

Report No. B4027C/STS/01

12th February 2009

MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

GATEWAY TO SUSTAINABILITY

Halton Borough Council

Environment Directorate

Rutland House

Halton Lea

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the Scene

- 1.1.1 The transport policies, strategies and implementation programmes of Halton Borough Council (the Council) are contained within its second Local Transport Plan (LTP) (Reference 1), which covers the period 2006/7- 2010/11. This Plan has been assessed by the Department for Transport (DfT) and graded as being ‘Excellent’. LTP2 was the subject of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) the outcome of which (as well as the LTP itself) was rated as “Excellent” by the Department for Transport (DfT). The mid-term review of progress against the plan has recently been reported to the DfT.
- 1.1.2 One of the key issues identified within the LTP are the problems resulting from congestion on the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB), which, due to the high levels of demand, is unable to satisfy its dual role of providing for both strategic inter-urban movement and local trips between Runcorn and Widnes. The breakdown of service affects all users of SJB including public transport and commercial transport.
- 1.1.3 The impact of this congestion on the SJB is felt locally and sub-regionally through the constraints it places on economic development and regeneration, due to its adverse impacts on local and sub-regional highway networks when incidents occur, and in the inability to adequately provide sustainable transport to address accessibility and connectivity issues within the administrative area of Halton Borough Council (the Borough).
- 1.1.4 Local policies contained within the Council’s Unitary Development Plan 2005 (Halton UDP) (Reference 2) provide for the Mersey Gateway Project (The Project). Strategic policy S14 of the Halton UDP states that a new crossing of the River Mersey (the River), east of the SJB, will be promoted to relieve congestion on the existing bridge.
- 1.1.5 The supporting text states that the existing severely congested SJB is considered to represent a “constraint on the economic development of the Merseyside Region, and severely restricts the development of an integrated transport Strategy for Halton.” It goes on to note that a strategic aim of the Council’s LTP2 (Reference 1) and the UDP is therefore to pursue the provision of a new and sustainable crossing of the River. The policy states:-
- “A scheme for a new crossing of the River Mersey east of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge will be promoted to relieve congestion on the existing bridge as part of an integrated transport system for Halton and the wider regional transport network. Any proposed route of the new crossing will be the subject of an environmental assessment.”*
- 1.1.6 The Council has, therefore, invested heavily in developing proposals for a new crossing, known as the Mersey Gateway Bridge (the New Bridge), works to the SJB and associated remote highway works. All of these works constitute the Project which is programmed to be delivered in 2014/15. The Council considers that the aims and objectives of the Project will be better achieved by the promotion of policy initiatives in parallel with the Project. In this respect, the Council is promoting this Sustainable Transport Strategy
- 1.1.7 The Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy (MGSTS) sets out how the Project can both facilitate and encourage sustainable transport in the Borough, and both provides for, and enables sustainable interventions and initiatives to be developed and implemented.

- 1.1.8 An important component of the Project is the proposed works to de-link the SJB (the SJB de-linking works) and change its status from a strategic highway route to a route designed primarily for local movement, public transport, walking and cycling in the Borough.
- 1.2 Impact and Opportunities for Promoting Sustainable Transport as part of the Project**
- 1.2.1 The Project aims to eliminate the bottleneck that is created by the SJB and enable strategic traffic movement that passes through the Borough to connect with the wider network and attractors including the Liverpool City area and other parts of the UK.
- 1.2.2 At the local level the Project aims to facilitate step change improvements to the transport connections between Runcorn and Widnes via the SJB. For example, reduced congestion on the SJB will facilitate improvements to the integrity of the bus network by reducing journey times, improving reliability and supporting and underpinning improved bus services across the River between Runcorn and Widnes.
- 1.2.3 In terms of walking and cycling, the creation of a sustainable transport corridor over the SJB will facilitate safe, reliable and attractive local connections between Widnes West Bank and Runcorn town centre and connect the existing and highly strategic multi user routes namely the Trans Pennine Trail National Cycle Network Route Number 62 (NCN 62) in Widnes, and NCN 5 and the Bridgewater Way in Runcorn.
- 1.2.4 The Project helps to improve the integrity and efficiency of the movement of goods and materials and strengthen the role and attractiveness of strategic multi modal transport facilities in the Borough such as the Mersey Multi Modal Gateway site (3MG), the new name for the Ditton strategic rail freight park, discussed in Section 2.
- 1.3 Links Between the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy (MGSTS) and The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (MGRS)**
- 1.3.1 The Project is central to the achievement of the environmental and economic regeneration aspirations of the Council, and is key to those of the sub-region. It is also important in delivering the step change improvements required in sustainable transport provision to address concerns over accessibility and connectivity as part of the wider sustainable transport and sustainability agenda.
- 1.3.2 The MGSTS and the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (MGRS) (Reference 3) are part of a highly integrated, multi-disciplinary approach adopted by the Council to enhance the Project and its outcomes. These two strategies are highly complementary and supportive of each other, and together set out a rigorous and clear approach to maximising the benefits that the Project will deliver.
- 1.3.3 Other work streams undertaken as part of the Project include extensive environmental and ecological studies and assessments, civil engineering design and feasibility work, and traffic appraisal. The latter has focused on transport economics and modelling and has included the development of the strategic Mersey Gateway Variable Demand Model (VDM). The MGSTS is informed by the results of these assessments and designs.

1.3.4 The Project has seven strategic objectives of which 2 relate directly to sustainable travel as follows:-

- To improve public transport links across the River Mersey (the River); and
- To encourage the increased use of cycling and walking.

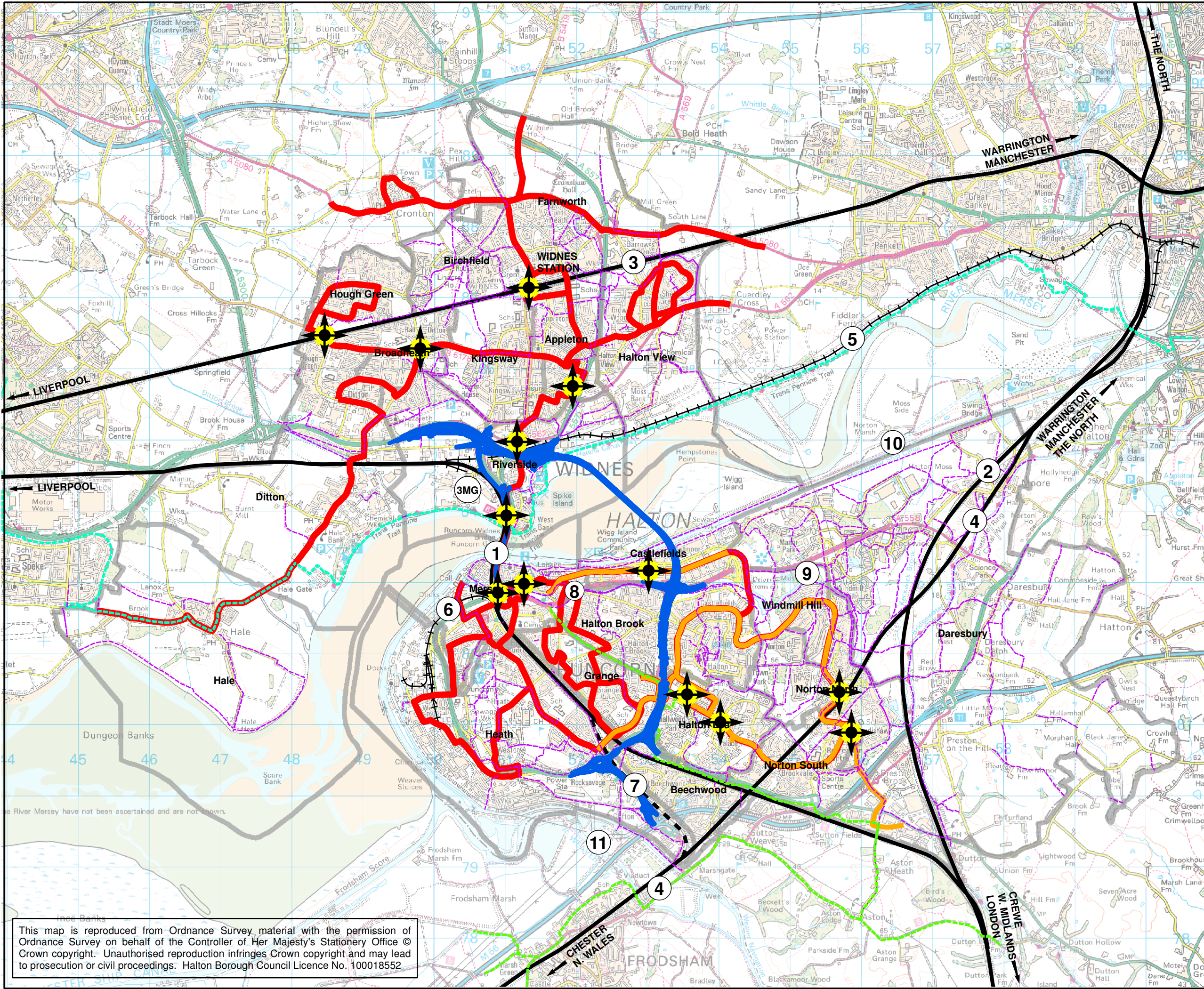
The project also supports other objectives as set out in the MGSTS Sustainability Appraisal Report (Reference 45).

1.3.5 The tolling proposals, linked to the delivery, traffic management, and integrated transport objectives of the Project, are also highly relevant to the proposed sustainable transport improvements. The tolling proposals will influence how people choose to travel in the Borough. Bus services, cycling and walking present a toll free alternative for cross-river trips, and the aim of MGSTS is to make these alternatives a more attractive option for travel within the Borough and the adjacent communities.

1.3.6 The Borough existing transport network, and the proposed alignment of the New Bridge and associated infrastructure is shown in Figure 1.1.

1.3.7 The objectives discussed above form the cornerstone of the MGSTS, which clearly identifies the aim to significantly improve the sustainable transport offer in the Borough. A range of potential actions and interventions designed to achieve the MGSTS objectives has been assessed where the delivery of potential initiatives has been a central consideration in formulating which proposals are to be taken forward. The delivery programme has been divided into two distinct phases. The first phase focuses on those sustainable transport initiatives that will be delivered and funded, as a direct result of the Project. These initiatives will lay the foundations for a Borough-wide Strategy, which will be implemented as a second phase.

1.3.8 The following diagram illustrates how the MGSTS has been developed:-



Legend

Local Interchanges

The Mersey Gateway Project

PROW

NCN 5

Trans Pennine Trail (NCN 62)

Runcorn Busway

Halton Core Bus Network

Freight Railway Route

Proposed Halton Curve

Passenger Railway Route

Halton Ward Boundaries

1 Liverpool Branch of West Coast Main Line (via Runcorn).

2 Main spur of West Coast Main Line (between Weaver Junction and Warrington Bank Quay Station).

3 Liverpool Lime Street to Warrington Central and Manchester Piccadilly route.

4 Manchester and North Wales coast line.

5 Section of the Garston to Timperley route.

6 Runcorn Docks Branch.

7 Halton Curve.

8 Bridgewater Expressway.

9 Bridgewater Way

10 Manchester Ship Canal

11 River Weaver

3MG Formerly known as Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park.

Client

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project

MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title

THE BOROUGH'S EXISTING TRANSPORT NETWORK

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Scale (At A3)

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Date

15/12/2008

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Jane Hunter

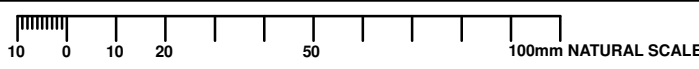
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FIGURE 1.1

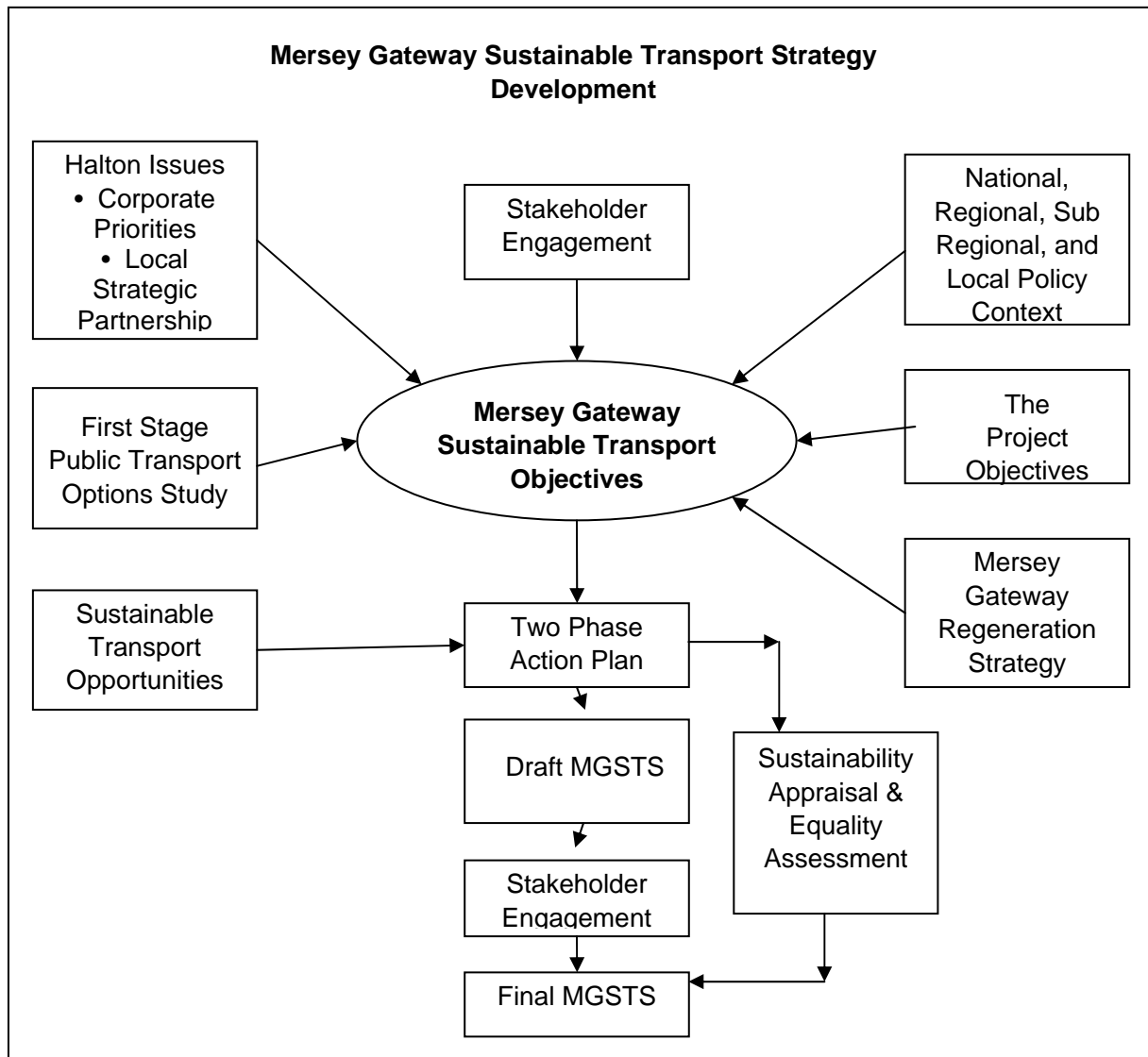
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How the MGSTS has been developed



1.4 This Report

1.4.1 This report for the MGSTS incorporates the following inter-related sections:-

- **Section 2 - Halton's Story of Place and Existing Transport Network:** This section explores the historical context of the Borough, its transport system and key issues that it faces.
- **Section 3 - National Regional and Local Policy Context:** This section summarises key national, regional and local sustainable planning and land use policies and strategies that support both the MGSTS and the MGRS. Recent policy changes that have arisen during the course of the development of the MGSTS have also been addressed in this section, and a summary of changes can be found in Appendix A.

- **Section 4 - Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy (MGSTS):** This section describes the vision of the MGSTS and its objectives, before proceeding to specify a themed approach to delivering a step change in sustainable transport in the Borough, utilising a two phase Action Plan. It can be seen that the MGSTS is heavily influenced by the issues identified in section 3, national, regional and local policies and key areas of work undertaken as part of the Project. Integral to the MGSTS has been stakeholder consultation. The outcome of this and the actions and responses of the Council in relation to the MGSTS can be found in Appendix B. In particular, the Strategy draws heavily on the findings of the MGRS and seeks to address the issues raised in the context of the First Stage Public Transit Options Study (Reference 5). The MGSTS has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal and Equality Impact Assessment.
- **Section 5 - Measuring Progress:** This final section identifies challenging targets and a rigorous monitoring regime to assess progress.

2 HALTON'S STORY OF PLACE AND EXISTING TRANSPORT SYSTEM

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This section considers the historical development and provision of transport infrastructure and services in the Borough. It also identifies key issues for the future development of sustainable transport and the role it can play in the social, economic and environmental regeneration of the Borough and the wider sub region.

2.2 Historical Context and Character of Halton

- 2.2.1 Halton is a unique administrative area in the United Kingdom (UK) based around its town centres of Widnes and Runcorn, which are separated by the Mersey Estuary (the Estuary) and connected by a single internal road link – the SJB. From a historical perspective, transport has had a dominating influence in shaping the Borough's spatial characteristics, appearance and levels of urbanisation, as well as providing a foundation that has underpinned its economic base.
- 2.2.2 Since the mid-19th century, canals and railways, coupled with the natural transport resource that the River provides, have helped to put the towns of Widnes and Runcorn clearly on the map, both in the UK and overseas. For example, the world's first railway dock was established at Spike Island in Widnes. Spike Island was also the site of the UK's first major chemical factory. This opened in 1862 and was quickly followed by many more. This industrial legacy has also produced a range of problems that the Borough still has to deal with.
- 2.2.3 In more recent times, the opening of the iconic Runcorn – Widnes bridge in 1961, as a replacement for a Transporter Bridge, led to immediate, step change improvements in terms of road access across the Estuary between Widnes and Runcorn at the point known as the Runcorn Gap. The bridge greatly strengthened the strategic highway connections between Widnes and Runcorn and the surrounding region. This helped to further open up access and provide continued support for economic activity as well as underpin the development of the Runcorn New Town (the New Town). This was designated in 1964 with the aim of providing improvements in housing and living environments for people displaced from slum clearance areas in Liverpool.
- 2.2.4 The New Town was designed and developed using town planning and urban design principles that were progressive for their time, particularly in respect of transport and accessibility. The design principles that were adopted were based on the Radburn housing layout principles. These design principles led to a high degree of segregation between vehicular traffic and housing. In terms of land use, a carefully planned and integrated zoning strategy was developed, with residential development sited on or near the UK's first Bus Rapid Transit system (BRT) known as the Runcorn Busway. The Runcorn Busway was designed to provide high penetration and access to key community facilities, including the Shopping City, which was the UK's first American style shopping mall, and which was established at Halton Lea.
- 2.2.5 Land zoned for industrial and employment use was introduced on the periphery of the residential land in the New Town, for example at Astmoor and Whitehouse Industrial Estates. These were in turn connected to the Runcorn Busway.
- 2.2.6 Integral to the layout and functioning of the New Town was the development of a well-defined network of expressways throughout Runcorn that had connections to Widnes via the bridge and the surrounding strategic highway network. These are discussed later in

this Section.

2.2.7 Typically, the bridge currently carries 83,000 vehicles per weekday, exceeding the Congestion Reference Flow (CRF) of 70,915 vehicles. This relationship shows that the peak flows will exceed capacity on an average day. Traffic flow data collection has shown that peak traffic demand on the bridge is often in excess of capacity, being over 5000 vehicles per hour in each direction. This issue is despite the 1977 change to its current configuration of 2 lanes in each direction and it's renaming as the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB).

2.2.8 The SJB is at the heart of the Borough's transport network, connecting its communities either side of the Estuary at the Runcorn Gap. It is part of a strategic network linking the inter-urban M56 and the M62, and is recognised by the DfT as a congestion hotspot. It provides a fragile level of network resilience as the only major crossing of the River between the M6 at Thelwall in the east, and the Mersey tunnels to the west. It also provides access to the ports of Liverpool and Manchester and their airports, as well as access to freight terminals.

2.3 Population in Halton

2.3.1 The 2001 National Census (Reference 6) indicated that the total population in the Borough in 2001 was 118,208 (with 57,135 males and 61,073 females). Government data suggests that this figure rose to 118,900 in 2004 and 119,500 in 2006. The Council's UDP identifies that the population declined from a peak of 124,900 in 1991 to 118,208 in 2001. The UDP (Reference 2) also notes that population forecasts are projected to fall to 114,600 by 2010. However, recent population estimates for 2006 have shown an increase in population numbers of 1,292 people from the 2001 Census level (Reference 6).

2.4 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

2.4.1 The Government's standard measure of deprivation and inequality in England is the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), recently updated in 2007 (Reference 7). The IMD covers a number of aspects of deprivation including disadvantage in education, income, employment, health, and housing.

2.4.2 The IMD for 2007 (Reference 7) not only contains some of the latest data available, but also is one of the most comprehensive sources of deprivation indicators, as some 37 different indicators are used.

2.4.3 Overall, the Borough was ranked as the 39th (worst 12%) most deprived Borough in England in 2007 (based on the average rank), out of 354 local authorities, (with 1st being the most deprived and 354th the least deprived), which is an improvement on its 2004 ranking of 21st most deprived (Reference 7). This indicates that, based on the average IMD rank, deprivation levels within the Borough are improving. In a sub-regional context, the Borough is less deprived than the neighbouring Boroughs of Liverpool and Knowsley, which are designated within the top most deprived Boroughs, but is not as prosperous as most others.

2.4.4 In addition, the 'concentration' of deprivation in the Borough went down from 20th position in 2004 to 27th worst in England in 2007 (Reference 7). 'Concentration' is a key way of identifying hot spots of deprivation within an area. However, there is still room for improvement.

2.4.5 Within the Borough there are 8 Super Output Areas (SOA's) in the top 975 SOA's in

England, i.e. within England's top 3% most deprived. This is up from 6 in 2004. The most deprived neighbourhood is ranked 306th out of 32,482 and is situated in the Windmill Hill area of Runcorn (Reference 7).

- 2.4.6 Figure 2.1 shows the IMD rankings in the Borough in relation to income deprivation. Income deprivation is one of a wide number of indicators of social deprivation. Figure 2.1 shows the key areas of income deprivation in relation to the Core Bus Route Network including the Runcorn Busway, which connects the concentrated areas of social deprivation in Runcorn. This is an important attribute of the Runcorn Busway.

2.5 Car Availability in Halton.

- 2.5.1 It should also be noted that the 2001 National Census (Reference 6) identified that 29.4% of households within the Borough do not have access to a car or van compared to the combined average of 26.8% for England and Wales. These figures are the latest available and will not be updated until 2011 (Reference 6). The wards of Castlefields and Windmill Hill in Runcorn, and Riverside and Appleton in Widnes contain the greatest percentage of households without access to a car/van.

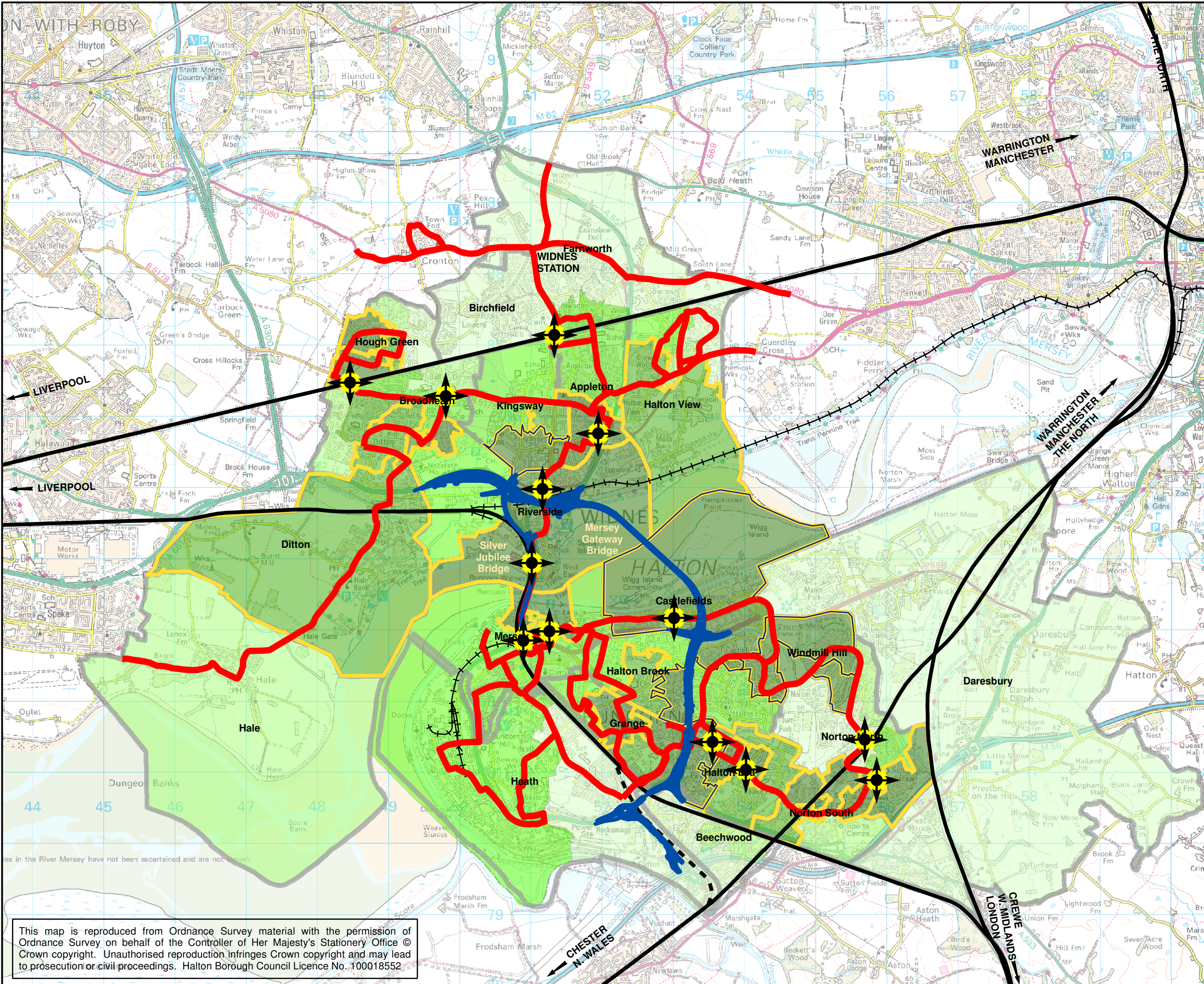
- 2.5.2 Figure 2.2 shows the levels of car ownership by ward in the Borough.

2.6 Business and Economic Prospects

- 2.6.1 The economy of the Borough has been performing well relative to the sub region and it is forecast that this level of performance will continue subject to the recent general deterioration in economic conditions that are now being experienced across the UK. However, there is a concern with regard to the supply of skilled labour.
- 2.6.2 It is forecast that by 2020 there will be an increase in demand for employees of around 6,000 positions, which is likely to result in a supply shortfall of 3,000 employees (Reference 2). The inability to meet the demand locally implies that there will be a need for substantial net commuting, alongside a growth in population.
- 2.6.3 Therefore, if the economic aspirations are to be realised, then the Project proposals and associated sustainable transport measures are extremely important for the area's development, particularly as there is evidence of a miss-match between local future employment opportunities and the local supply base of labour.

