

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>10 DECEMBER 2024</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>JONATHAN PARSONS – GROUP MANAGER PLANNING &amp; DEVELOPMENT SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>The report content has no direct effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>This report will provide Cabinet with an overview of the Council’s current and potential future strategic transport projects including active travel schemes and seek approval for schemes to go forward for local, regional or national funding and any future phases of the South East Wales Metro programme or any other funding or delivery mechanism.</b></p> <p><b>The projects identified will also form the basis of Bridgend strategic transport priorities in discussions with Welsh Government (WG), Transport for Wales (TfW), Network Rail (NR) and Cardiff Capital Region Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)</b></p>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with an update of the Council’s current and potential future strategic transport projects and seek authorisation for schemes to go forward for any future phases of Metro or other national, regional and local funding applications.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) through its Metro programme, together with Welsh Government (WG), provide the principal funding mechanism for large strategic transport projects within the region. A currently funded project includes the Porthcawl Metrolink bus facility, which has been completed and became operational on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Active travel schemes rely primarily on WG funding (managed by Transport for Wales) and the programme is prioritised separately as part of the regular active travel network map approval process. This report contains a re-prioritised active travel programme for the 2025-26 financial year driven by grant funding rules issued by TfW.

- 2.2 Other transport infrastructure projects (including active travel and highway improvements) may be funded by developer contributions (through Section 106 planning agreements), by other grant funding initiatives and on occasions support from within the Authority. Future funding opportunities may also come forward through UK Government.
- 2.3 Cabinet approved the current list of strategic transport schemes on 20 October 2023 and by way of this report Cabinet is advised of an updated list of proposed projects and schemes. It is essential that a list of schemes is agreed in order that they may be submitted as part of any current or future transport funding bids and also in the event that surplus funding is available from Welsh Government towards the end of the financial year. A recognised and approved list of schemes is also necessary when identifying projects that could be promoted when seeking developer contributions through Section 106 planning (S106) agreements relating to infrastructure improvements.
- 2.4 The identified projects would also be promoted with the related public transport bodies i.e., Welsh Government (WG), Transport for Wales (TfW), Network Rail (NR), and the UK Government when discussing rail and public transport priorities.
- 2.5 It should be noted that these schemes represent the main strategic transport projects currently underway or being proposed for future advancement and do not necessarily include other projects or schemes/enhancements that may come forward or are negotiated through the normal development control or land-use planning processes.
- 2.6 Cabinet are also advised that the schemes outlined below, with the exception of the Porthcawl Metrolink and the Active Travel programme, do not currently have any Council approved capital or revenue funding. The ability to progress these projects will therefore be dependent on the necessary resources, funding and budget being secured. It should also be noted that with any scheme that comes forward there will be a future maintenance liability as well as potential impacts on existing infrastructure. As such schemes will be developed in consultation with the relevant internal teams and officers.

### **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1.1 The current and proposed schemes are listed below in no particular order and have been included in terms of their compliance with national, regional, and local policies as outlined below.
- 3.1.2 National policy includes Future Wales 2040 - The National Plan (FW2040)

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/future-wales-the-national-plan-2040.pdf>

Llybyr Newydd - The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 (WTS),

[https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf)

Planning Policy Wales 12(PPW12).

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-07/planning-policy-wales-edition-12.pdf>

Regional and local policy comprises:

Replacement Bridgend Local Development Plan (RLDP),

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/development-planning/replacement-bridgend-local-development-plan-2018-to-2033/>

Bridgend Local Transport Plan (LTP),

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/4087/bridgend-ltp-wg-approved-version-may-2015-2030.pdf>

Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), Regional Transport Authority (RTA), South-East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (SEWCJC) priorities.

<https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/the-city-deal/>

- 3.1.3 The report of the independent panel appointed by Welsh Government entitled 'The Future of Road Investment in Wales i.e. 'The Roads Review' is of relevance.

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-02/the-future-road-investment-wales.pdf>

This report together with the Welsh Government response sets out the current national policy towards new road building and improvement in Wales.

