



The Gosport Partnership

" Working Together For The Gosport Community "

Tim Houghton
The Gosport Partnership
C/o Groundwork Solent
4 Portland Buildings
Stoke Rd
Gosport
Hampshire
PO12 1JH

Tel: 023 9261 7020

Keith Willcox
Project Director
Transport for South Hampshire
Environment Dept
The Castle
Winchester
SO23 8UD

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Dear Keith

South East Hampshire Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Gosport's Strategic Partnership Board would like to register its support and backing to Transport for South Hampshire (TfSH) for the proposed South East Bus Rapid Transit. In particular we believe the first phase of the scheme, which will see part of the former railway line brought back into use for public transport, is essential to assist in alleviating the long standing and worsening traffic congestion that occurs on the main roads on and off the Gosport peninsula.

Gosport's Sustainable Community Strategy has two complimentary priorities. We are working towards creating local jobs for local people and in parallel are also working to reduce traffic congestion. The Partnership Board have established a Transport and Sustainability Partnership to lead on its efforts to reduce congestion. This brings together transport providers, local authority representatives, businesses, cycling groups and community and voluntary sector representation. Maintaining and improving accessibility to the Gosport peninsula is essential in being able to attract new business and more jobs. This is in line with the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire's (PUSH) priorities in which strategic employment sites such as the former Daedalus airbase have potential to attract and create significant new jobs. We must create better public transport provision on and off the peninsula and the BRT proposal goes some way to realising this.

We believe that Gosport has suffered as a result of the demise of previous attempts to invest in transport infrastructure through the Light Rapid Transit proposals. Whilst some changes have been made to traffic signalling and minor junction improvements, the A32 and B3385 (Newgate Lane) remain heavily congested at morning and afternoon peak times. The BRT is a step in the right direction but is only part of the solution to tackling Gosport's traffic congestion. We urge TfSH, HCC and Government to invest further resources in improving the road network particularly the A32 in order to maximise the benefit that BRT will bring.

The recent Commuting Study commissioned by Gosport Borough Council demonstrates both the volume and localness of many of the journeys made by car. We know that many commuters travel by car because there is little alternative public transport provision. We know that the main concern of commuters is the impact that congestion has on journey time. Creating a fast and efficient bus route bypassing the busiest section of the A32 will provide a viable alternative particularly for passengers travelling to and from Fareham Railway Station. Connection times with trains will therefore be improved, making onward rail travel far more attractive than it is at present. Transfer from car to BRT, to take advantage of the more reliable travel times, should also help to reduce the present car parking congestion at the railway station.

We believe BRT will attract passengers providing it is of a quality as outlined in the proposal. It should have;

- high quality, clean, fuel efficient buses,
- frequent and reliable service. 5 minute interval between buses will we believe meet commuters expectations
- competitive fares. The BRT should not attract a premium fare.
- well maintained waiting areas and bus stops which are accessible and safe
- good cycle storage at bus waiting areas
- a well maintained and landscaped route

We recognise that the proposed Phase 1 is only a start but is an important one nonetheless. It is imperative that we start to make investments now on the section of the route that is available and easiest to construct. We would support further investment in extending the proposed BRT southwards at least as far as Military Road and in particular northwards to provide a direct link and interchange with Fareham rail station which would benefit commuter passengers travelling to Portsmouth, Southampton and London and those travelling to Queen Alexandra hospital at Cosham.

Gosport has the highest cycling rate in Hampshire and 6th highest in England. Residents are willing and keen to cycle to work and to access shops and services. Gosport has invested in a good network of off road cycle routes some of which use part of the former railway line. It is important to provide a choice and encouraging still more people to cycle is an important part of our action plan. We would like to retain as much of the current off road cycle network as possible and where feasible and space allows continue this route northwards along the line of the BRT. Where a separate cycle route cannot be created we would like to see high quality, safe and secure cycle storage at bus stops.

Gosport's Partnership Board together with the GT&SP is working hard to tackle congestion. We are taking action for ourselves with money raised by and through the partner organisations which is line with and compliments TfSH's reduce, manage and invest strategy. We are helping to reduce the need to travel and in particular reducing the need to travel by car. For example;

- We are investing in a dedicated travel website for Gosport,
- We are campaigning to promote alternatives to car use which will include a dedicated Gosport car share scheme,
- We are producing new cycle maps for Gosport, Portsmouth, Fareham and Havant,
- We are working with the Youth Council to promote and encourage more young people to travel by bus and to make it easier for them to do so
- We have invested in local businesses to help them make it easier for employees to cycle to work
- We are engaging with PCT and transport providers to make it easier for Gosport residents to travel to Queen Alexandra hospital in Cosham.

All of these activities are being funded and delivered by local partners. We now urgently need help from Government to invest in the public transport infrastructure to enable us to have real impact and provide a viable alternative to car use in Gosport.

Yours Sincerely

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

Tim Houghton
Chair of Gosport's Transport and Sustainability Partnership
On behalf of the Gosport Partnership Board (www.gosportpartnership.co.uk)