



South East Wales Regional Transport Plan
European Union Structural Funds 2007 – 2013
Programme Overview

Version 2.0

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1 **Introduction**

Document Purpose

- 1.1 Sewta has prepared this document to provide supporting information for the consortium's bids for European Union (EU) Structural Funds under the Convergence and Competitiveness Programmes. The document is focussed on realistic, practical and deliverable projects, designed to take forward Sewta's economic social and transport objectives. The purpose of this document, which has been prepared in conjunction with the Regional Transport Plan (RTP), is to enable Sewta to share with key partners and stakeholders, its aspirations to use Structural Funds resources for implementing the Plan.
- 1.2 This first version of the Overview Document defines an initial programme of packages, with a series of projects contained within each package. It focuses on rail, and on walking and cycling schemes, where projects are now ready for submission. The Document will continue to be developed and extended as project proposals focusing on other modes or issues become more fully developed. Other workstreams have been initiated to develop road and bus projects, and projects focusing on travel plans, and on developing project management. Further areas for project development will include community transport, projects to overcome transport barriers to work, and transport interchange projects, including park and ride.

Sewta

- 1.3 Sewta, the South East Wales Transport Alliance, is a statutory joint committee responsible for the co-ordination of transport planning and scheme delivery. This regional transport consortium comprises ten local authorities working in partnership with transport operators, user groups, and other public agencies. The spatial area covered by the Convergence Zone within Sewta corresponds to the following six Councils:
- Blaenau Gwent
 - Bridgend
 - Caerphilly
 - Merthyr Tydfil
 - Rhondda Cynon Taf
 - Torfaen

The spatial area covered by the Competitiveness & Employment Zone within Sewta corresponds to the following four local authorities:

- Cardiff
- Monmouthshire
- Newport
- Vale of Glamorgan

The other partners within Sewta are:

- Arriva Trains Wales (providing local and regional services in South East Wales)
- Bus Users UK (representing bus user interests)
- Confederation of Passenger Transport (representing bus operators)
- Network Rail (providing rail infrastructure)

- Passenger Focus (representing rail passengers)
- Sustrans (representing cycling and walking interests)

Sewta's Management Structure

- 1.4 Sewta has a three-tier management structure:
- A Board consisting of elected members and other partners
 - A Directorate comprising chief officers and other partners
 - Five technical groups of officers and other partners established to discuss specific topics – rail, bus, finance, policy and monitoring.

Newport City Council acts as the 'host' authority for administrative matters, Torfaen County Borough Council administers the finance. The current chair is from Caerphilly County Borough Council. A dedicated Secretariat provides management, communications, administrative and technical support.

Sewta's Aims and Objectives

- 1.5 The core aim of Sewta is "to work for better coordinated and more effective transport for people and businesses in South East Wales". This aim is supported by seven key objectives:

Objective 1: To work in partnership with the people and organisations with a stake in transport in South East Wales.

Objective 2: To coordinate the delivery of an integrated transport strategy for South East Wales, seeking to influence the modal choice through an appropriate mix of transport projects and supporting policies in the transport and related fields.

Objective 3: To promote the essential role of transport in economic and land use planning, and to influence land development to make the necessary provision for transport, and in particular public transport.

Objective 4: To ensure that safety, sustainability and social inclusion are taken full account of in transport plans and schemes.

Objective 5: To seek to increase the resources for transport for Wales, and to maximise the share available for South East Wales.

Objective 6: To pursue common standards for transport across the whole of South East Wales, based on best practice to seek cost effective use of resources, and to identify and monitor targets to judge the success of its strategy.

Objective 7: To drive the policy debate as a champion for transport, and in particular public transport, and to raise public awareness of the role of local government in transport.

South East Wales

- 1.6 The Sewta area is the Capital region, and contains 48% of Wales' population. The Valleys to the north of Cardiff and Newport, where over half of the region's 1.4million residents live, have experienced a decline in traditional industries, have a low employment rate and low average earnings. There has however been a

growth in service sector employment along the M4 corridor and coastal plain, which has resulted in a major growth of commuting into Cardiff and Newport from these areas.

- 1.7 Sewta's Regional Transport Plan embraces all of the transport corridors serving the region. Accordingly, some projects within this Programme Overview will cross the boundaries of the spatial areas defined by the two Programmes.

