

A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road (A6MARR)

Response to Joint Submission by North West Transport Roundtable (NW TAR) and Campaign for Better Transport (CfBT) – July 2013

Introduction

The NW TAR and CfBT have made a second submission in response to Phase 2 consultation on the A6MARR scheme. Their submission is endorsed by The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Friends of the Peak District (FoPD), Friends of the Earth (FoE) and the Cyclists Touring Club (CTC).

This paper provides the A6MARR Project Team's response to the submission.

The NWTAR/CfBT January 2013 report: "A folly in the making – SEMMMS A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road" focussed on the 'case' for the new road with the report authors making the point that in effect a new multi-modal study was required to assess the need for the road scheme given the length of time that had passed since the original SEMMMS study and the much reduced level of traffic growth that has occurred since then compared to the traffic growth forecasts used at that time.

Following the project team's response to the NWTAR/CfBT report, a meeting was held with the main authors of that report and the key issues of concern to them were discussed. The project team invited the delegation to put forward alternative options to the road scheme that they considered warranted consideration by the project team.

General Comments

This second submission by NWTAR/CfBT focuses on the original SEMMMS study recommendations and their alleged lack of implementation. The alternative options offered are essentially some of the original SEMMMS study recommendations for public transport options.

As an overarching point, it should be noted the SEMMM Study recommended the road scheme as a means of addressing existing issues on the local highway network, as well as accommodating future demand.

The section on Organisational and Policy Changes of the submission appears to have been taken directly from a response to another scheme as there are various references to Lancashire County Council (page 30) and the M6 to Heysham Link Road (Pages 32 twice, 34).

We have identified the main points for response and have maintained the same headings and numbering as the submission to enable easy reference between the two documents.

SEMMMS Final Report Recommendations

Whilst this section of the submission reproduces selective recommendations from the SEMMMS study report without any specific comment from the authors, a couple of these should be considered in the context of the A6MARR proposals.

4 *Existing road space relieved of traffic by new roads should be re-allocated to sustainable modes of transport and to support regeneration initiatives.*

The current proposals for the A6MARR include a range of complementary measures that include road-space reallocation and improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The new road itself, will include a segregated cycle way and pedestrian path along its entire length. Construction of the road will also open up the possibility of new bus services being provided that will make use of the new road.

5. Prior to the new roads being built:

- **area-wide traffic calming and measures such as 'Home Zones' are introduced**
- **an area-wide cycle network is developed and promoted and**
- **urban regeneration initiatives are used to promote walking and cycling in existing local, town and village centres**

The current proposals for the A6MARR include a range of complementary and mitigation proposals developed in conjunction with the three promoting authorities, including traffic calming that will reduce traffic through these areas and make them more attractive for walking and cycling and which will aid the regeneration of these local centres. Progress on the SEMMMS Strategy recommendations that have already been implemented are set out within the following section.

An Examination of the Progress of the SEMMMS Recommendations

The NWTAR/CfBT submission alleges that little or no progress has been made in implementing the SEMMMS study recommendations. Appendix L of the published scheme business case gives a summary of progress against the SEMMMS study recommendations and this is reproduced below.

Schemes Implemented

Over the last ten years since the completion of the SEMMMS study, approximately £63 million has been spent on SEMMMS projects. Within the five priority themes of SEMMMS, the schemes that have been delivered include:

Public Transport

SEMMMS Major Scheme Quality Bus Corridors / Integrated Transport Corridors (QBCs/ITCs). This included eleven main corridors plus a network of routes to serve the Manchester Airport. The improvements were designed to reduce journey time, improve reliability and to increase comfort and convenience to all users.

Other Public Transport improvements have included:

- accessibility improvements to bus stops on other bus routes;
- improvements to accessibility for number of transport interchanges and railway stations in the SEMMMS area;
- the provision of a computerised booking and scheduling system for flexible transport providers such as Ring and Ride and Local Links;
- the provision of yellow buses to improve school journeys by reducing anti-social behaviour and so increasing use of public transport for school journeys. Yellow School Bus services in operation in Stockport include Brinnington – Harrytown, Heavily – Harrytown, , Brinnington – Werneth.