2.7 HALTON'S TRANSPORT SYSTEM AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.7.1 The following section considers the key issues related to the transport modes in the Borough including the network, services and facilities under the following headings:-
- Highway network;
 - Current railway network;
 - Buses;
 - Cycling and pedestrian networks;
 - Focus groups;
 - Road safety;



Legend

Local Interchanges

The Mersey Gateway Project

Halton Core Bus Network

Freight Railway Route

Proposed Halton Curve

Passenger Railway Route

Income IMD 2007 Worst 4%

Income IMD 2007 Worst 20%

Halton Ward Boundaries

Income IMD 2007 Rank

232 - 3429

3430 - 6689

6690 - 11480

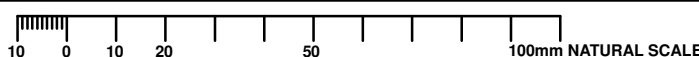
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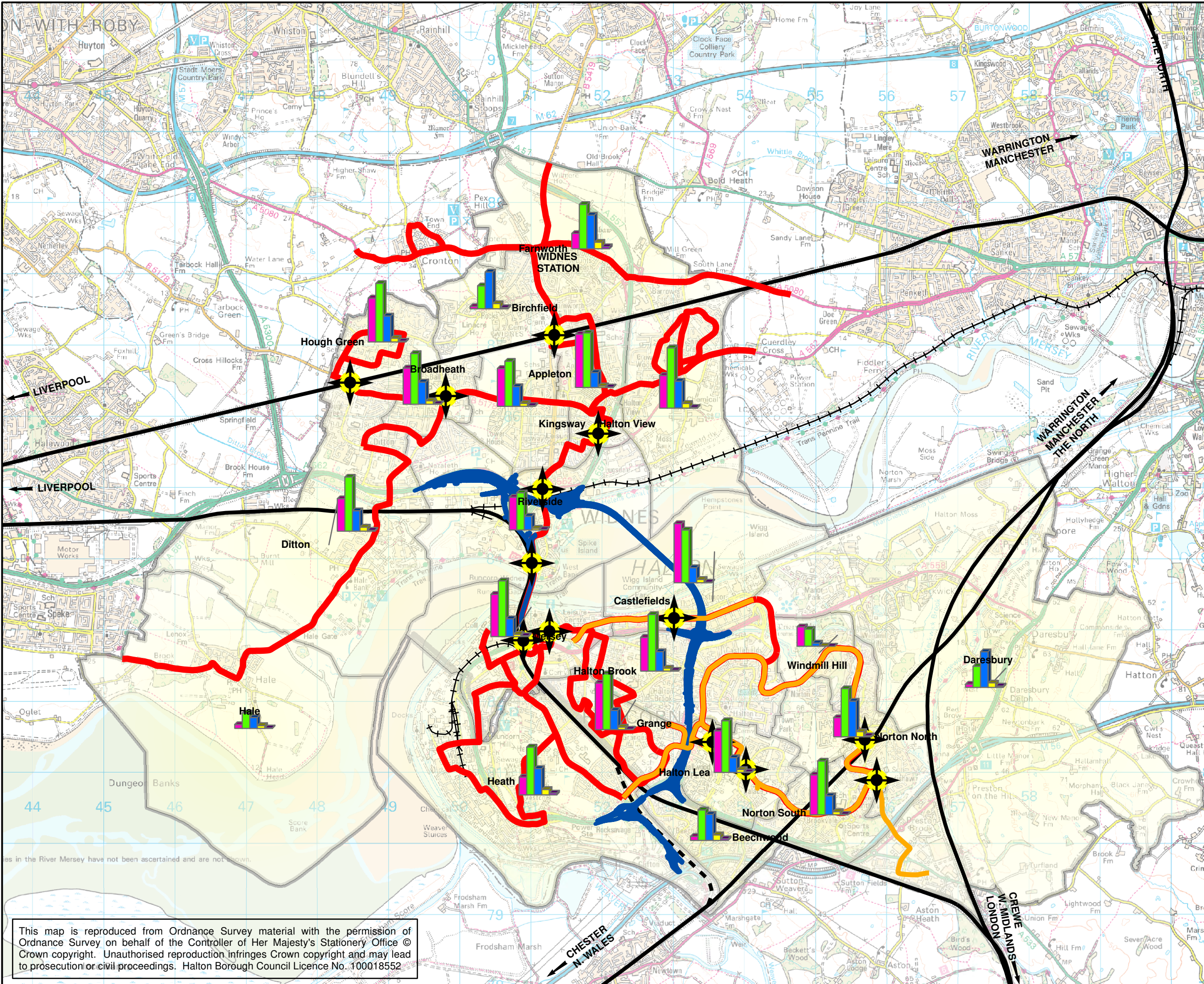
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Client	HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL		
Project	MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY		
Title	INCOME INDICES OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION RANKINGS		
			
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Legend

- Local Interchanges
- The Mersey Gateway Project
- Id**
- Runcorn Busway
- Halton Core Bus Network
- Freight Railway Route
- Proposed Halton Curve
- Passenger Railway Route
- Car Ownership Levels**
- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more
- Halton Ward Boundaries

Client

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project

MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title

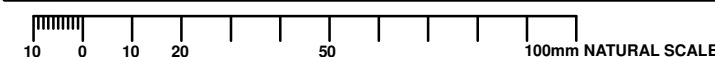
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- Freight;
 - Canals and waterways;
 - Mobility management; and
 - Real time passenger information (RTPI) intelligent transport systems and signage.
- 2.7.2 The Project offers significant opportunities for sustainable transport as part of the much wider regeneration programme, discussed in Section 4.
- 2.7.3 The Borough is a very compact urban area whose physical and socio-economic characteristics provide a fertile medium for sustainable travel. Communities across the Borough are generally linked by a comprehensive network of walking, cycling and public transport routes.
- 2.7.4 An analysis of local area statistics from the 2001 Census (Reference 6) reveals that many journeys are relatively short within the Borough. For example 49.41% of economically active people, aged 16-74 years, travel less than 5km to work (Reference 6).

2.8 THE HIGHWAY NETWORK

- 2.8.1 The highway network in Runcorn, which largely evolved as part of the development of the New Town, is significantly different in character from that in Widnes, which has evolved in a similar way to most industrial towns in the UK. In Runcorn, the SJB connects with an extensive and well defined network of Expressways designed primarily for motor vehicles. It is the dominant highway infrastructure which includes the following major links:-
- A558 Daresbury Expressway;
 - A533 Bridgewater Expressway;
 - A533 Central Expressway;
 - A553 Southern Expressway;
 - A533 Eastern Expressway; and
 - A577 Weston Point Expressway.
- 2.8.2 The Expressways were designed, where possible, to provide a high degree of segregation between motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. Local bus services mainly use the local highway network (with Sections of bus priority measures at key locations mostly introduced as part of the Council's first and current LTP). However, a dedicated segregated Busway system was developed in the 1960's and 1970's by the previous Runcorn and Warrington and Runcorn New Towns Authorities. The highway network and the Runcorn Busway is managed and maintained by the Council.
- 2.8.3 In Widnes the principal roads are as follows:
- The A562 primary route connecting the SJB with the southern route into Liverpool which serves Liverpool John Lennon Airport (Liverpool Airport) and Liverpool Port; and

- The A577 Widnes Eastern bypass primary route constructed to link the SJB with M62 at Junction 7, and onwards to St. Helens. Construction on Phase 1 M62 Junction 7 to Ashley Way started in November 1992, and opened in 1994. Phase 2 between Ashley Way and the SJB was completed in 1996.

2.8.4 The key issue affecting the highway network is one of congestion resulting in delay and poor journey time reliability. Without doubt the worst Sections of the highway network for delays are the approach roads to the SJB and the connecting junctions.

2.9 THE CURRENT RAILWAY NETWORK

2.9.1 The Borough is dissected by 7 railway routes, two of which are currently assigned to railway freight traffic only. The railway routes are shown on Figure 1.1. These consist of the following:-

- The Liverpool branch of the West Coast Main Line which serves Runcorn railway station and Liverpool;
- The main spur of the West Coast Main Line (between Weaver Junction and Warrington Bank Quay railway station) used by the main Scottish, West Midlands and London Euston Virgin rail services. No local railway stations are currently located on this section of the West Coast Main Line within the Borough;
- The route linking Liverpool Lime Street to Warrington Central and Manchester Piccadilly, with stations at Hough Green and Widnes in the Borough;
- The Manchester and North Wales coast line linking Manchester to Warrington Bank Quay and on to Chester, Llandudno and Holyhead, with a local railway station at Runcorn East;
- The section of the Garston to Timperley railway freight line linking Ditton roundabout junction (A562 and A533) in the Borough to Fiddlers Ferry power station. Although this route is currently used exclusively for freight traffic, it passes through the heart of the Widnes Waterfront regeneration area, and, therefore, has a potential role to play in providing local passenger railway services as part of improved services and provision arising from the Mersey Belt linkages Strategy;
- The Runcorn Docks branch, which caters for freight traffic to and from the western Runcorn docks system. This branch is linked to the West Coast Main Line Liverpool branch south of Runcorn railway station; and
- The Halton Curve linking Halton Junction (on the West Coast Main Line) in the Heath ward of Runcorn, to Frodsham Junction, on the Liverpool to North Wales coast railway line. This short section of the railway network is currently used by occasional freight trains however a Parliamentary passenger train operated in 2008 on summer Saturdays and comprised of one journey from Chester to Runcorn direct with no advertised stops at Helsby or Frodsham.

2.9.2 Although this railway network provides a comprehensive series of external linkages for residents and businesses within the Borough, the various lines do not connect and, therefore, interchange opportunities are poor. Significantly, following the closure of Ditton railway station in the mid 1990's, there is no direct passenger railway service linking Widnes and Runcorn together. The only direct local railway line linking stations within the Borough is the Liverpool to Manchester route which links Hough Green and Widnes railway stations.

2.9.3 It is important to stress that existing public transport and walking and cycling linkages

between the various railway stations in the Borough are underdeveloped and poorly differentiated. Figures released by the Office of the Railway Regulator ORR (Reference 8), show that passenger railway travel to and from railway stations within the Borough is greatly suppressed when compared with other similar areas across the North West. This is mainly due to the following:-

- Limited Park and Ride (P&R) facilities at stations with the exception of Runcorn railway station on the West Coast Main Line Liverpool Branch;
- Poor passenger facilities at stations (old and underused railway station buildings – Widnes and Hough Green) and limited booking office opening hours (Runcorn East and Widnes);
- Poorly sited stations on the edge of the urban area, especially Widnes and Runcorn East that are sited in remote locations relative to the nearest commercial centres.

2.9.4 The latest published information on railway station usage in the Borough for 2006/7 is as follows (Reference 8):-

- Runcorn railway station: 429,706 passengers;
- Runcorn East railway station: 108,787 passengers;
- Widnes railway station: 264,634 passengers; and
- Hough Green railway station: 143,556 passengers.

2.9.5 The current passenger railway operators on the rail routes that serve the Borough are as follows:

The West Coast Main Line

- Virgin West Coast operates an hourly train service between Liverpool Lime Street and London via Runcorn, Crewe and Stafford on the Liverpool branch of the West Coast Main Line;
- Virgin West Coast also operate regular services on the Weaver Junction to Warrington Bank Quay section of the West Coast Main Line through the Borough. However no local railway station exists on this route; and
- London Midland operate a half hourly semi-fast service on the Liverpool branch line of the West Coast Main Line linking Liverpool Lime Street to Birmingham via Liverpool South Parkway, Runcorn, Acton Bridge, Winsford and Hartford, and Crewe and then on to Stafford, Wolverhampton and finally Birmingham New Street.

Liverpool to Manchester Route

- Northern Rail operates local stopping services between Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester Oxford Road via Liverpool South Parkway, Hough Green, Widnes, Warrington Central and Irlam;
- East Midland Trains operate a service linking Liverpool Lime Street to a wide range of destinations across South Yorkshire, East Midlands and East Anglia via Widnes, Warrington Central and Manchester Piccadilly; and

- First Trans Pennine operate a service linking Liverpool Lime Street to Warrington Central and Manchester Piccadilly with Leeds, York and the North East, although the majority of trains do not call at stations within the Borough.

2.9.6 Northern Rail and East Midlands Trains combine to provide a basic three trains per hour service through Widnes railway station in each direction (Monday to Saturday daytimes) to both Liverpool and Manchester city centres.

Manchester and North Wales coast line

- Arriva Trains Wales (Arriva) provides an hourly service linking Manchester Piccadilly to Warrington Bank Quay, Chester, Llandudno and Holyhead along the North Wales line. The only railway station on this line within the Borough is Runcorn East, which is located on the eastern edge of the New Town. The railway station is located next to the Runcorn Busway and has recently been designated as a Community Railway Station as part of a national initiative promoted by Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACORP).

2.9.7 Rail currently accounts for a very small percentage share of work related journeys within the Borough, estimated at 1.25% (Reference 6).

2.9.8 In summary, in terms of key railway issues, the Borough enjoys excellent railway links to neighbouring areas within the Liverpool City area and Merseyside Region, and is well placed for express services to and from London. However, significant issues remain as follows:-

- Limited internal passenger railway market in the Borough, due to the nature of the network;
- Limited P&R facilities;
- Railway demand is suppressed due to poor facilities at local railway stations;
- Bus links between stations to facilitate interchange are not well publicised and are poorly differentiated for example at Runcorn East railway station;
- Widnes railway station is remote from Widnes town centre; and
- Relatively poor marketing of services locally.

2.10 BUSES

2.10.1 Local bus services provide the foundation of the local public transport network within the Borough, and the vast majority of all local public transport trips. The Council's accessibility model shows that most of the Borough's population live within 400m of a bus stop (Reference 1). Despite the extensive nature of the network, local bus services account for 7.12% of Journey to Work trips within the Borough, below the North West regional average of 8.56% (Census Data, 2001).

2.10.2 Given the high density of population, the high level of accessibility to the bus network and comparatively low car ownership within the Borough, this may be regarded as a disappointingly low return. Comparative Journey to Work data for other local authority areas (Table 2.0) suggests that, although bus use in the Borough is relatively strong, there would appear to be significant opportunity to grow the market share and achieve mode shift.

Table 2.0 Comparative Journey to Work data: People aged 16 - 74 who usually travel to work by bus, minibus or coach.

Local Authority	Region	Percentage
North West England Average	-	8.56
England Average	-	7.51
Kingston upon Hull Unitary	Yorkshire & The Humber	12.81
Middlesbrough Unitary	North East	11.24
Ipswich Unitary	East of England	10.40
Newport Unitary	Wales	9.86
Blackpool Unitary	North West	9.72
Portsmouth Unitary	South East	8.59
Redcar & Cleveland Unitary	North East	7.97
Swindon Unitary	South West	7.65
Halton Unitary	North West	7.12
Peterborough Unitary	East of England	6.53
Medway Unitary	South East	5.47
Warrington Unitary	North West	5.23
Milton Keynes Unitary	South East	4.74
Telford & Wrekin Unitary	West Midlands	4.29

- 2.10.3 Based on information provided by the bus operators, services are generally under utilised with an average passenger occupancy rate of only 15% (Monday to Friday inter peaks). The nature of the demand for bus travel within the Borough is very fragmented with the majority of passengers making relatively short trips.
- 2.10.4 There are two major bus operators in the Borough. Arriva (North West and Wales) is the principal operator of commercially operated bus services, providing over 60% of the registered bus mileage within the Borough. Halton Transport Ltd, the municipal owned operator, accounts for approximately 34% of the operated mileage share in the Borough.
- 2.10.5 In addition, there are a further 10 smaller operators providing local bus services within the Borough, mainly on contracted services for the Council. This suggests that competition for tendered service work within the Borough is relatively healthy. The Council currently spends in the region of £730,000 per annum on securing socially necessary bus services, (i.e. those not provided commercially by bus companies). The most significant of these are:-
- Runcorn evening services (Runcorn Town Centre to Weston Point and Halton Lea to Murdishaw via Castlefields, Windmill Hill, Norton, Runcorn East Station);
 - Murdishaw Bus Interchange to Runcorn East employment areas, especially Whitehouse Industrial Estate, Daresbury Business Park, Daresbury Science and Innovation Centre (Daresbury SIC) and Manor Park. This service was originally introduced in 2002 using DfT Urban Bus Challenge funding and is now funded by the Council; and
 - Evening and Sunday services linking Widnes to Warrington town centre.
- 2.10.6 In addition, approximately 40% of the Council's revenue budget for supported local bus services is assigned to fund "de minimis" agreements, which are permitted under the terms of the Transport Act 1985. These agreements are typically used to divert or alter existing commercial bus services to operate in certain areas or times of the day, without

the need to go through the usual competitive tendering process.

- 2.10.7 Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show the Core Bus Route Network in the Borough as defined by the Council's Bus Strategy 2006/7 – 2010/11.
- 2.10.8 Currently, the three main bus corridors (on the Core Bus Route Network) with the highest bus frequencies are:-
- Runcorn Busway Circular – (Halton Lea – Castlefields – Windmill Hill - Runcorn East – Murdishaw – Brookvale and Palacefields) every 6 minutes in each direction (Monday to Saturday daytime);
 - Hough Green – Chestnut Lodge – Widnes Town Centre every 5 minutes in each direction (Monday to Saturday daytime);
 - Halton Lea – Runcorn High Street Bus Station via Halton Lodge and Grangeway (Cherry Tree) every 15 minutes (Monday to Saturday daytime); and
 - The cross river corridor comprises of all services that currently operate over the SJB as part of the Core Bus Route Network between Runcorn Old Town and Widnes West Bank. This comprises 7 services, including the X1 express service that operates between Windmill Hill and Liverpool. In summary, up to 19 buses per hour currently operate in each direction over the SJB, Monday to Saturday daytime.
- 2.10.9 Both main operators have invested heavily in recent years, and as a consequence, the Borough is served by a high quality network of modern, low floor, fully accessible vehicles (95% of buses are now low floor within the Borough).
- 2.10.10 Whilst Arriva is the principal commercial operator within the Borough, both Arriva and Halton Transport Ltd operate competing services on much of the Core Bus Route Network. The only significant Sections of the network uniquely served by one of these two operators are as follows:-
- Runcorn Busway Loop North – Castlefields – Windmill Hill: Arriva;
 - Hale Village: Arriva;
 - Beechwood (Runcorn): Arriva;
 - Weston Point and Village (Runcorn): Arriva;
 - Crow Wood and Weates Close areas of eastern Widnes; Halton Transport Ltd; and
 - Sandymoor (Runcorn); Halton Transport Ltd.
- 2.10.11 Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show the Core Bus Route Network in the Borough, as defined by the Council's Bus Strategy in the LTP2 (Reference 11).

KEY

- Core Bus Routes
- Secondary Bus Routes

Map labels include: Cronton, Cronton Lane, Lunt's Heath, Upton, Farnworth, Widnes, Hough Green, Ball o' Ditton, Appleton, Kingsway, Ditton, Gurdale Road, Speke Road, Ditton Road, Hale Bank, West Bank, Lugsdale, Moss Bank, Halton View, Shell Green, Barrow's Green, Crow Wood, and Hale Village (in inset map).

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2.10.12 Improvements to the Bus Network in Halton during LTP2 (2006/7-2010/11)

2.10.13 The Council's Bus Strategy (Reference 11) defines a hierarchy of local bus services within the Borough as follows:-

- Core Bus Route Network;
- Strategic employment links;
- Local community services; and
- Cross boundary links.

2.10.14 The foundation stone of the local bus network is the Core Bus Route Network as shown in Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4. (Reference 11). For this part of the bus network the following service quality standards have been agreed with the bus companies, and are now being delivered as part of a voluntary quality partnership:-

- 'Turn up and go' frequencies of every 15 minutes (or better) between 07.00 and 19.30 (Monday to Saturday daytimes);
- At least 30 minute frequency of service, evenings and Sundays; and
- All services to be operated by low floor, easy access buses supported by improvements to key passenger facilities and information.

2.10.15 Table 2.1 below summarises some key outcomes from the Council's Bus Strategy (Reference 11) and provides an indication of progress and success achieved to date.

2.10.16 Network Performance - Core Bus Route Network Monday to Saturday Daytime

2.10.17 Figures 2.5 and 2.6 (Reference 11) show the extent to which existing Monday to Saturday daytime frequencies on the Core Bus Route Network meet the service requirement thresholds as set out in the Council's Bus Strategy. It shows that all parts of the Core Bus Route Network in Widnes meet the minimum quality thresholds, whereas in Runcorn the part of the network serving Weston Point and Weston Village in the Heath ward still fails to meet the minimum quality threshold requirements, both in terms of service frequency and vehicle quality.

2.10.18 Evenings and Sundays

2.10.19 Figures 2.7 and 2.8 (Reference 11) show the current provision of service on the Core Bus Route Network during evenings and Sundays. At these times, large areas of northern and eastern Widnes are under-served, as are Weston Point and the northern Runcorn Busway loop. In addition, although the minimum service threshold has been reached on the main Runcorn Busway loop on Sunday daytimes, evening services on the Runcorn Busway remain poor (hourly or less on the northern Section). These areas of the Borough exhibit high levels of social deprivation.

Figure 2.5 Level of Service on Core Bus Route Network-Widnes (Daytime)

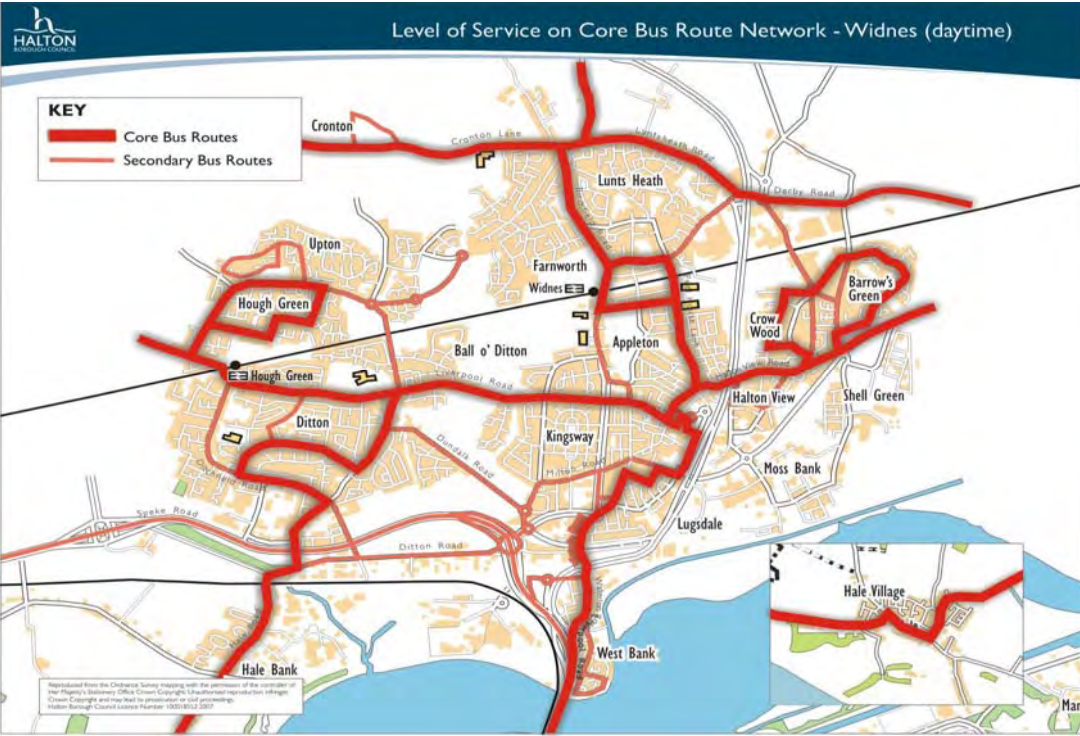


Figure 2.6 Level of Service on Core Bus Route Network-Runcorn (Daytime)

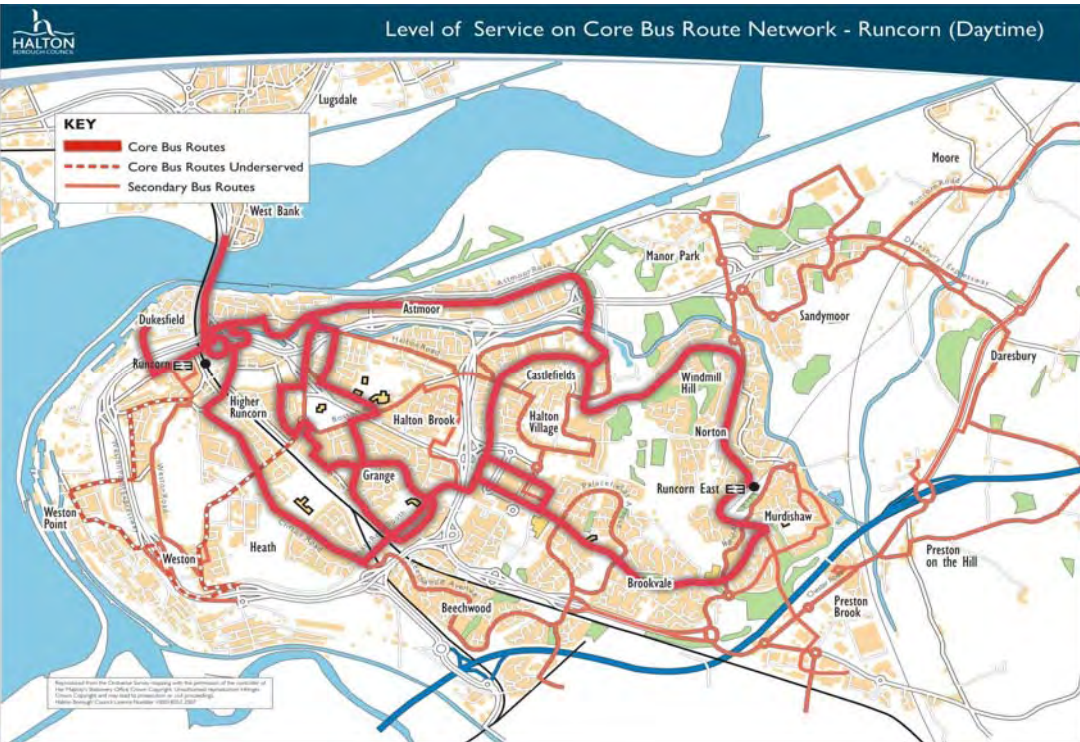


Table 2.1 Progress on the Network since 2005/6

Issue raised in 2006 at the start of the Council's Bus Strategy 2006/7 – 2010/11.	Now June 2008
<i>"Lack of a multi operator ticket covering the whole of Halton."</i>	New "Halton Hopper" multi operator ticket introduced in June 2006. Ticket retailed through the Council's Direct Link Shops, Contact Centre and Internet. Ticket sales approaching 1,000 per month. Discounted versions introduced for learners and NEET (not in employment, education or training) young people.
<i>"Currently there are a number of services within Halton that are not fully accessible."</i>	Over 95% of buses within the Borough are now low floor and fully accessible. The Council continues to work with local operators to ensure the goal of 100% low floor operation is achieved by the end of 2010/11. Arriva introduced a fleet of 39 low floor buses in 2006 at a cost of £4.5m.
<i>"Relatively good cross boundary services on certain corridors"</i>	This remains the case, and has recently been improved following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of a 15 minute daytime and 30 minute nighttime frequency on the service 79C by Arriva in January 2006; • Introduction of a frequent service by Halton Transport Ltd on the service 14 linking Widnes to Liverpool. • Introduction of improved daytime service linking Widnes – St Helens by Arriva; • Enhanced service between the Borough and Warrington; and • New service 700 introduced linking Widnes to Liverpool Airport and Manchester city centre.
<i>"Relatively stable commercial bus network with frequent services throughout the day on most key routes within the Borough."</i>	The bus network remains relatively stable within the Borough. The two main operators, Halton Transport Ltd and Arriva restrict registrations changes to one major change per year.
<i>"Poor interchange opportunities/facilities between the railway and local bus network."</i>	Bus/railway connections have been improved at Runcorn railway station as part of the Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) initiative funded as part of the LTP2. The national "Plus Bus" ticketing scheme was extended to serve Halton from May 2008 allowing through bus/railway ticketing within the Borough.
<i>"Potential funding opportunities for improved new services through "Kickstart" funding etc."</i>	The Council was successful in securing DfT 'Kickstart' funding in 2006 to improve the service 61 in north Widnes. This scheme introduced a 10 minute service in each direction between Farnworth and Widnes town centre.

(Source: Reference 11)

Figure 2.7 Level of Service on Core Bus Route Network - Widnes (Evenings and Sundays).

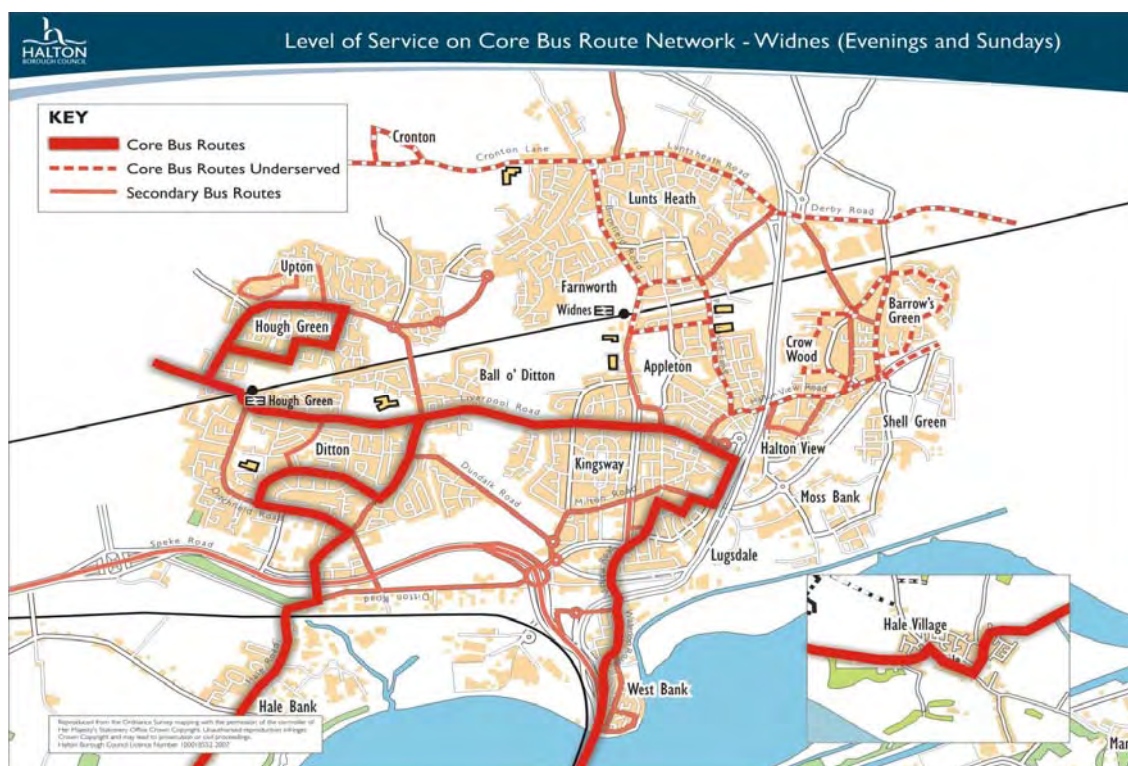
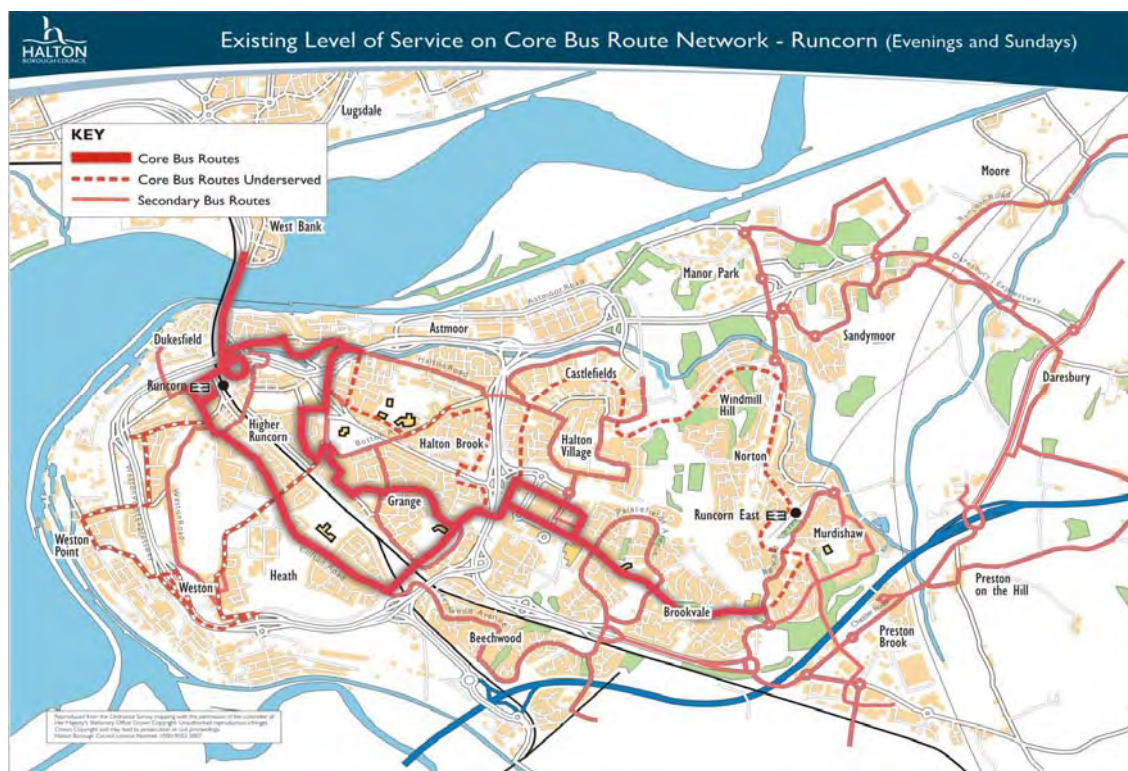


Figure 2.8 Existing Level of Service on Core Bus Route Network - Runcorn (Evenings and Sundays).