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2023/2/2/1676385038/welsh-government-response-roads-review.pdf>

- 3.1.4 The inclusion of each scheme should be based on criteria outlined in the strategies highlighted above. Consideration must therefore be given to the impacts that the following schemes will have on delivering local and regional economic, environmental and safety objectives as well as allocation in the LTP, LDP and compliance with regional and national policy aims and objectives.
- 3.1.5 Regional Transport Plan.
- 3.1.6 In April 2025 a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) was formed to provide regional governance and strategic policy for the South East Wales region. Other CJs have been similarly set up to cover other regions in Wales. The South East Wales region comprises 10 local authorities including Bridgend County Borough Council. The administrative functions of the CJC have been amalgamated with the CCR and

a separate committee established to oversee the development of a Regional Transport Plan (RTP). A separate Committee will oversee the development of a regional Strategic Development Plan (SDP).

- 3.1.7 Work on the RTP has commenced and it is likely that a draft plan will be published for public consultation some time in 2025. Local authorities are able to submit schemes of regional significance for inclusion in the RTP where they will be assessed against national and local policy and scored accordingly. If approved the schemes outlined below could be put forward for consideration.

### 3.2 **Strategic Transport Schemes currently in progress**

- 3.2.1 The following schemes are those that already have capital funding and/or current funding from Welsh Government / CCR or are being proposed for inclusion in next year's funding programme. At present this consists entirely of active travel. The Porthcawl Metrolink has benefitted from funding from CCR & UKG but has now been completed.

### 3.3 **Active Travel Programme**

- 3.3.1 The Active Travel Programme is an ongoing multi-million project that is funded through Welsh Government and subject to an annual grant bidding process. Bids for schemes are submitted annually and are approved on the basis that they are delivered during one financial year and it is not always possible that projects can undergo feasibility, detailed design and implementation within the timescales allowed. As such projects may have to be phased over several years i.e. year 1 - feasibility work, year 2 - design and finally year 3 implementation. The Active Travel programme is the largest ongoing strategic transport commitment and is considered as being essential to encouraging a 'modal shift' from reliance on private motor vehicles to sustainable modes such as walking and cycling.

- 3.3.2 The funding is separated into those that cover specific projects and other projects that may fall into 'core' schemes. The programme is subject to strict scrutiny by WG and quarterly spending returns are required. Some approved funding may be rolled over to subsequent years by agreement and surplus funds are occasionally offered out to local authorities to develop schemes.

- 3.3.3 Active Travel funding also requires that the route offered for grant funding be included in the Active Travel Network Map (ATNM), which was approved on 3rd August 2022 by Welsh Government. The map may be viewed online:-

<https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/active-travel-network-maps/>

- 3.3.4 The ATNM combines the Existing Routes Map (ERM) and Integrated Network Map (INM) required by the Active Travel (Wales) Act. Existing Routes are those that meet the requirements of the Active Travel design guidance and are audited by Sustrans and other authorised third parties collaboratively. Some routes might not fully comply with the guidance but may still get funds from other funding sources for construction. Future Routes are routes that are planned for future developments and continuous improvement of the network. The location and details are indicative and subject to changes as schemes develop. The delivery of these routes depends

on the level of available funding and the complexity of planning and design required for larger and more complex routes.