Work has also continued on the proposals for a Metrolink extension to Stockport. However, the delivery of such a route is unlikely before 2016. Consideration is also being given to tram-train options for extending the tram system beyond Stockport to Marple. A rail station improvement programme has commenced across Tameside, Stockport, Manchester, Derbyshire and Cheshire East.

Examples of improvements to cycling and walking to Railway Stations in Stockport include:

Major maintenance work on the Middlewood Way which provides a partially off - road route to local schools and a high quality off - road link between Rose Hill and Middlewood stations. This has led to an increase in the number of users on the route, especially at weekend. The Marple Multi User Trail (delivered as part of the Conect2 Lottery funding from Sustrans) continues the Middlewood Way connections to Romiley with onward connections on the ProW network and quieter sections of highway to Romiley station and Bredbury.

Improved connections have also been developed for cyclist going from/to Reddish North station and the Fallowfield Loop or the Trans Pennine Trail and Hazel Grove station and the hospital and other areas via a route parallel to the A6. An on-going regime of Cycle parking improvements continues across the Borough with most having cycle lockers and/ or Sheffield Stands. Pedestrian crossing and pavement improvements have been undertaken at most other stations as necessary.

Use of Road Space

Road space reallocation has involved the creation of on street cycle facilities, improvements to the pedestrian network, reducing traffic speed and removal of targeted vehicles from inappropriate routes, in order to make vulnerable road users feel more secure.

Quality Bus Corridors, as described above are another example of how reallocation of road space has been used to support sustainable transport. Junction 1 of the M60 is an important example of QBC improvement that has been implemented which involved bus priority measures being introduced at Junction 1 of the M60 motorway (Pyramid Roundabout). The location is a large grade separated signalised roundabout that is used both by local and strategic motorway traffic. Buses were delayed travelling from east to west through this very busy motorway junction and pedestrian and cycle facilities were poor. The construction of a bus only link road (Completed August 2007) Introduction of an additional signal control at the Didsbury Road exit; and widening of Didsbury Road to introduce two lane egress from the roundabout. The construction also improved the route of the pedestrian and cycle facilities at a point where the Trans Pennine Trail passes through the borough. Significant public transport journey time improvements were created westbound. It has been successful in acting as a catalyst in increasing political and public confidence to progress additional bus priority schemes; such as a similar scheme at Junction 27 which also included pedestrian and cycle improvements.

Transport Change

A strength of the SEMMMS strategy is the increased ability to encourage behavioural change due to increased school travel plan delivery and the ability to improve the accessibility of routes. A large part of the work to encourage a change in modal split away from private motor vehicles, reducing congestion and the health and environmental effects of this type of transport, is related to the production of travel plans for schools and business but other actions that encourage modal shift have also been pursued such as:

- Safer Routes to Schools including the provision of improved traffic signals, signing and lining with relevant TRO's, maintenance of sight lines, dropped kerbs and tactile paving;
- Improvement of cycle facilities on school sites ;
- Walking promotion schemes such as walking buses, Walk Once a Week (WOW) and park and stride e.g. St Peters Catholic Primary School, Hazel Grove, Stockport who have park and stride and take part in walk to school week and Abingdon Primary School, Reddish Stockport who have a walking bus and a WOW scheme in operation;
- Other education establishments such as Adult Education and Six Form Colleges have also implemented travel plans;
- In Stockport, area wide travel plans have been produced to help reduce specific congestion issues such as the Stanley Green Industrial Estate, in Heald Green and at another industrial estate in Bredbury.

Urban Regeneration

The ability to regenerate district centres and integrate schemes with necessary maintenance works has been identified as a strength of SEMMMS. As such there has been a significant amount of work done by the Greater Manchester authorities via SEMMMS funding to improve accessibility, aid public transport, improve public safety, improve the environment and the streetscape in local, district, and town centres.

Having summarised the progress of the SEMMMS study recommendations above, below we consider the individual points made in the NWTAR / CfBT submission.

