

East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Route

FAQs

What is the purpose of the scheme and why can't car drivers use the route?

The purpose of the scheme is to promote sustainable transport alternatives to cars and to improve access to and from Reading eastwards for buses, pedestrians and cyclists. The scheme is designed to complement the proposed Park and Ride facility at Thames Valley Park by offering a modal interchange from cars to sustainable transport modes in order to provide quicker, reliable journey times to central Reading and reduce congestion. The modal shift to public transport, together with enhanced provision for cyclists and pedestrians, will offer additional benefits such as contributing to improving Reading's air quality, and promoting healthy living, well-being and active lifestyles.

Could the route be used by cars in the future?

No – the MRT is being specifically designed to enhance the walk, cycle and bus networks, with connections to the proposed Park and Ride facility and Reading Station. The single lane shuttle working section over the river has been designed to be sensitive to the local environment and prevent the route being converted into a two-way traffic route without a complete rebuild of the bridge.

Could the route be used by taxis, motorcycles or electric vehicles?

No - the potential for the route to be used by a limited level of other types of vehicle has been considered, however this would significantly undermine the use and attractiveness of the MRT services by increasing journey times and therefore has been discounted.

Will there really be any decongestion or journey time benefits or will the roads fill up again?

With significant levels of planned development in Wokingham Borough and Reading town centre, and without any sustainable transport intervention, traffic congestion is forecast to increase over a longer time period in east Reading. Any switch in car drivers to MRT services will relieve the future traffic conditions by removing cars from the road network. Existing users of the bus services will also experience journey time savings, such as users of the Thames Valley Park bus, the RailAir, the Winnersh Park & Ride and services 13 and 14 to Woodley.

Will you protect the listed bridges?

Yes - the scheme does not physically impact upon the listed bridge structures. The preferred slender bridge design, has been selected to reduce impact on views to the listed structures, with weathered steel has also been selected to be sympathetic in colour to these structures.

As an employee at Thames Valley Business Park, how will I benefit from the scheme?

The scheme will provide the bus services operating between Thames Valley Park and central Reading with a more direct route to Reading Station by avoiding the congested A4, reducing journey times and improving reliability of journeys times. The scheme will also provide a direct commuter walking and cycle route into the centre of Reading and will connect the cycle hire hubs.

As a resident in Wokingham Borough on the east side of Reading, how will I benefit from the scheme?

The scheme will enhance connectivity between the east of Reading and central Reading, providing an alternative to the heavily congested A4 London Road. The MRT route, together with the proposed Park & Ride facility, will provide opportunity to use a quicker and reliable form of public transport.

The MRT will also enhance the existing cycle routes available from the east side of Reading to provide a direct cycle route directly into Reading Station and the town centre, providing an alternative route to the towpath which is shared with pedestrians and has sections where cyclist are required to dismount.

As a resident in New Town, how will I benefit from the scheme?

The scheme will increase public transport capacity in east Reading and across the wider local transport network, attracting users away from the private car and onto public transport. This will result in removing private car trips from the London Road corridor, which is among the most congested sections of the highway network in Reading. This will improve delays and air quality in the local area, which is otherwise predicted to increase with the significant level of planned development in Wokingham Borough and Reading town centre.

As a resident of Kenavon Drive area, how will I benefit from the scheme?

The scheme will provide additional pedestrian and cycle connections from Kenavon Drive, via Napier Road underpass to east Reading, avoiding the need to use the heavily congested A4 and providing an alternative to the use of the towpath which in some sections comprises a shared narrow space with poor surfacing.

How will the MRT be funded?

The majority of funding for the scheme has been allocated by central Government from the Local Growth Fund, with local contributions from the private sector funded through planning contributions and local investment. Funding from the Local Growth Fund is provided specifically for strategic transport projects and cannot be used for any other purpose. We are working with the private sector to secure the maximum level of contribution towards the scheme.

Will this scheme create jobs and support housing development?

The scheme would support sustainable economic growth through the creation of a significant number of jobs across central Reading, including the proposed development sites at Station Hill), land north of Reading Station and Hosier Street; as well as significant levels of housing development in Wokingham Borough. In addition, the scheme would provide a range of temporary construction jobs during the construction of the MRT route.

What is the Thames Valley Park and Ride, and is it part of the MRT scheme?

The proposed Park and Ride facility at Thames Valley Park would provide approximately 277 car parking spaces, motorcycle parking and associated vehicular access and landscaping. A planning application for the Park and Ride facility has been submitted to Wokingham Borough Council and is currently being determined independently from the current MRT proposals. It is proposed that the MRT route will connect with the Park and Ride facility to support sustainable transport improvements in east Reading, should both development proposals obtain planning permission.

How will the biodiversity of the site be protected?

The site is not covered by any statutory nature conservation designations, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and there are no European/ International designations (Ramsar, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)). However the site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site for the mosaic of habitats it supports which include woodland, scrub, tall herb and rough grassland.

Surveys will be undertaken to allow mapping of the habitats present within the Application Site and determine any signs of, or potential for, protected or notable species. The results from the ecology survey work will provide a greater understanding as to the biodiversity value of the site and the necessary mitigation measures required as part of the scheme to seek to achieve an no overall net loss in biodiversity.

Is the site on a flood plain?

Some of the Application Site lies in an area at high risk of flooding (Flood Zone 1), however, the majority of the Application Site is located within areas at lower risk of flooding (Flood Zones 2 and 3).

A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Surface Water Drainage Strategy (SWDS) will be prepared in consultation with the Environment Agency, to demonstrate how fluvial flood risk and surface water drainage will be managed and compensated to mitigate any significant adverse effect from flooding or drainage.

Where can the bridge be viewed from?

There are very limited places where the bridge can be seen, except from the adjacent towpath.

Will the MRT use lighting?

The MRT will incorporate low-level lighting to meet highway standards. A lighting assessment will be undertaken to inform the lighting proposals for construction and operation of the proposed development.

What evidence will be included within the planning application?

A planning application will be supported by a number of assessments, which will be scoped with the two planning authorities and the Environment Agency, including:

- Transport Assessment
- Air Quality Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Surface Water Drainage Strategy
- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and supporting ecological surveys.
- Phase 1 Ground Condition Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Heritage Desk Based Assessment
- Lighting Assessment.

How will the planning application be decided if Reading Borough Council is both submitting and determining the scheme?

The planning application is being submitted by the highways department of Reading Borough Council and will be determined separately by the planning departments of both Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council.

What are the next steps for the scheme?

Following this event we will review all of the feedback received and consider how the proposals can incorporate your comments prior to a formal planning application submission. In addition the full scheme business case will be prepared and the designs will be developed in further detail.

Will there be other opportunities to comment on the proposals?

Yes - It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted in late 2016 which will be published for public consultation by Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council as part of the formal planning process.

Can I provide feedback online?

Yes – feedback can be provided at the following address:

WWW.READING.GOV.UK/EAST-READING-MRT

Working with:

