

AUTHOR	Joint Report of the Strategic Director (Environment), Bedfordshire County Council and the Director of Environment and Regeneration, Luton Borough Council
SUBJECT:	LUTON DUNSTABLE TRANSLINK
PURPOSE:	To update Members on the progress with the scheme.

RECOMMENDATION: That members note the report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The report to the last meeting of this Committee on 20 September indicated that on 13 July 2004 the Department for Transport (DfT) wrote to all Objectors informing them that a Public Inquiry into the Luton Dunstable Translink proposals will be required. Following this direction by the Secretary of State, we are now firmly locked into the process in the lead up to the inquiry, the procedures for which are governed by the Transport and Works (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1992. This report updates members on progress since the last meeting.

2 Progress on Statutory procedures

- 2.1 During August and early September there was further dialogue between the Council and the DfT about the inquiry venue and possible dates. The planning inspectorate has appointed an independent inspector, Mr Christopher Tipping, to chair the inquiry. The DfT wrote to the Council and all objectors in late September confirming that the Public Inquiry would commence on Tuesday 15 February 2005. The Inquiry will be held at the Town Hall, under similar arrangements that have been made for the Borough Council local plan inquiry, which commenced on 3 November.
- 2.2. On 5 October the DfT published the Statement of Matters, which summarises the issues that it considers the Secretary of State will need to be informed of by the inspector. A copy of the Statement of Matters is found at Appendix A to this report.
- 2.3 The Inspector called a pre-inquiry meeting on 8 November. The Translink team and those objectors who indicated they wish to appear at the inquiry were invited to this meeting, the aim of which was to discuss procedural issues relating to the inquiry, but not the principles of the scheme. A copy of the Inspectors notes of the meeting is attached at Appendix B.
- 2.4 A programme officer has also been appointed, Ms Brenda Taplin of Persona Associates, to assist the Inspector with the smooth running of the inquiry, and

she has produced a note of the pre inquiry meeting, which is attached at Appendix B. The programme officer is also liaising with the promoters and all those objectors and supporters wishing to appear at the Inquiry, in order to develop a timetable for appearances. As this programme develops we should have a better idea how long the Inquiry is likely to last, which is currently expected to be between four and six weeks.

3. PROGRESS ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH OBJECTORS

- 3.1 The Translink team has responded to all statutory objectors and individual objectors. About twelve objectors, mainly individuals, have withdrawn their objections to date. The team has also met in particular with a number of statutory objectors, and a number of draft legal undertakings have been prepared, although to date no statutory objectors have yet withdrawn as a result of assurances given in these undertakings. The details of individual undertakings, together with other legal inputs to the TWA order and the Public Inquiry process has been provided by our parliamentary agents, Rees and Freres. The Translink team is continuing to negotiate with objectors in anticipation that they may withdraw their objections.
- 3.2 The Borough Council has also received copies of the Statements of Case prepared by many of the objectors, and addressing the issues contained within these will form the basis of the promoters evidence to the inquiry. The first drafts of the project team's evidence were discussed at meetings held with counsel on 1 November and 1 December. The approach to preparing rebuttals was also discussed at the meeting on 1 December.

4 Progress on overall project management

- 4.1 The Major Scheme Appraisal report for Translink, on which the Government based their decision to provisionally fund the schemes in December 2003, included a quantified risk assessment of the scheme costs. In addition to this two officer-led workshops were held in June 2004 which considered and challenged:
- The proposed guidance and vehicle technology,
 - Procurement of the detail design of the busway , and its construction/maintenance,
 - Whether services should be provided by a quality contract/quality partnership approach
 - other financial risks associated with the delivery of the project, together with other financial and operational issues
- 4.2 As a result of these workshops, Council officers :
- have undertaken visits to a number of guided busway schemes in the UK to ensure we learn from their experience as the project progresses,
 - are developing a marketing strategy for the scheme
 - have commissioned further work on alternative ways in which Translink services can be delivered and the associated financial implications to the council and operators. This includes further discussions with Arriva the Shires regarding service plans

4.3 Experience from other recent TWA inquiries into rapid transit public transport schemes has shown that it could be up to a year between the end of the inquiry and the secretary of state issuing a decision letter. Allowing a six month period for detailed design and tendering/procurement, the expected programme of key stages after the inquiry is therefore expected to be as follows:

March 2006 -receive secretary of state's decision

September 2006 -start of works

Spring 2009 -translink services start operation

However, given that both the East Luton Corridor and Luton town centre transportation improvements schemes contain elements of bus only infrastructure used by Translink services, an implementation date for Translink services of the end of 2008 could still be achievable.

List of background papers

Luton Dunstable Translink Major Scheme Appraisal, September 2002

Luton Dunstable Translink Order, December 2003

Luton Dunstable Translink environmental statement, December 2003.

Luton Dunstable Translink Statement of Case, August 2004

Copies of other documents are available from the contact officer.