Local Pinch Point Fund

Expression of Interest Form: 2021/22 and 2022/23 proposals

This form is for proposals to be funded by DfT in 2021/22 and 2022/23. Proposals should demonstrate the benefit to local businesses, and improvements to productivity on completing the project. The proposal should indicate the range of funding sought from the Department for Transport, e.g. £5 million to £10 million, £10 million to £15 million, or over £15 million.

The closing date for Expressions of Interest is 31 January 2020.

For proposals submitted by components of a Combined Authority a separate EOI form should be completed for each one, then the CA should rank them in order of preference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority name: Reading Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager Name and position: Chris Maddocks, Acting Strategic Transport Programme Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact telephone number: 0118 9374950</td>
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<td>Email address: <a href="mailto:chris.maddocks@reading.gov.uk">chris.maddocks@reading.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Postal address: Civic Office, Bridge Street, Reading</td>
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<td>Postcode: RG1 2LU</td>
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**SECTION A – Description of works**

A1. Name of proposal:

Reading: South Reading MRT (Phases 5-6)

A2. Geographic area:

Please provide information about the location of the proposal (in no more than 50 words)

South Reading MRT runs from Mereoak Park & Ride (M4 Junction 11) to Central Reading along the A33 corridor. Development of the greenwave rapid transit services has helped in the delivery of Green Park Business Park, Reading International Business Park, Green Park Village, Kennet Island housing and the Madejski Stadium.

OS Grid Reference: 51°26'39.0"N 0°58'33.3"W
Postcode: RG1, RG2, RG7
Figure 1: South Reading MRT – Proposed and Completed Phases
A3. Description of existing problems and how the proposal would address them. Please set out which other options have been considered:

Reading's transport links are suffering from the third highest levels of congestion outside of London, with journeys times averaging 16.1 mph, (source: Department for Transport statistics, Table CGN0501b, September 2019) and with only limited public transport alternatives that avoid the congestion. Whilst Reading Borough Council has made significant headway in delivering its transport strategy (set out in the last three Local Transport Plans), which has been identified to support planned growth, significant investment in transport infrastructure is still needed to tackle congestion and alleviate key pinch points. Junction 11 on the M4 has benefitted from capacity increases and bus priority. Reading Station has been improved to remove both rail and road bottlenecks and facilities upgraded to support the capacity increases. Park and Ride sites have been delivered at Mereoak and Winnersh and another at Thames Valley Park is expected to be open in spring 2020. Cycle routes have been delivered or enhanced along London Road, Wokingham Road, A33, and across the River Thames via a new foot/cycle bridge. Previous Pinch Point funded schemes have relieved bottlenecks, including on the A33 approach to Rose Kiln Lane.

Even with many of these schemes implemented, Reading still remains one of the most congested towns/cities outside of London with car journey times increasing by 46% between 2007 and 2016 (ONS, 2018), and yet, economic growth is faster than any other city. A step-change is needed to provide connectivity, capacity upgrades and encourage sustainable travel to allow this potential economic growth to be achieved.

The Business Parks along the A33 corridor are becoming fully occupied, developments are being progressed and completed, and further development is planned. As a result, there is increasing pressure on this main arterial route into Reading, traffic flows have increased in the peak hours and more so in the shoulder peak periods and therefore congestion is occurring over extended periods of the day. The development plans for the area, including those in neighbouring boroughs Wokingham and Hampshire, and Central Reading are expected to compound this issue.

Current vehicle journey times, not including greenwave buses, along the corridor range from 14 to 40 minutes southbound, depending upon the time of day. Northbound journey times range from 9 to 24 minutes. This shows there are currently significant variations in journey time due to congestion which will severely limit the potential for future growth on the corridor.

Greenwave Rapid Transit bus services are frequent and have benefitted from the completion of previous sections of South Reading MRT. However, bus services in the PM peak still suffer with reliability issues and extended journey times, reducing their attractiveness as an alternative to car commuting. Timetable reliability has improved significantly but still requires extra peak ‘padding’ and thus requiring extra vehicles to operate the service rather than being able to increase frequency. Reading Borough Council (RBC) has made significant investment in expanding the bus services along the corridor, delivering high-quality, low noise and low emission (CNG powered from a renewable source) bus services, steadily building patronage to over 1.2 million journeys per year and the equivalent to 1 in every 20 bus journeys in Reading Borough being made on the greenwave
Consistently kept out of congestion by using dedicated MRT lanes.