The Objective One Programme

- 1.8 Sewta's transport agenda has seen substantial progress as a result of EU funding, and continues to benefit from remaining EU Objective 1 funding. The schemes, all due for completion by 2008, are:
- Rhymney Valley Rail Enhancement Scheme: this project covers improvements to track and signalling, which have already provided the additional capacity needed to increase the rail frequency between Caerphilly and Bargoed. It also includes platform lengthening, and will accommodate longer six car trains;
 - Taff Vale North Track and Signalling Improvements: this project will facilitate a half-hourly train service to Merthyr Tydfil, and the combination of the existing stations at Abercynon North and Abercynon South into a new station;
 - Llanharan Station: a new two platform station on the South Wales main line, with passenger and interchange facilities, including a park and ride car park;
 - Cwmbran Rail Station Interchange: the scheme includes a new station building, and an improved passenger waiting environment, together with bus / rail interchange facilities;
 - Ebbw Valley Railway: the scheme involves upgrading 18 miles of freight line to accommodate passenger services, and constructing 6 stations.

Programme and Project Management Systems

- 1.9 Sewta is committed to using established best practice systems, MSP (Managing Successful Programmes) and PRINCE2 project management, to progress its Structural Funds Programme. These competences and processes will enable Sewta to ensure that the EU Structural Funds allocated are being appropriately managed and, with the required match funding, are delivering against targets. Sewta has established a Programme Board operating to MSP principles.
- 1.10 Sewta is already a successful and experienced applicant and recipient of major sources of public funds, including the Transport Grant and Objective 1 Funding. The consortium approach adopted by Sewta, and its predecessors, has been identified as a model of best practice in deploying European structural funds by the Welsh European Programme Executive in 'Project Profiles', a unique initiative designed to demonstrate the benefits of the structural funds through the 1994-1999 Programme.
- 1.11 As with earlier projects, Sewta will establish appropriate programme and project teams to enhance existing management systems, maintain co-ordination, ensure adherence to agreed procedures, produce reports on progress and performance,

keep accurate financial records, manage the grant claim process, monitor expenditure and respond to audit requests.

- 1.12 These robust mechanisms and expertise are already in place to ensure competent and effective use of EU Structural Funds. Sewta's management arrangements, backed up by the professional audit and financial scrutiny mechanisms of local government, will ensure the transparency, regularity and propriety of investments sanctioned under the EU Structural Funds Programmes.

2 Supporting Policies and Strategies

- 2.1 Current central government transport policy is focused on reducing reliance on the private car, reducing the number and length of car trips, improving the management of roads and traffic, and providing attractive alternatives, to encourage a shift from car use to walking, cycling and public transport.
- 2.2 Pressures on road and public transport networks are likely to increase with rising car ownership and economic prosperity. A co-ordinated and integrated approach to investment in transport will be an essential requirement.
- 2.3 The Sewta partners are committed to developing an ongoing successful relationship between the local authorities, WAG, central government, transport agencies, infrastructure owners and service operators to ensure an efficient and attractive public transport system for South East Wales.
- 2.4 The Wales Transport Strategy compared the 4 regions of Wales and concludes that the Sewta area has the most socially deprived areas and, as a result, the lowest levels of household access to a car (72%). The report also notes that "while most of our network is congestion free for a large part or all of the day, significant problems exist on strategic routes such as the M4 and also in main urban areas," and "there is more traffic in South East Wales than anywhere else in the country".
- 2.5 The Sewta region has the "busiest roads in Wales" and "traffic conditions on the Cardiff and Newport radials cause major delays to all vehicles, including buses." As a result 11 of the 13 Air Quality Management Areas in Wales are in the Sewta region - in Cardiff and Newport. The report also states that "Congestion also occurs in the Valleys, where topography limits the ability of the local road network. The unreliability caused by congestion is a particular concern of industry in the region." Nonetheless, the Sewta area is the most economically active in Wales, accommodating more than half the economic activity of Wales.
- 2.6 The Sewta Structural Funds Programme is being developed to closely reflect the national and regional strategic context, which is summarised below.

