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M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures Programme

M4 CEM Stakeholder Consultation Workshop – Swansea

20th 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 Alfie Stroud (CEA) and M4 CEM team members from Arup.

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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. Those Workshops have helped the Welsh Government prepare for this consultation.

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

- a) 17 Existing Transport Related Problems
- b) 15 Goals of the M4CEM Programme
- c) Public Transport Measures whose main aim is to reduce traffic on the M4~ these may give wider benefits to society as well; and
- d) 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, 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 CEM – key points from Sections 1, 2, and 6 of the Consultation Document (CD)

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

Plenary feedback

Q = Question; C = Comment (*Participants' contributions*)

A = Answer (*from Welsh Government and their Consultants*)

Q: "It's the economy, stupid!"* – road use is not just a matter of preference. The big aims of M4 CEM seem to me to be contradictory. Is our main aim to grow and service the Welsh economy? Or is it to prioritise sustainability and lower carbon emissions, which may contradict the aim of economic growth? The South East section of the M4 in Wales is so strategically significant that any programme for protecting or improving it must be mainly concerned with its key infrastructure role and its economic effect.

**Participant borrowed from Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign slogan to make his point in engaging manner.*

C: The either/or approach is not an option – that analysis comes from the car-centric culture, which we need to get away from. The Welsh Government's reports are based on projections premised on an expectation of rising car use. Current patterns of car use are often habits arising from an unsustainable transport culture more than a matter of need. Alternatives will have to be developed and this culture must be changed; the M4 CEM reports don't cover the impact of peak oil, rising energy costs, and the resulting likely fall in car demand.

A: A combination of approaches is needed. There is no one aim or solution. There is a discussion to be had about priorities. There is clearly some tension between the range of goals and priorities, but connected issues arising from this consultation are being passed-on to other parts of the Welsh Government for their attention.

A: Other improvements to the M4 are already underway – Variable Speed Limit signs have been installed and are now running automatically, concrete central barriers have replaced steel barriers in sections, to improve safety, other improvements are programmed. New traffic surveys are planned which will enable the traffic modelling to be updated. The Welsh Government is still pushing for mainline rail electrification beyond Cardiff to Swansea and also electrification of Valleys routes. The Welsh Government does not regard road use in the M4 corridor in isolation.

A: The Welsh Government's 2009 decision to reject the M4 relief road project as unaffordable was based on a plan to build it in a single phase. New solutions are based on more affordable phased investment.

Q: How does the Welsh Government ensure consistency of message on the programme aims? The controversy around tunnelling at Brynglas is based on memories of damage caused in the 1960s. Cost estimates of hundreds of millions of pounds quoted in the

media without context, the threat of 15 years' disruption, plus the problem of different sets of data, none fully comprehensive, have unsurprisingly dominated the coverage. Opportunities for broad engagement have been lost because of how the M4 CEM aims have been publicised in the media and the Welsh Government has communicated its objectives in this area.

A: We issue press releases which contain a full pack of information but we can have no control on how the press wish to report "a story" to suit their own agendas. There were many approaches that the media could have been taken – they decided to focus on Brynglas tunnels, perhaps because of the tunnel closure in July 2011.

C: The topography of Wales is not as convenient for cycling or other 'no carbon' transport as the Netherlands and other European countries. Public transport can't cope with the diversity of travel necessary in South Wales so it's not an option for the majority. Hours of work and the diversity of jobs require car commuting; the fragmentation of work, major industry leaving South Wales, and small or out-of-town employers all have an effect. Firms have been trying to explain the importance of roads to highway agencies for ages. The road to Milford Haven – 6th largest tonnage port in UK – is poor quality after St Clears; what about through-road traffic from Ireland to England? Focus on coastal cycle paths? These are not relevant to commuters! WG Road policy documents are improving since 2008's soft statement; the content of the M4 CEM Consultation Document is stronger but still does not show firm enough understanding of need for good roads to build jobs in communities.

C: There is an exhibition tomorrow about transport plans in Crumlin, Caerphilly: the topography and the geography of the town and the Ebbw valley are a real barrier to people making transport choices not involving their cars, in the area. The weather we experience here is also a factor. These elements are often under-appreciated in planning Welsh transport.

C: The M4 is important to the prosperity of the whole of Wales, but it is central to the local transport infrastructure of the Newport area too. Are both these needs equally valued as aims? The Consultation document mentions Junction closures.