- 3.3.5 The Ynysawdre Active Travel scheme was the only capital project for 2023/24 and was completed on time and under budget. The scheme provides an active travel design compliant traffic-free shared use active travel route from Ynysawdre (Lon Derw) to the National Cycle Network. It is referenced in the Council's Active Travel Annual Report 2023-24 which has been submitted to Welsh Government.
- 3.3.6 Under revised grant guidance from Welsh Government, only one capital active travel scheme can be submitted per local authority for funding in 2025-26 financial year. In keeping with previous years, the Council has been allocated a hypothecated budget to fund what the Welsh Government describes as 'Core' active travel schemes. 'Core' schemes fall into two broad categories, namely: scheme development schemes; and minor works. Under the former category, only three schemes can be submitted to the tune of no more than 40% of the allocated budget whilst under the latter category, at least 60% of the allocated budget should be spent. Accordingly, the Council has revised and re-prioritised the active travel schemes that will be submitted for funding for the 2025-26 financial year. The other active travel schemes reported to Cabinet on 20 October 2023 remain as Council priorities although not listed in any particular order. Below are the active travel schemes proposed to be submitted for funding.
- 3.3.7 It is proposed that the Main Capital Scheme to go forward for 2025/26 WG funding is Pen-y-Fai Phase 1. The aim is to construct a shared pedestrian and cycle track from the safe crossing point along Tondu Road, providing a key corridor for sustainable travel into the Bridgend town centre. Work will also be carried out to improve the A4063 Pen-Y-Fai Junction. This scheme has undergone considerable engagement with TFW as well as the community and local Member.
- 3.3.8 The Core Development Schemes proposed to go forward for 2025/26 funding are as follows:-
- Feasibility report on options completed. Agreed to review options from new proposed Ysgol Bro Ogwr (YGBO) Primary School along Princess way to Tremains Road/Brackla Street (Bridgend Town centre). Also look at options from YGBO School to Wyndham Crescent Brackla.
  - Penyfai Phase 2 - Commence outline design of the main route south of the junction into Bridgend town centre.
  - Danygraig: Investigate active travel options from Danygraig Roundabout A4106 to newly opened Porthcawl Metrolink. Incorporate local facilities such as schools, skateboard park and open green spaces.
- 3.3.9 The Minor Works Schemes proposed to go forward for 2025/26 funding are as follows:-

- A48: Improve the link from Picton Court roundabout along Heronston Lane to Ewenny Roundabout.
- A programme of dropped kerbs at various locations in the County Borough.
- Active Travel Route Monitoring (Data Collection): To install cycle counters at various locations to collect user data, and continue to monitor counters already installed at various sites.

3.3.10 There are other active travel priorities identified by the Council, which are unable to be put forward for funding for the coming financial year. These schemes remain important to the active travel programme although there is no funding identified to take them forward at this time. Nevertheless, it is vital that they remain on the list of schemes as they constitute the remainder of the Council's strategic active travel programme and in the event that alternative funding becomes available. These are listed below.

- South Cornelly ATR (Pyle Phase 2) – Funding has been granted to complete design and prepare Tender documentation. The scheme aims to provide an active travel route (ATR) starting at the Heol-Y-Splot/A4229 roundabout, along Porthcawl Road and the B4283 to North Cornelly. The route forms part of a wider strategy to develop and implement an ATR between Pyle to Porthcawl. Further funding will be required for route implementation.
- A48 ATR scheme: Feasibility studies of the active travel route identified along the A48 between Ewenny Road roundabout and Laleston roundabout. Further funding will be required for detailed design and implementation. There may be funding through S106 when the Island Farm strategic site comes forward.
- Brackla to Bridgend (Merthyr Mawr Bridge): this relates to the design of an active travel route utilising the under pass to Merthyr Mawr Road and redesign of the footbridge over the River Ogmore leading from Church Road to Angel Street. Further funding will be required for route implementation.
- Active Travel Pedestrian & Cyclist Improvements: To carry out an audit of pedestrian crossing points at areas of concern and with reference to the County Borough-wide active travel consultation in 2021. The audit will identify the most critical pedestrian crossing deficiencies and provide, re-locate or improve them on a priority order basis. The implementation of the scheme will be subject to future funding bids.
- Bridgend Town Centre Access Enhancements: Develop feasibility and design for active travel enhancements to improve connectivity and improve links to the relocated Bridgend College campus when complete as well as general town centre

access. This is also identified as part of the wider Bridgend Railway Station enhancement as described below.