2.10.20 Strategic Employment Links

2.10.21 The majority of bus services providing strategic employment links are financially supported by the Council. The services comprise of the following:-

- Service 200 linking Murdishaw and Runcorn East railway station to key employment sites in eastern Runcorn including Daresbury; and
- Service 13 linking Widnes Town Centre to the Widnes Waterfront economic development zone.

2.10.22 Patronage on both services is relatively subdued due to the dispersed nature of employment locations within the two areas and varied and flexible employment patterns, resulting in difficulties in operating conventional fixed route services in these areas. Halton Transport Ltd also provides a limited number of commercial peak hour services to Whitehouse Industrial Estate.

2.10.23 Local Community Services

2.10.24 These services are mostly operated by Halton Community Transport (HCT) under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Council. Services funded to date include the following:-

- Dial a Ride;
- Women's Safe Transport;
- Accessible Learners Service for post 16 learners; and
- Volunteer driver's scheme.

2.10.25 The services offered by HCT are greatly valued in the community and have consistently outperformed targets set for accessible travel in both LTP's.

2.10.26 Following a recent best value review, the Council and HCT are currently in the process of better integrating these services as part of the new 'Door2Door' service.

2.10.27 Cross Boundary Services

2.10.28 The majority of the commercial bus services within the Borough operate across the boundaries into neighbouring local authority areas. Details of cross boundary links provided from the main centres within the Borough are shown in Table 2. 2 below.

2.10.29 As can be seen in Table 2.2 below, there is an excellent service linking the Borough to Liverpool City Centre, with all major centres served. However the following key gaps remain:-

- Runcorn to St. Helens (particularly St. Helens Hospital); and
- Widnes to Chester (only served on a Sunday).

2.10.30 Furthermore, the only cross boundary bus corridor, not directly served by passenger railway services is between the Borough and St. Helens town centre. There are also very poor cross boundary local bus services to urban areas in Vale Royal (Cheshire East and Chester Shadow Authority), in particular Northwich and Winsford, although Frodsham and

Helsby are well served on the Manchester to North Wales railway line (services call at Runcorn East Station) and local bus services linking Runcorn (Halton Lea) to Chester.

- 2.10.31 The commercial viability of key bus services within the Borough is heavily dependent upon cross boundary patronage levels in other neighbouring authority areas, particularly Merseyside.

Table 2.2 Summary of Cross Boundary Bus Services that operate within the Borough from Widnes Town Centre, Halton Lea and Runcorn Town Centre

Key cross boundary destination	Number of services per hour	Service numbers	Combined Monday – Saturday peak hour Frequency (buses per hour in each direction)	Direct service from Widnes town centre	Direct service from Halton Lea	Direct service from Runcorn town centre
Liverpool	7	X1, 82A, 82B, 79C, 14, 61, 6	16	✓	✓	✓
Warrington	4	62,110,66, X30	5	✓	✓	✓
St. Helens	2	17/ A and 33A	3	✓	✗	✗
Chester	2	X30, 21	2	✗	✓	✗
Huyton	2	6, 61	4	✓	✓	✓
Whiston Hospital	2	6B,61	2	✓	✓	✓
Manchester city centre	1	700	1	✓	✗	✗

2.10.32 The Mersey Dee Alliance

- 2.10.33 The Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) was born out of the recognition of shared economic and community interests across the West Cheshire, Wirral and North East Wales Area. The Alliance is led by the local authorities of Cheshire, Chester, Denbighshire, Ellesmere Port & Neston, Flintshire, Wirral, Wrexham, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and Merseytravel
- 2.10.34 The partnership recognises that the area represents a single economic sub-region with a population of approximately 930,000, which is divided by a national boundary. Partners agree to work together on common strategic interests to sustain the economic future of the travel-to-work area, and facilitate a coherent approach to social, economic and environmental issues.
- 2.10.35 MDA project areas include transport and accessibility, labour market skills, and business investment. Examples of recent MDA successes include the Workwise initiative and the Sub-regional Spatial Strategy for West Cheshire and North East Wales.
- 2.10.36 The MGTS recognises the role of the MDA in terms of developing and promoting access across the region particularly in cross boundary movement and associated services and facilities that can underpin employment opportunities for people who live in the Borough but work outside the Borough, and people who wish to travel into the Borough from the Mersey Dee Alliance area by sustainable modes.

2.10.37 Bus Patronage

- 2.10.38 Approximately 5.94 million passenger journeys were reported to have been made on the local bus network within the Borough during 2007/8 compared with 6.07 million in 2006/7. (Reference 32). This figure indicates a 2% fall in local bus passenger journeys during 2007/8. This follows the unprecedented reported 10% growth in 2006/7 following the introduction of the improved concessionary travel arrangements and significant improvements to commercial services by Arriva in January 2006 (Reference 32). Evidence appears to point to, at best, a stabilisation or slight fall in bus patronage following strong growth in 2006/7.

2.10.39 The Runcorn Busway

- 2.10.40 The Runcorn Busway was developed as an integral part of the Runcorn New Town over 30 years ago, and is the first example of a segregated Busway or BRT system to be introduced in the UK. Its location is shown on Figures 1.1 and 2.9. The Runcorn Busway is classed as highway, and its use is largely restricted to buses, council maintenance vehicles and emergency service vehicles, only.

- 2.10.41 There are 4 component Sections to the Runcorn Busway as follows:-

- A loop taking in Halton Lea including its two bus stations (North bus station and South bus station), Castlefields, Windmill Hill, Runcorn East railway station, Murdishaw Interchange and Palace Fields;
- A branch between Murdishaw Interchange and the Whitehouse Industrial Estate;
- A branch from Halton Lodge to Beechwood which links Beechwood Avenue to Halton Lea via the Arriva Runcorn bus garage; and
- A branch running through the Astmoor Industrial Estate, between Bridge Street in Runcorn Old Town and Arkwright Road.

- 2.10.42 The Council has implemented several key improvements to infrastructure on the Runcorn Busway system as part of its programmes through LTP1 and LTP2 as follows:-

- Modernisation and upgrade of Halton Lea north bus station;
- Improvements to key interchanges and stops including Halton Hospital, Brookfields and Halton high school;
- Castlefields district centre proposals;
- Removal of poorly maintained vegetation and landscaping; and
- Removal of pedestrian bridges with low clearances, and unpopular pedestrian subway crossings.

- 2.10.43 Although the Runcorn Busway system remains a key part of the Borough's Core Bus Network, parts of the system require considerable upgrade and maintenance/management issues remain challenging. Key issues include:-

- Poor pedestrian connections between Halton Lea north and south bus stations when Halton Lea shopping centre is closed;

- A number of stops still require upgrading especially Halton Brow and Murdishaw Interchange;
- Poor information and signage across the Runcorn Busway system;
- Poor perceptions of safety and personal security on segregated Sections of the Runcorn Busway system; and
- Under-utilised Sections of Runcorn Busway, particularly the Murdishaw to Whitehouse Industrial Estate link.

2.10.44 Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) Strategy in Halton

2.10.45 A Strategy of introducing Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) improvements has been integral to both of the Council's LTP's, and continues to be an effective way of bringing about a highly integrated range of public transport, highway and urban realm improvements and interventions encompassing the following:-

- Improvements to bus stops and the passenger waiting environments;
- Bus priority measures to improve reliability and regularity of services and reduce journey times;
- Integrated walking and cycling facilities;
- Traffic calming; and
- Improved street lighting and safety and security measures.

2.10.46 The QBC Strategy and programme has been integral to improvements on several corridors including Widnes to Runcorn via the SJB and the Liverpool corridor in Widnes on Liverpool Road. This has been undertaken in conjunction with bus operators and has included step change improvements and enhancements to on-street passenger facilities and information, as well as some real time information displays linked to the real time information system and associated technology platform that is being taken forward by Merseytravel.

2.10.47 Key Interchange Points

2.10.48 The key bus interchange points on the local bus network shown in Figure 2.1 are as follows:-

- Halton Lea north and south bus stations;
- Runcorn High Street bus station;
- Widnes Vicarage Road;
- Widnes Green Oaks;
- Murdishaw Interchange;
- Halton Hospital; and
- Chesnut Lodge (Widnes).

2.10.49 Issues Identified in The Halton Access Plan 2006/7 - 2010/11

The Halton Access Plan (Reference 11) identifies the need for improvements to local bus services to key out-of-borough health facilities namely Warrington General Hospital and Whiston Hospital in Knowsley. The latest accessibility indicators from the DfT (Reference 11) reaffirm that general levels of accessibility to a range of key facilities are high within the Borough. However, further key improvements are needed to local bus services to ensure better levels of accessibility to out-of-borough hospital sites.

2.11 CYCLING, PEDESTRIAN AND EQUINE NETWORKS

2.11.1 Cycling is a key mode of transport that can offer a sustainable alternative to the car and has many of the same benefits as walking. The Government's 2004 White Paper, The Future of Transport (Reference 12), states that 'there is huge potential for levels of walking and cycling to increase' and "while there will always be some short trips for which a car is the most convenient choice (carrying heavy shopping, for example), many of these short journeys could be done on foot or by bike". It goes on to recognise that 'concerns about safety deter many people from choosing to cycle or walk' and that it is the Government's aim "that people are safer, and feel safer, whether riding a bike or walking.

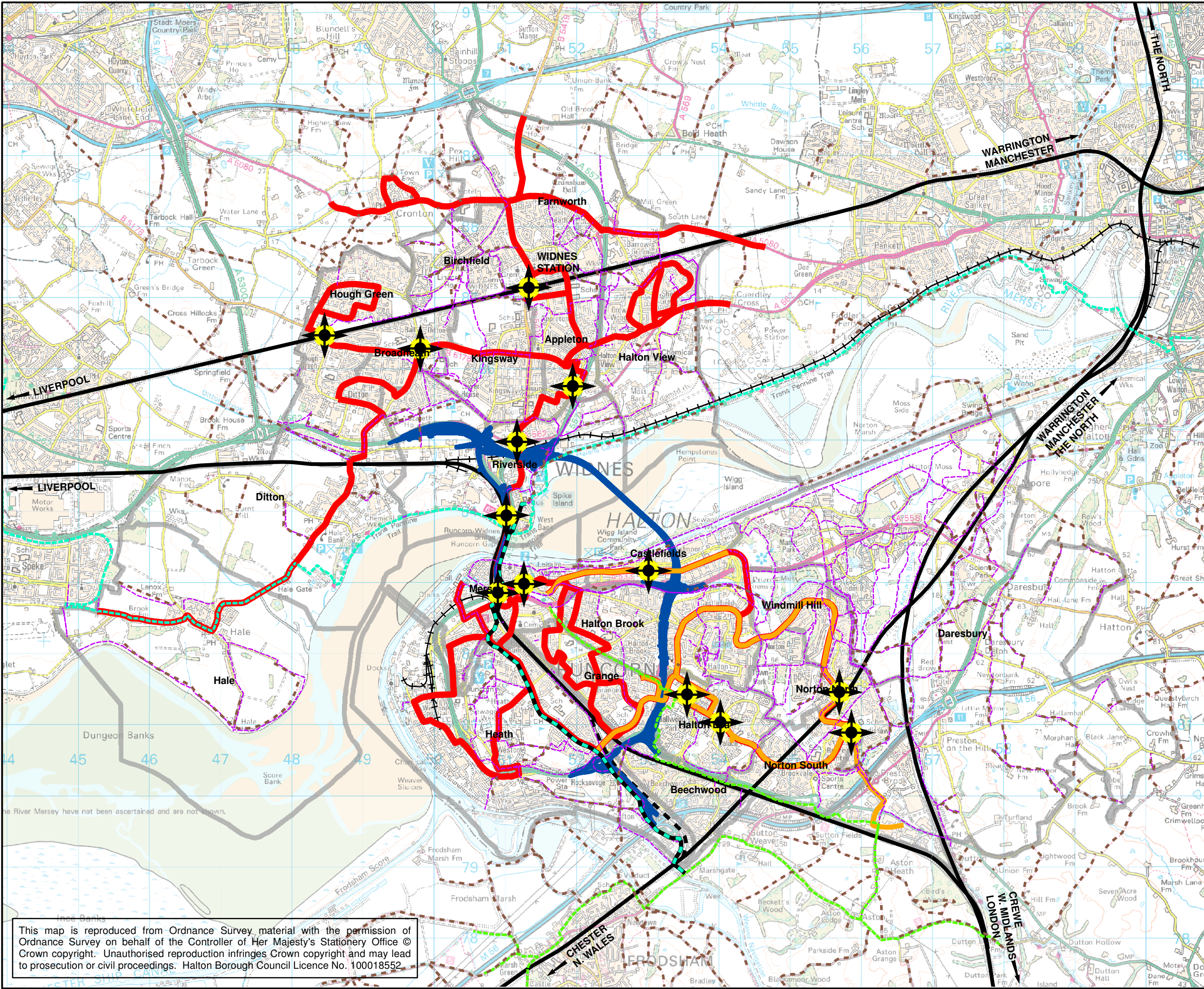
2.11.2 The Borough possesses an extensive network of walking networks, cycling networks, bridleways and public rights of way that extend beyond its boundaries into neighbouring areas.

2.11.3 Halton's Cycle Network

2.11.4 The Borough affords excellent potential for cycling journeys (both recreational and utility). However, currently only 2.03% of work journeys are made by bicycle within the Borough. Given that nearly 50% of local residents travel less than 5km to their place of work (Reference 6), there is significant potential to encourage a greater number of short journeys to be made by walking and cycling. Given the relatively advantageous topography and mild climate, cycling offers a realistic option for shorter journeys within the Borough.

2.11.5 Sustrans claims that 75% of the UK's population lives within 2 miles of a route on the National Cycle Network (Reference 13). This gives some indication of the potential demand for these types of routes and facilities. Two key strategic routes run through the Borough. These are the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 in Widnes, and NCN 5 in Runcorn. The routes of NCN 62 and NCN 5 in the Borough are shown on Figure 2.9. This figure also shows the proposed route NCN 82, which could connect Widnes with Runcorn via the SJB. This NCN route has not been introduced to date because of the inherent deficiencies of the existing facilities on the SJB, and poor connections into Widnes West Bank and Runcorn Town Centre.

2.11.6 The Borough already has an excellent network of cycle routes, which are particularly well developed within central and east Runcorn. The Council has inherited a comprehensive network of segregated cycle routes, which were specifically designed around the Radburn housing layout principles by the previous Runcorn Development Corporation discussed earlier. In Widnes, which has a more traditional highway network, the corresponding cycle network mostly relies on the use of shared road space. Over the last 10 years, the Council has made considerable progress in upgrading the cycle network through the LTP process and funding mechanisms.



Legend

- Local Interchanges
- The Mersey Gateway Project
- Public Right of Way
- PROW
- NCN 5
- Trans Pennine Trail (NCN 62)
- Proposed future route for NCN
- Id**
- Runcorn Busway
- Halton Core Bus Network
- Freight Railway Route
- Proposed Halton Curve
- Passenger Railway Route
- Halton Ward Boundaries

Client

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project

MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title

LOCAL INTERCHANGES AND BUS, CYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORKS

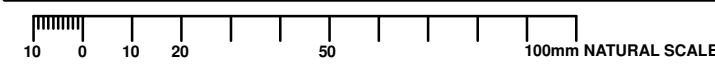
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Scale (At A3)	Date	Drawn
1:50,000	15/12/2008	Jane Hunter

Drg No	Rev.
FIGURE 2.9	-

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2.11.7 The current cycle network can best be described as a hierarchy of interlinking and complementary routes and corridors, consisting of:-

- Longer distance strategic routes of which the majority are part of the defined National Cycle Network and include the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 in Widnes and NCN 5 in Runcorn;
- Core intra-borough cycle routes linking key commercial centres with the secondary commercial centres and other key facilities such as health, leisure and employment; and
- Neighbourhood routes which branch off the core cycle network.

2.11.8 As part of LTP2 all three hierarchies of the cycle network have been progressively updated and improved. However, there are currently poor and undefined strategic cycle links between the Borough and the neighbouring boroughs of St. Helens and Knowsley.

2.11.9 Scope for Increasing Cycling Trips in Halton

2.11.10 Work undertaken by Gifford in 2006 (Reference 37) indicated that higher proportions of cycle use might be anticipated in wards with high proportions of journeys to work of between 2km and 5km in length. However, it was further noted that for travel to work journeys of less than 2km, walking might be a better alternative.

2.11.11 Table 2.3 compares Journey to Work data for the Borough and a sample of other authorities for people aged 16-74 who usually travel to work by bicycle.

Table 2.3 Comparative Journey to Work data: People aged 16 – 74 who usually travel to work by bicycle.

Local Authority	Region	Percentage
North West England Average	-	2.27
England Average	-	2.83
Kingston upon Hull Unitary	Yorkshire & The Humber	11.65
Peterborough Unitary	East of England	7.70
Portsmouth Unitary	South East	7.08
Ipswich Unitary	East of England	5.72
Swindon Unitary	South West	5.08
Warrington Unitary	North West	3.22
Blackpool Unitary	North West	3.19
Milton Keynes Unitary	South East	3.02
Middlesbrough Unitary	North East	2.54
Telford & Wrekin Unitary	West Midlands	2.51
Halton Unitary	North West	2.03
Redcar & Cleveland Unitary	North East	1.94
Newport Unitary	Wales	1.46
Medway Unitary	South East	1.36

Source: (Reference 6) 2001 census

2.11.12 Given the high density of population, particularly in wards near the SJB, the comparatively low car ownership within the Borough and the poor facilities across the SJB for cycling (including poor linkages into West Bank and Runcorn Old Town), there would appear to be significant opportunity to grow the market share for Journey to Work trips by cycle. Whilst there are a number of factors that influence cycle use, there is strong evidence to

suggest that improvements to facilities, information and training do stimulate growth in cycling.

- 2.11.13 Cycling England claims that the 6 cycling town demonstration projects have experienced an average increase in trips by bicycle of 20%. (Reference 44)

2.11.14 Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 in Widnes and NCN 5 in Runcorn

- 2.11.15 The Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 in Widnes is a multi-user route that runs across the North West from Southport in Merseyside to Hornsea in East Yorkshire. NCN 62 passes under the SJB in Widnes West Bank. It runs along the northerly side of the Mersey Estuary in an east to west alignment alongside the 3MG site and onto Spike Island. It then continues east following the St Helens Canal and then heads towards Warrington, Lymm and Stockport before crossing the Pennines and into South Yorkshire.

- 2.11.16 NCN 5 is the strategic multi user route that exists in the south of the Borough in Runcorn and provides strategic connections between Runcorn Old Town, Vale Royal, Weaver Valley, Chester and North Wales. NCN 5 comes into the south easterly quadrant of the Borough near the Whitehouse Industrial Estate and runs parallel with the Southern Expressway. At Beechwood, it turns north to connect with Halton Lea shopping centre and then turns North West to Runcorn Old Town where the route currently terminates.

2.11.17 The Bridgewater Way

- 2.11.18 A key component of the existing cycling and walking networks in the Borough is the Bridgewater Way, which provides extensive connections to the sustainable transport network, both within and outside the Borough, on the south side of the Mersey Estuary. The Bridgewater Canal towpath, which is 65km long, forms the multi-user route known as the Bridgewater Way trail which is also a cycle track.

- 2.11.19 The Bridgewater Way has been developed as part of a multi agency initiative including the Bridgewater Canal Trust and 8 local authorities including Halton Borough Council.

- 2.11.20 This highly strategic, multi-user route presents major opportunities in terms of sustainable transport, leisure and the local economy in both the District and the region, particularly as the towpath connects Runcorn Old Town with key centres including Daresbury Park and Daresbury SIC, Warrington, Altrincham and the westerly quadrant of the Greater Manchester conurbation including Leigh, Worsley and central Salford.

- 2.11.21 The network of long distance strategic routes and core cycle network is shown in Figure 1.1.

- 2.11.22 Table 2.4 below summarises locations in Runcorn and Widnes where formal cycle parking provision is in place. The issues and opportunities in relation to cycle parking and promoting and supporting cycle use and interchange between cycling and bus and railway travel are identified and discussed in more detail in Section 4. In addition, the Council has recently installed secure cycle lockers at Widnes and Hough Green railway stations.

Table 2.4 Locations in Halton where formal cycle parking exists.

Widnes	Runcorn
Albert Road (Junction with Marzhan Way)	Church Street
Albert Road (Junction with Cooper Street)	Halton Lea (Trident Entrance)
JJB Car Park	Brindley Arts Centre
Widnes Market Entrance (by car park)	Phoenix Park Visitors Centre
Morrison's	Runcorn Station
Widnes Road	Norton Priory
ASDA Entrance (trolley bays)	Asda
Victoria Square	
Kingsway Learning Centre	
Widnes Health Centre	
Victoria Park	
Liverpool Road (Junction with Hale Road) Chesnut Lodge	
Liverpool Road (Junction with Hale Road) Co-op	
Halton Stadium (secure, covered storage)	

2.11.23 Key Cycle Issues

2.11.24 Key cycle issues have been identified as follows:-

- The lack of a formal cycle route across the SJB between Widnes West Bank and Runcorn and connections between the local and strategic networks including NCN 62, NCN 5 and the Bridgewater Way;
- The routes from Runcorn railway station are inadequately maintained and signposted. There is a direct link from the railway station to Runcorn Riverside College. However, the link to Runcorn Old Town is considered indirect and unattractive;
- The lack of strategic cycle routes and links between Widnes and St. Helens and key parts of southern Knowsley, especially Huyton and Prescot;
- The lack of a new strategic cycle link between northern Widnes and Penketh in Warrington to complement NCN 62;
- A need for improvements to the core cycle network in the western Runcorn area to better link Rocksavage, Weston Point and Frodsham areas to central and eastern Runcorn and across the SJB to Widnes and the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62;

- A need for improvements to key orbital cycle routes in Widnes to better directly link suburbs, commercial and employment areas to leisure and education facilities;
- Measures to improve access to cycles for households, businesses and visitors in the area are needed, for example, short term cycle hire facilities;
- Lack of revenue has affected the maintenance of cycle lanes/off road cycle facilities and greenways; and
- Cycleway signing needs improving and integrating with the wider sustainable transport network.

2.11.25 Walking/Pedestrian Routes

2.11.26 The Borough has two distinct types of pedestrian provision as follows:-

- A network of footways alongside public highways; and
- An independent network of footpaths that is separate from the public highway network, mainly in the Runcorn New Town area.

2.11.27 The 2001 Census (Reference 6) indicates that the modal split for journeys to work by the Borough's residents in employment is as follows:

- Private car 71%;
- Public transport 9%;
- Pedestrian 10%;
- Cycle 2%; and
- Other 8% (work from home/no fixed place of work).

2.11.28 The 2001 Census (Reference 6) also found that the trip length to work by the Borough's residents in employment was as follows:-

- Less than 5km: 49%;
- 5km – 9km: 16%;
- Greater than 9km: 25% and
- Other 10% (work from home/no fixed place of work).

2.11.29 Since 2004, when 'Walking and Cycling - an Action Plan' was published by the DfT (Reference 14) there has been increasing Government encouragement to promote and support projects for pedestrians that provide a real alternative to using the private car for short journeys.

2.11.30 Given increasing investment in walking, awareness of climate change issues and the positive health implications of increasing physical activity, it is important that walking is actively promoted as a viable alternative to the car for short journeys, and that challenging targets for mode share are set. A survey conducted by Gifford on Tuesday 4th December 2007 between 7am and 7pm identified a total of 104 pedestrians using the footway on the SJB to walk between Runcorn and Widnes West Bank.

- 2.11.31 The increased accessibility resulting from the proposed SJB de-linking works will facilitate direct access to Runcorn and the Widnes Waterfront regeneration areas and remove many of the physical barriers to walking that are currently experienced by pedestrians.
- 2.11.32 Once tolling is introduced on both the SJB and the New Bridge, walking will gain a competitive advantage. Over the longer term, this is likely to be set against a background of rising fuel costs, making walking and cycling even more attractive to those who currently use their car. National Travel Statistics 2005 (Reference 9) indicate that over 40% of car users would walk more 'if road user charging is introduced. This factor may be more relevant in the Borough with its low car ownership levels and a significant proportion of its population living in deprived areas.
- 2.11.33 The traffic modelling undertaken using the Mersey Gateway Variable Demand Model (Mersey Gateway VDM) suggests that the Road User Charging Order under the (provisions of the) Transport Act 2000 will have an effect on travel behaviour. A change in mode is one of the key potential impacts.

2.11.34 Key Walking Issues

- 2.11.35 The key walking issues are summarised as follows:-
- Lack of an attractive, well connected and integrated pedestrian link across the SJB between Widnes, West Bank and Runcorn Old Town;
 - Poor permeability of existing pedestrian routes and connections in West Bank, particularly areas to the West of Victoria Road and Waterloo Road and over Queensway towards 3MG; and
 - Poor permeability and lack of clear and direct pedestrian routes and connections between Runcorn Old Town, Runcorn railway station and Runcorn Riverside College and the proposed housing growth point area at Weston.

2.11.36 Equine Issues

- 2.11.37 As part of the stakeholder consultation for the MGSTS, the British Horse Society requested that the Council permits ridden horses to use the proposed improved pedestrian and cycle facilities over the existing SJB following the opening of the New Bridge in 2014. In response to this, and recognising the importance of providing good quality equestrian routes, the Council will fully evaluate the potential of allowing equestrian access as part of the proposed improved pedestrian and cycling facilities on the SJB and its approaches. To this end, the Council will work with the British Horse Society to ensure that a full safety audit is carried out, and appropriate facilities provided as set out in Section 4.

2.12 FOCUS GROUP CONSULTATION ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

- 2.12.1 An in-depth focus group consultation initiative was commissioned by the Council and conducted in January and February 2008 to help support and inform the development of the MGSTS (Reference 15).
- 2.12.2 The research consisted of six in-depth focus group discussions, conducted between 28th January 2008, and 4th February 2008. With between seven and nine respondents per group, the research interviewed a total of 46 people. Each group lasted a minimum of 90 minutes. Discussions were held in convenient and accessible locations in the Borough. All groups were moderated by an experienced market researcher in accordance with the

Market Research Code of Conduct.