A: The role of the M4 in the Newport areas is appreciated and motorway junction closures are an option being considered. The M4 motorway started as a ring-road, post-war, and so has many more junctions than would be permitted under current road standards. The programme is engaging locally on possible junction closures and Newport County Council has indicated that it is happy to have some closed but not others. The east side slip roads at J26 near Brynglas are considered to be sub-standard; and therefore we are considering closing them or modifying how and when they can be accessed. All these possibilities are under consideration.

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.

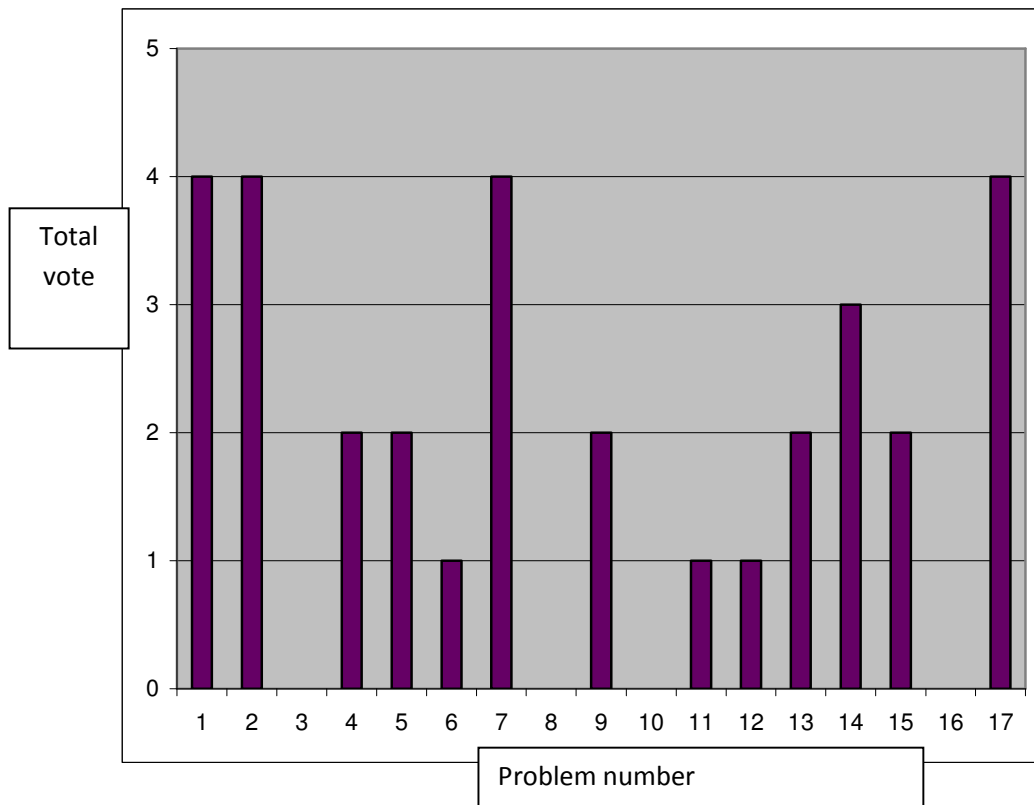
Plenary feedback - Initial comments and questions on Problems and Goals

C: References are made differently throughout the documentation about where we need ease of travel: either "East-West" as in Goal 1 or "along the M4". The former seems to acknowledge there are other routes and corridors for East-West travel in South Wales, e.g. A472 Newbridge to Pontypool. People stagger their working patterns to avoid snarl-up roundabouts near / around the M4 – there are other road congestion problems in the area that impact very directly, but aren't much addressed.

A: Addressing problems at roundabouts on major routes in the corridor area is part of the package of measures described in the consultation document. There are likely to be requests from broader interests, e.g. SEWTA (South East Wales Transport Alliance) to address issues along some of the other routes in the area.

Participants' selections of problems and goals – reports back from table 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 below.