- Dock Street, Porthcawl: This is a Regeneration led project and will include enhanced active travel links between the Metrolink bus facility and Porthcawl town centre along Dock Street, to promote active travel and improve connectivity and permeability for pedestrians and cyclists. This scheme will be crucial to the future use of the Porthcawl Metrolink.
- Pencoed to Rhondda Cynon Taff boundary (RCT) - Cross-border link: This relates to the provision of a seamless continuation of safe active travel routes from Pencoed to RCT. Further funding will be required for full design and implementation.
- Maesteg to Bridgend (Llynfi Valley): Llynfi Valley – Maesteg, Garth, Llangynywd and Cwmfelin. Feasibility for providing a north-south active travel route will enhance connectivity for the residents of the Llynfi valley. The proposed route will link into the National Cycle Network (NCN) and complement proposals to build a passing loop on the railway line at Tondu to increase frequency on the existing railway line.
- Pyle to Porthcawl (Phase 2): The scheme will comprise a Toucan Crossing (Pyle to Porthcawl Phase 2) on A4229 at the northern end of South Cornelly and another Toucan Crossing on the A4229 at the southern end of South Cornelly.
- Bridgend to Porthcawl: Providing active travel route along A4106 Bridgend Road between Porthcawl and Bridgend. The proposal is for scheme development funding to progress the outcome of WelTAG 2 study completed in 2023. If the scheme is proven feasible then future funding applications could be made for a full design and implementation.
- Garw Valley Community Route: This relates to an upgrade programme for the National cycle Network (NCN) route between Bryngarw House and Pontycymer. The route upgrading is also subject to ongoing discussions with Network Rail (NR), which owns much of the land. At the moment part of the route has been closed by NR due to safety reasons and will require the upgrading of bridge decks and cutting back of vegetation to allow public use to continue. The cost of these works is likely to be in the region of £35,000. This may be raised through current active travel funding mechanisms although some assurances on the long term future of the route will be required in order progress. In the longer term, if the Council were to take on the lease from NR, there will be significant future maintenance liability issues in taking on full responsibility for the route. A full survey of the route will be required in order to assess the capital cost of any upgrading and estimates of future maintenance costs, which will fall to current budgets and potential options are being discussed including national and regional funding streams. Nevertheless, the route remains highly important to the Garw Valley communities and visitors. It provides

local active travel links between community facilities as well as a very popular recreational facility. Some commitment from the Council is necessary in order to make progress with WG and TfW in terms of securing future funding and it is proposed that subject to extensive survey work and legal investigations that the Cabinet acknowledges the importance of the route and approves in principle the short term works necessary to make the route safe and taking on the lease to ensure its long term security. A separate report will be brought to Cabinet setting out in detail the costs and resource implications associated with taking on the lease for the route and how they will be funded.

- Active Travel Safety Enhancements: The access barrier auditing work has already been undertaken. This work included Technology Drive and all the existing routes in Bridgend, Pyle and Porthcawl. A total of 56 barriers have so far been identified and other routes in Pencoed and Maesteg will also be audited.
- Bridgend (Coity Gyratory) to Designer Village: Options analysis and feasibility design for an Active Travel Link between the Princess of Wales Hospital to Bridgend Town Centre. This scheme has now been superseded by the proposed route along Princess Way, and Meadow Rise in Brackla, The recommendation to amend the route was made in consultation with TfW on the grounds that Bridgend (Coity Gyratory) to Designer Village route was not feasible to build due to land availability issues and accommodating an active travel route to national standards. The alternative route, whilst not as direct, will provide the same outcome and may be achieved with minimal land acquisition. Part of this scheme is proposed to be put forward as one of the three 'core' development schemes for the next financial year as indicated above.

3.3.11 Merlin Crescent Active Travel Scheme. This scheme formed part of a wider Bryntirion active travel proposal, intended to enhance pedestrian and cycle access to Bryntirion Comprehensive as well as improving the active travel infrastructure for future strategic development within the area and for other local journeys. Feasibility and design work was carried for the active travel route along Merlin Crescent and public consultation and engagement sessions undertaken. However, this drew a negative reaction to this proposal and public petition opposing the scheme was submitted along with concerns from local Members and Senedd Member. In view of the considerable level of opposition it was not considered appropriate to include the scheme as part of next year's funding bid. As such it is proposed to defer the scheme from the current programme whilst further public and political consensus is sought. A report on the public engagement is attached as **Appendix A**.