- 2.12.3 The focus group research was concerned solely with issues associated with sustainable transport as opposed to the project and examined the following in detail:-
- Attitudes and opinions on sustainable transport, to travel as a whole, and to individual aspects, for example public transport. This included in-depth probing for reasons, motivations and influences on people's attitudes and opinions; and
 - Behaviour and usage in terms of current travel patterns, for example, the impact of a New Bridge and usage of different forms of transport.
- 2.12.4 The groups comprised:-
- 3 groups of males; 3 groups of females;
 - 3 groups in Runcorn and 3 in Widnes;
 - 3 groups of respondents with access to a car/van and 3 without access to a car/van; and
 - 3 groups of older respondents (40-60); 2 younger (20-40) and 1 of older teens (16-21).
- 2.12.5 In addition to open-ended questions, a series of stimulus materials were used in the groups including maps of the Borough, photographs of the SJB and the New Bridge.
- 2.12.6 In summary, the headline findings from the focus groups as a whole were as follows:-
- Personal safety and security and fear of crime and attack is a major deterrent to using public transport, especially buses;
 - Public transport is limited in the service it can provide;
 - Convenience and comfort are key reasons for using cars; and
 - Participants, most of whom were residents of the Borough, demonstrated a low level of awareness of wider environmental issues and carbon footprints.
- 2.12.7 Safety And Security**
- 2.12.8 Respondents stated they wanted to 'make it safer to walk around', 'to walk to bus stops', and 'to train stations.'
- 2.12.9 Specific areas identified for improvement included the under-passes. For example, those in Runcorn New Town to be better lit/made safer to walk through.
- 2.12.10 Bus Stops in the Borough are identified as a major inhibitor to the use of public transport. Comments included, 'more lighting needed at bus stops', and 'make them safer, more welcoming, then more people would use them.'
- 2.12.11 The Runcorn Busway was identified as 'dangerous', a 'real danger', and that 'the stops on the Busway are not attractive or welcoming' and that 'lighting is poor.'
- 2.12.12 The railway stations were also heavily criticised. Runcorn East was identified as 'unfriendly,' 'unwelcoming' and 'very poorly lit.' It was also noted that 'no-one there/no

security/no staff' and that the car park is insecure,' 'wouldn't leave my car there,' Hough Green and Widnes were also identified as 'need for better lighting' and 'better security.' Even the taxi office 'looks uninviting/unwelcoming/dark/unsafe.' Runcorn Railway station was viewed slightly more positively as 'bright' and 'well maintained.'

2.12.13 Walking routes improvements were identified as follows:-

- More walkways along the River to be opened; and
- The walkway across the SJB should be made more user friendly,' 'more attractive to use,' 'have better access/better signage from both sides of the River,'

2.12.14 Improved road safety suggestions for pedestrians and cyclists included the following:-

- More separation of pedestrians from cars;
- Better control of buses/coaches/cars stopping/parking outside schools;
- More speed bumps;
- More speed cameras;
- Better policing;
- Give more priority to pedestrians;
- Better road planning at entrances/exits to some car parks; and
- Introduce more dropped kerbs.

2.12.15 The respondents who owned cars were very positive about the advantages of having access to a car which was generally perceived as quicker, easier, more comfortable and more convenient than using public transport. Other comments included the necessity of a car for transporting disabled relatives, or large families. Again, many mentioned the safety and security that the car offered compared to public transport.

2.12.16 Cars were typically not viewed as a problem in the area, and it was viewed that their use was having a limited individual impact on the environment.

2.12.17 Those problems which were identified by respondents who had access to a car/van included:-

- Congestion on the SJB exacerbated by the closure of the SJB to road traffic due to incidents, and road works;
- The cost of driving;
- Speed bumps;
- Other drivers;
- Road works; and
- No health benefits.

2.12.18 Public Transport

2.12.19 The general perception of respondents who were bus users was that public transport is unreliable and involves a lot of waiting around.

2.12.20 Key comments included the following:-

- *'Buses don't go where I want to go'*
- *'Need more routes'*
- *'More destinations'*
- *'Limits where you can live'*
- *'It limits where I can go'*
- *'It limits where I can work'*

2.12.21 Instances of buses driving past passengers waiting at the stops, especially at night and concerns over the safety on board buses were also raised including:-

- Overcrowding at peak times;
- Letting passengers stand in the bus;
- People falling over on the bus;
- Driving off before get chance to sit down;
- Drivers always in a rush;
- Pulling out in front of cars; and
- Stop thugs getting on.

2.12.22 Suggestions to improve personal safety and security of passengers on buses in the Borough included the re-introduction of bus conductors.

2.12.23 Similarly, suggestions also included improving the comfort of buses, improved courtesy from drivers, better information, discount tickets and lower fares.

2.12.24 Comments also included 'if public transport was better, cars would not be used as much,' that 'public transport would cut the traffic' and that 'you can get more people in a bus than in a car.'

2.12.25 A number of respondents cited specific routes that they had used and had experienced problems as follows:-

- Widnes to Manor Park/Daresbury;
- Runcorn to Whitehouse employment area for the evening shift;
- Widnes to Whiston hospital;
- Widnes to Warrington; and

- Runcorn Old Town to Warrington.

2.12.26 Evening and night time services in particular were criticised, comments included:-

- *'During day time services - they are quite regular'*
- *"Need later services"*
- *'So they can be used to go out'*
- *'Especially Fridays/weekends'*
- *'Would encourage me to use buses more/use car less/less drinking and driving'*

2.12.27 Trains

2.12.28 The times of trains were criticised as inconvenient. Other issues included the inaccessibility/lack of attractiveness of the train stations.

2.12.29 Summary of Key Bus Issues Arising From the Focus Group Consultation

2.12.30 Although great strides have been made to improve the quality of bus services within the Borough and have resulted in patronage growth, a number of key issues remain to be addressed including:-

- The bus network remains very traditional with services primarily focused on existing commercial and town centres;
- Communities in western Runcorn are relatively poorly served by local bus services compared to other comparable areas (stimulus to improve services is provided by a new Housing Growth Point proposal in western Runcorn);
- The Runcorn Busway is under utilised, requires upgrading in terms of information, signing and facilities, is perceived as unsafe in parts and the connections between Halton Lea north and south bus stations are poor;
- The northern section of the Runcorn Busway serving wards of high income deprivation in Castlefields and Windmill Hill is poorly served in the evenings;
- Bus services to peripheral employment areas remain relatively poor and difficult to sustain on a commercial basis due to relatively low passenger numbers and dispersed nature of journey patterns;
- In terms of factors mitigating against the use of buses, the public have concerns that the services are not as convenient and comfortable compared with car journeys, and frequencies are limited. Access and facilities at bus stops need improving and personal security is an issue;
- Bus services to new housing areas particularly Sandymoor (eastern Runcorn) and Upton Rocks (northern Widnes) remain relatively poor;
- There is evidence of oversupply and wasteful competition between the two main operators on the key Widnes – Hough Green – Wavertree – Liverpool City Centre corridor; and
- The bus network remains vulnerable to external operational influences in neighbouring areas particularly Merseyside.

2.13 ROAD SAFETY

2.13.1 A key concern in relation to transport is safety, particularly on roads. In 2000 the Government produced a safety Strategy entitled, 'Tomorrow's Roads Safer for Everyone,' (Reference 16). Key national targets were set within the Strategy for 2010 based on the average of 1994-1998 data as follows:-

- A 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents;
- A 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured (aged under 16); and
- A 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate.

2.13.2 Analysis and investigation of incidents on the SJB and on the northbound and southbound approaches has revealed that this route is a concern to the Council. Typical incidents have involved rear end shunts, misjudgement of speed or distance and vehicles colliding whilst changing lanes.

2.13.3 The high demand for travel, coupled with the physical limitations and carriageway arrangements, have resulted in the route continuing to incur casualties, despite remedial measures such as imposing 30/40 mph speed limits. It is recognised that there is no realistic chance of fully addressing this problem without utilising the opportunities afforded by the Project to rationalise and reduce demand and recast the role of the SJB to serve only local journeys.

2.14 FREIGHT (All MODES)

2.14.1 Freight distribution plays a major part in the Borough's economy. The White Paper on the Future of Transport: A Network for 2030 identified that efficient freight transport is essential to the economy and prosperity of the UK.

2.14.2 The recent work of Eddington (Reference 22), which is discussed in Section 3 confirms that transport is vital to the economy. He argues that reliability of transport networks, including international networks is a high priority for freight. Eddington's work highlighted the need to tackle delay and unreliability on the transport network as this has significant direct costs on people and businesses by increasing business costs and affecting productivity and innovation. It is therefore essential that the Council provides the necessary facilities to meet the demands of freight distribution and increased reliability to support this highly important component of the Borough's economy and its contribution to the Region and UK as a whole.

2.14.3 The Council, as part of a Greater Merseyside initiative, has undertaken a review of freight in the region, which is reported in both the Council's LTP and the LTP for Merseyside. The Merseyside Freight Study (Reference 36) was commissioned to gain a greater understanding of the issues surrounding freight with the aim of developing a long-term strategy and Action Plan to:-

- Promote future economic growth;
- Reduce accidents, health risks and environmental damage; and
- Be affordable, practical and capable of implementation.

- 2.14.4 The Council's overriding objective on freight is to assist economic regeneration with minimal environmental costs. Main areas of the freight strategy in terms of the MGSTS include:-
- The provision of the New Bridge crossing of the River within the Borough;
 - Freight distribution sites to be located next to railway routes and docks where possible, and in all cases to be accessed by suitable roads;
 - To implement road and junction improvements to assist HGV movements;
 - To pursue the scheme to improve the Halton Curve;
 - To ensure that site traffic generated from developments involving modal change has a minimal environmental impact;
 - To liaise with the Highways Agency (HA) to assist with the implementation of motorway junction improvements and motorway signing; and
 - Work with Network Rail to develop opportunities to get road freight onto rail.

2.15 Canals, Inland Waterways and Associated Infrastructure and Facilities

- 2.15.1 This section provides an overview of the provision of facilities for inland waterways within the Borough.
- 2.15.2 The Manchester Ship Canal passes along the south side of the Estuary, as shown in Figure 1.1 and provides passage for sea-going vessels of up to 15,000 tonnes. The canal also serves the Runcorn docks, which has road connections to the chemical, glass and pottery industries, and can cater for vessels up to 6,500 tonnes.
- 2.15.3 Runcorn Docks can only accommodate vessels up to 6,500 tonnes. However, the convenient road connections are invaluable for the industries located nearby. Seven million tonnes of freight per annum are transported by the Manchester Ship Canal (Reference 39), thereby reducing the impact on the local highway network. However, with a supporting policy framework this could be increased to 16 million tonnes per annum.
- 2.15.4 Current supportive Government policy includes:-
- A New Deal for Transport-Better for Everyone (July 1998) (Reference 18);
 - A Better Quality of Life a Strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK (May 1999) (Reference 19); and
 - Waterways for Tomorrow (June 2000 Reference 20).
- 2.15.5 The River Weaver Canal runs to the south of Runcorn and connects with the Manchester Ship Canal as shown on Figure 1.1. The River Weaver Canal can only accommodate smaller sea vessels up to 1,000 tonnes and therefore with ships becoming larger, this canal has less potential for development. Traditional canals of up to 50 tonnes capacity cannot be expected to have any significant freight future.
- 2.15.6 The Bridgewater Canal runs along the eastern boundary of the Borough within Runcorn as shown on Figure 1.1. This canal has a branch from the Murdishaw Marina to Runcorn Town Centre via Norton, Windmill Hill and Castlefields. The Runcorn branch of the canal

used to be connected through to the Runcorn Docks system, however, this link was severed in the 1960's with the construction of the various spur roads and infrastructure linked to the SJB.

2.15.7 This canal is now used as a leisure cruising facility. As part of the MGRS for Runcorn discussed in Section 4, it is proposed that subject to further detailed engineering feasibility work and evaluation that this canal connection is reinstated between Runcorn Old Town and Runcorn Docks and the Manchester Ship Canal.

2.15.8 The St Helens Canal, commencing near West Bank runs eastwards on the north side of the Estuary. This canal is currently used as a small marina at Spike Island but is only navigable for a short length due to the presence of a low wooden footbridge just upstream of Spike Island. It also retains a significant leisure role, with the towpath providing the route for the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 for walkers and cyclists.

2.15.9 Many of these key routes are now classified as multi user routes such as NCN 62 as discussed above, and serve as significant leisure attractions. As part of the MGSTS efforts will be made to utilise key links as important local sustainable transport corridors through:-

- The greater promotion of the links with improved signage;
- Infrastructure improvements to better link the routes with the existing walking, cycling and public transport networks at key nodes;
- Further public realm improvements along the banks in line with the quality already provided along the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 (section between Spike Island and Fiddlers Ferry power station); and

2.15.10 Key Canal and Waterway Opportunities

2.15.11 The following opportunities have been identified:-

- With focused attention there is the potential to better integrate the inland waterway and canal network with walking, cycling and public transport networks;
- The need for infrastructure improvements to better link the routes with the existing walking, cycling and public transport networks at key nodes;
- The need for public realm improvements along the banks, in line with the quality provision already provided along the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 (the section between Spike Island and Fiddlers Ferry Power Station); and
- There is potential to introduce a new waterbus service linking Runcorn Old Town Centre to the Murdishaw basin providing a leisure service linking key communities in Castlefields, Windmill Hill and Norton (stops at Astmoor, Castlefields north (Bridgewater Day Centre), Castlefields (The Barge), Phoenix Park (for Norton Priory), Windmill Hill, Norton and Murdishaw Basin. This service could also potentially serve the Runcorn Collegiate site, which is proposed to be constructed in the Murdishaw area and the Daresbury SIC.

2.15.12 Rail Freight and the 3MG Site

2.15.13 In order to reduce road freight and congestion within the Borough there would need to be a substantial increase in the use of rail freight. There are two freight only lines within the Borough which could restrict growth of rail freight.

- 2.15.14 The line from Ditton to Arpley in Warrington is important for trans-modal railway freight, as it serves the 3MG development site shown on Figure 1.1. The second line runs from Runcorn railway station to the industrial sites at Runcorn and Weston Point docks, adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal shown on Figure 1.1.
- 2.15.15 Ditton has also been identified by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) as a strategic regional site. The Council, which is one of the key partners in 3MG, endorsed the Masterplan for the site in December 2004.
- 2.15.16 The programme will realise the potential for developing a major new rail/road freight handling and logistics park at Ditton covering approximately 180 hectares. It will build upon the established assets of the location to create a sustainable 21st century freight park which is a flagship for the region and which will create up to 5,000 new jobs.
- 2.15.17 3MG will support a number of local, regional and strategic objectives regarding the sustainable movement of goods and materials, as outlined in the Government's Transport White Paper, the North West Regional Freight Strategy and in the Council's LTP.
- 2.15.18 The transfer of freight from road to rail will help to reduce congestion as well as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions with a typical freight train transporting the equivalent of around 50 lorry journeys. Landscaping and environmental improvements will be achieved through the implementation of a landscaping strategy. This will mitigate any potentially negative environmental implications and include the creation of landscaped 'buffer zones.' In addition, areas of land currently classified as Brownfield will be comprehensively remediated, resulting in a great overall improvement to the environmental quality of the area.
- 2.15.19 The Ditton site has many advantages which make it ideal for a freight hub within the North West's developing freight network as follows:-
- Bringing back into use extensive areas of derelict and contaminated land;
 - Existing access onto the West Coast Main Line Liverpool branch and the Halton curve;
 - Direct rail access to Warrington via the Garston to Timperley railway route which also connects the Borough to Fiddlers Ferry power station;
 - Site expansion may be achieved by the incorporation of new development land;
 - The opportunity to create a new direct access onto the motorway network; and
 - Daily rail links to deep sea ports and the Channel Tunnel.

2.15.20 Road Haulage

- 2.15.21 Road haulage allows operators ease of access into the freight market as they do not have relatively high infrastructure costs compared with, for example, railway operators.
- 2.15.22 As identified in the Council's LTP, the largest single issue in relation to road freight is the congestion on the SJB. The proposal for the New Bridge, which provides three lanes of traffic in each direction should assist in alleviating localised congestion and associated costly delays.

2.15.23 Air Freight

- 2.15.24 Liverpool John Lennon Airport lies close to the western side of the Borough and currently handles around 15,000 tonnes of freight per year (Reference 9). The Airport benefits from being able to cater for night flights, an essential feature of air cargo capability.
- 2.15.25 The World Freight Terminal at Manchester Airport is accessed from the Borough and other parts of the City Region by the M56 Motorway. It currently handles over 140,000 tonnes of freight per year (Reference 9).

2.15.26 Freight Issues

- 2.15.27 Freight distribution accounts for 11% of the Borough's GDP and 16% employment (Reference 9). 'The largest single issue in relation to road freight is the congestion on the SJB and the need for a new crossing of the River. The congestion on the SJB is recognised by the Council in the LTP as a constraint on the operation and development of freight movements within the Borough.

2.16 MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

- 2.16.1 The Council received national recognition for the work it has carried out on mobility management over the past 10 years, twice receiving Beacon Council status in 2005/6 for better public transport and in 2008/9 for 'Improved Accessibility,' as a joint bid with Merseytravel and the Merseyside authorities. This has been based on an integrated approach to delivering transport/accessibility improvements including the Council's Neighbourhood Travel Team (NTT).

2.16.2 The Neighbourhood Travel Team (NTT)

- 2.16.3 The NTT was formed in August 2002 and is based within the Council's Transport Coordination Section.

- 2.16.4 Currently, the NTT provides a range of services that are designed to improve people's ability to travel into, out of and around the Borough and focuses on promoting and supporting travel change and Smarter Choices. These services are available to anyone living or working within the Borough and currently include working with employers and businesses to promote alternative 'green' travel arrangements for example a car-share database. Key activities are listed below:-

- Working with new and existing business, to develop local travel plans in line with the Council's LTP 2;
- Personalised journey planning service available upon request;
- Freephone travel enquiry line;
- Holding travel surgeries on partner premises and within the community;
- The dissemination of transport and travel information to the community and employers;
- Conducting travel surveys with local communities and employers;

- Feeding back to the Council's transport coordination team with the findings from travel surveys and surgeries;
- Producing and distributing travel information leaflets;
- Providing discounted taxis through the "Links to Work" scheme for people unable to reach their place of employment by conventional public transport; and
- Delivering 'Travel Training' for key socially excluded members of the community.

2.16.5 Using their local experience, the NTT has raised a number of issues of concern as part of the development of the MGSTS:-

- Persistent problems associated with the low mobility and localised travel horizons of households living in low-income communities across the Borough. Specific interventions continue to be needed to improve access to key facilities such as fresh food, education, health, training, and employment opportunities;
- High public transport fares, especially for short journeys, recognising that the majority of local bus journeys within the Borough are less than 2.5 miles, and that a typical single journey costs between £1.40 to £1.70. Furthermore, the 'cash' fare single for a typical local cross-river bus journey between Runcorn (Halton Lea) and Widnes is currently £2.30;
- Lack of attractive local bus service links to key employment areas on the edge of the urban area, made increasingly difficult to provide due to flexible working patterns;
- Inaccessible infrastructure preventing people with limited mobility in accessing key public transport services and facilities across the Borough; and
- Lack of information/knowledge of the network of sustainable travel choices.

2.16.6 Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI), Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and Signage

2.16.7 Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) displays are in operation at key stops on routes 14, 17 and 61 between Hough Green and Widnes town centre, and Farnworth and Widnes town centre, as well as at key stops within Runcorn. This system was introduced and developed as part of a partnership between the Council, Halton Transport Ltd and Merseytravel.

2.16.8 One of the key passenger benefits of RTPI systems is that they give passengers confidence that buses are operating and are going to turn up even though route 14 is a high frequency service.

2.16.9 Intelligent traffic signage systems that provide variable messages are in place on the SJB to provide motorists with advance information on lane closures. This system is linked into the HA's variable message signing, which covers a wide area of the strategic motorway network incorporating the M6, M62 and M56.

2.16.10 Key RTPI and ITS Issues are as follows:-

- Lack of integration between RTPI and systems for sustainable modes for example between bus and railway services at stations such as Runcorn;

- Lack of a comprehensive system displaying the times of all buses serving the route, regardless of operator. This can lead to confusion and a lack of confidence in the system for the intending passenger;
- Lack of RTPI on low frequency bus routes;
- Lack of RTPI at off line locations such as key employment sites, major retail stores and health and leisure facilities; and
- Lack of RTPI at key stops on the Runcorn Busway such as Murdishaw, Astmoor, Halton Hospital, and Runcorn East.

2.17 CONCLUSION

2.17.1 Section 2 has considered the historical development and provision of transport infrastructure and services within the Borough and has identified a wide range of transport related issues. These issues are summarised below. Addressing them will be key to the Project. Section 4 details how these have influenced the development of the MGSTS.

2.17.2 Demographics

- Although there have been some recent modest improvements, overall the Borough remains a relatively deprived area;
- Despite this improvement, the Borough has seen an increase in the number of wards ranked in the top 3% most deprived areas of England;
- Generally, car availability within the Borough is lower than the average for England. There are several wards with very high percentages of residents with no access to cars or vans;
- Demand for employees is forecast to significantly outstrip the available local labour supply by 2020; and
- Almost half of the Travel to Work journeys within the Borough is less than 5 kilometres.

2.17.3 Public transport

- Although rail services within the Borough are generally good for journeys to neighbouring centres (except for links to St Helens), there appears to be significant potential to grow the demand for rail travel;
- There is little opportunity for intra-borough rail travel and a lack of connectivity between the rail routes limits journey opportunities. The Borough's railway stations currently suffer from poor passenger perceptions of security and accessibility, with limited staffing, restricted P&R provision and poor integration with the bus network;
- Bus use in the Borough is strong and appears to be relatively stable, but comparative Travel to Work statistics suggest that there could be considerable scope to grow the demand for bus travel, especially for journeys to and from work;
- The Borough enjoys a substantial network of high quality, high frequency, accessible bus services, operated commercially during the weekday daytime. However, during the evenings and on Sundays the network coverage deteriorates

significantly, with the Council required to financially support the majority of services;

- Despite good accessibility to services and high service levels, perceptions of bus services remain poor – but especially amongst non-users, concerned with quality and security issues. Addressing these negative perceptions will remain a key challenge;
- Bus services directly serving the Industrial zones are limited, both in terms of coverage and periods of operation;
- There is a strong and successful Community Transport sector within the Borough, (Neighbourhood Transport Team) with the potential to be further integrated into the overall public transport network; and
- Whilst cross-boundary bus links to Liverpool and Warrington are good, there are significant gaps in the links offered to other neighbouring towns.

2.17.4 Infrastructure

- The Runcorn Busway is a unique asset, whose potential should be further developed. The Runcorn Busway currently suffers from poor passenger perceptions, relating to personal safety security, lighting, infrastructure, signage and service levels; and
- The Quality Bus Corridor programme has seen substantial improvements on a number of core routes. The SJB offers the opportunity create a Quality Corridor between Runcorn and Widnes.

2.17.5 Cycling, Walking and Equestrian provision

- The Borough has a well defined network of routes for cycling – especially in Runcorn, but there remain some significant gaps in provision. There is considerable potential to encourage greater use of the cycle for short journeys within the Borough;
- The SJB offers the opportunity to create a new cross-river cycle link to join up the existing long distance cycle routes;
- There are significant opportunities to develop additional recreational and utility cycle routes, especially within Widnes and links into St Helens and Knowsley.
- Opportunities would be created to enhance pedestrian routes between Runcorn and Widnes and on both banks of the Mersey. In particular, walking routes to West Bank, 3MG and between Runcorn Old Town and Runcorn Station could be significantly improved; and
- The opportunity would be created to examine the provision of bridleway and equestrian facilities as part of the enhanced cross river facilities.

2.17.6 Road Safety

- The Project offers the opportunity to reassign traffic to the strategic route, and designate the existing SJB route for local traffic. This will provide further opportunities to introduce safety measures on the route.

2.17.7 Freight

- The MG project offers the catalyst for the freight Strategy across the Borough and further development of the 3MG site.

2.17.8 Waterways

- Opportunities exist to enhance the use of the waterways and towpaths in the Borough for recreational and leisure use.
- The potential for reopening the Runcorn branch of the Bridgewater Canal will be explored as part of the remodelling of the area approaching the SJB.

2.17.9 Smarter Choices

- The work of the NTT is recognised and the MGSTS would seek to further this in the delivery of Smarter Choices activities to promote sustainable travel and encourage greater consideration of mode choices and awareness of alternatives.

3 NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 It is important at the outset to set out the Government's agenda and thinking in relation to sustainable transport and economic growth beyond the period of the Council's LTP (Reference 1).

3.1.2 This section therefore sets the scene in terms of the wider transportation and planning policies, strategies and frameworks at the national, regional and local levels. It therefore provides an overview of the key issues that need to be addressed by the MGSTS in order to demonstrate consistency with current thinking and approaches to the delivery of sustainable transport. This is particularly pertinent following the publication of 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System' (TaSTS) Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World, DfT (Reference 21). The Government are currently consulting on the transport goals, challenges and processes involved in taking TaSTS forward, and have issued the 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' (DaSTS) document, which sets out how regions can influence Government decision making on transport investment from 2014 onwards. The consultation ends on 27 February 2009.

3.1.3 TaSTS is a very important discussion document, particularly in the context of the MGSTS, that sets out the Government's response to the following landmark reviews and studies relating to economic development and sustainability:-

- Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change (October 2006); and
- The Eddington Transport Study - The Case for Action (Reference 22). The document also assesses how the recommendations of these reports can be translated into the Government's short, medium and long-term policy making process

3.1.4 The key conclusions of the Stern Review are very much focussed on developing strategies and interventions that can help to combat climate change, recognising the significant and highly detrimental impact this could have on the UK's economy if no action is taken. The Stern review recognises, however, that there is still time to avoid the worst impacts.

3.1.5 TaSTS recognises that the Stern Review 'is not about sacrificing all economic growth to reduce CO₂, but about tackling climate change in the most cost-effective way possible in order to achieve future economic and social objectives.' There are clear parallels here with the Project as it is not simply about providing additional highway capacity, but is central to the social, economic and environmental aspirations of the Borough. The MGRS confirms the potential wider impact of the Project on these matters and its role in stimulating regeneration in five areas of the Borough. Importantly, the proposals to charge drivers on the New Bridge and the SJB will enable better management of car based trips, and help to encourage greater use of less polluting forms of transport.

3.1.6 The Eddington Study was written recognising the government's commitment to sustainable development. It provides advice on the long term links between transport and the UK's economic productivity, growth and stability.

The headline conclusions of the Eddington Report in the context of the MGSTS include the following:-

- Provision of the right transport connections to the right places;

- Good transport systems support the productivity of urban areas; and
- Strategic economic priorities for long-term transport policy should be the growing and congested urban areas and their catchments.

3.1.7 TaSTS identifies 5 broad goals for the Government's agenda as follows:-

- Maximise the competitiveness and productivity of the economy;
- Address climate change by cutting emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases;
- Protect people's safety, security and wealth;
- Improve quality of life, and promote the development of healthy natural environments; and
- Promote greater equality of opportunity.

3.1.8 TaSTS emphasises the importance of making best use of existing networks and improving their performance. The Borough has a long established, highly developed transport network and associated facilities and infrastructure. A key emphasis and focus of TaSTS is on treating the most unreliable, congested and crowded sections of highway to improve end-to-end journey times, for example, trips across the SJB at peak times. This is particularly important for travel to work, domestic and international business trips, as well as the movement of goods and raw and finished materials. Removing delays at bottlenecks, such as the SJB, improves journey time reliability and, hence, makes businesses more competitive.

3.1.9 Proposals to reduce congestion, promote more sustainable development, and facilitate high levels of accessibility and permeability by sustainable modes, such as walking, cycling and public transport should facilitate reductions in greenhouse gases. In relation to motorised transport there are opportunities to introduce new low emission or zero emission public transport vehicles to operate services across the network within the Borough, and surrounding areas.

3.1.10 Protecting people's safety and security is a key issue on the Government's agenda. It is an issue that can actively deter people from using sustainable transport services and facilities unless it can be adequately addressed through safety and security interventions.

3.1.11 There is a strong relationship between issues relating to promoting accessibility and permeability and the design and development of the urban realm. Making interchanges and bus stops more visible and generating activity is one of a number of ways of addressing safety and security issues and instilling more people's confidence in the sustainable modes of transport.

3.1.12 In general, transport's negative impacts on the quality of life can include noise, vibration and intrusion all of which can undermine people's well-being. However, transport also has very powerful benefits, which people value very highly such as the ability to visit friends and relatives, to enjoy the open space and be able to easily access jobs, shops and health and leisure facilities.

3.1.13 People's expectations of comfort, convenience, quality of service, and speed and accuracy of information are increasing, and the government is keen to see that authorities, such as the Council, can adequately respond to these expectations through

its extensive community connections and stakeholder engagement.

- 3.1.14 From the Council's perspective the Project facilitates an opportunity to provide step change improvements to restore and uplift the biodiversity and landscape of large areas of the River estuary.
- 3.1.15 Ensuring that our transport systems provide effective access for everyone, and in particular for disadvantaged groups and disabled people, to jobs, services and social networks is a core aim of transport policy. These factors are embedded in the Council's general approach to transport provision, and are largely delivered through the services of its Neighbourhood Travel Team.
- 3.1.16 Looking at transport's wider impacts, people's life-chances can vary hugely between regions, and there are pockets of income deprivation in even the most affluent of areas in the UK.
- 3.1.17 What is particularly significant, is that the Borough is currently ranked 30th in Government's ranking of deprivation, which indicates that it suffers disproportionately from high levels of social deprivation (Reference 7).
- 3.1.18 A number of the wards in the Borough that exhibit these characteristics lie close to the SJB and the core bus, cycle and pedestrian networks. In order to reduce social exclusion, the MGSTS advocates a highly targeted Action Plan to enhance accessibility.
- 3.1.19 The TaSTS White Paper follows on closely from the previous White Paper 'The Future of Transport,' which was published by the DfT in July 2004 (Reference 17). This sets out a vision for the transport network and future transport investment up to 2030, and seeks to develop a coherent transport system through investment in the following:-
- Road Network to provide a more reliable and freer flowing service for both personal travel and freight, with people able to make informed choices about how and when they travel;
 - Railway Network providing a fast, reliable and efficient service, particularly for inter-urban journeys;
 - Bus services which are reliable, flexible, convenient and meet local needs;
 - Walking and cycling-making these modes a real alternative for local trips; and
 - Ports and airports providing improved international and domestic links.

3.1.20 Transport Bill 2008

In late 2008 the new Transport Act gained Royal Ascent. This will give local authorities important new powers to improve the quality of local bus services, reform the arrangements for local transport governance in the major conurbations and enable councils to take decisions on local road pricing schemes. Therefore the new Transport Act seeks to provide a clearer spectrum of options for local authorities consisting of:-

- Voluntary agreements;
- Statutory Quality Partnership Schemes (QPS); and
- Quality Contracts.

- 3.1.21 Changes also being introduced by the new Transport Act will mean that the QPS may also impose additional new restrictions relating to the subsequent registration of new bus services or the amendment/withdrawal of existing services within the area covered by the QPS. The aim of this new provision is to:-
- Prevent the introduction of new services which might undermine services also specified and provided under the QPS; and
 - Preclude the entry of operators who are unwilling to operate services to the prescribed quality standards as set out in the QPS.
- 3.1.22 The new regulations would also empower local authorities to specify key dates for bus service registration changes as part of a QPS, hence ensuring greater stability to local bus markets. However, the DfT make clear that it remains the responsibility of the Traffic Commissioners to ultimately decide as to whether a bus service meets the quality criteria as set out in a QPS. Under such circumstances the normal 56 day notification period on bus service registration change is suspended and replaced by a decision taken by the Traffic Commissioner as to a practical start date for a new service, or amendment to an existing one, based on the nature of the QPS.
- 3.1.23 The new draft regulations also specify a procedure for the review of timings, frequencies and maximum fares under a QPS. The draft guidelines state that maximum fares must be reviewed at least every 12 months, however no such review period is stipulated for timings and fares.
- 3.1.24 A QPS cannot include tour services inter urban services, community bus services or school buses. Local authority subsidised services should be included in the QPS.
- 3.1.25 It is suggested that the local transport authority should establish a robust governance process for monitoring the scheme with all of the local partners such as a Local Partnership Board
- 3.1.26 Draft Renewable Fuel Obligation (Amendment) Order 2009**
- 3.1.27 In October 2008 the Government published consultation on the Draft Renewable Fuel Obligation (Amendment) Order 2009 (Reference 42). The proposals are designed to take forward the key findings of the Gallagher Review including the proposal that the rate of increase of the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) be slowed to reach 5% in 2013/14 rather than 2010/11, with two new types of bio fuels namely biobutanol, and hydrogenated renewable diesel, to be included within the list of fuels eligible under the RTFO.
- 3.1.28 Climate Change Act 2008**
- 3.1.29 The UK Government is committed to addressing both the causes and consequences of climate change and has therefore passed a Climate Change Act 2008 (Reference 43). It will create a new approach to managing and responding to climate change in the UK through the following:-
- Setting ambitious targets;
 - Taking powers to help achieve them;
 - Strengthening the institutional framework;

- Enhancing the UK's ability to adapt to the impact of climate change; and
- Establishing clear and regular accountability to the UK, Parliament and devolved legislatures.

3.1.30 Key provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008 include the following:-

- **Legally binding targets** - Green house gas emission reductions through action in the UK and abroad of at least 80% by 2050, and reductions in CO₂ emissions of at least 26% by 2020, against a 1990 baseline. The 2020 target will be reviewed soon after Royal Assent to reflect the move to all greenhouse gases and the increase in the 2050 target to 80%;
- **A carbon budgeting system** - which caps emissions over five year periods, with three budgets set at a time, to set out our trajectory to 2050. The first three carbon budgets will run from 2008-12, 2013-17 and 2018-22, and must be set by 1 June 2009. The Government must report to Parliament its policies and proposals to meet the budgets as soon as practical after that; and
- **The creation of the Committee on Climate Change** - a new independent, expert body to advise government on the level of carbon budgets and where cost effective savings could be made. The Committee will submit annual reports to Parliament on the UK's progress towards targets and budgets to which the government must respond, thereby ensuring transparency and accountability on an annual basis.

3.2 The Halton Local Transport Plan (LTP)

3.2.1 The Council's transport policies, strategies and implementation programmes are contained within its LTP (Reference 1). This Plan has been assessed by the DfT and graded as being 'Excellent'.

3.2.2 The Council's LTP has also been the subject of an SEA.

3.2.3 The overarching objective of the LTP is:

'The delivery of a SMART sustainable, inclusive and accessible transport system and infrastructure that seeks to improve the quality of life for people living in Halton by encouraging economic growth and regeneration, and the protection and enhancement of the historic, natural and human environment.'

3.2.4 The plan is structured around the four-shared priorities for transport, which were agreed by local and central government. The objectives and summarised issues associated with each priority that are relevant to the Project are described below.

3.2.5 Tackling Congestion

Objectives

- To address and manage both local and strategic travel demand to ensure that the area's regeneration needs are met;
- To develop a sustainable and integrated transport system that meets the social, economic and environmental needs of residents living in the Borough; and
- To manage and maintain the highway network to minimise congestion and delay.

- 3.2.6 The major and overriding congestion problem identified in LTP2 is experienced on the approaches to the SJB. The SJB performs both a local function linking Widnes and Runcorn as well as a strategic role for the region. However, as the Council progresses its regeneration, a number of key junctions, as well as parts of the town centres are experiencing increasing levels of congestion at peak periods. Congestion Hotspots include A56 Chester Road/A558 Eastern Expressway roundabout, the Widnes Eastern Relief Road/Fiddlers Ferry Road junction and the A557 approach to the M56 Junction 12.

3.2.7 Delivering Accessibility

Objective:

- To resolve problems experienced by socially excluded communities, when accessing key services, and enhance life chances and employment opportunities.

- 3.2.8 The Council has developed extensive and detailed information on the accessibility of services and facilities in relation to local residents, networks and services. As part of its LTP, the Council has developed a comprehensive bus strategy, which addresses key accessibility issues. The bus strategy focuses on addressing the following matters, which have been identified as being important, in delivering increased travel on buses:-

- Network reliability;
- Accessibility;
- Permeability;
- Accurate information;
- Safe and accessible facilities and infrastructure;
- Affordable services;
- Minimum levels of service to communities across the network;
- Travel training;
- Coordinating different vehicle fleets;
- Stakeholder involvement to develop the network, services and facilities; and
- Improved access to Health facilities in the Borough.

- 3.2.9 These factors have also been recognised in the preparation of the MGSTS and as such have been incorporated in its development.

3.2.10 Safer Roads

Objectives:

- To minimise the incidence of personal injury road crashes within the Borough, through a combination of targeted physical measures and preventative road safety education and training initiatives.

3.2.11 The Council's Safer Roads strategy is based on a holistic and balanced approach utilising engineering, education, training, publicity, and enforcement techniques. Measures are generally targeted at specific problems, which are identified through extensive analysis of road casualty data.

3.2.12 An ongoing casualty hotspot problem exists on the SJB, where due to the high vehicular demand, substandard carriageway width and constrained highway arrangement, road casualties continue to occur on a regular basis. Attempts have been made to address the problem in the past with limited success. It is now recognised that the only realistic opportunity to successfully resolve this problem is through reducing the demand to travel on the SJB and simplifying its role to just a local route. Both of these measures will be achieved by the Project.

3.2.13 Better Air quality

Objectives

- To address air quality issues which have an impact on health and the environment, through management of travel demand and the provision and encouragement of environmentally sustainable travel choices.

3.2.14 There are known linkages between high levels of air pollution and health. In the short term, high levels of pollution can result in increased hospital admissions for people whose health is vulnerable to pollution. Exposure to pollutants, such as fine particles, over several years, may also contribute towards a reduced life expectancy. In addition, of course, there is a growing concern about the contribution that vehicle emissions make to the problem of greenhouse gases.

3.2.15 Locally, increased congestion on the highway network has resulted in two areas of the Borough being at risk of exceeding air quality objectives (Reference 4). The two areas are:-

- Deacon Rd (NO₂); and
- Milton Road (NO₂).

3.2.16 Should the concentration of pollutants at these sites fail to meet the air quality objectives, then the Council will be required to declare an Air Quality Management Area, (AQMA) and Action Plan for each area, to reduce the levels of pollutants.

3.2.17 The MGSTS has an important part to play in reducing vehicle emissions by encouraging the use of more sustainable forms of transport.

3.2.18 The MGSTS also seeks to bring forward measures to support proposals being advanced by the EU and the UK Government to develop local initiatives promoting alternative 'green' fuels. In particular careful attention will be taken of the Draft Renewable Fuel Obligation (Amendment Order) 2009, which sets revised targets for the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), and encourages the potential use of a wider range of biofuels including biobutanol and hydrogenated renewable diesel for powering motorised road vehicles. The public transport improvements being proposed as part of the MGSTS will seek to utilise 'green fuels' as far as possible.

3.3 Transport Policies of Neighbouring Authorities

3.3.1 Recognising the close links that the Council has with its neighbouring authorities and the wider strategic impacts that the Project is expected to deliver, particularly in relation to sustainable transport, it is important to consider the LTP policies of neighbouring authorities.

3.3.2 Cheshire County Council

3.3.3 Within the context of the four shared Government/Local Authority priorities of congestion, accessibility, safety and air quality, Cheshire County Council (Cheshire CC) has identified the following objectives:-

- Enhance the quality of life of those who live, work or visit Cheshire;
- Promote social inclusion and accessibility to everyday services for all, especially those without access to a car;
- Promote the integration of all forms of transport and land use planning, leading to a improved and more efficient public transport system;
- Contribute to an efficient economy and to support sustainable economic growth and regeneration in appropriate locations; and
- Manage a well maintained and efficient transport network.

3.3.4 Cheshire CC responded to the MGSTS stakeholder consultation discussed in Section 4. This was held during September and October 2008. A summary of the response from the Council to Cheshire CC, and suggested changes to the MGSTS following the stakeholder consultation, can found in Appendix B, set out as issue numbers 20, 21 and 22.

3.3.5 Warrington Borough Council

3.3.6 Warrington Borough Council (Warrington BC) is working on a coordinated strategy to meet the following objectives:-

- Enhance and protect the environment of Warrington BC;
- Improve safety, personal security and health;
- To contribute to an efficient economy and to support sustainable economic growth in Warrington;
- Improve accessibility and mobility in Warrington BC;
- To promote the integration of all forms of transport and land use planning; and
- Improve the quality of life, transport system, and reduce social exclusion and poverty in the borough.

3.3.7 Warrington BC responded to the MGSTS stakeholder consultation discussed in Section 4. This was held during September and October 2008. A summary of the response from the Council to Warrington BC, and suggested changes to the MGSTS following the stakeholder consultation, can found in Appendix B, set out as issue numbers 23 and 24.

3.3.8 Merseyside Local Authorities

3.3.9 The Merseyside Local Authorities which comprise Liverpool City Council, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council (St Helens MBC), Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (Knowsley MBC), Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (Sefton MBC) and Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (Wirral MBC) state the following set of objectives in their LTP's as follows:

- Provide appropriate infrastructure to improve the capacity and efficiency of the network and support the economic growth areas;
- Provide access for all to provide better links to employment, education and health;
- Manage demand to ensure that roads do not become congested and affect the efficient movement of public transport and freight;
- Protect/enhance the environment by taking positive measures to reduce the effects of travel demand;
- Support a healthier community by addressing air and noise problems caused by traffic and promote cycling and walking; and
- Make best use of existing resources by ensuring an efficient maintenance regime.

3.3.10 The Merseyside LTP (Reference 34) specifically supports the development of schemes to improve access to the port and Liverpool Airport and the creation of a Super Port.

3.3.11 The Liverpool Super Port is a major strategic and economic initiative being taken forward by the Merseyside Partnership. The Council is a member of the operational group for the Merseyside Partnership.

3.3.12 At national level, the Port of Liverpool is encouraging the UK Government to recognise the value and potential benefit of ports to offer modal shift opportunities to their regionally immediate hinterlands and prioritise spending on road and rail schemes to foster this. Such schemes include:-

- Re-instatement of the Halton Curve to enhance accessibility from North Wales into Merseyside that would particularly increase the catchment of Liverpool Airport;
- Construction of the Mersey Gateway Project; and
- Re-development of dockland areas adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal similar to the Seine-Nord European canal project.

3.3.13 The Merseyside Authorities who responded to the MGSTS stakeholder consultation in September and October 2008 were Liverpool City Council and Merseytravel who provided a response as the transport planning authority for Merseyside and its five districts.

3.3.14 A summary of the response to Liverpool City Council from the Council, and suggested changes to the MGSTS, can found in Appendix B set out as issue number 25, and for Merseytravel as issues 29-36.

3.4 Key Spatial Planning Documents - National Spatial Policy Framework

3.4.1 This section includes a high level review of key national, regional and local planning policy and Strategy frameworks considered relevant to the MGSTS.

3.4.2 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development

3.4.3 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development (Reference 23) sets out the Government's overarching planning policies for the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.

3.4.4 Key principles set out in PPS1 place responsibility on regional planning bodies and local planning authorities to ensure that development plans contribute to global sustainability by addressing the causes and potential impacts of climate change through policies which achieve the following:-

- Reductions in the use of energy;
- Reduced emissions (for example, by encouraging patterns of development, which reduce the need to travel by car, or reduce the impact of moving freight);
- Promote the development of renewable energy resources; and
- Take climate change impacts into account in the location and design of new development.

3.4.5 This has placed a responsibility on the Council, through its Local Development Framework (LDF), discussed below, to enhance the environment as part of development proposals. This means that significant impacts on the environment have to be avoided. Furthermore, those alternative options that might reduce or eliminate those impacts must be taken forward.

3.4.6 PPS 1 states that reducing the need to travel is highly appropriate to supporting sustainable development. The planning process adopted by the Council should actively manage patterns of urban growth to make the fullest use of public transport, and focus development in existing centres near to major public transport interchanges, for example, in Widnes and Runcorn.

3.4.7 Planning Policy Statement - Planning and Climate Change, Supplement to PPS1 (DCLG, 2007)

3.4.8 Key Planning Objectives set out in this PPS (Reference 24) that are highly relevant to the MGSTS are to provide spatial strategies that:-

- Deliver patterns of urban growth and sustainable rural developments that help secure the fullest possible use of sustainable transport for moving freight, public transport, cycling and walking; and, which overall, reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

3.4.9 Planning Policy Statement 12 - Local Spatial Planning (PPS12) June 2008

3.4.10 The recently reissued PPS12 (Reference 25) reiterates the key role of local spatial planning which is closely aligned to Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) developed by Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's). The Local Government White Paper seeks to encourage local authorities to ensure that:-

- Their SCS takes full account of spatial, economic, social and environmental issues;
- Key spatial planning objectives for the area are set out in the LDF Core Strategy and are in harmony with SCS priorities; and
- The LAA as the delivery agreement with central Government is based on the priorities of the SCS and supported by local planning policy to deliver the outcomes agreed.

3.4.11 Each local planning authority should produce a Core Strategy which includes:-

- An overall vision which sets out how the area and the places within it should develop;
- Strategic objectives for the area focusing on the key issues to be addressed;
- A delivery strategy for achieving these objectives that should set out how much development is intended to happen where, when, and by what means it will be delivered, and locations for strategic development should be indicated on a key diagram; and
- Clear arrangements for managing and monitoring the delivery of the strategy.

3.4.12 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 13: Transport (March 2001)

3.4.13 A key objective of PPG13 is to integrate planning and transport at a national, regional, strategic and local level and to promote more sustainable transport choices both for carrying people and for moving freight. The aim of this approach is to:-

- Promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;
- Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling; and
- Reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

3.4.14 Regional Spatial Planning Framework: North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS 2008)

3.4.15 From the regional perspective, the recently adopted North West Regional Spatial Strategy RSS 2008 (Reference 27) focuses heavily on the need to increase the contribution towards the movement of people, goods and services by sustainable modes including road based transport, railways, waterways, walking and cycling.

3.4.16 Key objectives and outcomes of the RSS that are highly relevant to the MGSTS include the following:-

- Support economic growth and business competitiveness, tackle congestion and improve journey time reliability;
- Support regeneration and reduce social exclusion, integrate transport networks within, to and between the North West's city regions, and between these city regions and others in the north;
- Improve surface access, in particular to Liverpool and Manchester airports and the Port of Liverpool, to underpin the gateway functions;

- Introduce an integrated range of measures to manage travel demand and encourage a shift from the car to more sustainable modes of transport;
- Improve the public realm in the North West's regional centres, regional towns and cities and key tourist destinations;
- Enhance accessibility by developing integrated transport networks based on hubs at key service centres in order to support regeneration, reduce social exclusion and encourage sustainable tourism in rural areas;
- Community transport and demand responsive transport services should improve access to employment, services and facilities, particularly in rural areas where traditional commercial bus services are less likely to be financially viable and revenue support opportunities are limited for example, east Runcorn and employment areas around Daresbury;
- Develop a structured framework and improve region's highway network to reduce the wider environmental, social, health and quality of life impacts of road transport and infrastructure; and
- Facilitate opportunities for increasing the movement of freight by railway and on water.

3.4.17 A key component of the Project is to address the issues of network integrity, which, amongst other things, will help strengthen and improve business performance as well as provide a platform for delivering high levels of reliability and regularity on the bus network. This is important in helping to promote growth in patronage in line with parallel integrated strategies.

3.4.18 By the nature of its location at a key crossing and gateway, the Borough has always provided a platform for facilitating transport connections. Residents of the Borough have a close affinity and association with Merseyside. Hence, it is vitally important that transport connections by bus and railway between the Borough and this important region are maintained and strengthened.

3.4.19 The North West Regional Spatial Strategy (September 2008)

3.4.20 The recently adopted North West Regional Spatial Strategy replaces the old Regional Planning Guidance 13 (RPG13), and forms part of the statutory development plan for the Borough.

3.4.21 Liverpool City Region Development Programme

3.4.22 The Council is one of a group of local authorities comprising the Liverpool City Region. It is also a member of the operational group of the Merseyside Partnership, which was responsible for creating the Liverpool City Region and its development programme. The operational group also includes Merseytravel.

3.4.23 The opportunities identified in the development programme and which underpin the strategy for the Liverpool City Region include the following, which are particularly applicable to the borough and the MGSTS:-

- The improved connectivity between the key centres of the City Region and with the Manchester City Region and the Midlands, which will result from the New Bridge;

- The City Region's developments in science and innovation including Daresbury SIC within the Borough;
- The stable and strong economies of Cheshire and North Wales including Vale Royal and Weaver Valley, containing knowledge economy businesses, research, development and manufacturing;
- The potential that Liverpool Airport provides as a resource for the Borough's business and community to access UK and overseas markets; and
- The City Region's considerable, as yet unused, capacity for expansion in the form of land released by the decline of manufacturing in past decades. This includes the land that represents a legacy from the chemical industry. This industry used to dominate Widnes and Runcorn, for example, land adjoining West Bank and land in east Widnes.

3.5 LOCAL SPATIAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

3.5.1 Halton's Unitary Development Plan (Adopted April 2005).

3.5.2 The saved policies of the UDP (Reference 2) represent the Council's adopted statutory development plan.

3.5.3 The UDP sets out an extensive range of aims and objectives across all policy areas for sustainable transport and land use within the Borough. The aims are:-

- To provide an efficient and effective land use pattern and transport infrastructure, which will reduce overall demand for travel and allow improved accessibility by a variety of transport modes;
- To develop safe, efficient and inclusive integrated transport systems and infrastructure that encourage sustainable economic growth and regeneration;
- To promote a new sustainable crossing of the River; and
- To encourage increased use of walking and cycling as modes of transport.

3.5.4 The Council's UDP policies (Reference 2) clearly identify the need to resolve the transport, accessibility and economic constraints imposed by the current river crossing. The need for a new river crossing is explicitly recognised, in particular Policy S14 states that:-

'A scheme for a new crossing of the River, will be promoted to relieve congestion on the SJB as part of an integrated transport system for Halton and the wider regional transport network'.

3.5.5 The saved UDP policies also include a number of specific transport related policies as follows:

- Integrated public transport network;
- Cycle network;
- Pedestrian network;
- Road network;

- Sustainable economic growth;
- Accessibility for all;
- Safety for all; and
- The environment.

3.5.6 Local Development Framework (LDF)

3.5.7 The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the new system of spatial plans, introduced following the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. (Reference 41). The folder of LDF documents includes among others, Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), the former carrying more weight and the ability to allocate land for particular purposes. It is anticipated that documents within the LDF will eventually replace the saved UDP policies to become the Council's statutory development plan.

3.5.8 The first DPD to be produced is the emerging Halton Core Strategy, currently under production. The Core Strategy will provide the overarching spatial planning framework for the Borough's development to 2026 and beyond. The emerging Core Strategy will look beyond LTP 2 and the planned opening of the Project, and identify in broad terms the areas of the Borough where development and change will happen during the plan period. The document will establish the spatial vision, strategic objectives and spatial strategy for the Borough in its opening Section. It is intended that the spatial strategy will be conveyed through seven spatial themes:-

- An affordable and decent home and neighbourhood;
- A balanced and prosperous economy;
- Health, learning and social inclusion;
- Vital and vibrant town centres;
- Well designed places and spaces;
- A cleaner, safer and greener environment; and
- Sustainable travel options.

3.5.9 The MGSTS will support transport and movement related interventions, which are considered to be critical to the successful delivery of the Spatial Strategy for the Borough.

3.5.10 The LDF may include further sustainable transport related policies, in DPDs and SPDs, yet to be produced.

3.5.11 Halton Local Area Agreement (LAA) (June 2008- April 2011)

3.5.12 In June 2008, the Halton Strategic Partnership (Reference 28) published the new LAA for the Borough. It reiterated the strategic policy framework for the Borough, the key priorities of which are:-

- **A Healthy Halton:** To create a healthier community and work to promote well being – a positive experience of life and good health;

- **Halton's Urban Renewal:** To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, the develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough;
- **Halton's Children and Young People:** To ensure that children and young people in the Borough are safeguarded, healthy and happy;
- **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton:** To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth; and
- **A Safer Halton:** To ensure pleasant, safe and secure neighbourhood environments where people can enjoy life.

3.5.13 These principles are embedded in the MGSTS. The Council recognises the importance of the Project and the accompanying MGSTS in terms of supporting new employment opportunities and improving accessibility across the Borough and beyond.

3.5.14 Halton Draft Economic Review 2008

3.5.15 In 2008, the Council undertook a review of the key economic issues and trends that are likely to influence the development of its local economy. The draft review identified the following key messages associated with sustainable transport:-

- **Business Base:** The Borough has grown at a significantly higher rate than both the North West and the UK, although there remain concerns about the number of micro firms (0-4 employees), proportion of businesses in the lower turnover bands and business densities;
- **Gross Value Added (GVA):** The contribution made by the Borough to the North West's GVA has been rising, against a background of a decline in its manufacturing sector. Transport and communications continues to be the only other sector to have a share of GVA higher than the NW and the UK, although distribution comes close. Future GVA is expected to grow from £2.2bn to £2.99m by 2020 with the Transport and Communication's share increasing;
- **Unemployment:** Beechwood, Birchfields , Daresbury, Farnworth and Hale wards of the Borough have lower than UK average unemployment, whilst Grange, Halton Lea, Kingsway, Mersey, Riverside & Windmill Hill wards have levels significantly greater than the UK average.
- **Worklessness:** 18% of the Borough's working population (13,000 people) claim benefits compared to the UK average of 11%. The Borough has 15 wards which fall into the top 10 most deprived wards in the UK, where 31.6% of the working population claim benefits, representing around 7,000 people.
- **Education & Learning:** In common with other parts of the region, education performance in the Borough is somewhat below the England average;
- **Skills:** Although skill levels have improved since the last survey in 2003, the Borough remains significantly under-skilled at level 4. Level 3 deficits are projected to be moderate, whilst it is projected that there will be an over supply at Level 2 and below. The deficits in skills are likely to be made up by people commuting into the Borough.
- **Land & Property:** The Borough is an active player in the inward investment arena and is able to 'feed off' the shortage of land for industrial uses in neighbouring

authorities, partly due to its good motorway connections. The market for office space in the Borough is considered as relatively small and the offer being perceived as generally poor. Retail within the Borough has a negative balance of trade of approximately £129m per annum, due to residents choosing to shop in Liverpool, Chester and Warrington.

- 3.5.16 The draft Review, which has yet to be approved by the Council, highlights the progress that has been made recently by the Borough and points to an increasing importance of transport in the Borough. The review also confirms the continuing and significant problems that the Borough faces in dealing with pockets of deprivation, as evidenced by the unemployment, worklessness, education and skills assessments. Ensuring that sustainable, affordable, accessible and convenient transport choices are developed will help to address these issues and provide travel choice for those who do not have access to a car and realistic alternatives to those who do.

4 THE MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY (MGSTS)

4.1 Strategic Objectives

4.1.1 The Project has 7 high level strategic objectives of which two strategic objectives relate directly to sustainable transport. These are:-

- **To improve public transport links across the River Mersey; and**
- **Encourage the increased use of cycling and walking.**

4.1.2 The proposed MGSTS aims to deliver the following key vision for sustainable travel options within the Borough:-

To identify and promote a network of high quality, safe, affordable, accessible and environmentally friendly travel measures for local residents, businesses and visitors to Halton, which support the key objectives of the LTP and the Project.

4.1.3 This vision will be achieved by the implementation of an integrated package of measures and initiatives designed to meet the following objectives:-

- Further improve accessibility for residents living in the most deprived wards in the Borough to a wide range of key facilities including employment, education/training, health, leisure and retail facilities;
- Reduce the future reliance on carbon intensive modes of travel through encouraging promotion of greater use of public transport, walking and cycling options;
- Support the continued regeneration of the Borough, through ensuring that new, high quality sustainable transport opportunities are delivered as part of the Project and associated MGRS;
- Improve the modal share of journeys into the 3 main commercial centres of the Borough (Runcorn town centre, Widnes town centre and Halton Lea) by sustainable forms of transport, thereby supporting the regeneration of the centres;
- Further develop new strategic high quality sustainable transport links/corridors through the Borough utilising the opportunities provided by the Project and thereby improving key Mersey Belt and Liverpool City linkages; and
- To mitigate the impact of tolls on vulnerable groups by providing attractive alternatives to private vehicles for cross-river travel within the Borough and neighbouring communities.

4.1.4 Defining the Approach

4.1.5 The MGSTS has been developed following a wide ranging review of existing land use, regeneration and transport policies for the Borough and the wider Liverpool City Region, as well as comprehensive stakeholder consultation in 2008. The diagram in Section 1 on page 6 sets out how the MGSTS has been developed. The key components of this are summarised below:-

- **The Objectives of the Project** (as above);
- **LTP2 2006/7 – 2010/11:** (Reference 1) This is the second LTP for Halton which sets out the Council's strategic transport objectives, strategies and policies for the period April 2006 to March 2011 and beyond. It also contains details of the schemes and initiatives that will be delivered, together with performance indicators and targets that will be used to monitor progress;
- **Halton Access Plan 2006/7-2010/11:** This supports the LTP and covers the same period, setting out a range of complementary actions to improve accessibility to a wide range of facilities across the Borough;
- **'Halton's Story of Place'** in Section 2 of this Study;
- **The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (MGRS):** The purpose of which is to explore the wide ranging economic, social, physical and environmental regeneration opportunities that the Project could potentially deliver; and
- **First Stage Public Transit Options Study:** (Reference 5) This study was commissioned by the Council to help inform the development of the sustainable transport Strategy by undertaking a high level review of the feasibility of utilising a range of alternative rapid public transport options as part of the Project. This provided a valuable platform for the development of the Strategy and is described in Section 4.2.
- **Mersey Gateway Variable Demand Model:** This seeks to objectively assess the impact on local travel behaviour across all modes of various transport modes as part of the Project.

4.2 First Stage Public Transit Options Study

4.2.1 The First Stage Public Transit Options Study was commissioned by the Council to inform the development of the MGSTS. The study included:-

- A comprehensive review of various public transport route development options;
- An initial passenger demand study;
- A review of the opportunities to integrate various public transit options into the proposed de-linking works of the SJB;
- A high level assessment of the costs and benefits of the utilisation of a wide range of potential public transit options and technologies including:-
 - Personalised Rapid Transit (PRT);
 - Ultra Light Railway (ULT);
 - Guided busway (also including trolley bus);
 - Light rail;
 - Tram-train;
 - Heavy rail; and
 - Monorail.
- The short listing and evaluation in detail of the following options:
 - Medium level bus priorities;

- High level bus priorities;
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) using guided busways;
- BRT using regular busways;
- Light rail;
- Opportunities for Tram-train; and
- Heavy railway development.

4.2.2 The evaluation was based on:-

- Spatial characteristics, to determine the ease with which each system could be integrated into the existing commercial centres within the Borough, the suitability for accommodation of each option within the structure of the existing SJB, and the proposed New Bridge structures and associated infrastructure;
- Alternative energy and power supply options to minimise emissions and carbon footprint;
- Vehicle capacity and system capacity matched to likely future demand including indicative networks;
- Indicative system performance for each public transport option; and
- Indicative vehicle and infrastructure costs for each public transport option.

4.2.3 All of the above were carried on the assumption that the Project is constructed and fully operational. As such, this MGSTS is designed to complement and work in a holistic manner with the new and existing crossings.