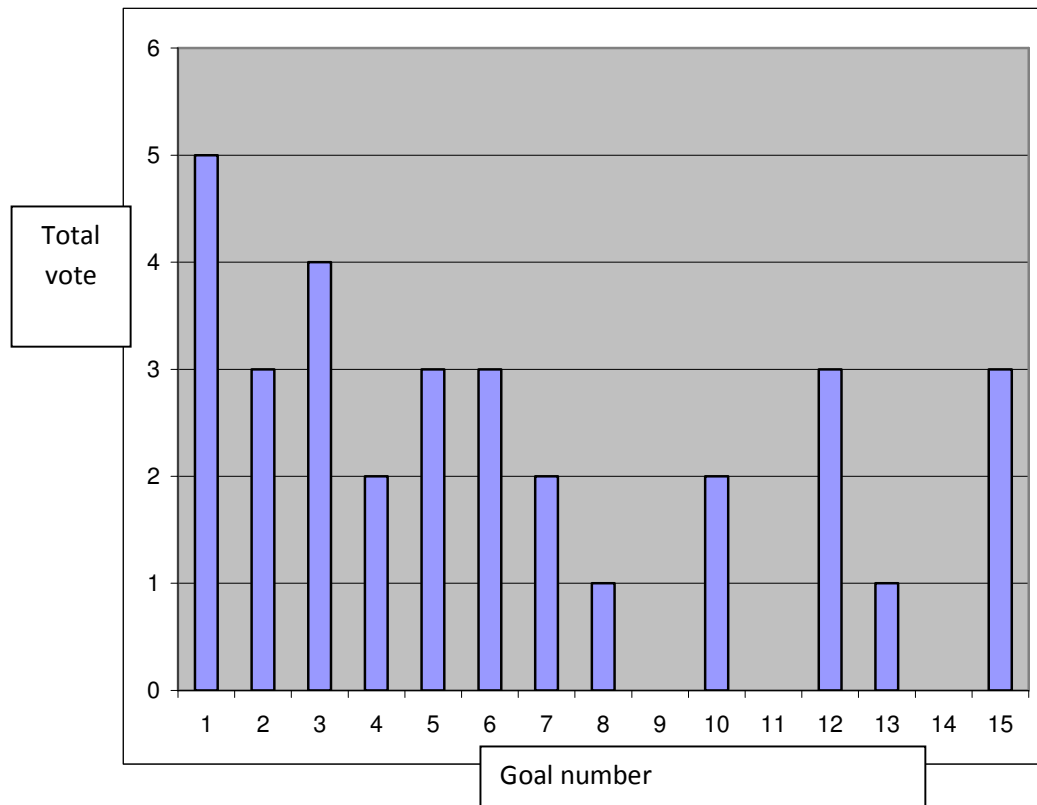


Several participants identified Problem 17 – *The existing transport network acts as a constraint to economic growth and adversely impacts the current economy* – among their most significant, with one stressing the long-term sustainability aspect of the M4’s impact on the economy as particularly problematic.

One table mainly selected capacity and resilience problems as the most pressing problems, noting the significance of local Newport traffic needs among the context of these problems. 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*; Problem 2 – *The M4 around Newport is used as a convenient cross town connection for local traffic, with insufficient local road capacity*; and Problem 7 – *Difficulties maintaining adequate traffic flows on the M4 and alternative highway routes at times of temporary disruption; alternative routes are not able to cope with M4 traffic* – were regarded as most significant by this table. These problems were also selected by participants in the other group.

The second table focused on problems relating to safety and sustainable development as the most important for addressing, with most selected among them Problem 14 - *Some people’s driving behaviour leads to increased accidents (e.g. speeding, lane hogging, unlicensed drivers)*.

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.



Goal 1 – *Safer, easier and more reliable travel East-West in South Wales* – was the most selected by participants , although the other aspects of East-West travel in South Wales were highlighted in plenary discussion (see above).

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* – was the next most-selected goal, receiving four votes in total, indicating the significance of traffic within Newport.

Each receiving the next highest number of votes were goals 2, 5, 6,12 and 15. These are, about achieving:

2) *Improved transport connections within Wales and to England, the Republic of Ireland and the rest of Europe on all modes on the international transport network.*

5) *More reliable journey times along the M4 corridor.*

6) *Increased level of choice for all people making journeys within the transport corridor by all modes between Magor and Castleton, commensurate with demand for alternatives.*

12) *An M4 attractive for strategic journeys that discourages local traffic use*

15) *A cultural shift in travel behaviour towards more sustainable choices*

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

After an introduction by Allan Pitt, Arup, 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?

- More bus/train connecting services.