#### 3.4 **Porthcawl Metrolink**

3.4.1 The Porthcawl Metrolink which comprises a new purpose-built, enclosed bus facility located within the Porthcawl Regeneration Area at Salt Lake became operational on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The Metrolink was developed with strategic funds from CCR, WG and UGW under the South East Wales Metro Programme. The glass and steel structure provides capacity for four buses and features a green roof, rain garden and internal seating. It will provide the necessary public transport infrastructure for



the future regeneration of Porthcawl, which includes residential, commercial and recreational uses. A formal opening event will be arranged in due course.

### **3.5 Proposed Strategic Transport Projects**

3.5.1 The following projects are put forward for approval as part of any future applications to the Cardiff Capital Region Metro Programme, Levelling Up Fund, or other funding opportunities as well as the basis for discussion with other outside transport bodies on national and regional strategic transport priorities. The schemes will also be considered for inclusion in the forthcoming CCR Regional Transport Plan (RTP). Whilst there is currently no specific funding or budget in place for these schemes it is important that they are recognised and approved in the event that any future funding opportunities are forthcoming.

### **3.6 Brackla Halt Railway Station**

3.6.1 This is a longstanding proposal for a new station facility on the South Wales mainline between Bridgend and Pencoed and serving the large residential area of Brackla and Coychurch as well as Bridgend Industrial Estate. The proposal will also include enhanced active travel provision connecting the residential hinterland with the industrial estate and town centre to the south.

3.6.2 As well as the station, a car park has been constructed (although not in use) and a new active travel bridge is being considered that would form an essential link between Brackla and Bridgend Industrial Estate. The bridge may also be pursued through the current active travel programme independently of the new station proposals. It is envisaged that a new station would form part of the South-East Wales Metro along with the existing local Pyle, Bridgend and Pencoed stations.

3.6.3 There are no current TfW proposals to take this project further and it is not identified as a priority within the CCR transport programme, however, it is possible to seek funding to look at the feasibility of the active travel bridge and connections within the area as part of wider active travel enhancements.

### **3.7 Bridgend Railway Station enhancement**

3.7.1 This is a Regeneration led project, which aims to improve access and enhance park and ride options, active travel, a bus interchange facility and active travel improvements. This forms part of the Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan but could also be considered as a strategic transport project in itself alongside the Town Centre Access Enhancements project described above. The project would also look at the feasibility of enhanced bus connections and infrastructure within the town centre.

### **3.8 Ewenny Road (Maesteg) Interchange and Llynfi valley Line**

3.8.1 The Ewenny Road Interchange was identified as part of the WeITAG Stage 2 study into the Maesteg line enhancement project currently undertaken by Transport for Wales (TfW). An internal feasibility bid has previously provided funding to carry out preliminary feasibility studies to complement the WeITAG (Welsh Government Transport Appraisal Guidance) process. The scheme is expected to include a park

& ride facility, electric vehicle charging facility, bus stops, covered cycle parking and taxi rank adjacent to the existing Ewenny Road rail station.

- 3.8.2 The interchange is also directly adjacent to the Ewenny Road regeneration site, a major mixed use residential and commercial scheme with outline planning approval. The interchange would provide an excellent opportunity to further develop transit orientated development (TOD). The principle of TOD is to provide residential and other development around public transport hubs as a way of reducing reliance on the private car and encouraging 'modal shift'.
- 3.8.3 The project would initially take the proposal to design stage but with suitable funding could be fully implemented. Furthermore, the facility, which would have transport benefits to the wider Llynfi Valley, has sufficient critical mass to be pursued independently of any future regeneration plans for the adjoining, former industrial site.
- 3.8.4 The WelTAG study is still being considered but whilst enhancements to the Llynfi Valley line also remain a priority for the Council this is a matter for TfW along with NR to determine.

