

Executive Member Environment, Planning & Transport

Mr D Horton
Chairman, The Abbey Flyer Users' Group
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c/c Edna Woname, Abbey Line CRP Officer
Abbey Line CRP Steering Group (via e-mail)
Richard Harrington MP
Anne Main MP
Dorothy Thornhill, Mayor of Watford
Peter Roberts, Chairman – ACORP
Stephen Sleight, Marston Vale CRP Officer

5 October 2016

Dear Mr Horton

Thank you for your letter of 28 September.

I regret that ABFLY is withdrawing as a partner of the Community Rail Partnership. I do not understand your reasons for doing so as the current consultation on the Transport Vision 2050 which you refer to is being conducted by Hertfordshire County Council and not the CRP. I will also leave aside in this letter the issue of the CRP chairmanship as I want to respond to your comments in my role as Executive Member.

You refer to your organisation's response to the Rail Strategy consultation. As you are aware, the county council listened to these concerns and made amendments to the strategy. To reiterate the county council's position, it strongly supports the development of the Abbey Line as a heavy rail route in at least the medium term. Examples of this include the county council's response to the recent franchise consultation calling for an increase in service frequency and the current project to deliver a pilot shuttle bus to improve the connectivity of the line. We will also be stressing the need to improve the service in our forthcoming discussions with the franchise bidders.

In the longer-term, we have set out the need to investigate whether there are any options to improve services by integrating the line within a wider passenger transport system, serving a much larger number of destinations. There is a widespread recognition that improving east west links across Hertfordshire must be a priority for the future. St Albans and Watford are two key settlements on this corridor and therefore it is important to consider how

they might be linked into a wider network. The current consultation seeks views on whether this concept is the right way to move forward or not.

The consultation document specifically refers to Bus Rapid Transit as our initial technical work, available on the consultation website, shows that this has a stronger economic case for east-west connectivity across Hertfordshire than alternatives such as light or heavy rail.

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However, the route or technology of such a system is not fully determined. If the consultation response shows support for the concept we would undertake further work to develop the proposals. Hence I cannot respond to your request to "see the business case for a £90m busway" as there is just an indicative cost based on typical construction costs per kilometre to allow comparisons with other major schemes included in the consultation. The further work would include the need to consider whether the existing Abbey Line rail line should be incorporated into a wider scheme or remain as a heavy rail service.

I would like to reiterate that the Transport Vision 2050 is a consultation on the long-term way forward to meet the needs of Hertfordshire. I would welcome ABFLY's response to this consultation to help shape the future transport strategy which is due to be published in late 2017.

Yours sincerely,

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

Derrick Ashley
Executive Member