Issues identified around this measure included:

- The extra time added to journeys
- The affordability of fares and potentially their integration
- Aging rolling stock in need of upgrading
- The need for bus and train services to operate near one another for ease of access and making connections

- Better park & ride services
- Additional local bus services
- Additional mainline affordable train services

Responses to the following question: to what extent do you think the public transport measures (selected by the group), address your group's priority problems or goals?

Only one table wrote-down a response to this question, noting that public transport should form part of any package to address local traffic issues. Public transport also needs to be better connected. Public transport could not be a solution to the problems [of the M4] on its own.

Plenary feedback on Qs 3a and b

Bus-train connecting services

C: More bus-train connecting services would be needed to approach the flexibility of travel offered by cars. Above all the proximity [of bus stops / stations to railway stations] would be important, making it easy to access both bus and train station. It rains a lot in Wales, and will always be hard to persuade people to wait for the bus or cycle.

C: The weather is not really an issue – many non-car commuters in Wales already put up with it.

C: Even bus and train connecting services may not be able to substitute for cars when travellers have multiple urban and rural destinations. For this reason, questions of transport sustainability are closely connected to regional planning; perhaps we need to push urban hubs, focusing people's daily destinations on developed areas. That way public transport could be made more genuinely convenient and less of the willing compromise it otherwise has to be for all but those most conveniently placed.

C: Alternatives needn't always be geographical – there are video conferencing/non-travel options available too.

Rail

C: As much as connections are important, rail is the main alternative to road travel in South Wales, as shown during the temporary closure of the M4. That is why electrification would make a big difference. New rolling stock would be necessary to manage much real expansion, and would be a big improvement too.

A: Welsh Government has made the case to central government for electrification of the mainline to Swansea and also the electrification of the Valley lines independently of the M4 CEM Programme. Public transport modelling suggests that investment in bus and rail improvements would produce a significant modal increase in the Newport area but only reduce traffic on the M4 by less than 3%.

New bus services

C: More bus transport options would make a big difference to local journey choices. Ideally they would be hop-on-hop-off, perhaps with an integrated charging system, even linked to trains. To make an impact though, they must be affordable. Bus transfers are expensive, and make car travel cheaper by comparison.

A: Clearly public transport can only be part of a package.

C: Is the affordability of using the bus or train really a question of perception? Advertising affordable fares, as First Great Western did with Swansea to Cardiff fares, can generate real demand growth – 10% in that particular case. On the other hand, the complexities of the fares and purchasing system are a downside.

C: Local government needs to push integration of transport services and promote a joined-up approach to planning, e.g. is it consistent to push free city centre parking while encouraging Park & Ride services?

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 the option and there was a short plenary discussion of points raised.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

- Option A just moves the problem on to Llantrisant.
- It would improve the problem of driver behaviour and would give drivers a road built to current standards.
- It would have a significant environmental impact.
- This option touches on lots of the Goals put forward – including the table's priority, Goal 15 – giving strategic benefits. Some Goals, though, might only be achieved once option is complete – phasing and interim benefits are a significant concern and a factor in preferences. The controversy over any scheme crossing the Gwent Levels, would involve a significant Public Local Inquiry, which would have to consider all issues and this could last for a significant period of time, perhaps years.
- As well as a road in, Option A would be a road OUT of Wales. Without considering this, the appraisal scoring may be inaccurate. Also, comparative costing using the new eco-system services seems not to have been done.
- If built in stages, the partial benefits gained need to be considered. Goal 1 – *Safer, easier and more reliable travel East-West in South Wales* – would only be achieved when it was complete.
- If used strategically, it would help achieve 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*. It would also help with Goal 12 – *An M4 attractive for strategic journeys that discourages local traffic use*.
- The Option A road would also improve resilience and capacity problems identified in earlier sessions.

Plenary feedback on Q4a

Phasing

Q: How could Option A be phased?

A: Phasing would be developed depending on demand and to improve affordability. The WG will investigate which phases should be developed first. For example the first phase could run from Junction 23a, along part of the improved Steelworks Access Road to

connect into a central section which would include a new crossing of the River Usk. An alternative could be to build a link-up from Junction 29 to the SDR first. These beginnings could be joined-in to existing network as demand requires.

Q: Have the different benefits of each stage been assessed in looking at phasing?

A: Each stage has distinctive benefits and all are part of the assessment.

Q: What improvements could be made to the Steelworks Access Road itself to serve as part of this option?