### **3.9 Ford Branch Line**

- 3.9.1 The branch line opened to serve the Ford Engine factory at Waterton but is no longer in use following the plant's closure in 2020. The rail head is located within the plant itself but the associated level crossing across the A48 has been closed. The track bed remains on the line, which crosses into the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough (VOG). Whilst it will require significant upgrading, the reopening of the line as a heavy rail or light rail tram train alternative with connection to Bridgend and VOG lines could still in theory be developed.
- 3.9.2 The site has now been sold and the owners are in consultation with the Council regarding the future development of the land. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the rail link within the site will form part of any proposals going forward. However, branch line remains and could potentially provide the basis for a future transport scheme in conjunction with VOG.

### **3.10 Heol Simonston / Coychurch Road Junction Improvements**

- 3.10.1 The improvement of the Heol Simonston / Coychurch Road junction has long been identified as a key highway improvement project. Although not identified as a specific priority in the LDP or LTP, there is a significant local congestion problem at this location. The key issue in this project is to overcome highway safety issues generated by traffic congestion at this pinch point as well as the provision of active travel links between the residential areas to the north of the railway line and key employment sites to the south.
- 3.10.2 One of the main constraints in the area is the railway bridge over the B4181 Coychurch Rod/Heol Simonston, which carries the mainline railway line which narrows considerably at this point. The bridge is also a Grade II Listed Building due to its architectural and historic interest as part of the original Victorian railway.

Notwithstanding the important heritage issues which would need to be overcome, work to replace the bridge and realign the road would be a considerable undertaking with a very high financial and operational cost and as such other options are being considered.

3.10.3 A feasibility study of the junction was originally undertaken in 2007 to assess the suitability of the Heol Simonston / Coychurch Road Junction for the incorporation of a roundabout. The purpose of the scheme was to accommodate increased traffic flows generated from the Coed Castell Development off Coychurch Road and improve the operation of the existing junction. Several options were considered at the time.

3.10.4 It should also be noted that since the 2007 study there has been significant changes to legislation and national policy i.e. The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, which places a duty on local authorities to prioritise walking and cycle routes over car-based transport along with the recent Welsh Government Roads review, which impacts on the amount of national funding is available for new road schemes. These changes in legislation and policy direction will significantly influence any future scheme(s) coming forward. Although some S106 funding is available to undertake feasibility for active travel solutions within the locality (see active travel schemes above), no funding to design, complete or undertake any works has been identified as of yet. Internal resourcing issues will also impact on the progress of the project, however, options and alternatives will be reconsidered and Members will be updated in due course.

### 3.11 Junction 36 (M4)

3.11.1 A number of assessments and reports (e.g. the Welsh Government 'pinch point' study) have been undertaken over recent years and have evidenced that Junction 36 has reached its operational capacity limit and there are significant queue lengths on all of the six junction approaches during peak periods. A WelTAG Stage 2 report commissioned by WG was undertaken to consider the efficiency, capacity and congestion issues that impact on this key node's ability to perform its strategic function. This situation will restrict future growth in the north of the County Borough and disadvantage those who are most affected by this major constraint to movement.

3.11.2 The provision of a safe, attractive, and extensive active travel network will improve local accessibility, giving residents the opportunity to walk and cycle to nearby services and facilities, whilst improved access to public transport services will enable residents to travel to employment opportunities further afield. Whilst these measures will increase sustainable transport use which will help release some capacity at J36 they are unlikely to fully resolve the problems due to the current physical constraints and as such major infrastructure intervention will be required.

3.11.3 However, the recent WG Roads Review report has halted any further progress on motorway junction improvement to improve traffic congestion. Without any significant changes to the current junction infrastructure this national approach has a corresponding impact on any proposal for bus and active travel enhancement. Without significant infrastructure investment any future active travel improvements at the junction could further exacerbate congestion and as such would be limited to improving connectivity within the surrounding area.

3.11.4 It is noted that the current activities at J36 including the Designer Outlet, hotels, superstore, restaurant, and cinema, is a significant employer within the County Borough and as such any improvements in active travel to and from the facilities could encourage modal shift and use of active travel with a corresponding benefit in reducing car-based congestion.