1. Traffic growth has flattened out for years

The data for traffic levels on major roads in Manchester, Stockport and Cheshire East between 2000 and 2011 shows that over the period since the SEMMMS study, traffic continued to grow until about 2007 and then declined to 2010, as a result of the global economic downturn, but has been growing again since 2010. In 2009, which is the base year for the traffic models, traffic levels were slightly higher than in 2000, in Cheshire East and Manchester, but were substantially higher than levels in 2000 in Stockport. Irrespective of the traffic growth / decline in the intervening period, traffic levels in 2009 were higher than in 2000 when the SEMMMS study recommended the construction of the proposed highway schemes.

Traffic forecasts prepared for the road scheme are based on a model that is validated to actual traffic levels in 2009 and therefore whilst traffic growth prior to this may be of interest from a historical perspective, it is irrelevant from a modelling perspective for this scheme. Traffic growth forecasts in the models beyond 2009 are based on the guidance given in WebTAG.

2. Proposed junctions are of a higher standard (grade-separated) than recommended

With only one exception (Woodford Road), all proposed new junctions are in fact at-grade as recommended in the SEMMMS report. The current format of the A555/Woodford Road junction was constructed with the existing A555 to allow for the A6MARR proposed layout to be accommodated. The provision of an at-grade junction at this location would impact on and require the demolition of several residential properties.

The other grade-separated junctions already exist on the existing section of the A555. The assertion in the NWTAR / CfBT submission is not correct.

3. Cheshire East Council moving forward with the Woodford-Poynton Relief Road

The comments here do not relate to the A6MARR scheme and hence we are not able to comment on these. However, we refer these comments to colleagues in Cheshire East Council for information.

4&5. Road-Space re-allocation is being ignored

The current proposals for the A6MARR include a range of complementary measures that include road-space reallocation and improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The new road itself, will include a segregated cycle way and pedestrian path for its entire length. Construction of the road will also open up the possibility of new bus services being provided making use of the new road. The assertion in the NWTAR/CfBT submission is not correct. Please also note the road space re-allocation measures that have already been implemented, as outlined above.

Pedestrian and cyclist crossing facilities have been included within the scheme where appropriate.

6&7. Metrolink to Stockport has languished compared to road proposals

8&9. Mixed use rail lines / trams not been progressed due to constraints on officer time and emphasis on delivering road schemes

10. Frequency of rail service into central Manchester have decreased and few planned station improvements

11. No new stations – although demand for them is a given

12. Urban Metro not developed nor western/eastern rail links to Manchester Airport taken forward

13. No new stations have been commissioned

14. No new radial orbital corridors or Stockport focussed QBCs have come to fruition (except the 192 service)

15. No new QBCs to the Airport

16. Real time bus information has not been rolled out

17. Progress on walking and cycling strategies has been nothing short of appalling

It is appropriate to consider the response to points 6 to 17 collectively given the interrelationships between the issues in question.