4.2.4 The recommendations and conclusions of this detailed evaluation of the short listed options are summarised below:-

- **Heavy Railway Enhancements:** existing and future heavy railway facilities need to be integrated into proposed transit systems. The proposed improvement of the Halton Curve for example is a heavy rail transit proposal, but could be easily incorporated into a tram/train system and network if tram-train is taken forward in the long term as part of an alignment that includes the New Bridge.
- **Tram–train options:** These may be worthy of further investigation, possibly commencing with a basic north-south transit system;
- **Light railway options:** These may be worthy of further consideration, possibly as part of a basic north-south transit system. However, an option to link with proposed Merseytram Lines 2 & 3 would be poor value for money;
- **Tramway:** The study identified that this may be worthy of further consideration, possibly as part of a basic north-south transit system operating exclusively within the Borough;
- **Bus based options (guided and non guided options):** The Runcorn Busway provides a sound basis for developing a network to serve a wider part of the Borough, using unguided buses. Whilst not recommending guided bus technology for kerb guidance, due to it being unsuitable/insufficiently developed, elements of the technology could be used for docking and providing for narrow rights of way and for guidance on the New Bridge should this option be pursued. Further investigation of options was recommended;

- **Bus based transit (alternative power and traction options):** Trolley buses and dual mode technologies were not excluded. Electrification could be applied to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options, but is not a prerequisite, as vehicles can be based on diesel or low emission bio fuel. A BRT system is an option, worthy of further investigation, subject to detailed technical and investment appraisal;
- **High level bus priority measures:** The relatively modest cost of adopting high level bus priorities, compared with the cost of light railway or tramway, suggests that the option should be retained for further detailed study and evaluation;
- **Medium level bus priorities:** The relatively low cost of bus priorities, delivered through a corridor approach, suggests that the option should be retained for further consideration, and should form the base case for any evaluation of transit option systems;
- **Demand responsive and Para-transit options:** The Council already funds a range of community and voluntary transport schemes operated principally by Halton Community Transport (HCT) a stand alone charitable organisation. These services include a traditional 'dial a ride' service as well as an evening Women's "Safe" transport scheme, and an accessible, post-16 learners transport scheme to local colleges and the Independent Living Centre in Runcorn. These services are complemented by the Council's 'in house' passenger transport fleet. At the time of writing these two services were undergoing a process of better integration through the launch of the new "Door2Door" service. These services offer high levels of flexibility and opportunities to serve areas of low demand, but at the same time provide a platform for growing the network. These types services have considerable potential to be expanded and further developed;
- **De-linking the SJB:** That the de-linking proposals for optimising public transport benefits are developed and evaluated in more detail; and
- **Accommodating public transport on the New Bridge and associated infrastructure:** The Study recommended that funding is set aside to examine the feasibility of accommodating public transit options for the Project.

4.2.5 The recommendations arising from this study were that the Council should develop a BRT system, linked into the heavy railway network, utilising medium level bus priority measures, delivered through a corridor approach.

The characteristics of the system would be as follows:-

- Metro style quality service with 'turn up and go' frequencies;
- Integrated network of routes and corridors;
- Segregated busway (in key places based on the existing Runcorn Busway);
- Typically pre-board fare payment/verification;
- Higher quality stops and stations;
- Clean vehicle technologies;
- Strong network identity through clear and consistent marketing; and
- Superior quality service.

4.2.6 The study also recommended that once this BRT network is established, the Council should carry out further feasibility work to examine the potential to introduce further high level bus priority measures as well as Tram-train and Light Rapid Transit (LRT) options on the busiest corridors.

4.2.7 Building on the recommendations of the study, the following modifications were made to the Project to accommodate the delivery of the priority sustainable transport

improvements and local regeneration:-

- The design of the New Bridge would accommodate the carrying of a light rail system which could be implemented in the future, given the design life of the New Bridge structure is 120 years;
- The Strategy for the Project would be based on the SJB being used for local travel within the Borough, with priority being given for sustainable transport, taxis and local trips by private vehicles;
- The approach roads to SJB would be modified to allow the new route to be constructed and regeneration proposals in West Bank and Runcorn Old Town to be delivered; and
- The carriageway across SJB would be reduced to one full standard traffic lane in each direction with the remaining width being used for cycling and walking and equine use (subject to safety assessments).

4.2.8 These changes now form part of the Project which is subject to applications for statutory powers. Subject to securing the necessary consents and powers, the new bridge is expected to be opened in 2014.

4.2.9 Based on the opportunity of using SJB as a local facility, a comprehensive and integrated sustainable transport Strategy has been developed, which builds upon and complements the Project. The MGSTS incorporates a wide variety of complementary measures to encourage sustainable travel, through improving opportunities for public transport use, walking and cycling. In developing the MGSTS it was important to also take into account the impact that the proposed tolling is expected to have on travel behaviour.

4.3 The Mersey Gateway Variable Demand Model

4.3.1 The impact of tolls has been forecast using the Mersey Gateway Variable Demand Transport Model.

4.3.2 The Project is designed to relieve the congested SJB to allow the Borough's regeneration and local transport objectives to be achieved. There is local congestion approaching the SJB, and alternative crossings of the River (at the Mersey tunnels, through Warrington and on the M6 Thelwall Viaduct) experience congestion during extended peak periods and during times of incidents on the network. Centrally located within the sub-regional motorway network, the SJB plays an important network role. Each of the alternative crossings of the Mersey has experienced routine traffic growth over many years and this growth in traffic demand is expected to continue over the foreseeable future. It is therefore likely that the capacity of the road network-and the capacity of the SJB in particular-will have an increasing effect on future traffic levels and congestion as demand exceeds the capacity available.

4.3.3 The model, therefore, had to be able to model congestion and reflect the re-assignment and behavioural changes brought about by increasing congestion over the traffic evaluation period of the Project (15 years after opening) and the effects of imposing tolls.

4.3.4 The traffic model was specified as a variable demand traffic model, incorporating highway and public transport components to allow the modelling of travel behaviour. In essence the model reflects how travel choices are likely to be influenced by varying levels of congestion across the study network.

4.3.5 Attitude to paying tolls

- 4.3.6 Providing significant additional capacity, albeit modified by the use of SJB for local traffic and no-car modes, in a congested network can normally be handled by conventional assignment models. However, because of the opposing effect of requiring the payment of a toll to use that capacity, the model has to be able to reflect the interaction between re-assignment and behavioural response to paying tolls. This interaction has additional dimensions when considering values of time of travellers from different socio-economic groups, and undertaking trips for different reasons. The traffic model developed for the appraisal of this project is able to model the behavioural responses required.

4.3.7 Model specification overview

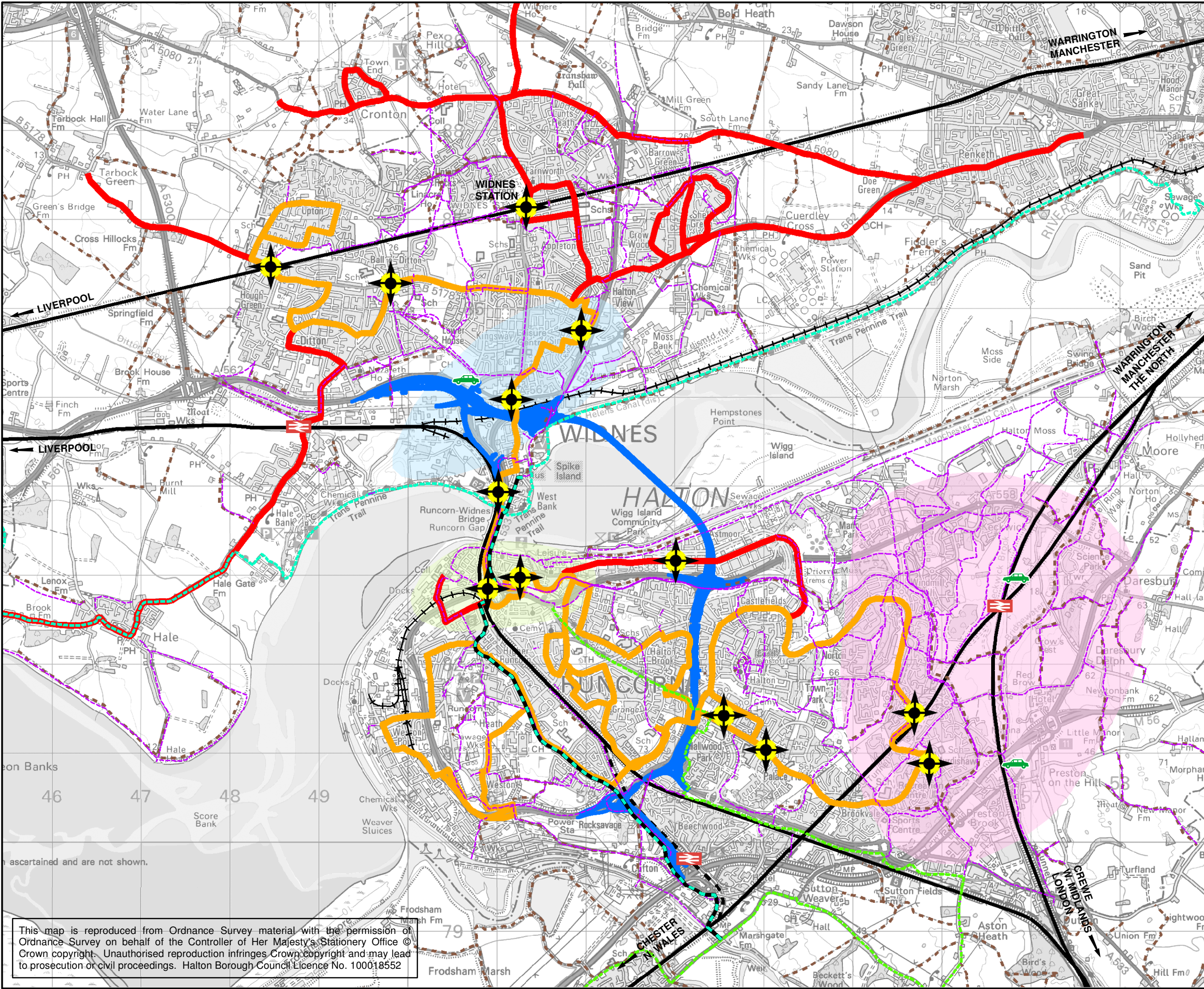
- 4.3.8 The traffic model consists of a number of inter-related components. Separate highway and public transport models have been developed for the base year of 2006. These two models are brought together in the forecasting process and it is here that the variable demand element comes into play.
- 4.3.9 The forecasting process enables the behavioural responses to increasing congestion, payment of tolls and provision of new capacity to be assessed.
- 4.3.10 The output from the forecasting process, which also includes the physical changes anticipated on the travel networks (committed schemes and developments, regeneration proposals and changes in values of time and travel costs), then feeds into the economic, environmental and financial appraisals.
- 4.3.11 The data requirements of the model have been considerable. An extensive series of roadside interviews (RSI's) was conducted, and household survey data was analysed to inform trip making patterns. Journey time surveys, manual and automatic traffic counts, stated preference surveys to establish values of time and aerial surveys to check network performance were all undertaken.
- 4.3.12 Tolling also provides an opportunity to fund sustainable transport improvements. The Project delivery objective is to base toll charges at levels similar to the Mersey Tunnels. The procurement process will determine the success of this objective and the Council is required to take a prudent view on the amount of toll revenue likely to be available to fund sustainable transport, given the objective of keeping toll levels down. To provide some certainty of funding sustainable transport through the toll revenue stream, an amount of £500k per annum will be specified as a requirement in the Project procurement process. It is likely that the Council would benefit from toll revenue share in excess of this minimum of £500k, but this will depend on actual outturn revenues received and the management of toll charges in the future.
- 4.3.13 The modifications to use SJB as a bridge for local transport combined with the tolling effects and funding through toll revenue sharing present the Council with an opportunity to deliver a step change in the quality of sustainable transport available to residents. The MGSTS has been designed to capture this opportunity with the objective of producing a significant modal shift towards sustainable transport in the Borough for the future.

4.3.14 Funding Support

- 4.3.15 Without the Project and the potential funding support the scheme will generate through

tolls, it would not be possible to deliver such an improvement to the sustainable transport choice available to residents of the Borough.

- 4.3.16 The reason for this, is the absence of river crossing capacity and that the key established funding mechanisms for local transport cannot generate the step change improvements that are going to make a noticeable difference to the way the Borough's residents travel in the future. The Council's LTP provides capital resources to maintain and improve facilities on the whole of the transport network. Indicative levels of funding provided by the DfT for the 5 years after 2010/11 show a considerable reduction in real terms over the levels provided during the current LTP. Similarly, revenue funding provided by the Council to carry out other maintenance works, support to local bus services and travel planning, information and training and other associated components of sustainable travel, are also likely to be very limited.
- 4.3.17 Funds secured through tolling on the existing and proposed bridges can, however, enable the critical step change improvements to be delivered. Importantly, such funding would provide a guaranteed revenue stream that will encourage stakeholders, such as bus operators, to grow the bus network, provide new vehicles and improve services across the whole integrated network through pump-priming or Kickstart mechanisms. The additional ring fenced funding will reduce the risk to bus operators when introducing improvements and enhancements to the network. Furthermore, the anticipated additional tolling revenue, above the minimum assumed, will support a process of continuous step improvements to go forward in the long term.
- 4.3.18 The informal public/private partnership between the Council and stakeholders, which has resulted in considerable improvements to the sustainable transport offer across the Borough, will be used to deliver a step change in provision as part of the Project. In addition, opportunities will be taken to utilise private developer contributions, where appropriate, to help facilitate the proposed improvements to sustainable travel within the Borough.
- 4.3.19 Two Phase Implementation Strategy**
- 4.3.20 Based on the above assessment and modelling exercise, the Strategy is based on two phases of implementation as follows:-
- The first phase Improvement Themes (Numbers 1-6) (for implementation from 2014/2015 to 2024/25) contain those initiatives that, potentially, could be funded through tolling income from the Project, the LTP, private developers and bus operators; and
 - The second phase of Improvement Themes (Numbers 7-9) (for implementation beyond 2024/25) incorporates projects that will draw on the variety of public and private sector funding that may be available at the time. The recommendations set out below will be brought forward depending upon the availability of such funding.
- 4.3.21 It is important to stress that the opportunity will be taken to accelerate all themes, where new funding sources become available.
- 4.3.22 The work programmes in each phase have been structured into a number of inter-related Improvement Themes. Each theme addresses the key areas of concern, previously identified in Section 2. The detailed content of each of these Improvement Themes are described below.
- 4.3.23 The Improvement Themes that can be shown visually have been set out in Figure 4.1.



Legend

- Possible future Park and Ride sites
- Possible future rail stations
- Local Interchanges
- Other cycle routes
- NCN 5
- Trans Pennine Trail (NCN 62)
- Proposed future route for NCN
- Halton Rapid Transit Network
- Halton Core Bus Network
- Public Right of Way
- The Mersey Gateway Project
- Freight Railway Route
- Proposed Halton Curve
- Passenger Railway Route
- Runcorn East Door2Door service
- Town centre shuttle bus - Runcorn
- Town centre shuttle bus - Widnes

Client

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project

MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title

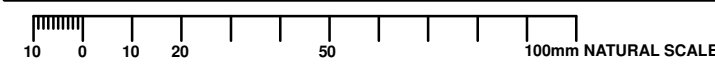
IMPROVEMENT THEMES

Gifford

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Tel: 0161 827 1890 Fax: 0161 819 5703 www.gifford.uk.com

Scale (At A3)	Date	Drawn
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4.4 Phase One Improvement Theme 1 – Development of the Proposed Halton Rapid Transit Network

The focus of this Improvement Theme is the development of the first stage of a new bus based rapid transit network for the Borough, (*marketed as, Halton Rapid Transit Network.*) This new revitalised network will incorporate many of the ‘best practice’ features commensurate with other high quality bus rapid transit networks being developed across the UK and continental Europe.

- 4.4.1 Following the results of the stakeholder consultation, a key immediate priority for the Council and its stakeholders is the delivery of a ‘step change’ in quality of public transport links across the Borough. The foundation for these improvements will be a significant upgrade to the quality of bus based public transport services which provide the backbone of the integrated sustainable transport network within the Borough.
- 4.4.2 At the heart of the network lies the Runcorn Busway, and, as such, Improvement Theme 1 will primarily concentrate on further revitalising this key, existing, infrastructure asset. This part of the network includes the main Runcorn Busway loop linking Halton Lea (North and South) - Halton Hospital, Palacefields - Brookvale - Murdishaw - Windmill Hill and Castlefields, as well as the spur links to Halton Lodge, Whitehouse and Beechwood. Once the network is improved, the Council, and its partners, will use it as a platform to develop a range of complementary measures across the sustainable transport network.
- 4.4.3 Key features of this Improvement Theme include:-
- Greatly improved connections between the Runcorn Busway and Widnes via the SJB;
 - The safeguarding of key linkages as part of the land use development process;
 - The introduction of a new dedicated marketing and branding of the service and vehicles for the proposed ‘Halton Rapid Transit Network’ (HRTN);
 - The introduction of a new fleet of ‘state of the art’ high quality, fully accessible, visually attractive, and environmentally friendly buses (electric hybrid or bio fuels) offering a passenger travelling environment equivalent to a modern tramway system;
 - Significant improvements to all existing stops on the Runcorn Busway system offering level boarding facilities and vehicle ‘docking’ to benefit all users and improved passenger waiting facilities including attractive passenger shelters, seating and lighting;
 - The provision of a range of accessible public transport information, including real time, audio and conventional printed information at all stops, and on board the new vehicles; and
 - The provision of ‘at stop’ ticketing machines at key stops designed to reduce average bus boarding times for passengers.

- 4.4.4 The services on the HRTN will be significantly improved to offer a 5 minute frequency (Monday to Saturday daytime) service, complemented by a 20 minute frequency service in the evenings and on Sundays. This will create a genuine 'turn up and go' service at key periods and is linked to the proposed package of service improvements as part of Improvement Theme 2 discussed below.
- 4.4.5 It is also proposed to encourage greater community involvement in the management of the stops on the transit system through the development of community partnerships, based on the successful railway model. High quality public realm features will be incorporated at key stops and along prime corridors of the proposed HRTN. These will be developed in partnership with surrounding land owners and developers to generate a greater 'sense of place' among local communities.
- 4.4.6 Table 4.1 below shows the projected capital costs of delivering these improvements, which will be funded through a mixture of:-
- LTP capital funding; and
 - Bus operator contributions (for example funding for new vehicles and improved driver training and passenger care).
- As can be seen, the projected total capital costs of the improvements, as set out in Improvement Theme 1, are estimated to cost £8.07m, to be implemented over a period between 2014/15 and 2020/21. It is currently projected that the LTP process will provide £4.57m (or 57%) of the required funding, with the remainder from other external sources. In addition, the programme will be enhanced, when possible, with developer funding.
- 4.4.7 The revenue costs associated with operating the new services are covered by the proposals set out in Improvement Theme 2. It is proposed that tolling revenue generated by the Project will be used to 'pump-prime' bus service improvements across the bus network in the Borough.
- 4.4.8 In delivering the new proposed HRTN, the Council notes, and welcomes, the new provisions contained within the Transport Act 2008, which received Royal Assent in December 2008. This new legislation will enable local authorities to work more effectively with bus operators to deliver more attractive local bus networks. The new provisions contained within the legislation, that widen the scope of the statutory quality bus partnership agreements to restrict the operation of bus services on the network, which do not meet strict quality criteria, are considered to be of particular benefit in bringing about a step change in the quality of services offered in the Borough.
- 4.4.9 The criteria that can be applied include:-
- Service frequencies;
 - Hours of operation; and
 - Maximum fares.
- 4.4.10 The Council, and its partners, are currently examining the new provisions to ensure that the new powers are fully utilised in the delivery of the objectives of the MGSTS, although it is envisaged that the bus improvements will be delivered through a voluntary, quality bus partnership approach. Improvements to local public transport services will also be carried out in close partnership with Merseytravel and other neighbouring authorities.

Table 4.1 Proposed Costs of Improvement Theme 1

Theme 1 Elements	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	2016/17 £000s	2017/18 £000s	2018/19 £000s	2019/20 £000s	2020/21 £000s	Totals £000s
Improvements to Murdishaw Bus Interchange (LTP)	150	180	0	0	0	0	0	330
Improvements to Halton Lea Bus Station (LTP)	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	200
Improvements to Halton Hospital Interchange (LTP)	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
Introduction of BRT style buses (bus operators)	1000	1000	1000	500	0	0	0	3500
Improvements to bus stops on the main Runcorn Busway loop (LTP)	450	550	850	760	550	300	300	3760
Improvements to information on board vehicles and stops (LTP)	100	50	30	0	0	0	0	180
Total (LTP)	900	880	880	760	550	300	300	4570
Total (Other)	1000	1000	1000	500	0	0	0	3500
Grand Total								8070

4.4.11 Improvement Theme 2 - Further Expansion of The Halton Rapid Transit Network (HRTN) and the Introduction of Complementary Service Improvements

The focus of this Improvement Theme is the further development of proposed new HRTN, and the introduction of a new network of complementary public transport service improvements designed to better connect key development and regeneration areas.

4.4.12 To complement the proposed improvement to the core Runcorn Busway network as part of Improvement Theme 1, it is proposed that the Council, and its partners, deliver a range of measures/initiatives to:-

- Expand the proposed HRTN to other key bus corridors across the Borough and key cross boundary routes into Merseyside, Warrington, West Cheshire and Chester;
- Improve the quality and frequency of bus based public transport services over the SJB, especially during evenings and Sundays when the existing bus network within the Borough is most limited in terms of connectivity and frequency;
- Introduce new town centre shuttle bus services linking key public transport interchanges to the main retail, education, leisure and employment facilities within Runcorn and Widnes town centres;
- Launch major new, demand responsive transport services, focused on improving accessibility to key employment locations in eastern Runcorn;
- Consider the potential introduction of a new discounted travel scheme for young people; and
- Launch a new community transport development fund to encourage the introduction of innovative transport/accessibility improvement schemes at a local level within individual communities within the Borough.

4.4.13 This theme primarily focuses on addressing the key bus service accessibility gaps for low income communities by increasing the accessibility of employment, training, health, education, social and food retail shopping opportunities.

4.4.14 There is potential for the new services to be funded using 'pump prime revenue funding' generated through tolling on the bridges. The package of bus service improvements identified to be delivered in this Improvement Theme will require an average of £500,000 per year of tolling income to fund the £5.5m programme of measures (over 11 years 2014/15-2024/25).

4.4.15 Where possible, all of the measures identified in this Improvement Theme will be delivered through a 'decreasing revenue funding' principle. Revenue funding for each scheme will be gradually decreased over a period of 5 years, commensurate with a projected increase in fare revenue as the services become more established and passenger numbers grow. Hence, it is expected that all of the schemes identified will become commercially sustainable at the end of their respective 5 year revenue grant period. As the funding is 'released', this will enable the Council, and its partners, to introduce further measures to improve accessibility and improve travel choice for a wider range of local residents. It is proposed that complementary infrastructure improvements will be funded through a

mixture of LTP capital funding and developer contributions (where available).

4.4.16 The physical improvements to the routes will be funded from LTP sources as set out in Table 4.2 .

4.4.17 The package of schemes include:-

- **A** - Further expansion and improvement of the HRTN focussing on cross river services;
- **B** - Introduction of new Runcorn town centre shuttle bus service;
- **C** - Introduction of an enhanced Widnes town centre shuttle bus service;
- **D** - Launch of a new Community Transport Development Fund;
- **E** - Launch of a new Runcorn East 'Door 2 Door' Service;
- **F** - Introduction of a new concessionary travel scheme for young people/ "WorkWise"

4.4.18 A - Further Expansion of the Halton Rapid Transit Network

As part of this package of measures it is proposed that facilities on 3 key corridors are developed to complement the platform of improved services being delivered along with Improvement Theme 1 on the rejuvenated Runcorn Busway. In addition, new services will be introduced on the improved corridors as follows:-

- **Transit Line 1:** Introduction of a new cross Runcorn service linking the main Runcorn Busway Loop (Halton Lea, Castlefields, Windmill Hill, Norton, Runcorn East railway station, Murdishaw, Brookfields, Palacefields and Halton Hospital) and the Heath/Weston Point areas (serving the proposed Halton Housing Growth Point sites);
- **Transit Line 2:** Hough Green - Halton Lea (Hough Green estate loop, Hough Green railway station, Chesnut Lodge, Widnes town centre and Widnes West Bank, SJB, Runcorn town centre); and
- **Transit Line 3:** Runcorn town centre - Halton Lea via Grangeway and Halton Brook areas.

4.4.19 Transit line 2, once developed, will provide the main public transport link over the existing SJB.

4.4.20 These corridor improvements will be developed over a phased period of 9 financial years, between 2014/15 and 2022/23. The projected cost of these improvements is £1.11m (revenue) and £2.55m (capital).

The projected timescale for the development of transit lines 1 - 3 is as follows:-

- Transit Line 1 will be developed between 2014/15 – 2020/21;
- Transit Line 2 will be developed between 2016/17 – 2020/21; and

- Transit Line 3 will be developed between 2018/19 – 2022/23.

4.4.21 **B - Introduction of new Runcorn Town Centre Shuttle Bus Service**

This proposed new service will be introduced in 2014/15 and will be designed to link the main public transport gateways in the Runcorn town centre area to key employment, retail and leisure opportunities. In particular it is proposed that the route of the service will link the following places:-

- Runcorn town centre bus station;
- The Bridges retail park;
- Runcorn station;
- Riverside College, Runcorn;
- Independent Living Centre;
- Runcorn Waterfront;
- 'The Deck' residential development; and
- Runcorn leisure centre.

4.4.22 The service will be operated by a fleet of dedicated new low floor environmentally friendly shuttle buses (either electric hybrid traction or bio fuel technology). It is proposed that the service will operate every 20 minutes in each direction (Monday to Saturday, daytime 08.00 - 18.00).

4.4.23 The projected revenue cost of this new service is £345,000 (decreasing over 5 years in line with the adopted "Kickstart" principle). This will be supplemented by an additional £105,000 in capital funding for supporting infrastructure improvements. The service will feature new attractive branding, and will be comprehensively marketed in the local area. Consideration will also be given to the introduction of an attractive fare policy to encourage use.

4.4.24 **C - Introduction of an Enhanced Widnes Town Centre Shuttle Bus Service**

4.4.25 To complement the proposed new town centre shuttle bus service operating in Runcorn, it is proposed that a similar service be introduced in and around Widnes town centre. Again the proposed new service will be operated by low floor vehicles powered using the latest low carbon technologies. This will minimise their impact on the environment. The shuttle will link the following key attractions:-

- Widnes Green Oaks bus station;
- Widnes Waterfront;
- 3MG;
- West Bank (proposed new public transport interchange); and
- Stobart Stadium and Widnes leisure centre.

4.4.26 The enhanced service will be based on an extension to the existing service 13, which is proposed to be funded by toll funding. This new service will utilise new, dedicated, environmentally friendly shuttle buses, running every 20 minutes in each direction (Monday to Saturday daytime 08.00 - 18.00).

4.4.27 The estimated revenue cost of this initiative is £345,000, again based on a 5 year decreasing revenue "Kickstart" basis. This is complemented by a programmed £105,000 in capital investment. As with the proposed Runcorn new town centre service, the

Widnes service will be launched in 2014/15, and will be expected to be fully commercially sustainable by the end of the financial year 2018/19.

4.4.28 D - Launch of a New Community Transport Development Fund

4.4.29 Given the demographic profile of the population within the Borough, there is expected to be a significant growth in the number of elderly persons over the next 20 years. The projected growth of people within the following age bands between 2006 and 2021 are:-

- All aged 65 or over = + 43%;
- All aged 75 or over = + 42%; and
- All aged 85 or over = + 63%.

4.4.30 Therefore, it is proposed that a proportion of the toll revenue generated from the SJB and the New Bridge will be used to fund further improvements to community transport initiatives within the Borough, to improve accessibility and independence for elderly and retired persons. Therefore, £250,000 of toll revenue funding has been programmed to support the development of innovative, new community transport schemes.

4.4.31 E - Launch of a New Runcorn East 'Door2Door' Service

This would involve the introduction of a new, dedicated, demand responsive transport service for key areas in eastern Runcorn. The service will operate as an extension to the recently introduced Borough wide 'Door2Door' service, and will be operated through the centralised booking and vehicle scheduling system, introduced as part of the Council's second LTP. This new service will link key employment sites in eastern Runcorn to both Murdishaw Bus Interchange and Runcorn East railway station. The service will operate 19 hours per day, 6 days per week and will serve the following key places:-

- Murdishaw Bus Interchange;
- Runcorn East railway station;
- Whitehouse industrial estate;
- Daresbury business park;
- Daresbury SIC;
- Manor Park;
- Sandymoor; and
- Windmill Hill.

4.4.32 The projected cost of this initiative is £820,000 to be funded out of revenue generated from the SJB and the New Bridge.

4.4.33 Diagram 4.1 illustrates how these Improvement Theme 2 initiatives would form the HRTN. Table 4.2 details the costs of funding these measures, and the proposed funding mechanisms for Improvement Themes 2 and 3.

4.4.34 Over the longer term, the Council is aware of the potential increased travel demand arising from future housing growth as part of the housing growth point proposals. The proposed new HRTN is ideally placed to provide a solid platform from which to serve the proposed new housing developments. The MGSTS also seeks to support complementary housing growth point projects in neighbouring local authority areas, such as West Cheshire and Chester, Warrington Borough Council and the Metropolitan Borough of St. Helens. These measures are set out in paragraph 4.4.12, and are subject

to further feasibility work and discussion with neighbouring authorities.

4.4.35 F - Introduction of a New Concessionary Travel Scheme for Young People/ 'WorkWise'

Also included within this Improvement Theme is indicative funding to provide additional concessionary travel for young people resident within the Borough. This initiative will be the subject of a detailed feasibility study as set out in Improvement Theme 3 below. Subject to the results of the feasibility study, this funding could also be used to develop further 'WorkWise' initiatives within the Borough. It is proposed that this study will be undertaken during the financial year 2017/18. A projected funding package has been identified for this initiative, featuring £1.63m revenue funding and £1.15m capital funding.