A: Work is currently underway on the second phase of upgrading the Steelworks Access Road. It is a private road currently, but it will be opened for public use once the upgrading has been completed. It could form part of the Option A road, though there are speed limit restrictions, etc., which must be considered.

C: The costs and benefits of Option A depend on phasing. If phased, road building also spreads benefits, may be better off building one new relief road at higher cost, or building tunnels for lesser but quicker impact. More information needed on phasing and benefits that way.

A: Benefits of Option A would be greater than the former M4 relief road, even though the relief road would have been delivered in one hit. Not only cost and phased benefits, but also the environmental impacts of Option A would be much less than for the relief road, because of the alignment in the Gwent levels. A range of beneficial measures that can be delivered in phases would be more financially manageable and would lend themselves to a more integrated approach led by the WG.

The road

Q: Would there be junctions on new road? What would be the speed limit? How many lanes would it have?

A: It would run from Junctions 23 to 29, and should be free flowing all the way. There may possibly be one or two junctions on the route, but the speed limit is intended to be 70mph. It would be a dual two-lane road.

C: Dual carriageways on this section of the M4 have been insufficient ever since the 1960s bridge road was built. The new roads built then have been under improvement since the 1970s. The result has been to leave little remaining trust in highways decision making. As soon as you build a road, you will attract traffic: it doesn't automatically solve problems or save money. Meanwhile, there will still be no cross-Newport road to deal with local traffic demand.

A: Traffic modelling shows that a new route – with 2 lanes each way and free-flowing – should be able to solve a lot of the M4 traffic problems, though it could be upgraded to three lanes if necessary in future. That possibility is included in proposal under consultation.

Growth

C: If we believe there is a linkage between road travel capacity in South Wales and economic capacity for growth, this new linkage should certainly be planned to permit for expansion.

C: On the other hand economic decline of South Wales has more to do with globalisation and South-East England dominance than transport; the primacy of transport case for growth has not been proven.

Q: Isn't a longer-term solution needed even than this? What about future growth – perhaps supported by more sustainable forms of road transport? Traffic flow maps show that local traffic and north-south traffic from the valleys and Gwent are major needs. Even Option A does not address this.

A: Data suggests new road would take-off around 50% of traffic from M4. It would not solve all problems, but it would make a major impact.

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, 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

- Option B may help locally in Newport, but it does little for many of the identified problems.
- At junctions, public transport needs to be given priority to achieve Goal 15 – *A cultural shift in travel behaviour towards more sustainable choices*. High-occupancy vehicle lanes might be an alternative.
- Option B is the least objectionable of the proposals on environmental grounds.
- It would give extra resilience on the network by dealing with some of the current problems on the SDR, but it is definitely not seen as a long term solution – rather, it is a possibility for relieving problems.
- Junctions are likely to be an intractable problem in making this Option effective.
- It may help locally in Newport, but it does little to address the major problems, particularly those most identified by one table which were sustainable development and safety related. Developed with sustainable approaches though (e.g. bus and

multi-occupancy vehicle priority) it could best achieve a cultural shift, as cited by Goal 15.

Plenary feedback on Q4b

Q: Could Option B be used as an interim solution, on the way to building extra tunnels for the M4?

A: Yes, that is technically possible. Neither could be just a temporary solution – they would be permanent – but they could be phased together.

C: Option B could also be considered combining with an alternative solution at Brynglas, such as making a cutting.

Q: Is the SDR a private or public road?

A: The SDR is a public road constructed and maintained by a private company. Any changes to it will need to be agreed with the private company.

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, and this was followed by a short plenary discussion of points raised.

Summary of table discussions as noted on worksheets

- Option C would help to achieve Goal 1 – *Safer, easier and more reliable travel East-West in South Wales* – although not as well as Option A would.
- It would not do anything to achieve Goal 12 – *An M4 attractive for strategic journeys that discourages local traffic use.*
- Option C is at best a partial solution, serving essentially as a diversion route for traffic – which already happens when there are problems on the M4 – and doing little to address the traffic problems at Junction 28.
- By making the current SDR route more free-flowing, Option C may just attract more traffic to that road.
- As with Option B, to be effective for sustainable development goals, Option C would need to include some measures for giving public transport and cyclists priority.

- Option B is felt to be a better version of C, doing a reasonably similar job, but for substantially less. Option C, in this sense, as a 'Making Better Use' solution, is not really doing 'more for less', but more for substantially more.
- Meanwhile, combining Options B and D would have the added benefit of bringing real improvements to the existing M4 and the SDR, and provide an alternative route during work on the M4 (Option D).