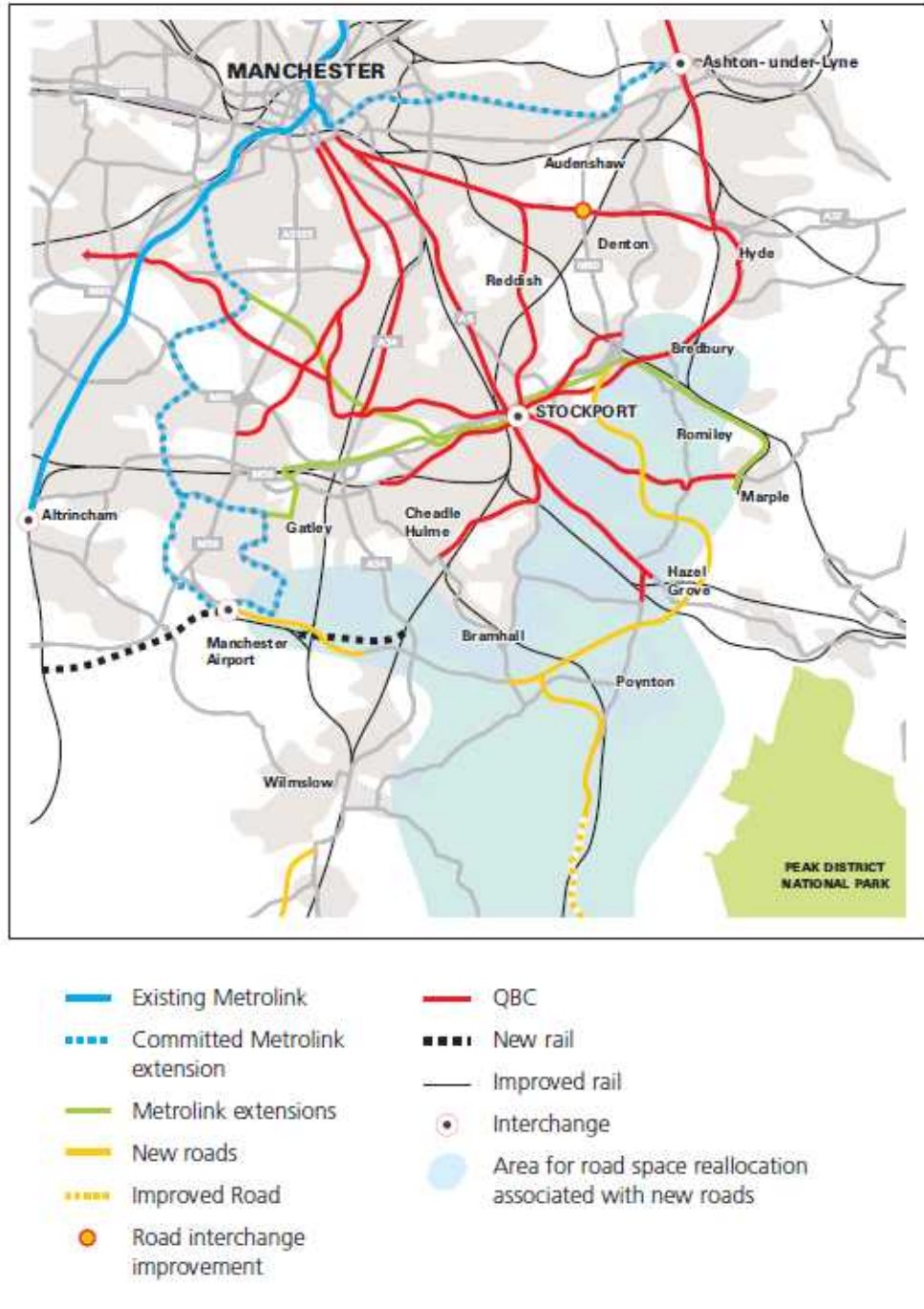
Stockport has worked with its partner authorities including Transport for Greater Manchester to improve local rail and bus services and rail stations. Schemes have included the SEMMMS QBC Major Scheme and the rail station improvement programme. Joint studies have been undertaken to investigate Metrolink/tram train options for the area and the outcome of the government sponsored pilot is awaited before any work can progress in this area. Whilst there are no QBCs to the Airport, a Metrolink line is currently under construction (due to open in 2016) which will provide a high quality public transport offer.

We would be interested to learn what evidence forms the basis of NWTAR's claim that demand for new stations is a given.

Walking and cycling improvement programmes are on-going as are the District and Local Centre regeneration programmes. Local people will be aware of the most recent projects including district centre improvements in Bramhall and the Connect 2cycle project in Marple.

The infrastructure elements of the SEMMMS recommended strategy is illustrated in Figure 7.5 of the Final Report and re-produced below. It is very clear from looking at this figure that none of the other recommended elements of the strategy actually cover the same corridor as the recommended road schemes. In fact, the recommended road schemes are the only infrastructure proposals in this corridor. So it is not correct for NWTAR/CfBT to suggest that the road scheme would not be needed if the other elements of the strategy were all implemented. The road schemes were an integral part of the SEMMMS recommended strategy.

