Luton Guided Busway Update

Report by: Keith dove, Luton Borough Council

Purpose:
To provide Members with an update on the Luton Guided Busway.

Recommendations:
• To note the report.

1. Background

1.1. The Contract for detailed design and construction of the Busway was awarded to BAM Nuttall in May 2010. It is a target price contract with activity schedules under the NEC3 (Option C); the Tender target cost was £51,613,363. The Defined Cost is a rolling quarterly forecast of the out-turn cost.

1.2. Under this form of Contract, the target price can be adjusted up or down as Compensation Events (CEs) resulting from changes to the Works Information that are notified by either the client or contractor as Early Warning Notices. The agreed CEs to date total about £3.9m, resulting in an increase of the target cost to £55,521,316.

2. Busway construction contract

2.1. The Busway crosses main roads in the conurbation on bridges, although there are a number of at-grade junctions with the Busway around the centres of Luton and Dunstable in order to maximise the opportunities for buses to circulate around the town centres. Work on the bridges and junctions has generally been progressing well, although many of the junction improvements have been frustrated by delays in utility companies completing their work together with uncharted utility apparatus and other structures.

2.2. The main delays are a result of the bad weather on pad and beam laying. The pad laying in particular has suffered as a result of the poor weather, as the pads are laid on a wet concrete blinding. To date two thirds of the pads and half of the beams have been laid.

3. Other works

3.1. In addition to the construction of the Busway, around 200 on-street stops are being improved along the route of services that will use the Busway. This work is being undertaken by Luton and Central Bedfordshire’s term contractors. The real time passenger information displays, CCTV, and passenger help points at the 4 stops on the guided Busway and at other key stops are being delivered by VIX as part of the sub-regional contract involving Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Northamptonshire and the three Unitary authorities in Bedfordshire.

4. Bus operations

4.1. In Spring 2009, the Councils advertised for Expressions of Interest to operate services on all or part of the Busway. Since that time negotiations have advanced with 2 of the 4 local operators who responded to this advert, Arriva and Centrebus. Progress in agreeing busway
operations was hampered by reductions in Council subsidies and BSOG, although in the first half of 2012 both operators confirmed investment in buses and smartcard ticketing.

4.2. The launch of Arriva’s new Busway vehicles took place on 27th September 2012. The eleven new Volvo Eclipse buses started operating on the 38 route between Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Luton on 1st October. Each bus can carry 46 seated and 61 standing passengers, and are fitted with Euro 5 engines and Wi-Fi. They are fully prepared for fitting guide wheels when testing and Busway operations commence in 2013.

4.3. The next RTF meeting will be held at Luton, and this will include an afternoon visit to see the Busway works and hopefully experience a ride on part of the Busway.