

Environment Not Trams - Nottingham Express Transit Meeting

Wednesday 26th September 2001

Civil Service Social Club, Wilford Lane, Nottingham

Present:

ENT: Stephen Tompkin (Chair), Pauline Hyman-Taylor, Matt Britton, Stephen Cowper, Dean Haspey, Mark Hodgson, Jack Hedger, Nigel Morley.

NET: Neil Bates (Executive Director), Pat Armstrong (Project Leader), Stephen Barker (Communications Officer)

Opening Remarks:

1. Stephen Tompkin opened proceedings, thanked the NET team for supporting the meeting and advised of the background to the opposition to the CW route. A petition with 800 signatures from the local electorate had been submitted. He hoped that NET had got a strong impression of the level of opposition to the CW route when 450 people attended the Public Meeting on 11th September. It was intended that at this meeting NET would be able to explain in more detail tram development issues relating to routes CW and CQD.
2. Neil Bates stated that he felt unable to work through the agenda circulated prior to the meeting, as he had no new information to add to that already circulated by NET. From his perspective the objective of the meeting was to clear up misconceptions he felt were held by ENT. He wasn't able to talk for example about the detail of whether there would be a bridge or a crossing at Wilford Lane, because that detail hadn't been decided yet.
3. He explained that feasibility studies looking at environmental impact, economic viability and financial implications were currently in progress for all potential routes. Teams of industry leading consultants were looking at each of these aspects and will submit reports to NET in the coming weeks. NET will present the findings of the results to the Nottingham City Council Executive Committee and to the County Council on 29th October 2001. Mr Bates said the consultants' reports would be available to the public on 22nd October 2001 (seven days prior to the committee meetings).
4. With regard to the high level of objection to the CW route from the wider neighbourhoods of Wilford and Compton Acres. Mr Bates gave an assurance that he will write about the level of concerns of residents along the CW route in his reports to the Council committees. Stephen Barker stated that there was no prejudice for, or against any route and all routes were of equal interest at this stage.
5. Pat Armstrong felt that there was a misconception that NET were withholding information or giving out conflicting information. He wanted to explain that considerations and options for the design of the route and possible solutions to engineering difficulties were adopted or discarded as further information became available. He used the example of the original proposal for a bridge to allow a tram to cross Wilford Lane. NET were now considering a crossing or a bridge depending on the results of the feasibility study. They had not changed their minds but considered an alternative option. The whole concept is a 'moveable feast' at present but will become less so as the submission for the Transport and Works Act Order draws nearer.

CQD Pros and cons:

6. NET advised that the objective of both the CW and CQD routes was to get people from the A453 via Clifton, to the centre of Nottingham and pick up as many people as possible on the way. Stephen Cowper suggested the objective was also to drop them off where they wanted to go and this may not just be the city centre! When evaluating tram routes - housing density is considered. For example the route along the A52 by Bramcote was discounted because the housing density was too thin. When challenged it was stated that compared to the Queens Drive route, the Wilford/Compton Acres area was of greater density.
7. Stephen Tompkin asked for further information on the CQD route and the advantages and disadvantages of choosing that route. NET said their current perception was that CQD would serve fewer residential properties and therefore is less attractive than CW. The criteria for evaluation are set by central government and demand that environmental, economic and financial implications are addressed. In this context the fact that CQD would serve businesses along Queens Drive was highlighted to NET and the benefits of patronage from this area should be considered.

- NET pointed out that the CQD route may present problems because it serves two Park and Rides and this may result in overcrowding of the tram at peak times. NET also commented that the existing Queen's Drive Park and Ride bus service already provided a fast route into the city centre and the tram would not provide any extra capacity but would merely be a substitute. CQD would require the building of a new bridge to cross the Trent (estimated cost £12 million). This would be necessary to enable the maintenance of the flood plain and the NET team suggested that the tram track would have to be built on stilts in this area to achieve this. The overall cost increase of CQD versus CW is currently estimated at £30 million. The NET team stated that it is possible that both CW and CQD could have equal merit and be recommended for the next stage in development.

