question: To what extent do you think that Highway Infrastructure Option B will address your group's priority problems or goals?

- This option is not going to solve the problems of the M4. It is not a long term solution.
- It does not address Junction 28-29, but Junction 28 improvements are being addressed separately.
- It may improve connectivity with south Newport.
- It would give some improved resilience to the road network. It could deliver minor benefits in relation to Problem 9.
- Although it would benefit air quality in the M4 area, it would be detrimental to properties around the SDR.
- A mid-Wales route should be considered as an additional option.
- We doubt that Option B would help in the case of catastrophic failure on the M4 – but it could help in the case of minor incidents.
- Perhaps this option could be used as an interim fix.
- Again, improved signage could be important – e.g. giving estimated travel times for the different routes.
- It has the potential to be implemented quickly.

Discussion on the presentation

Q: One of the overall Goals relates to the economy – for each scheme, have you modelled what the economic effects might be?

A: There is some underlying information on this, as reflected in the appraisals for each of the options. As a relatively modest scheme, it could be implemented more quickly, but it would not give the longer term increase in capacity and potential economic impacts that Option A (for example) would offer.

Plenary feedback on Q4b

C: Option B looks like an interim fix – not a long term solution.

Session 7: Highway Option C: Grade separated junction improvements to the A48 SDR

After a brief presentation and discussion of Highway Option C, participants discussed the option at their tables in relation to Q4c - *To what extent do you think Highway Option C will address the problem and achieve the goals you have chosen?* - and this was followed by a short plenary discussion of points raised.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

Responses to the following question: To what extent do you think that Highway Infrastructure Option C will address your group's priority problems or goals?

- This option is substantially better than Option B; but it would be a 50mph route not a 70mph route.
- This option addresses Problem 9 better than Option B does.
- There are two major schools on this route; so there are issues of safety and access to schools to be considered.
- A point on SAR was raised, based on current traffic from Llanwern.
- It is an improvement on the current situation; but it is expensive. There is consensus at this table that it is not worth the extra cost relative to Option B.

Plenary feedback on Q4c

Q: Junction 28 – what can be delivered at a reasonable price? Would bus priority measures help here? It would be once in a lifetime opportunity to introduce these at Junction 28.

A: Yes – but priority bus lanes would need to be extended into Newport to make them work effectively. There are no bus priority lanes in Newport at present. Bus priority at traffic lights through the use of transponders could provide priority without the need for additional lanes.

C: This option is substantially better than Option B, but it is still not a long term solution.

C: Yes – an improvement on the current situation, but it looks expensive for what it would be likely to deliver.

Session 8: Highway Option D: Online Widening to dual 4 of the M4 between Junctions 24 and 29, including an additional tunnel at Brynglas

After a brief presentation and discussion of Highway Option D, participants discussed the option at their tables, and this was followed by a short plenary discussion of points raised.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

Responses to the following question: To what extent do you think that Highway Infrastructure Option D will address your group's priority problems or goals?

- When finished, this option would meet the CEM Goals; but the disruption during construction could act as a deterrent to economic growth.
- This option does not really address Goals 1, 3, and 12. "All our eggs are in one basket".
- There is a risk of damaging and/or exacerbating damage caused by tunnel boring beneath Brynglas Ridge. Would there be a need for assurances on this point, and/or a need to recognise this risk?

Plenary feedback on Q4d

When finished, it meets the goals – but it would lead to disruption in the meantime.

It is not clear whether Goals 3 and 12 would be met.

The costs of building and running the tunnel are difficult to quantify.

Session 9: Discussion and feedback on Q5

The facilitator invited participants to agree answers to Q5, and these were then considered in plenary. Dan Saville also referred to the Common Measures that are proposed in conjunction with all of the Options.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

Responses to the following question: Do you have any additional comments, suggestions, observations, key messages?

- It is important to recognise the interaction between these proposals and SAR.
- The small take-up for this workshop is a shame – we feel it has helped our understanding of the issues and the proposals.

- There are concerns about the longer-term needs of the region. The wider problems to consider include commuting to Bristol and Cardiff.
- The industrial profile of South Wales means that HGVs are an important consideration.
- Greenhouse gas emissions for all the options are neutral (both for WeITAG and for Goal 10) – the analysis of this issue needs to be given further consideration before the final decision is taken.
- Giving buses priority at junctions would be worthy of serious consideration.
- Why not start Option A at Junction 23A rather than Junction 23, and stop short at Junction 28 to reduce the length and therefore the cost?
- Option D heading east is four lanes until Junction 24, three lanes till Junction 23a, and then two lanes through the junction; therefore the plans need to deal with the 2 lane constriction.
- We accept that something has to be done – and it is important that we make the right choice.
- It would be possible to deliver Option B as an interim measure to complement a longer term solution.
- Alternative routes are important.

Plenary feedback on Q5

- Why does Option D start at Junction 24? Eastbound from Junction 24, there is also a need to widen the two lanes sections to four lanes.
- There is a need to think about the long term, the region as a whole, and getting it right; also the value of alternative routes in terms of resilience.
- Option B could be considered as a interim measure.
- All options are appraised as neutral in terms of their carbon impacts. This tends to indicate that this aspect may not have been fully assessed. They should be, given WG's carbon footprint targets.

Session 10: Closing session

The facilitator confirmed next steps in the consultation and how the proceedings today would be taken forward.

Martin Bates expressed his thanks and appreciation to all participants, and the workshop ended at 3.00pm

We will type up the transcript of this workshop including the work sheets; and send these to participants. The transcripts of the workshops will go on to the M4 CEM web site, along with the feedback from the drop-in sessions.

Please respond to the consultation; and please encourage friends and relations to respond too. This will greatly help the Minister get the broad feedback needed to help make the decision.

Participants

Eight participants took part in the whole day's deliberations. They were members of the public and representatives of organisations.

A handful of others dropped in to look at the exhibition panels and talk to team members.