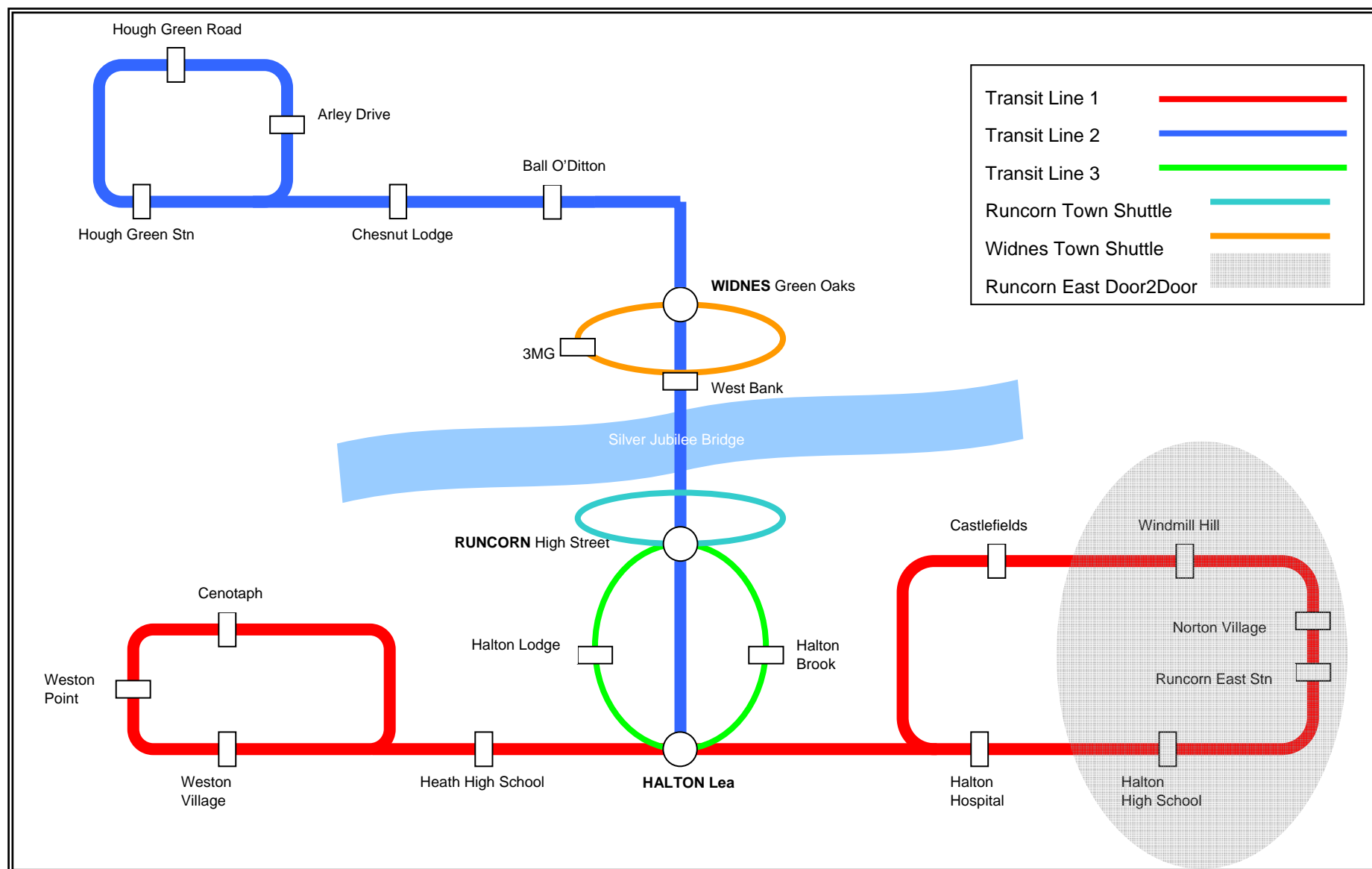


Diagram 4.1: Proposed Halton Rapid Transit Network: [Indicative diagram - not to scale]

4.4.36 Improvement Theme 3 - Introduction of a New Mobility Smartcard

The focus of this Improvement Theme is the further development and launch of an Integrated ITSO* compatible Mobility Smartcard for use by local residents, and users of the SJB and the New Bridge. This will enable residents, visitors and transit vehicles/passengers to easily access and use the network of sustainable transport services/ infrastructure within the Borough.

* Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation (ITSO)

4.4.37 It is proposed that the concessionaire (who will build and operate the project and administer the tolls) will also manage a proposed new, Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation compatible, Smartcard which will be marketed as the '**Halton Mobility Card.**' Subject to compatibility with fast-tag technology for tolling, this will act as the common platform for the payment of transport services incorporating:-

- Bridge tolls;
- Public transport journeys;
- Leisure facilities;
- Cycle hire facilities; and
- 'Door2Door' services.

4.4.38 Fully integrated ticketing will underpin the principles adopted within the Halton Rapid Transit Network enabling passengers to interchange between services, regardless of operator, and between modes without penalty, and in the most cost effective manner. The Smartcard offers the potential to operate as a season ticket for any user-defined period, increasing the flexibility of the product to both the regular and occasional passengers.

4.4.39 It would also be possible to devise a scheme which recognises sustainable use of the Smartcard and rewards users with 'green points' to offset against other goods and services.

4.4.40 This proposal will be incorporated into the existing family of pre-paid, multi-operator, public transport passes which are currently available for use within the Borough, based on the block exemption to the 2002 Competition Act. The card will be able to build on the successful operator reimbursement mechanisms that are already in place.

4.4.41 One of the key advantages of a Mobility Smartcard is that all residents living within the Borough could be issued with a card for use on all modes across the sustainable transport network. A key feature of the technology that surrounds Smartcard services is that it makes them very easy to administer. Furthermore, highly targeted discounts can be provided to particular users if this is required, for example, residents of the Borough who are either unemployed or on low incomes.

4.4.42 Smartcard technology is moving forward very rapidly and the next generation of cards could be incorporated within mobile phones.

- 4.4.43 Another important aspect of the Smartcard technology is that it provides instant, and up to date information on travel behaviour, which can be used to monitor service provision, provide continuous improvements and carefully match supply and demand.
- 4.4.44 Finally, Smartcards can considerably reduce boarding times on buses and, therefore, make a considerable contribution to speeding up journeys, improving reliability and reducing bus operating costs.
- 4.4.45 As part of the development of the Smartcard scheme, the Council and the Concessionaire will look for opportunities to integrate the proposed new Smartcard with similar, complementary proposals being advanced in other local authority areas across the Merseyside and the North West regions. This would make huge inroads into supporting and promoting cross boundary travel, which is both difficult and complicated to administer and confusing for passengers, and generally not a user friendly way of promoting sustainable travel.
- 4.4.46 The Council is particularly keen to target young people between 16 and 21 with the proposed Smartcard. This will help to support a range of initiatives to encourage greater participation by socially excluded young people in education, training, employment and leisure activities. Included within this Improvement Theme is indicative funding to provide additional concessionary travel for young people resident within the Borough. This initiative will be the subject of a detailed feasibility study. Subject to the results of this study, this funding could also be used to develop further 'WorkWise' initiatives within the Borough. It is proposed that this study will be undertaken in 2017/18.
- 4.4.47 This proposal will be the subject of a comprehensive feasibility study, which is estimated to cost £50,000 and will be undertaken in 2017/18. However, capital and revenue funding has been programmed from 2018/19 to launch the ticket. Details of the funding for this element of the strategy are shown in Improvement Theme 2. In total £1.63m in revenue funding has been programmed, and £1.15m in capital programmed to support the initiative.

Table 4.2 Proposed Costs of Improvement Themes 2 and 3

Table 4.2 Improvement Themes 2 and 3	2014/15 (£000s)	2015/16 (£000s)	2016/17 (£000s)	2017/18 (£000s)	2018/19 (£000s)	2019/20 (£000s)	2020/21 (£000s)	2021/22 (£000s)	2022/23 (£000s)	2023/24 (£000s)	2024/25 (£000s)	Totals (£000s)
A-Transit Line 1												
Revenue (tolls)	130	100	70	50	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	370
Capital (LTP)	250	60	0	0	180	150	80	0	0	0	0	720
A-Transit Line 2												
Revenue (tolls)	0	0	130	100	70	50	20	0	0	0	0	370
Capital (LTP)	0	0	300	300	200	300	200	0	0	0	0	1300
A-Transit Line 3												
Revenue (tolls)	0	0	0	0	130	100	70	50	20	0	0	370
Capital (LTP)	0	0	0	0	200	200	130	0	0	0	0	530
B- Runcorn Town Centre Shuttle												
Revenue (tolls)	130	100	65	40	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	345
Capital (LTP)	0	105	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	105
C-Enhanced Widnes town centre shuttle												
Revenue (tolls)	130	100	65	40	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	345
Capital (LTP)	0	105	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	105
D- Community Transport Development Fund												
Revenue (tolls)	110	0	0	70	10	40	20	0	0	0	0	250
E- Proposed Door to Door Demand Responsive service expansion in East Runcorn												
Revenue (tolls)	0	200	170	150	150	90	60	0	0	0	0	820
Mersey Gateway Theme 3 introduction of Smartcard Technology incorporating local concessionary fares scheme for 16-19 year olds/'Workwise' (Tolls)												
Revenue (tolls)	0	0	0	50	100	220	330	450	480	0	0	1630
Capital (LTP)	0	0	0	0	0	200	300	300	350	0	0	1150
TOTALS												
Revenue (tolls)	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	5500
Capital (LTP)	250	270	300	300	580	850	710	300	350	0	0	3910
												9410

4.4.48 Improvement Theme 4 - Further Development of Mobility Management Initiatives

This Improvement Theme focuses on the ongoing development of further mobility management measures across the Borough, to be delivered by the Council's award winning Neighbourhood Travel Team.

4.4.49 As part of this Improvement Theme, it is proposed that the Council's award winning Neighbourhood Travel Team (NTT) be expanded to provide a more comprehensive range of services and facilities for local residents. The focus of the NTT's work will continue on addressing mobility/accessibility issues of residents living in the poorest wards within the Borough by working, in partnership, with stakeholders and community/voluntary organisations.

4.4.50 The proposed package of complementary measures across the Liverpool City Region. include:-

- Enhanced travel blending and advice to households within the Borough, which includes individualised travel planning;
- Further expansion of the various "WorkWise" initiatives including scooter commuter schemes, cycle hire, discounted taxis and car share schemes; and
- The continued development of 'healthy lifestyles' initiatives in partnership with NHS Halton and St. Helens (formerly known as St. Helens and Halton PCT).

4.4.51 The cost of this measure will be subject to the outcome of a full feasibility study into the proposals, which will be funded through specific grants from partner organisations and businesses through the ongoing development of employee/staff travel plans.

4.4.52 Improvement Theme 5 - Walking and Cycling Improvements

Under this Improvement Theme, the Council, and its partners, will seek, as part of the strategy, to develop a step change in the provision of facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists across the Borough, as well as developing improved links to key centres in neighbouring local authority areas.

4.4.53 In addition to the proposed step change improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport on the SJB, an extensive and highly complementary package of sustainable transport improvements has been identified by the Council that are designed to address the key issues set out in Section 2, including:-

- Improvements to key strategic cycle and walking routes and links between Widnes and St Helens and parts of Knowsley MBC (especially Huyton and Whiston);
- The development of a new strategic cycle link between northern Widnes and Penketh (Warrington) to complement the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62;
- Provision of a dedicated cycling centre linked to the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 offering bike hire, bike doctor, shower and locker facilities for leisure cycling and both cash and Smartcard payment;
- Improvements to the core cycle network in the western Runcorn area to better link Rocksavage, Weston Point and Frodsham areas to central and eastern Runcorn and across the SJB to Widnes and the Trans Pennine Trail;

- Improvements to prime orbital cycle routes in Widnes to better directly link the suburbs, commercial and employment areas and leisure and education facilities;
- Improved access to cycle facilities for households, businesses and visitors in the area;
- Improved cycle links between Widnes town centre and Widnes Waterfront via West Bank and new proposed local centre; and
- Improved walking and cycling route linking the SJB/Runcorn railway station and Runcorn town centre.

4.4.54 The estimated costs of these improvements are shown in Table 4.3 below. It is proposed that these works would be funded from LTP sources. However, the theme will be enhanced with contributions from developers and other sources, such as the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF), as they become available.

4.4.55 The Council is also supportive of measures to promote good levels of equine access across the Borough. As part of the detailed design works on the remodelled SJB, the Council will fully evaluate the potential of allowing equestrian access to the improved pedestrian and cycling facilities on the SJB and its approaches. The Council will work with the British Horse Society to develop a comprehensive safety audit to ensure that the safety of all road users is protected when determining the feasibility of any options proposed.

4.4.56 The Projected Costs of delivering the various improvements identified within Improvement Theme 5 is £6.59m, of which £665,000 is programmed from LTP capital funding with the remaining £5.92m from other sources, such as Housing Growth Point infrastructure funding and developer contributions. This programme is identified in the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy.

Table 4.3 Proposed Costs of Improvement Theme 5 Cycling and Walking Improvements

Mersey Gateway STS Theme 5	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Totals
Improved Strategic cycle link North Widnes – St. Helens												
LTP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	50	10	0	160
Other Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	60	0	0	100
Improved Cycle Route linking North Widnes - Warrington												
LTP	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	50	40	0	0	190
Other Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	60	0	0	100
New improved strategic Rincorn – Weston point – Rocksavage – Frodsham – Weaver regional park cycle / pedestrian route. (This will serve the proposed new Housing Growth Point development).												
LTP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	40	60	0	120
Other Capital	0	0	0	0	0	1157	75	32	47	169	52	1532
Introduction of new cycle hire service at key locations across the Borough.												
LTP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	20	0	0	30
Other Capital	0	0	0	0	20	25	30	35	0	0	0	110
Improved cycle / walking links to and from Widnes West Bank / Waterfront.												
LTP	50	50	20	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	130
Other Capital	514	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	514
Improved cycle / walking links between SJB / Runcorn Railway station and the proposed new Housing Growth Point area.												
LTP	25	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
Other Capital	284	258	329	1241	345	254	232	295	95	108	127	3568
Totals												
LTP	75	60	20	10	0	0	100	180	150	70	0	665
Other Capital	798	258	329	1241	365	1436	337	443	262	277	179	5925
Grand Total												6590

Improvement Theme 6 - Improvements to Bus/Rail Interchange and Railway Stations in Halton

The aim of this Improvement Theme is the substantial improvement of passenger facilities at key railway stations across the Borough.

4.4.57 Proposed improvements include:-

- New railway station booking offices and passenger waiting facilities (with enhanced opening hours);
- Improved bus/railway interchange facilities at all railway stations;
- Development of bus and railway station improvement zones within approximately 800 metres of each facility, to promote an integrated, multi-modal approach to the provision of improvements for cyclists and pedestrians, including measures to make sustainable travel safe and secure;
- Improved information, facilitating connections and real time bus/rail information; and
- High quality public realm features commensurate with the proposed HRTN discussed above as Improvement Theme 2.

4.4.58 The estimated cost of this option is £1.5m, which will be funded by a mixture of railway industry funding and contributions from the LTP.

4.4.59 Total Costs and funding sources for Phase One

4.4.60 The projected total costs of the various Improvement Themes which constitute Phase One of the Strategy is £24.57 million, of which £9.145m would be provided through the LTP bid process. Table 4.4 below details the total costs.

Table 4.4 Costs and Funding sources for the Phase One Implementation Themes

Theme	LTP Capital £000s	Tolls Revenue £000s	Other sources £000s	Total £000s
1 – Development of the Proposed Halton Rapid Transit Network	4570	-	3500	8070
2 - Further Expansion of The Halton Rapid Transit Network (HRTN) and the Introduction of Complementary Service Improvements	2760	2870	-	5630
3 - Introduction Of A New Mobility Smartcard	1150	1630	-	2780
4 - Further Development of Mobility Management Initiatives	-	-	#	-
5 - Walking and Cycling Improvements	665	-	5925	6590
6 - Improvements to Bus/Rail Interchange and Railway Stations	-	-	*	1500
Totals	9145	4500	9425	24570

The cost of this measure will be subject to the outcome of a full feasibility study into the proposals, which will be funded through specific grants from partner organisations and businesses through the development of travel plans.

* Costs will be funded by a mixture of railway industry funding and contributions from the LTP

4.4.61 Phase Two Improvement Themes for Implementation Beyond 2024/25.

4.4.62 Over the medium to longer term it is proposed that the following Improvement Theme s be developed as part of the Strategy. Funding for many of these proposals still needs to be identified and many of the initiatives are subject to more detailed feasibility studies to be carried out by the Council, in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and key stakeholders.

4.4.63 Improvement Theme 7 - The Development of New Strategic P&R Facilities across Halton.

Under this Improvement Theme, the Council, in partnership with the Concessionaire and other key stakeholders, proposes to carry out a comprehensive set of feasibility studies to evaluate the potential to introduce new strategic Park and Ride (P&R) sites across the Borough, taking advantage of enhanced levels of local and regional accessibility afforded by the opening of the Project, and proposals to improve the sustainable transport network as set out in Phase One of the strategy.

- 4.4.64 In the longer term it is also proposed that the Council and the Concessionaire will investigate the feasibility of constructing new strategic Park and Ride (P&R) facilities, close to the key approaches of the Project.
- 4.4.65 Key sites identified within the Borough for examination as part of further feasibility work include are shown on Figure 4.1 and include:-
- Central Widnes close to the approaches of the New bridge; and
 - Daresbury (serving the M56 and A56).
- 4.4.66 It is envisaged that these new P&R facilities will be primarily bus based. The revenue subsidy for connecting bus services to P&R facilities will need to be identified as part of the proposed feasibility work, but could include a mixture of developer contributions, and tolling revenue.
- 4.4.67 In order to progress this matter, the Council has already agreed to contribute £15K to a P&R study that Warrington Borough Council is intending to commission. In addition, further work on P&R at local rail stations is being considered by Merseytravel, which Halton intends to support.
- 4.4.68 As part of the housing growth point proposals, the Council has submitted a Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) bid which includes the carrying out of a detailed feasibility study on the potential early construction of a new bus based P&R facility at Daresbury.
- 4.4.69 At the time of writing, the Council is also aware of significant initiatives at a national level to develop a network of new high speed rail lines across the UK. The Council will explore the potential to link the Borough and its key development sites fully with any new high speed rail lines serving the wider North West where opportunities exist to develop the strategic P&R.

4.4.69 Improvement Theme 8 - Canal and Waterway Improvements

This Improvement Theme includes the potential development of new schemes to reinvigorate the network of inland waterways across the Borough.

4.4.70 The MGSTS has also identified further improvements to canals and waterways to support the development of further strategic transport/access improvements for passengers and freight during the longer time frame of the Strategy. These include:-

- The introduction of a new passenger waterbus service linking Runcorn town centre to Murdishaw Marina via Astmoor, Castlefields, Phoenix Park and Windmill Hill (This service will mainly serve the leisure and visitor market, however a pre-feasibility study will also examine options to utilise the link to encourage more local journeys to be made by the service);
- A feasibility study will be carried out into the reopening of the waterway link between the Runcorn branch of the Bridgewater Canal and the Manchester Ship Canal at Runcorn Docks. This will be facilitated by the planned de-linking of the SJB in Runcorn and other changes to the land use pattern in Runcorn town centre as part of MGRS; and
- Further support for measures will further utilise the Manchester Ship Canal as a key inland freight and distribution artery.

4.4.71 As part of the housing growth point proposals, the Council has submitted a Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) bid which includes the carrying out of a detailed feasibility study on the above waterway proposals.

4.4.72 Improvement Theme 9 - Improvements to The Halton Curve

This Improvement Theme seeks to support the development of this key sub regional rail project within the Liverpool City region.

- 4.4.73 The Halton Curve links Halton Junction (on the West Coast Main Line) to Frodsham Junction on the Manchester to North Wales coast line. The proposal involves the introduction of a new local passenger railway service linking Liverpool Lime Street - Liverpool South Parkway - Widnes Waterfront (3MG) - Runcorn - Beechwood - Frodsham - Chester. The scheme not only caters for strategic movements between Chester and Liverpool, but also local journeys within the Borough, should the option to build a station at Beechwood and re-open Ditton railway station be adopted.
- 4.4.74 The Halton Curve is already a commitment within both the Council's LTP and Merseyside's LTP, and has been the subject of a detailed project appraisal by Network Rail. (Reference 40)
- 4.4.75 The scheme provides improved rail access to the Liverpool Super Port initiative discussed in Section 3.
- 4.4.76 The cost of the basic scheme is projected at £13.6m. The funding for this project has yet to be identified, but is likely to be provided from a cocktail of public and private sector initiatives. The opportunity will be taken to accelerate this theme if new funding sources become readily available.
- 4.4.77 The economic benefits of the scheme include:-
- Significant impact on the accessibility of locations along the line of route, increasing the size of local labour markets;
 - Bringing more than 500 jobs to the North West; and
 - The biggest impacts will be felt in Runcorn, Widnes, Frodsham, Helsby and Chester.
- 4.4.78 The Council will continue to work in partnership with Merseytravel and Network Rail to deliver this key scheme. At the time of writing Merseytravel and the Council were, jointly, undertaking a detailed demand forecasting study of the proposed new scheme, and it is anticipated that this will lead to its inclusion within Network Rail's Merseyside Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS), which is expected to be published in the summer 2009.

4.5 New Approach to Appraisal (NATA)

- 4.5.1 A NATA appraisal of all the themes has been undertaken, the results of which are shown in Table 4.5

4.6 Stakeholder Consultation and Feedback for the MGSTS

- 4.6.1 The MGSTS was the subject of a stakeholder consultation during September and October 2008. More than 160 stakeholders, representing a wide range of interests were invited to engage in this key stakeholder initiative, and were sent copies of the draft MGSTS for comment, discussion and to provide a platform for feedback to the Council. An integral component of the stakeholder consultation was a consultation seminar held at the Stobart Stadium in September 2008. The consultation seminar, which was well attended, included comprehensive presentations covering the MGSTS in the context of the Project, and a

workshop and feedback session. The latter allowed stakeholders to drill down into specific aspects of the MGSTS and provide feedback, aided by facilitators from the Council.

4.6.2 A summary of the written responses to the MGSTS stakeholder consultation and actions that have been taken by the Council to change and amend the MGSTS can be found in Appendix B of this document.

4.6.3 It can be seen from Appendix B that the thrust of the consultation responses was, generally, very positive and supportive.

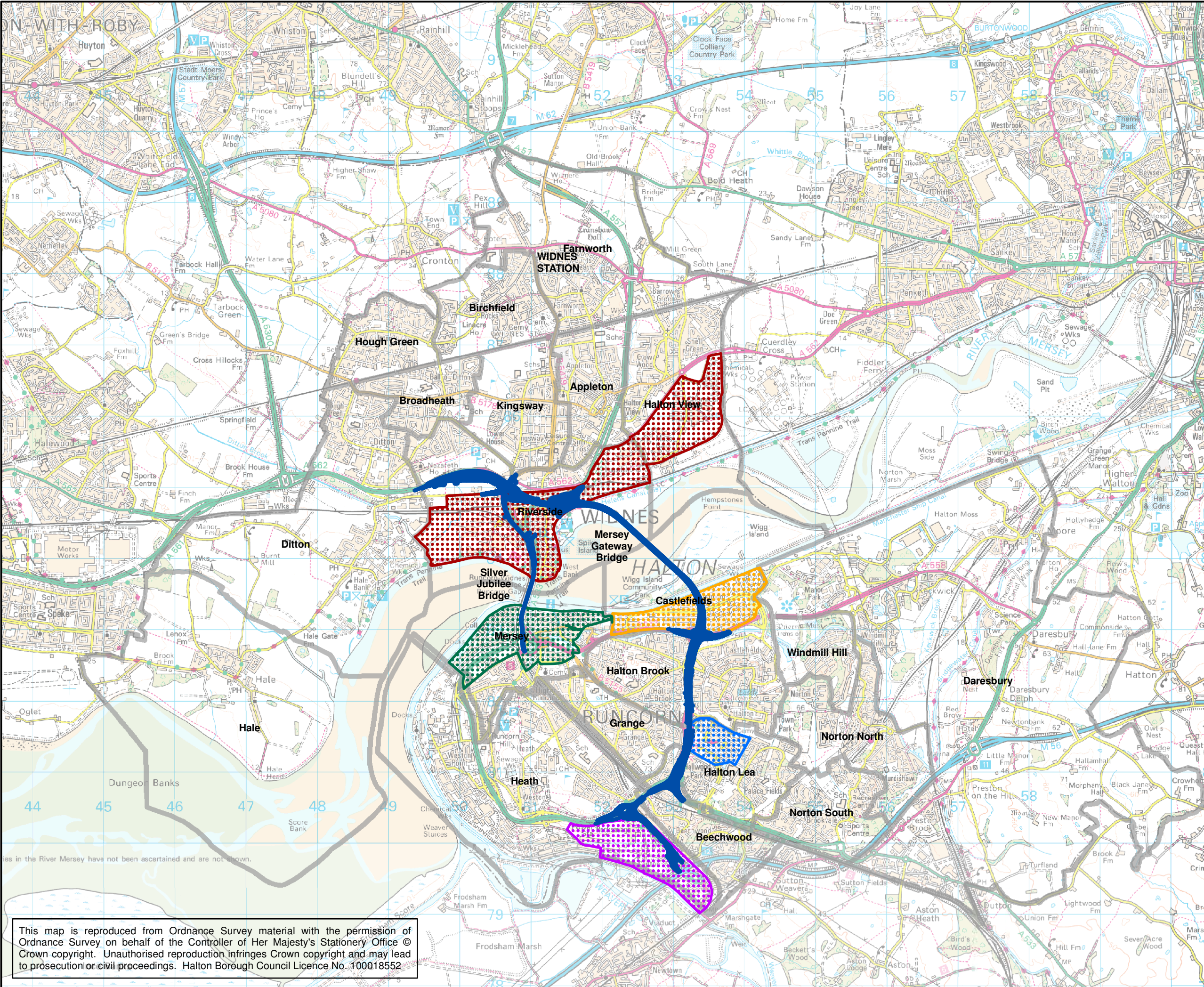
4.7 The Strategy in Practice

4.7.1 It is generally recognised that transport is not an end in itself, but is a means to an end. It is, therefore, important to demonstrate how the proposed Strategy complements key initiatives within the Borough and enables the delivery of much wider socio-economic and environmental benefits.

4.7.2 In developing the MGSTS, particular attention has been paid to addressing the key transport issues that were identified in the MGRS. Section 4.8 summarises the aims and objectives of the MGRS along with the key sustainable transport issues relevant to the five designated regeneration areas in the Borough. The five MGRS areas are shown in Figure 4.2. and are as follows:-

- West Bank;
- Runcorn;
- Astmoor;
- Halton Lea; and
- Rocksavage and Clifton.

4.7.3 The Project impacts directly on two of the regeneration areas. These are Widnes West Bank and Runcorn town centre, and, as such, provide early opportunities for regeneration. However, regeneration in the remaining three areas is more dependent on other development opportunities and is more long term. Section 4.8 below focuses on an integrated approach to the transport issues in the West Bank and Runcorn town centre and identifies those themes in the proposed Phase One delivery programme that will facilitate regeneration of these two areas of Halton. Measures are also identified for the other three areas, but are less detailed due to the longer timescales involved.



Legend

- The Mersey Gateway Project
- Regeneration Areas**
 - ASTMOOR
 - HALTON LEA
 - ROCK SAVAGE
 - RUNCORN
 - WIDNES
- Halton Ward Boundaries

Client	HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL		
Project	MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY		
Title	MERSEY GATEWAY REGENERATION STRATEGY AREAS		
			
3rd Floor, King's Court, 2-4 Exchange Street, Manchester, M2 7HA Tel: 0161 827 1890 Fax: 0161 819 5703 www.gifford.uk.com			
Scale (At A3)	Date	Drawn	
1:50,000	10/12/2008	Jane Hunter	
Drg No	FIGURE 4.2		Rev. -

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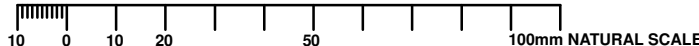


Table 4.5 This illustrates the results of a high level impact evaluation of the proposed Strategy using key elements of the DfT's NATA approach to transport appraisal. LP= Low Positive N = Neutral MP= Medium Positive HP=High Positive

Assessment Criteria	PHASE ONE Improvement themes 1 and 2	PHASE ONE Improvement Theme 3	PHASE ONE Improvement theme 4	PHASE ONE Improvement Theme 5	PHASE TWO Improvement Theme 6	PHASE TWO Improvement Theme 7	PHASE TWO Improvement Theme 8	PHASE TWO Improvement Theme 9
	Halton Rapid Transit Network Improvements and ring fencing of tolling revenue	Halton mobility smartcard	Development of mobility management measures	Walking and cycling improvements	Improvements to bus/rail interchange and railway stations	Development of new strategic P&R facilities across Halton	Canal and waterway improvements	Improvement of the Halton Curve
Environment:								
Landscape	N	N	LP	HP	N	LP	LP	N
Noise and Air Pollution	MP	N	LP	HP	MP	LN	MP	LP
Congestion	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP
Safety	LP	LP	LP	LP	MP	LP	N	LP
Economy:			LP					
Regional	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	MP
Local	MP	LP	LP	LP	LP	MP	LP	MP
Employment (employers)	MP	LP	LP	LP	LP	MP	LP	MP
Employment (employees)	MP	LP	LP	LP	LP	MP	LP	MP
Integration	MP	MP	LP	MP	MP	HP	MP	MP
Passengers			LP					
Journey Time	MP	LP	LP	N	LP	LP	LP	MP
Increased accessibility	HP	LP	LP	N	LP	MP	LP	MP
Service Frequency	HP	N	LP	N	LP	MP	LP	MP
Service Reliability	MP	N	LP	N	LP	LP	LP	MP
Journey Opportunities	HP	MP	LP	N	LP	MP	LP	MP

4.8 The Draft Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (MGRS) (GVA Grimley April 2008)

4.8.1 The MGRS explores a wide range of economic, social, physical and environmental opportunities for the Borough that result as a direct consequence of the Project. Significantly, the MGRS recognises that the Project is much more than just a bridge.