### 3.12 **Metro Enhancement Framework (MEF)**

3.12.1 A Metro Enhancement Framework (MEF) has been prepared to enable Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, and the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority to start developing the pipeline of future transport projects that can be delivered to further complement the existing commitments being delivered as part of the Metro and Metro Plus programme. As part of the MEF, Transport for Wales have appointed Arcadis to prepare a WelTAG Stage one study. Its purpose is to help identify areas and 'transport corridors' where transport solutions could address the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFGA) goals. Thirteen transport corridors were initially identified across the South Wales Metro area and scored against a set of 14 criteria.

3.12.2 The highest scoring corridors to be progressed within this study were Maesteg / Porthcawl / Bridgend to Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. These corridors demonstrate the existing and future social, environmental, cultural, and economic challenges and the areas include the Ewenny Road Interchange and the Porthcawl Metrolink described above.

### 3.13 **Penprysg Road Bridge**

3.13.1 This project is a longstanding strategic land use and transport commitment for the Council as evidenced in proposed, current and previous development plans and the LTP. At present there is a moratorium in place on the development of Pencoed north of the crossing due to traffic congestion caused by an inadequate, narrow road bridge combined with the regular closing of the level crossing restricting north-south access. A working group was set up comprising local representatives, politicians, Council officers, UK government, TFW and Network Rail. The project involves the replacement of the sub-standard Penprysg Road bridge, closure of Pencoed Level Crossing and its replacement with a fully accessible active travel bridge. It is also considered that the project will bring economic, environmental and public realm enhancements to the centre of Pencoed once the level crossing has been removed. It should be noted that any further frequency of services along the mainline could lead to further congestion issues if the frequency of level crossing closure is increased.

3.13.2 Using funds from the CCR Metro Plus project, a WelTAG Stage 2 study was carried out in August 2020, working with Network Rail and other partners, to try and find a long-term solution to this problem. The WelTag Stage Two study concluded that a combination of two options should be progressed to WelTAG Stage 3. This would see the provision of a new active travel bridge over the railway, adjacent to the station, and the permanent closure of the level crossing. The bridge would be fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010. To facilitate the level crossing

closure, Penprysg Road Bridge would also be rebuilt as a two-lane carriageway to increase its capacity in both directions. The new bridge would also be compatible with any future line electrification proposals. A public consultation exercise took place in late 2021 and there is widespread local support for the project. Network Rail (NR) which controls the line and track infrastructure are also supportive of the closure of the level crossing on rail safety grounds.

- 3.13.3 Recently as part of a TFW project, Pencoed was appraised and developed to WeITAG Stage 2 at programme-level via a Bridgend-Pontyclun study. TFW will be developing a project-level WeITAG Stage 2 Outline Business Case focusing on Pencoed and Llanharan Interchanges alone. This will include further optioneering (the potential for do minimum – intermediate – high ambition options) as well as commensurate concept design development for the preferred option.
- 3.13.4 However, this TFW exercise does not include any design development for the Penprysg Level Crossing scheme and replacement road bridge. Whilst the current design is predicated on the Level Crossing Closure coming to fruition, it is likely that the do-minimum and intermediate ambition options will also explore scenarios where the level crossing closure does not come to fruition soon, but which do not impinge on its subsequent development in the future, should funding prospects improve. Alongside the business case, optioneering and design development on the Interchanges at Pencoed and Llanharan, TFW will also be looking to develop Station Network Plans for both Pencoed and Llanharan, assessing first-and-last mile routes between the interchanges and key trip attractors/conurbations in the areas.
- 3.13.5 The project was identified by Cabinet as the transport project bid under the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) programme and a bid for £25 million was submitted in August 2022. However, as it could not be adequately demonstrated that the project could not be delivered within the funding timeframe, unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful. Whilst a large amount of essential feasibility work has been undertaken since 2020, there is still considerable work to be undertaken including developing a sound economic case as well as undertaking a full technical design. The project is not currently supported by any regional funding programme, however, future funding options are still being considered.