Plenary feedback on Q4c

Q: How much would local use of the road change through Option C? What would happen to the junctions?

A: About 50% of the currently open junctions on the SDR would be closed under this option and there would be a need for changes to the local highway network to accommodate this.

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

- Option D would address two of the safety problems selected by one of the tables: Problem 13 – *The existing M4 is an inadequate standard compared to modern design standards*; Problem 14 – *Some people's driving behaviour leads to increased accidents (e.g. speeding, lane hogging, unlicensed drivers)*.
- Option D would work towards Goal 1 – *Safer, easier and more reliable travel East-West in South Wales*; and for Goal 12 – *An M4 attractive for strategic journeys that discourages local traffic use*; if it were combined with junction closures. It would do nothing, however, for 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*.
- Option D would address the perceived problem of the bottlenecks at Brynglas, and would be phased to address the worst of the problems first.
- It would unavoidably cause significant disruption: the tunnels would be constructed off-line, but the road widening and tying-in process would cause the most disruption.

- It would not be so environmentally difficult as Option A.
- It would likely be more disruptive than Option A, but probably less disruptive than Options B and C.
- Could a cutting be made at Brynglas instead? It would be safer, though a much higher-impact engineering operation. But there will be a great deal of disruption to the local area anyway.
- If the tunnels or some other part of the M4 infrastructure failed, what is the alternative? This would not help with resilience. A new route, combined with real efforts to encourage a cultural shift to address sustainable development concerns, would seem to tackle more problems and achieve more goals.

Plenary feedback on Q4d

C: What is really needed is a culture shift away from fossil fuels. The existing Brynglas tunnels were thought to be sufficient for future needs at the time, but projections are often inadequate.

A: The Option D proposals are all physically possible and include upgrades that are much needed anyway, including slip road improvements and straightening-out bends. But even Option D would still not bring the M4 completely up to modern standards – there would be no hard shoulders in the tunnels for instance.

Q: What would the speed limit be in the new tunnels?

A: The standard speed limit through the tunnels would be 70mph.

Session 9: Discussion and feedback on Q5

The facilitator invited participants to consider their answers to Q5: “Have you any additional comments to make regarding how to address the travel related problems occurring in the M4 Corridor, Magor to Castleton?. Responses to Q5 were then considered in plenary.

Key messages noted on group worksheets

- A combination of measures is needed including junction closures to reduce local traffic on the M4. Should this be full time, or just during the peak period?
- Ramp metering should be added to junctions.
- Should Option B be included as a short-term relief measure? Or as a diversion while Options A or D are being constructed.

- Extend the variable speed limit to Junction 29 to overcome any congestion problems between Junctions 28 and 29.
- We need integrated travel and joined-up thinking with Newport City Council, e.g. improve local bus services, park & ride etc. and increase car park charges in Newport as a disincentive to drivers.
- If behaviour is to change, a carrot and stick approach will be needed.
- Another important road improvement measure for the area is a link road from the B4245 road to the M48 to the east of Magor, which the community there has been pushing for.
- Ecological impacts should be quantitatively measured as far as possible.

Plenary feedback on Q5

Wider M4 challenges

Q: What about wider M4 problems, such as at Junctions 23 and 24, and at Llantrisant, Coryton, and Port Talbot? What about some park and ride solutions to the west of Cardiff, to pre-empt demand at Newport. For equivalent financial outlay, other major improvements could be made, falling outside the scope of M4 CEM.

A: Prioritising Magor to Castleton may be a matter of not trying to over-extend political will. There are other public transport measures underway too.

Growth and culture shift

C: Refusing to ever-increase road capacity could be what is needed to encourage the cultural shift we want. Business campaigns for road access, of course, because they do not initially want to champion new models. Business drives the roads, not the roads driving business in Wales.

A: Wales would be placed at a strategic disadvantage if we pursued an approach like this

C: We have fewer 'motorways per head' than England. Compare the M11 as Cambridge's semi-private road, to the winding A-roads to Aberystwyth. Areas of Wales with good road connections are often successful.

C: The M4's construction in fact coincided with South Wales's industrial decline. It was not the cause, of course, but it alone could not compensate for other failures and outside trends.

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

List of Participants

Eight participants took part in the day's deliberations.

They were members of the public and representatives of organisations.