4.8.2 The development of the MGRS has included extensive and wide reaching stakeholder participation and consultation in the Borough.

4.8.3 There are four overlapping themes that the MGRS seeks to develop, of which two are highly relevant to the MGSTS:-

- **Enhancing Accessibility:** through reduced travel times, thereby extending potential catchment areas to education, employment and other community facilities; and
- **Image, Property and Development:** the Project will have a direct physical impact on the locality and will assist in the definition of land use, movement and design mix.

The integration of the land use proposals as set out in the MGRS and the transport and accessibility improvements, as articulated in the MGSTS, are clearly demonstrated from the following integrated area regeneration solutions.

4.8.4 Integrated Solution 1 - West Bank, Widnes

4.8.5 The MGRS recommends that as part of the Project, the West Bank area of Widnes should be comprehensively upgraded as an attractive, mixed land use area. Hence, the MGSTS seeks to support the MGRS by delivering a comprehensive range of transport and access improvements to support the key proposals for that area.

4.8.6 Para 4.6 of the MGRS states:

‘An important ambition for the West Bank area is, firstly, to create a new and improved waterfront promenade, which, as part of a robust environmental improvement Strategy, could really transform the image and quality of place. A second important ambition is to improve the links with adjacent areas, particularly Widnes and Runcorn town centres, and also enhanced accessibility to the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 and the highway network.’

4.8.7 Following on from this, the MGRS recommends the following key improvements within the West Bank area;

- **Image and Place Making**
 - To support the improved image and place making within the West Bank area, the MGRS proposes the creation of a new neighbourhood centre located on the Waterloo Road corridor. This new commercial centre is designed to provide an attractive commercial and social hub for the community, where a wide range of key local services will be provided within an attractive setting. This proposed new commercial centre will also act as the hub of an enhanced network of improved sustainable transport links especially public transport, walking and cycling improvements in the area.
 - Furthermore, new sustainable access improvements are proposed to open up access to the Widnes Waterfront area stretching from Spike Island

through to Pickering's Pasture. Particular attention will be placed on the creation of new high quality walking and cycling routes emanating from the key public transport interchange identified at Irwell Street and the new proposed district centre (located off Waterloo Road). These improved walking and cycling links will be complemented by the introduction of a new shuttle bus service linking West Bank, Widnes Waterfront, 3MG, and Widnes Town Centre, detailed in Improvement Theme 2.

- **Accessibility and Movement**

- To improve accessibility and movement within the West Bank area, the MGRS specifically recommends that the A533 (Queensway) should be downgraded using modifications to the existing road infrastructure to create more direct access to West Bank. As part of the proposals, the A533 becomes a local two-way road to simplify and maximise accessibility. This will be complemented by new at-grade junctions allowing better local traffic movements within and between West Bank and the surrounding areas.
- The MGRS also identifies the need for the creation of clearer and more easily defined routes for pedestrians and cyclists through the West Bank area. It also provides for a clear hierarchy of defined routes, which responds to the character of the areas proposed and provides for pedestrian and cycle movement, especially key north/south linkages. These issues are addressed in the MGSTS by the proposals contained in Improvement Theme 5.

- **Development and Economic Prosperity**

- High quality public realm improvements will be introduced as part of the proposals, which will seek to unify the area and improve the 'sense of place'.

4.8.8 Key issues related to sustainable transport and movement in this area were identified as follows:-

- Poor traffic circulation and a lack of permeability;
- Area dominated by motor vehicles and road infrastructure;
- A hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Poor linkages into West Bank;
- Need to upgrade links to Widnes town centre and the Estuary; and
- Need to improve safety and security on footways and roads.

4.8.9 The MGSTS will address these issues by implementing the following:-

- A significant upgrade to key bus routes through the area. The area is dissected by the Core Bus Route Network (identified in Section 2) linking Widnes town centre to West Bank and the SJB. This Core Bus Route Network will be upgraded as part of the first phase of the introduction of the proposed new HRTN. This will be complemented by the introduction of a new local community shuttle bus service, under Improvement Theme 2, offering improved connectivity between the key residential communities within West Bank, the main employment areas, the proposed new commercial centre and key public transport interchange nodes (to be located at Irwell Street and the new commercial centre on Waterloo Road). This service, in addition, provides for enhanced north/south links;

- The creation of new high quality and attractive core walking and cycling routes, (Improvement Theme 5) again linking the key public transport nodes in the area and the housing, employment and leisure attractions in the area;
- Further improvements to the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 section of the strategic cycle network, (Improvement Theme 5); and
- The Council will aspire to deliver a high quality scheme to better provide for pedestrian movement between the high level SJB deck (and proposed public transport interchange at Irwell Street) and Widnes Waterfront area in West Bank. (Improvement Theme 5).

4.8.10 Proposed De-Linking of the SJB in West Bank

4.8.11 Integral to the Project is the de-linking of the SJB from the strategic highway network. The de-linking arrangements are aimed at reducing the potential for the SJB to be used as a strategic link for long distance traffic movement, whilst increasing its function as a local connection for residents and businesses in the Borough.

4.8.12 The planning application submitted in respect of the Project includes de-linking proposals on Queensway in West Bank. The indicative layout for the proposed de-linking as submitted with the Planning Application is shown in Figure 4.3 for illustrative purposes only.

4.8.13 Integrated Solution for Runcorn Town Centre

4.8.14 The MGRS also identifies and recommends specific infrastructure and land use changes for Runcorn town centre, which are supported by measures in the MGSTS.

4.8.15 Key issues related to sustainable transport and movement in this area from the perspective of the MGRS are as follows:-

- Poor visibility and legibility of Runcorn railway station and associated bus and pedestrian facilities and connections;
- Poor pedestrian links and high levels of severance in this area; and
- Dominant road infrastructure, particularly on elevated structures.

4.8.16 A number of potential solutions have been considered for the SJB de-linking works in Runcorn as set out in the Mersey Gateway De-Linking Options Report (Reference 33). The scale of the heavy highway infrastructure on the Runcorn side of the SJB is significant and complex. The MGRS has examined the development potential for land in this area following the de-linking works. A key opportunity resulting from this is the potential to redevelop Runcorn railway station with associated office and business land uses adjoining the frontage of the station.

4.8.17 From the perspective of the MGSTS, the de-linking of the SJB provides an opportunity to develop and improve Runcorn railway station as a major transport interchange and thereby address the sustainable transport issue identified above. The key design considerations include the need to identify a solution that maximises the development and commercial opportunities of the land adjoining the station, whilst facilitating the provision of a key sub-regional interchange and transport hub at the station itself. Designs will also have to incorporate direct linkages for buses, pedestrians and cycles between Runcorn railway station and Runcorn Old Town and between Runcorn railway station and the



NOTES

1. This layout is indicative of a highway/ infrastructure layout which defines the layout of the highway and the infrastructure elements which are required to deliver the key elements described in the project brief. It is not a final design and is subject to change. It is not a final design and is subject to change. It is not a final design and is subject to change.

FOR INFORMATION			
Item	Quantity	Unit	Value
1. H&B	13.06	m	
2. H&B	13.06	m	
3. H&B	13.06	m	
4. H&B	13.06	m	
5. H&B	13.06	m	
6. H&B	13.06	m	
7. H&B	13.06	m	
8. H&B	13.06	m	
9. H&B	13.06	m	
10. H&B	13.06	m	



THE MERSEY GATEWAY

WESTBANK DELINKING

INDICATIVE LAYOUT

REFERENCE DESIGN

OPTION

FIGURE 4.3

Not to Scale

Scale (or A3)	Date	Drawn	Rev
1:2000	1.10.08	BW	
Rev	Rev	Rev	Rev
B40271/MSK157B			

This map is a reproduction of the original map and is not a substitute for the original map. It is not a final design and is subject to change. It is not a final design and is subject to change. It is not a final design and is subject to change.

housing growth point at Weston via Picow Farm Road.

4.8.18 To help support the regeneration of Runcorn town centre, the key transport recommendations contained within the MGRS, which are supported by the MGSTS include:-

- The removal of the highway bridge over the Bridgewater Canal, which currently prevents it joining with the Manchester Ship Canal and providing wider links to the inland waterways which form the Cheshire loop system, which the Runcorn Branch of the Bridgewater Canal is linked to;
- A comprehensive redesign of the road layout from/to the SJB, involving the removal of the Runcorn 'loops,' to simplify vehicular movement into/out of Runcorn town centre and allow direct bus and vehicular movement from the SJB to Runcorn railway station;
- Retention of the east bound slip road which would be redesigned as a two way road linking the SJB to the town centre by a new, at grade, four-way junction on the Runcorn Expressway; and
- Downgrading of road infrastructure from the 'loops' format allowing improved pedestrian and cyclist movement from the town centre to commercial development via upgraded and new pedestrian and cycle links.

These proposals will be subject to further detailed scrutiny as the project progresses and actual funding and development opportunities come forward.

4.8.19 The MGSTS will address these issues by implementing the following:-

- The introduction of a new town centre shuttle bus service (Improvement Theme 2) linking Runcorn town centre bus station - Runcorn railway station (through the new proposed mixed use commercial area created through the removal of the 'loops'), The Bridge retail park - Riverside College Halton - the Independent Living Centre and the Runcorn Promenade;
- Core Bus Route network improvements over the SJB linking West Bank to Runcorn town centre (Improvement Theme 1);
- Improved bus links between Runcorn town centre and the proposed new housing growth point area at Western Docks (Improvement Theme 2);
- Cycling and walking links (Improvement Theme 3); and
- Improved leisure corridor along the Runcorn branch of the Bridgewater Canal (Improvement Theme 7).

4.8.20 Common Issues and themes in West Bank and Runcorn associated with the SJB

4.8.21 There are a number of common issues and themes in terms of sustainable transport in West Bank and the Runcorn regeneration areas and these are related to the SJB, which provides the only connection for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists in the Borough.

4.8.22 Issues Associated with the Pedestrian Route on the SJB

4.8.23 The SJB currently offers very poor facilities for pedestrians walking between Runcorn and Widnes. The route comprises a narrow pedestrian route running along the east side of the

SJB between West Bank in Widnes and the Town Viaduct in Runcorn. (See plates 4.1 and 4.2 below). Other factors discouraging pedestrian movements include:-

- Noisy environment, particularly on the approaches to the SJB;
- Poor air quality;
- Close proximity of pedestrians to dense traffic;
- High potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists due to the narrowness of the route;
- High level of exposure to the wind and rain;
- Bridge vibrates which can be unnerving for pedestrians; and
- The route is not a formalised route for cyclists.



Plate 4.1. Existing narrow footway on the east side of the SJB, that is intended for pedestrians, but is also used by cyclists.



Plate 4.2. Cyclists in West Bank, heading south towards Runcorn via the SJB.

4.8.24 Feedback from focus group consultation in Section 2 indicated that the walkway across the

SJB should be made more user friendly, more attractive to use and have better access and signage from both sides of the River. Concerns about personal safety were also expressed by consultees as pedestrians and, to a lesser degree, cyclists are 'out of view' when crossing the bridge.

- 4.8.25 Experience and observations have indicated that pedestrians walking across the SJB often have to frequently get out of the way of cyclists travelling over the SJB, and there is a degree conflict between the two groups of users. This is exacerbated by the narrowness of the route.

4.8.26 Issues Associated with Cycling on the SJB route

- 4.8.27 A survey conducted on Tuesday 4th December 2007 between 7am and 7pm counted 104 pedestrians and 129 cyclists using the footway on the SJB (Gifford 2007). The survey was undertaken at a time of the year when demand is likely to be low due to the seasonal weather conditions. More people tend to walk and cycle outside the winter season. The results of the survey provided strong evidence to suggest that there is a core of users who wish to make the connection across the River, despite the current unpleasant conditions. The proposed improvements will make the crossing more attractive and should, therefore, generate greater regular use throughout the year.

- 4.8.28 An automatic counter installed on behalf of the Council on the Town Viaduct in Runcorn on the southerly approach to the SJB, has been monitoring cycle use. These are cyclists who have travelled over Town Viaduct on their way to or from the SJB. A summary of the data collected between May 2007 and September 2008 is shown in Table 4.6. Due to mechanical problems and vandalism to equipment it was not possible to obtain data for every month between May 2007 and September 2008.

- 4.8.29 The data indicates a peaked profile during weekdays demonstrating a strong demand during the commuter peaks.

Table 4.6 Summary of Cycle Use over the SJB Recorded by Automatic Counting Equipment

		Volume	
Month	Period	Ave Mon-Fri	Ave Sat-Sun
May-07	21st-31st	172	61
Jun-07	1st-10th	206	151
Jul-07	2nd-22nd	157	118
Sep-07	17th-30th	163	126
Oct-07	Whole Month	146	102
Nov-07	Whole Month	123	79
Dec-07	Whole Month	88	62
Jan-08	25th-31st	107	95
Feb-08	Whole Month	132	102
Mar-08	27th-2nd April	136	96
Apr-08	Whole Month	145	83
Aug-08	6th-31st	178	119
Sep-08	6th-15th	184	114

4.8.30 Integrated Solution 3 - Astmoor Sustainable Transport Issues

- 4.8.31 Key issues related to sustainable transport and movement in this area are as follows:-

- Poor visibility of the Astmoor branch of the Runcorn Busway and stops;
- Poor integration between the Runcorn Busway and pedestrian and cycle routes and adjoining employment and business sites;
- Weak north-south links within Astmoor and links to Runcorn town centre; and
- Poor public realm, particularly in areas adjacent to the Runcorn Busway and stops; and
- No clearly defined interchange and key transport node on the Runcorn Busway in Astmoor.

4.8.32 Measures to address these issues will be implemented as part of proposals to comprehensively regenerate the Astmoor Industrial Estate by the Council.

4.8.33 Halton Lea Sustainable Transport Issues

4.8.34 Halton Lea is one of the foremost commercial centres within the Borough, with significant retail and business office functions. The majority of the centre was purpose built between the late 1960's and mid 1970's in a series of phases, coinciding with the expansion of the Runcorn New Town area.

4.8.35 The main commercial shopping centre, although now dated in many respects, was designed around a unique arrangement of segregated access routes for public transport, pedestrians/cyclists and vehicle movements. The centre is the hub of the unique Busway system which connects all the main residential areas in the Runcorn area with the shopping centre. Passenger access to the Runcorn Busway system is provided by two separate bus stations (Halton Lea North bus station and Halton Lea South bus station) which are served by an elevated one way loop section of the Runcorn Busway. Accessibility by bus to the main commercial centre continues to be excellent from most areas during the daytime Monday to Saturday. However, service quality and availability deteriorates during evenings and Sundays.

4.8.36 Cycling and walking access to Halton Lea is generally very good and is based again on segregated walking and cycling links from surrounding areas. Pedestrians and cyclists are fed into the centre via a network of elevated pedestrian footbridges, although with the opening of the Trident Retail Park in 2003, the at-grade pedestrian access was improved to the southern section of Halton Lea.

4.8.37 The main issues related to sustainable transport and movement in this centre include the following:-

- Car movement dominates the area:-
- Halton Lea North bus station and Halton Lea South bus station operate independently of each other;
- Poor provision for pedestrians;
- The centre suffers from poor legibility with the main access to the shopping area being hidden; and;
- Direct vehicle access from the east is lacking.

4.8.38 Over the longer term, and linked into any future redevelopment of the commercial centre at Halton Lea, the Council will work with developers to address these problems.

4.8.39 **Rocksavage and Clifton Sustainable Transport Issues**

4.8.40 The MGRS recommends a package of regeneration measures for the Rocksavage and Clifton areas of south Runcorn. The area is tightly ringed by a network of strategic road links and infrastructure (A557 'Western Point Expressway' and the M56) which limits the permeability and ease of movement by sustainable transport choices to the rest of the urban area. The area also fronts onto the River Weaver Canal which provides an important recreational and leisure resource. The railway alignment which is the proposed route of the improved Halton Curve railway is also located on the western fringes of the area. However, pedestrian access between Clifton and the proposed new station on the Halton Curve at Beechwood is currently severed by the A557.

4.8.41 The western part of the area is dominated by heavy industrial activity associated with the Rocksavage power plant and Weston Dock. The principal road access points are Cavendish Farm Road and Bankes Lane. Towards the south east of the area lies the Ashville industrial estate, this only has vehicle access from the A557 (off the severed Clifton Road). Sandwiched in between these two industrial/commercial areas lies the small residential area of Clifton village. Access to Clifton village, is limited by sustainable travel choices due to the existence of heavy road infrastructure, with public transport, walking and cycling links currently extremely limited in scope. Furthermore, strategic walking and cycling linkages are hampered by the design and limited road/footpath capacity on the swing bridge over the Weaver Navigation, affecting key walking and cycling movements between Runcorn and Frodsham and the Weaver Vale area.

4.8.42 The MGRS identifies the area as the key southern gateway to Runcorn and a key link between the M56 and the New Bridge. The MGRS identifies the following objectives for the area:-

- **Objective One:** Strengthen the distinctive character assets of the area, including the Weaver Canal, Sutton Quays and areas of woodland, through the promotion of leisure and recreation;
- **Objective Two:** Respond to the demand for smaller, better quality employment accommodation to cater for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) and business start ups;
- **Objective Three:** Seek to promote alternative energy production within the area, due to the opportunity offered by the areas relative seclusion, lack of opportunity for residential development and locational links into the Borough's electrical supply network;
- **Objective Four:** Encourage high quality, visible gateway development opportunities;
- **Objective Five:** Maximise the use of contaminated land through appropriate redevelopment; and
- **Objective Six:** Promote improved east to west pedestrian links along the River Weaver Canal.

4.8.43 Therefore, over the medium to long term the MGSTS will seek to deliver the following improvements funded out of a mixture of LTP funding and developer contributions:-

- The introduction of improved community passenger transport services to the Clifton village area;
- Improved local pedestrian and cycle links between Clifton village and the core of the urban area in Runcorn;
- Better walking and cycling links between Clifton village and the surrounding commercial and employment areas to the proposed new Beechwood railway station on the Halton Curve railway line;
- The development of travel plans with businesses in the area to work up detailed proposals to promote the greater use of walking, cycling and public transport to the key employment areas; and
- The further development of strategic cycle/walking links through the area, in particular the re-opening of a new cycle/walking link over the Weaver Navigation and River Weaver, thereby improving connections between southern and western Runcorn and Frodsham.

4.9 Conclusion

- 4.9.1 Section 4 has identified a two phase implementation plan, based on a thematic approach, which addresses key issues identified in the MGRS. Section 5 will describe how progress is to be monitored on the implementation of the MGSTS, and identifies a series of challenging targets, which are linked to the MGSTS objectives.

5 MEASURING PROGRESS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

5.1 Measuring Progress

5.1.1 As with any key strategy covering a period of 20 years, it is important to identify and implement a robust framework for measuring the effectiveness of the MGSTS, both in terms of outputs and impacts.

5.1.2 It is proposed that the recently established Halton Local Strategic Transport Board will steer the implementation and monitoring of the MGSTS and that annual updates will be produced in line with the normal reporting mechanisms for the LTP (or successor documents).

5.1.3 To assist with the measuring of progress, the following output indicators and impact targets are proposed (grouped under each of key objectives of the MGSTS).

5.1.4 Objective 1

Further improve accessibility for residents living in the most deprived wards in Halton to a wide range of key facilities including employment, learning/ training, health, leisure and retail facilities.

Table 5.1 Objective 1 Indicators

Output Indicator	Impact Target
Improved cycle links between the top five most income deprived wards of the Borough and the key regeneration sites.	Increase the percentage of people living in the top five most deprived wards in the Borough, regularly cycling to education, employment, health, leisure and shopping facilities by 10% in 2021 and 25% in 2031.
Improved accessibility to key employment sites in eastern Runcorn through the introduction of a new 'Door2Door' service operating 24 hours a day and seven days a week.	Reduction in the journey time by bus for residents living in the top 5 most income deprived wards living within 40 minutes end to end journey time from their home to place of employment in eastern Runcorn. Specific targets will be identified when base data becomes available. Performance will be monitored using the DfT's 'Accession' accessibility software.

5.1.5 Objective 2

Reduce the future reliance on carbon intensive modes of travel through encouraging greater use of public transport, walking and cycling options.

Table 5.2- Objective 2 Indicators

Output Indicator	Impact Target
Improvements to local bus services on the Core Bus Route Network, as set out in improvements themes 1 and 2.	Increase the percentage of people travelling to and from work by bus from 8% in 2001 to 15% in 2021, and 18% in 2031.
Introduction of 20 new cycle hire nodes in the Borough.	Generate 1,000 active members of the cycle hire scheme by 2021 (active members are defined as using the scheme at least twice per month).
Introduction a fleet of at least 40 new buses running on bio fuel or alternative low carbon fuel as part of the Strategy	Reduce reliance on conventional diesel sources for operators providing services on the local public transport network by 75% by 2021.

5.1.6 Objective 3

Support the continued regeneration of Halton, through ensuring new high quality sustainable transport opportunities are delivered as part of the Project and the associated MGRS.

Table 5.3 Objective 3 Indicators

Output Indicator	Impact Target
The introduction of 2 new high quality shuttle bus services linking key regeneration sites to Widnes and Runcorn Town Centres.	90% of the population of the Borough should be within 45 minutes travel time of key regeneration areas by public transport by 2021. Performance will be monitored using the Accession model
Improved accessibility to key employment sites in eastern Runcorn through the introduction of a new 'Door2Door' service	Delivering a 20 minute 'connecting' target for passengers arriving and transferring to/from the new proposed eastern Runcorn 'Door2Door' service at Murdishaw Bus Interchange or Runcorn East Station, Specific targets will be identified when base data becomes available. Performance will be monitored using the DfT's 'Accession' accessibility software.
Better linkages for pedestrians and cyclists over the SJB.	Increase the number of pedestrians and cyclists travelling over the SJB by 350% by 2021 compared with current levels of use as at 2008.

5.1.7 Objective 4

Improve the modal share of journeys into the 3 main commercial centres (Runcorn Town Centre, Widnes Town Centre and Halton Lea) by sustainable forms of transport, thereby supporting the regeneration of these centres.

Table 5.4 Objective 4 Indicators

Output Indicator	Impact Target
The introduction of improved frequencies and hours of operation on the Core Bus Route Network , which links the key three commercial centres to their surrounding residential areas.	Increase the percentage of people travelling into the three main commercial centres by public transport by 8% in 2021, and by 12% in 2031 compared to the baseline data established in 2011.
Introduction of improved cycle links and facilities into the main commercial centres from the surrounding areas.	Increase the percentage of people cycling into the three main commercial centres, by 15% in 2021 and by 25% in 2031 compared to the baseline data established in 2011.
Improve the footfall in the three main commercial centres through measures to improve the pedestrian environment.	Increase the percentage of people walking to the three main commercial centres by 4% in 2021 and by 8% in 2031 compared to the baseline data established in 2011.

N.B. Baseline figures for the cordon count's need to be established. The cordon counts will be conducted once every 3 years, during the period of the MGSTS.

5.1.8 Objective 5

Further develop new strategic high quality sustainable transport links/corridors through Halton utilising opportunities provided by the Project and thereby improving key Mersey Belt and Liverpool City area linkages.

Table 5.5 Objective 5 Indicator

Output Indicator	Impact Target
Better cycle links between the Trans Pennine Trail NCN 62 and Runcorn via SJB.	Increase the number of pedestrians and cyclists travelling over the SJB by 100% by 2021

6 SUMMARY

- 6.1 The MGSTS, delivered within the Mersey Gateway Project, seeks to dramatically improve levels of accessibility in Halton and within the emerging Liverpool City Region. This, in turn, will support the ongoing regeneration of Halton and deliver a sustained, balanced improvement to communities and the local economy, enabling the Borough to play a full part in the transformation of the UK economy.
- 6.2 The Project, including the MGSTS, is very closely aligned to the UK Government's long-term vision for transport as set out in "Towards a Sustainable Transport System" and is firmly cemented into a strong regional, sub-regional and local vision framework.
- 6.3 The key outcomes of the Project clearly meet the UK Government's long term vision for transport as set out in TaSTS including :-
- Supporting national economic competitiveness and growth by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;
 - Reducing transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change;
 - Contributing to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;
 - Promoting greater equality of opportunity for all citizens with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society; and
 - Improving quality of life for transport users and non transport users and promoting a healthy natural environment.
- 6.4 The proposed MGSTS ensures that the Project is much more than just a new road crossing across the River Mersey. It also includes a package of complementary sustainable transport improvements which aim to significantly enhance travel options and improve accessibility for all residents of the Borough of Halton, especially those living in the most deprived areas. This is the essence of the **Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy**.

REFERENCES

- Ref 1 Halton Council (2006) Final Local Transport Plan 2006/07-2010/2011.
- Ref. 2 Halton Council (2005) Unitary Development Plan 2005.
- Ref. 3 GVA Grimley, The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy 2008
Chapter 16.00 Transport
- Ref. 4 The Mersey Gateway Project Environmental Statement 1.0, 2008
Chapter 20.00 Impact Assessment
- Ref. 5 Mersey Gateway First Stage Public Transport Options Study, 2006.
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APPENDIX A

Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy

Review of Recent Developments relating to National, Regional and the Local Policy Context.

National Policy Developments

Policy Change	Description of Policy Change	Recommended Action
Draft Renewable Fuel Obligation (Amendment) Order 2009	In October 2008 the Government published consultation on the Draft Renewable Fuel Obligation (Amendment) Order 2009. The proposals are designed to take forward the key findings of the Gallagher Review including the proposal that the rate of increase of the Renewal Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) be slowed to reach 5% in 2013/14 rather than 2010/11, with two new types of bio fuels – biobutanol and hydrogenated renewable diesel be included within the list of fuels eligible under the RTFO.	It is recommended that the national policy change should be referred to in Section 3 of the MGSTS. However this does not affect the overall Strategy as currently drafted.
Local Transport Bill 2008	In late 2008 the new Transport Act gained Royal Assent in late 2008. This will give local authorities important new powers to improve the quality of local bus services, reform the arrangements for local transport governance in the major conurbations and enable councils to take decisions on local road pricing schemes. Therefore the new Transport Act seeks to provide a clearer spectrum of options for local authorities consisting of:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary agreements (VPA's); • Statutory Quality Partnership Schemes (QBP's); and • Quality Contracts. 	In commenting on draft Guidance to accompany the Bill, the Council welcomed the introduction of new powers to introduce Statutory Quality Bus Partnership Schemes. These schemes allow local authorities to specify bus service frequencies, timings and maximum fares. It is recommended that the Strategy be changes to include the following provision:- “In delivering the proposals as set out in the MGSTS, the Council will seek to identify the correct mechanism for delivering the proposed public transport improvements in partnership with the bus operators, including the creation of a formal Statutory Quality Bus Partnership.”

	<p>Changes also being introduced by the new Transport Act will mean that the QPS may also impose additional new restrictions relating to the subsequent registration of new bus services or the amendment / withdrawal of existing services within the area covered by the QPS. The aim of this new provision is to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent the introduction of new services which might undermine services also specified and provided under the QPS; and • Preclude the entry of operators who are unwilling to operate services to the prescribed quality standards as set out in the QPS <p>The new regulations would also empower the local authority to specify key dates for bus service registration changes as part of a QPS, hence ensuring greater stability to local bus markets. However, the DfT make clear that it remains the responsibility of the Traffic Commissioners to ultimately decide as to whether a bus service meets the quality criteria as set out in a QPS. Under such circumstances the normal 56 day notification period on bus service registration changes is suspended and replaced by a decision taken by the Traffic Commissioner as to a practical start date for a new service or amendment to an existing one based on the nature of the QPS.</p> <p>The new draft regulations also specify a procedure for the review of timings, frequencies and maximum fares under a QPS. The draft guidelines state that maximum fares must be reviewed at least every 12</p>	
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	<p>months, however no such review period is stipulated for timings and fares.</p> <p>A QPS cannot include tour services; inter urban services, community bus services or school buses. Local authority subsidised services should be included in the QPS.</p> <p>It is suggested that the local transport authority establish a robust governance process for monitoring the scheme with all of the local partners such as a Local Partnership Board</p>	
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Regional Policy Developments

Policy Change	Description of Policy Change	Recommended Action
The recently adopted North West Regional Spatial Strategy (September 2008)	The recently adopted North West Regional Spatial Strategy replaces the old Regional Planning Guidance 13, and forms part of the statutory development plan for the Borough. The forthcoming North West Regional Spatial Strategy Implementation Plan (due for publication in December 2008) will outline regional priorities for transport investment.	It is recommended that this regional policy change should be referred to in Section 3 of the MGSTS. However this does not affect the overall Strategy as currently drafted.

Local Policy Developments

Policy Change	Description of Policy Change	Recommended Action
Halton Local Area Agreement June 2008 – April 2011	<p>In June 2008, the Halton Strategic Partnership published the new Local Area Agreement for the Borough. It reiterated the strategic policy framework for the Borough, the key priorities of which are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Healthy Halton – To create a healthier community and work to promote well being – a positive experience of life and good health; • Halton's Urban Renewal – To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough; • Halton's Children and Young People – To ensure that in Halton children and young people are safeguarded, healthy and happy. • Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton – To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth; and • A Safer Halton- To ensure pleasant, safe and secure neighbourhood environments where people can enjoy life. <p>The LAA recognises the importance of the Project and the accompanying MGSTS in terms of supporting new employment opportunities and improving accessibility across the Borough and beyond.</p>	It is recommended that the local policy change should be referred to in Section 3 of the MGSTS. However this does not affect the overall Strategy as currently drafted.