Figure 7.5: SEMMMS Recommended Strategy: Selected Infrastructure Elements



18a. Traffic Generation from new housing sites (Woodford / Handforth East) is not included in the traffic model

As part of our approach to construct a traffic model and in accordance with WebTAG we have prepared an Uncertainty log in liaison with each of the local planning authorities. This documents the assumptions included within the model related to future land-use developments. In essence, we have included details of committed developments within the traffic models and in the phase 2 consultation material.

For the Woodford Garden Village, we have considered the level of potential development and included this within the traffic forecasts.

We are aware of early proposals for potential developments at Handforth East. However, these are at a very early stage in the planning process and do not have any formal planning status at the moment and are therefore not included in the traffic models at this time. However, at the appropriate point in the future, the proposals will be included in accordance with WebTAG guidance.

18b. Airport City Enterprise Zone

The Airport City was approved as an Enterprise Zone by central government. It is not appropriate for us to comment on this.

18c. Impacts of World Freight Centre and Airport City not incorporated in the traffic model

Again, the assertion by NWTAR/CfBT is not correct here. Forecast proposals for Manchester Airport and surrounding environment have been included within the A6MARR / SEMMMS forecast model scenarios.

A specific appendix into the modelling assumptions at this strategically important location has been included within the Uncertainty Log Document (Appendix E).

This note was written when the SEMMMS team were developing the forecast traffic model to use for supporting information in the Major Scheme Business Case for Programme Entry - the Manchester Airport development data was identified through detailed discussions with Manchester Airport Group and the local planning authority between the period April to July 2011. At that time the information gathered (and agreed) represented the then 'current' development situation at the Airport. A number of assumptions were made regarding actual land uses - these are required by transport planners in order to generate appropriate numbers of trips to and from each development area. Airport City was assumed to mainly consist of 'B1' type land uses (Business Office and Premises for Research and Development).

We are now in the process of updating all aspects of development sites across the SEMMMS model area - this will involve detailed discussions with the local planning authorities at Manchester City, Stockport Council, Cheshire East Council, Trafford Borough and High Peak District Council. In 2012/2013 at the time of the planning application submission for Airport City, we engaged with Manchester Airport Group and Manchester City Council, the local planning authority, in order to determine that the trip generation for the development included within our transport model remains appropriate.

Any updated development information will be used to assist in the process to develop the A6MARR / SEMMMS traffic model to assist and prepare for Final scheme approval.

18d. Not possible to tell impacts of traffic and emissions on local communities as a result of the road scheme

A Social and Distributional Impacts report was prepared in accordance with WebTAG and has been included as part of the Scheme Business Case (Appendix M) available on the Scheme website. This report assesses and reports on the potential impacts to local communities. In addition, an Environmental Statement and a Health Impact Assessment are also being prepared in support of the planning application which will provide further information on the potential scheme impacts on communities.

19. Urban Regeneration not happened

There has been an on-going programme of district and local centre improvement programmes across the area and this continues to be supported with the measures proposed in the complimentary and mitigation measures package. Urban regeneration projects already undertaken include within Wythenshawe, Stockport District Centres and Poynton town centre.

20. Freight

This issue is outside of the scope of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road scheme.

21. Interchange

This issue is outside of the scope of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road scheme.

22. Smart Cards still not in place

This issue is outside of the scope of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road scheme.

Trunk Road Initiatives

Managed Motorway and Pinch Point Programme – HA proposed improvements not taken into account in the traffic modelling

The previously announced improvements to the motorway network are incorporated within the traffic models and details of these can be found in Table 1.3 of the uncertainty log. These include the managed motorway proposals as well as the proposed A556 Improvement scheme.

The schemes announced as part of the recent spending review, post date the modelling for the A6MARR and therefore they could not have been included in the modelling. However, these will be incorporated in the next update of the traffic models as appropriate.

Action for Roads: A Network for the 21st Century – motorway improvements mean that the A6MARR has to be remodelled.