National Policy Context

- 2.7 The West Wales and the Valleys region has been awarded the highest level of support, known as the **EU Convergence Programme**, from the European Union for the new European Structural Funds programming round 2007–2013. Convergence is the successor to the Objective 1 programme 2000–2006, and geographically will cover 15 local authority areas in the West Wales and the Valleys region.

The Convergence programmes in Wales comprise funding from two separate European Structural Funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Separate Operational Programmes have been developed for each, which show how the funding will be spent.

The documents outline the priorities for each programme which have been based on social, economic and environmental analyses of the needs and opportunities of the region, and eligible areas of activity in line with European Commission and Council Regulations.

Around £856 million of ERDF funds will be channelled through the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to transform the region by investing in the knowledge economy and helping new and existing businesses to grow. It will also focus on regenerating Wales' most deprived communities, tackling climate change and improving transport. The ERDF Operational Programme has identified 5 main priorities:

- Building the knowledge based economy
- Improving Business Competitiveness
- Developing strategic Infrastructure for a modern economy
- Creating an attractive business environment
- Building Sustainable Communities

Some £570 million from the ESF will be used to tackle economic inactivity, increase skills and employment. The ESF Operational Programme has identified 4 main priorities:

- Supplying young people with the skills needed for learning and future employment
- Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity
- Improving skill levels and adaptability of the workforce
- Improving public services - Making the Connections

Together, the funds will total more than £1.4 billion of Convergence spending, which combined with match funding, will drive a total investment of £3.2 billion in the West Wales and the Valleys region.

2.8 The **Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes** covering the East Wales region have been awarded a total of £93 million in European grant for the new European Structural Funds programming round 2007–2013.

The programmes are the successor to the Objective 2 and Objective 3 programmes 2000–2006, and geographically will cover seven local authority areas in the East Wales region. The Competitiveness and Employment Programmes Wales also comprises funding from both the ERDF and the ESF.

Around £49 million of ERDF funds will be channelled through the WAG to help continue the region's economic, social and environmental transformation, by helping new and existing businesses to grow and move up the value chain, and increase the 'value added' per job. It will also focus on regenerating Wales' most deprived communities and tackling climate change. The ERDF Operational Programme has identified 4 main priorities:

- Knowledge and innovation for growth
- Business competitiveness and growth
- Tackling climate change
- Regeneration for growth

Some £43 million from the ESF will be used to tackle economic inactivity, increase skills and employment. The ESF Operational Programme has identified 2 main priorities:

- Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity
- Raising skill levels and adaptability of the workforce

Together with match funding from the private, public and voluntary sectors, the total investment of the Programmes will be around £232 million.

- 2.9 The **Sustainable Transport Strategic Framework** is one of 19 Operational Strategy documents. It has been prepared jointly by the WAG and the Welsh Local Government Association to guide the delivery of activity in support of the 2007-13 Convergence and Competitiveness ERDF and ESF Programmes in Wales.

It aims to 'increase accessibility within West Wales and the Valleys, to enable individuals to access employment opportunities and to provide businesses with access to markets'.

The Framework identifies the main strategic objectives as:

- To support key rail and road enhancements, particularly those on or closely linked to the TEN-T network
- Enhancement of road links that have significant wider benefit in terms of economic development, regeneration or access to key facilities
- Improving accessibility to jobs, employment opportunities and key services
- To reduce the road haulage of goods and encourage movement by rail and sea
- Supporting the technology needed to develop renewable and cleaner fuels

- 2.10 The **Wales Spatial Plan** (WSP) sets out a strategic approach to guide future development, and forms the basis for working between local, regional and national levels to meet Assembly objectives. The WSP splits Wales into 6 areas, providing a vision and strategy for each. South-East Wales is 'The Capital Network', which has the following vision: 'An innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life - international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast, and with the UK and Europe, helping to spread prosperity within the area, and benefiting other parts of Wales.' Improved transport is seen as central to making the city region work, and to the regeneration of Valleys communities. The WSP highlights the two key transport issues as the need to improve accessibility to jobs and services, and to achieve a change in travel behaviour in response to climate change.

The WSP identifies that the overall objective for achieving sustainable accessibility is to 'enable people and businesses to have easy access to goods and services that support their economic and social life without damaging the environment'. In order to deliver this objective, the overall priority is to make better use of existing transport infrastructure.