### **3.14 Pyle Railway Station Relocation and Park and Ride.**

- 3.14.1 The existing station at Pyle was developed as part of the revitalisation of local railway infrastructure in the early 1990s. However, it has significant land and infrastructure constraints that impact on current and future park and ride enhancements and therefore a relocation further east will be required if the facility is to be expanded into a strategic regional facility. An initial feasibility study has already been carried out in 2020, which indicated that the relocated station would cost around £20 million (at that time).
- 3.14.2 This scheme is intended to enhance the public transport accessibility profile of the strategic development land at Pyle included as part of the RLDP. This site comprises of approximately 2,000 houses and associated commercial and educational development. Existing communities along the Pyle-Porthcawl corridor will benefit and there is further opportunity for a park and ride facility to service Porthcawl. Currently, there are active travel links being developed in the area and

relocating the Pyle railway station would facilitate the integration of land use and multi-modal transport as well as promoting transit orientated development. (TOD)

3.14.3 The moving of Pyle Railway Station is a large-scale engineering undertaking for which there is no current funding to progress design or land acquisition. As such the project could also include exploring interim measures to improve the facilities at the current station in conjunction with TFW.

### **3.15 Rapid Bus Infrastructure**

3.15.1 Rapid bus systems refer to bus-based public transport, which is designed to have better capacity and be more efficient than conventional bus routes that use the normal highway infrastructure. They typically include roadways that are dedicated to buses, giving priority to buses at intersections/junctions and where buses may interact with other traffic. These systems could be utilised more flexibly in areas that are not well served by rail and provide faster bus journeys from residential to commercial centres and employment bases.

3.15.2 The project would look at feasibility of introducing these systems in the Garw and Ogmore Valleys as part of the South-East Wales Metro as well as a review of the current rail stations in the Valley Gateway area that could be utilised for enhanced park & ride and interchange facilities. In the Pyle to Porthcawl travel corridor this project could include dedicated bus lanes and/or bus gates at congested junctions and be developed to complement and enhance the Metrolink bus facility in Porthcawl.

3.15.3 The emphasis for future bus related schemes would be on the use of ultra-low emission vehicles to meet carbon reduction targets. However, the development of this project will be dependent on the available bus resource and operator constraints going forward.

## **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

## **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

## **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 There are no Climate Change Implications arising from this report, however, the development of active travel routes and public transport options also aims to reduce dependency on carbon intensive transport options.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications arising from this report.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 The work on the Porthcawl Metrolink project has been funded by the Welsh Government Local Transport Fund which is administered under the Cardiff City Region's Metro Programme. Additional funding was provided from the Council's capital programme. The Active Travel programme is similarly funded through Welsh Government grants. As such these projects already are or will form part of the capital programme if funding is forthcoming.

8.2 Any future approved schemes will be subject to separate funding bids. Potential sources of funding for future technical work and construction include Section 106 planning contributions, Welsh Government grants, UK Government grants, Cardiff Capital Region Metro and City Deal initiatives.

8.3 The Council will need to fully explore future funding options and at this stage any match funding requirements or financial commitments from the Council on individual projects is unknown. Future reports will be brought to Cabinet with updates on funding bids. Any future capital schemes will need to be presented and approved by Council for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Considers the information contained within this report and notes the progress on the Active Travel Programme and Porthcawl Metrolink.
2. Approves the list of active travel projects outlined above in paragraphs 3.3.7 – 3.3.9 to go forward as schemes for Capital Projects, Core Development Schemes and Minor Works Scheme as bid in the 2025/26 WG funding programme.
3. Defers further work on the Merlin Crecent Active Travel scheme pending further development work and consultation.
4. Approves the proposed active travel and strategic transport projects as identified above to be included as part of any future applications to the Cardiff Capital Region or other funding opportunities as well as inclusion in the Regional Transport Plan.
5. Approves the projects identified above to form the basis for discussion with other outside transport bodies on national and regional strategic transport priorities.
6. Approves in principle the works required to allow the Garw Valley Community Route to return to operational use in the short term subject to funding and in

principle to take on the lease and operational control of the route in the longer term subject to an extensive site investigation, costings being prepared, budgets identified and reported back to Cabinet for formal approval.

7. Note that any future capital schemes will need to be presented to Council for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

### **Background documents**

Bridgend County Borough Council's Active Travel Annual Report 2023-24