As the name suggests, these are schemes to address specific pinch points on the motorway network during peak periods and are not intended to provide significant additional capacity. These improvements will not improve accessibility to Manchester Airport from the south and east, or relieve local communities from high volumes of traffic. Without the proposed A6MARR scheme, these motorway improvements will encourage more of the same movements, and more traffic along the roads and through the communities that the A6MARR scheme is designed to relieve.

The NW TAR / CfBT submission appears to approve of the government's commitment to fund the motorway improvements, but then chooses to ignore the fact that the same government documents commit the government to funding the A6MARR scheme. Indeed scheme funding has been approved for the A6MARR which the government sees as an essential element of the road network to facilitate economic growth and job creation in this area.

Critique by Keith Buchan

3. Modelling should reflect: Metrolink to Manchester Airport, electrifying Trans Pennine rail links and the Northern Hub.

The proposed A6MARR is serving a different corridor to the Metrolink Airport Extension. As such, modelling this line will not have a material impact on the case for the road scheme.

The road scheme is not designed to attract additional Trans Pennine traffic and thus the electrification of this line will not have a material impact on the case for the road scheme.

As explained at the previous meeting, there is currently no new service pattern available for services using the improved Northern Hub that could be tested. But as we have previously said, if service pattern information becomes available prior to the next update of the traffic model then this information will be incorporated in the forecasting work.

7. Implement Rail Improvements

Stockport is working with TfGM to continue to seek rail service and station improvements in the area. Network Rail has indicated that they do not intend to develop an eastern link to the airport from the west coast line and is promoting the new High Speed route to the airport.

9. Motorway Improvements

The NWTAR/CfBT submission makes the assertion that the proposed motorway improvements will seriously influence how motorists from the Peak District will access Manchester Airport. We cannot see how this will be the case or how motorists from the Peak District will access the improved motorway network if not via the existing routes such as the A6 and through Hazel Grove and Stockport town centre or other existing trans-Pennine routes.

NWTAR/CfBT in their submission have acknowledged that the north-south routes which connect with the M60 are heavily congested. So, pinch point improvements at some motorway locations cannot be said to seriously influence traffic route choices from the Peak District.

11&12. SEMMMS traffic forecasts

The NWTAR/CfBT submission makes the incorrect assumption that the road scheme was recommended solely on the basis of the traffic growth projections at the time of the original SEMMMS study but this is not the case. Proposals existed for the Highways Agency to build a series of roads, long before the inception of the SEMMMS study. The case for these road schemes already existed and indeed the Highways Agency constructed the middle section (the existing A555) of what was then known as MAELR (Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road) in 1995, four years before the start of the SEMMMS study. These road schemes were remitted to the SEMMMS study as part of a wide ranging multi-modal assessment of future transport needs. The SEMMMS recommendations that the road schemes should be constructed were not predicated on its assumed level of traffic growth materialising. Therefore, it is not correct to assert that the A6MARR is not justified as a result of any reductions to forecast traffic growth; there are clearly identified existing issues to address, regardless of traffic growth.

Furthermore, within the SEMMM Strategy itself, it was recognised that growth was not occurring across the whole road network, with the document stating that *“While traffic flows and journey times have increased on the A34, flows and journey times on the A6 and A57 have been static in recent years and both may in fact be declining.”* Yet, despite this, the document was clear in recommending the road scheme to address the traffic issues on the local highway network.

The SEMMMS study recognised that there was a dispersed pattern of activity in relation to job location and employees which resulted in an orbital trip making pattern in the study area, which by its nature is challenging to cater for by public transport. It thus concluded that **some of the serious congestion problems could only be addressed through the implementation of the remitted road schemes**, albeit to a reduced standard. It did not say that anticipated future problems required the road schemes, but the recommendations related to the then present day in 2000/2001. Appendix L of the scheme’s business case sets out a comparison of traffic and congestion levels in the late 1990s/2000 and 2009 and demonstrates that conditions have deteriorated over this period.