Patronage:

- Traffic surveys are currently being analysed by specialist consultants who are assessing and comparing the patronage of each route through standard industry techniques. NET stated that one factor was that tram users would only expect to walk up to 500m to/from the tram stop. It is proposed that there would be 3 tram stops in the Wilford/Compton Acres/Ruddington Lane area if the route was chosen, but the locations had not been identified.

Alternative modes of transport:

- NET said that a bus serving a Park and Ride from Clifton would not work because the journey time would be too long to attract people away from their cars. When a bus lane on the A453 was suggested as an alternative, NET said that would not be possible, as it would result in further traffic congestion. There was an implication that trunk road traffic on the A52 should not be affected by any further restriction (earlier discussion on tram crossing the existing Clifton Bridge). Stephen Barker argued that the objective of the tram was to stabilise vehicle movements around Nottingham, not to create more congestion and thus drive people onto the tram/bus. "We are not anti car we want to see them used for appropriate journeys". Neil Bates also stated that the tram system would encourage inward investment into Nottingham which is a growing, vibrant city. A discussion on alternatives to the tram such as electric-powered buses was not pursued by the NET team.

The use of old railway alignments:

- When asked why sometimes there was a preference to use old railway alignments and sometimes not? The NET team argued that the reason why the Sharpes Hill Wood route did not follow the Green Line railway alignment was because in places, housing had been built upon it and wherever possible, they wanted to avoid demolition of existing property. However there appeared to be an inconsistency, as other routes include the demolition of properties (Beeston North). NET advised that the Sharpes Hill Wood route used Musters Road to provide the corridor to support the tram.

The 'only those immediately adjacent to the route are affected' issue:

- Stephen Barker stressed that only those people who were 2 or 3 houses away from a tram route would be adversely affected. Further away they would not see or hear the trams. This was not the key focus of the local resident's opposition to the CW route, which was based on the much wider concerns about the local environment and amenities. But in response to the point of detail raised by Mr Barker Matt Britton argued that the catenary would be seen from properties at quite some distance especially if built on an embankment. If the track was built on an embankment lights from the carriages would also be able to be seen some distance. In relation to the CW route, the tram crossing the footpath and cycle route to Ruddington Lane playing fields would impact on the wider community's access to the playing field. It was also pointed out that the CW route would lead to potential parking problems that would affect residents in neighbouring roads. The NET team pointed out that a residents parking scheme could be introduced. The residents pointed out that such a scheme would impose significant restrictions and produce an adverse impact on the whole locality and therefore was seen as a significant disadvantage to the route by residents over a wide area.

Tram Network Development:

- Pat Armstrong agreed that future developments would consider interconnecting tram routes/ spurs to provide better operational economies and ease of public transport around the city. Stephen Tompkin stressed that the first step in this direction could be achieved in the selection of the Beeston

South/CQD route. Neil Bates confirmed that the decision to select tram route options from this point onwards would not be done with one route in isolation from another and any shared benefits from joint alignments would be assessed.

The next stage:

14. **Mr Bates extended the offer for the ENT committee to formally submit their arguments to him in writing. This document would be included in his report to the executive committee to be issued on 22nd October 01 and will allow ENT to present their case in a more formal way.** The committee agreed to do this.

Funding:

15. This was not discussed in any depth. What was stated was that the construction costs were far larger than they were presented in the original consultants report. This was because the original report only contains about a third of the cost elements involved.

Closing remarks:

16. Stephen Tompkin thanked all those attending for their contributions to the meeting and asked the representatives of NET to consider carefully the feelings and concerns of the large number of people represented by ENT. As a group they abhor the idea of building a tram line, through what they consider to be an important conservation area which is used and loved by the local people. They also have strong doubts about the patronage and financial viability of that line, but could support the recommendation of Beeston South and CQD as a combination of proposed routes.