Proposed development sites set out in the new Local Plan indicate that much of the opportunity for growth is around the southern corridor and therefore investment in transport is essential in this location. There is also significant growth outside of Reading Borough, within neighbouring Wokingham Borough to the south east of Reading and North Hampshire, which is subject to a multi-modal corridor study. A large proportion of these new residents are likely to travel into Reading for work and other facilities, including access to national rail services.

**What other options have been considered?**

A wide range of options have been considered to undertake various route alignments, on and off carriageway schemes and considering tidal flow opportunities. The South Reading VISSIM model and EAST tool has been utilised to sift, test and selected the preferred scheme, which is the MRT corridor.

**What would be the consequences of a “do nothing” option?**

Commuter car congestion along the corridor is increasing and greenwave rapid transit bus services remain susceptible to delays and unreliability once out of the new MRT lanes, therefore discouraging those travelling along the A33 corridor from using the bus as a mode of transport, as well as using the route to access the town centre and destinations along the corridor by all modes. The significant levels of congestion in south Reading, an area with three of five LSOA in Reading within 10% nationally, lead to many parallel residential areas being used as rat-runs, such as Northumberland Avenue.

Should this situation continue, there will be detrimental economic and social impacts within Reading and the sub-region, therefore constraining economic growth. This scheme aims to unlock sustainable...
development along the corridor and provide the foundation for future growth through the delivery of strategic transport networks.
SECTION B – The Business Case

B1. The Financial Case – Project Costs and Profile

Please indicate the anticipated cost of the proposal in the table below. Figures should be entered in £000s (i.e. £10,000 = 10).

Funding profile (Nominal terms)
The proposed resourcing package is 80% Pinch Point and 20% local contribution. RBC is actively seeking further private sector funding contributions through the planning process as applications come forward. In addition, there have been significant contributions from RBC to progress scheme development to date and land transfer agreements with relevant landowners/developers.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>£000s</th>
<th>2021-22</th>
<th>2022-23</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DfT Funding Sought</strong></td>
<td>5,148</td>
<td>5,148</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LA Contribution</strong></td>
<td>536</td>
<td>2,038</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Third Party Funding</strong></td>
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Notes:
1) Department for Transport funding will be granted in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years but local highway authorities may carry that funding over to following financial years if necessary.
2) There is no specific amount for a local contribution by the local authority and/or a third party but if additional funding is proposed please state what this is expected to be.

B2. Timetable

Proposed start date - April 2021

Estimated completion date - November 2022

B3. Further information in support of the proposal

At this Expressions of Interest stage we will be looking at the impact of the proposal on traffic congestion, and its benefit to local residents and businesses. For example, details about the level of congestion on the route, delays at junctions, and evidence of queuing in the peak hours. You should set out the wider strategic benefits that the proposal is expected to address.

The A33 is a strategic corridor within Thames Valley Berkshire providing the main radial route to Reading, linking the M4 Junction 11 with Reading town centre and access to the core employment areas, residential areas and planned development alongside the A33. The corridor is also recognised as part of the Major Road Network (MRN).
The scheme will increase capacity and reduce congestion on the network, contributing to sustained economic growth across TVB. The scheme will realise additional benefits delivered through: the Phase 1 to 4 MRT schemes; previous A33 Pinch Point scheme through enhanced public transport journey time savings; and will increase the attractiveness and success of Mereoak Park & Ride with improved reliability and reduced journey times.

The scheme will realise additional benefits from those already achieved by the Reading Station upgrade and estimated to be achieved by the forthcoming TfL Rail - Elizabeth line, Western Rail Access to Heathrow and HS2 projects. The scheme will increase accessibility to the rail network and therefore potentially uplift the users benefiting from these large-scale investment schemes.

The current transport networks are at capacity for car commuting and developments with planning permission are already reliant on the delivery of sustainable transport alternatives. For example: Green Park Village is due to contribute to the delivery of Green Park Station. Similarly, the (original) Southside development, Worton Grange and land north of Island Road are all contributing to the delivery of the MRT route, either via land contribution or internal connections. The strategic sites in Wokingham Borough are also required to contribute to MRT.

Three specific sites have been identified which currently severely constrain the congestion-free operation of effective greenwave rapid transit bus services;

Southbound on A33 from Holybrook overflow bridge through the pinch point junction with Rose Kiln Lane (north) to join section 4a southbound MRT lane opened in 2019 (51.4448143, -0.9749820 (550m)). The MRT lane prior to the traffic lights will keep greenwave rapid transit buses out of the existing traffic queue to within a short distance of the lights. This will allow buses to always get though the lights in one phase saving 2 minutes during peak times. Buses will join traffic in the nearside lane for the narrow section through the traffic lights but the MRT lane after the lights will allow buses to progress free of the existing traffic flow into the MRT lane previously constructed.