For NWTAR/CfBT to suggest that the case for the scheme needs to be re-evaluated (presumably through another major multi-modal study) simply because traffic growth has been less than was projected in 2000/2001 is completely invalid. Whilst the scheme was one of those recommended in the SEMMMS study report and the need for such a road was recognised for many years prior to this, the current case for the scheme is made on the basis of actual, current conditions and using the latest government projections for future traffic growth; it is not reliant on historic traffic forecasts.

The business case demonstrates that the scheme will deliver very high value for money, relieve currently congested roads and communities and provide a much needed improved route to Manchester Airport and the planned Airport City Enterprise Zone from across the south Manchester and north Cheshire area. It is in recognition of this scheme’s major contribution to improving the transport infrastructure in the area that successive governments have committed substantial funding to this scheme and its role in delivering economic growth.

The scheme is considered essential by Manchester Airport in improving surface access to the airport and Airport City. In its Ground Transport Plan (which pre-dates the Airport City announcement as an Enterprise Zone) the Airport identifies surface access capacity as the most significant constraint on its future growth and therefore the economic benefits that it can help deliver to the Northern economy.

The scheme is being promoted by the three local authorities, who see it as an integral part of the wider infrastructure plan to improve economic performance, support economic regeneration and job creation across these areas.

14&15. East/West traffic using North/South routes

It is correct to infer from Figure 2 of Appendix L that much of the congestion is on north/south routes. This is simply because it is these north/south radial routes provide the main routes from these areas into Manchester city centre. But in addition to this expected traffic, these routes are also used by

traffic wishing to make an east-west journey linking to the M60 as no appropriate east-west route is currently available. This means that inappropriate journeys have to be made along these roads which provide a much longer journey than would be made possible by the direct east-west link through the A6MARR scheme. This lack of a direct east-west link is self-evidently, increasing journey length and journey times, and adding to congestion leading to increased carbon emission from road transport and adversely impacting upon local communities. The proposed schemes will address these negative transport impacts.

From an examination of the location (Figure 8) of the select link analyses shown in Figures 9-13 it is clear that if traffic is currently travelling along these north-south routes and passing these locations with origins and destinations as shown in the figures, that east-west movements are using north-south routes.

We acknowledge that Figure 10 is incorrectly labelled as “destinations” and that it should be labelled as “origins”.

19. Definition of sectors

The sectors referred to in Figures 9-13 of Appendix L to the business case are not the same sectors as those used to illustrate the economic benefits of the scheme to which reference is made in the submission. These are simply key local areas used to illustrate the point being made about east-west traffic movements and relate to individual or small groups of zones reflecting the areas labelled in the graphs.

20. Traffic congestion in UK cities

The diagram in question is taken from page 16 of Transport Trends 2009, DfT. A copy of this document can be accessed at the following link for further details:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100406130654/http://www.dft.gov.uk/adobepdf/162469/221412/190425/220778/trends2009.pdf>

23. Increased carbon emissions

It is simply not correct for NWTAR/CfBT to state that the scheme business case reports an increase of 10,300 tonnes of carbon with the construction of the proposed road and “all confirmed public transport schemes”. This would imply that the increase in carbon emissions due to the road scheme is much greater and this is offset by the public transport schemes leading to the reported level of increase.

In actual fact, the assessment reported in the business case relates to the impact of the road scheme only, and then only to those elements that can be directly reflected in the traffic models. It does not include carbon benefits from any public transport schemes and excludes for example, the new cycle route that will be provided as part of the scheme. A detailed commentary related to carbon emissions is provided in paragraphs 4.70-4.79 of the business case which can be found on the website at www.semmms.info/140683/638805/a6tomanchesterairportmsbc.

24. Outstanding modelling issues (numbered 23 in the NWTAR/CfBT submission)

The previous queries around the use of Temprow and the levels of public transport use included in the models have been answered in our response to NWTAR’s pre-meeting notes issued by email on 4th July 2013.

Carbon emissions data for the model base year of 2009 is not available as this is not a requirement of WebTAG or of scheme appraisal. The scheme’s contribution to carbon emissions is set out in the business case and in the preceding section above.