Southbound on A33 from end of section 4a above (prior to junction of A33 and Rose Kiln Lane (south) across the pinch point of the River Kennet Bridge to join section 4b southbound MRT lane being constructed in 2020 (51.4370209, -0.9776152 (200m)). This section requires provision of bus priority space at the traffic lights and traffic light pre-emption plus relocating the existing cycle/pedestrian shared pavements to two new pedestrian cycle bridges attached to the outside of the existing River Kennet A33 bridge. This will allow the use of the full bridge deck width to add the new MRT lane in addition to the existing traffic lanes. Cyclist and pedestrians will benefit from dedicated bridge space outside the existing bridge deck.

Completion of the under-construction sections plus the above two missing links would provide bus priority lanes for the majority of the distance from Central Reading to Mereoak Park and Ride, 3.7km from 6km between the IDR and Mereoak (63%). It is expected that journey time savings of 3-4 minutes will then be available to peak time greenwave rapid transit buses enabling the journey to Mereoak P&R to be reduced from 20 minutes to 16/17 minutes, a 15% reduction. Off-peak journeys are likely to benefit from 1-2 minute reductions from existing 15 minutes to 13-14 minutes.
The third pinch point is Northbound; Northbound on A33 from Berkeley Avenue bridge to the divergence of routes for the IDR north and eastbound including an extra northbound lane (125m) and a separate eastbound MRT lane (51.4493113N, -0.9754111W (75m)). This section will provide extra capacity for general traffic northbound on the A33 joining the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) northbound and separate this traffic from traffic turning onto the IDR eastbound. The resulting middle lane will also provide space for Central Reading bound buses to avoid the eastbound queue and turn into a dedicated eastbound MRT lane provided by reallocation of one westbound lane to eastbound). This will enable buses to get to the front of the queue for the IDR off ramp to Bridge Street where a previous bus lane extension has been provided. The additional capacity at this IDR junction will enable greenwave rapid transit buses to move consistently towards Central Reading, particularly in the PM peak periods when general traffic is queuing for the IDR north towards Caversham. Savings of 2-3 minutes for bus journeys will reduce the need for padded PM peak timetables enabling buses to return for additional peak trips from Green Park and other South Reading business locations. The reliability of buses which will then do a peak trip to Mereoak P&R will also improve enabling an increase in frequency of service.

General traffic flow will benefit from the new northbound lane and from dedication of the two eastbound lanes (plus bus lane) to separate through IDR eastbound traffic from off ramp traffic.

Overall the time saving impact of the three pinch points on greenwave rapid transit buses is expected to be around 5-6 minutes per round trip. This reduction of running time is expected to provide enough time saving to give one extra PM peak trip to Mereoak (from 4 to 5) (25% extra), one extra PM peak trip from Green Park (from 8 to 9) (12.5%) and one extra PM peak trip out to Kennet Island and Green Park Village (from 5 to 6) (20%). Off-peak time savings should be enough to reduce the currently inconvenient 16 min Mereoak frequency (round trip 48 min) to an even 15 min frequency (45 min round trip).

SECTION C: Declarations

C. Senior Responsible Owner Declaration

As Senior Responsible Owner for South Reading MRT Phases 5-6

I hereby submit this request for approval to DfT on behalf of Reading Borough Council and confirm that I have the necessary authority to do so.

I confirm that Reading Borough Council will have all the necessary powers in place to ensure the planned timescales in the application can be realised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Signed:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cris Butler</td>
<td>![Signature]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interim Head of Transport</td>
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Submission of Expression of Interest:

The deadline for the Expression of Interest submission is 5pm on **31 January 2020**
Successful proposals for EOs in the Local Pinch Point Fund are to be funded by DfT in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

There are two phases to the application process:
• this Expression of Interest stage where we will assess the proposal based on the eligibility criteria as set out in Section 3 of the published Guidance.
• for authorities successful in passing to Phase 2, we will expect a further and detailed submission. Further guidance will be issued to the successful authorities when they are notified

An electronic copy only of the EOI should be submitted to:

[LT.Plans@dfi.gov.uk](mailto:LT.Plans@dfi.gov.uk) copying in [Paul.O'Hara@dfi.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.O'Hara@dfi.gov.uk)