- 2.11 **Wales: A Vibrant Economy** is the consultation of WAG's revised economic development strategy for Wales that will update the existing strategy, A Winning Wales. It sets out how the WAG will continue to develop a vibrant Welsh economy capable of delivering strong and sustainable economic growth by providing opportunities for everyone in Wales.

The main priorities are:

- Increase employment rates to match the UK average
- Raise the quality of jobs, so that average earnings increase and close the gap with the UK average

To achieve these W:AVE identifies one of its key actions as 'helping businesses to grow and to increase value-added per job and earnings by investing in our transport networks and other economic infrastructure'.

The strategy recognises that improvements in the transport infrastructure can tackle barriers that deter people from entering work, creating an attractive business environment; is vital in opening up the commercial opportunities in local areas; of critical importance in rural areas; and help to develop a low carbon economy.

Sewta recognises that transport systems are central to sustainable development and supporting a thriving economy. This includes giving people in deprived communities better access to jobs and services and developing alternatives to the use of private cars.

- 2.12 The **Environmental Strategy for Wales** was issued in July 2007. It will inform other policy areas of environmental priority and vice versa, e.g. the Wales Transport Strategy.

It outlines transport as one of the key pressures on the environment in Wales at present. It outlines the benefits of a good transportation network, including its importance for economic growth and tackling social inclusion.

It sets out the environmental disadvantages linked to transport as including air pollution; flood risk; greenhouse gas emissions; noise pollution; resource and material use; use of land; waste generation; and water pollution.

The final chapter outlines the importance of knowing the roles and responsibility of organisations for better integration and delivery of environment protection and enhancement. WAG makes a commitment to encourage and support local authorities to deliver environmental targets and commitments, including more use of public transport.

WAG suggests that each member of the public can make a difference, including replacing non-essential car journeys by using other modes e.g. bus, rail, walking and cycling.

- 2.13 The **Wales Transport Strategy (WTS)**, One Wales: Connecting the Nation (2008) sets out how WAG proposes to deliver its transport duty. The WTS outlines WAG's long-term vision for transport, and specifies outcomes and priorities that link the WSP and other WAG strategies to the RTP and Local Development Plans. The overarching goal of the WTS is to 'promote sustainable transport networks that safeguard the environment, while strengthening our country's economic and social life'. This goal is to be guided by the three sustainable transport themes of:

1. Achieving a more effective and efficient transport system;
2. Achieving greater use of the more sustainable and healthy forms of travel;
3. Minimizing demands on the transport system.

The WTS identifies 17 social, economic and environmental outcomes that seek to maximise the contribution transport can make to delivering sustainable development, and guide delivery of the WTS:

Social

- Improving access to healthcare
- Improving access to education, training and life-long learning
- Improving access to shopping and leisure facilities
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles
- Improving the actual and perceived safety of travel

Economic

- Improving access to employment opportunities
- Improving connectivity within Wales and internationally
- Improve the efficient, reliable and sustainable movement of people
- Improve the efficient, reliable and sustainable movement of freight
- Improving access to visitor attractions

Environmental

- Increase the use of more sustainable materials
- Reducing the contribution of transport to greenhouse gas emissions
- Adapt to the impacts of climate change
- Reduce the contribution of transport to air pollution and other harmful emissions
- Improve the impact of transport on the local environment
- Improve the impact of transport on our heritage
- Improve the impact of transport on biodiversity

Strategic Priorities

The WTS also identifies five strategic priorities to guide delivery in the first five years. Each is supported by a number of key actions, and reflects WAG's strategic agenda in One Wales. These priorities are:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts from transport
- Integrating local transport
- Improving access between key settlements and sites
- Enhancing international connectivity
- Increasing safety and security

These outcomes and priorities will be delivered at the regional and local level through the RTP and Local Development Plans.

- 2.14 The Department for Transport White Paper '**Delivering a Sustainable Railway**' was published in July 2007 and provides a strategic direction for the rail industry. The Railways Act 2005 places a statutory duty on the Government to set out every five years how much public expenditure it wishes to devote to rail and specify what it wants the railway to deliver in terms of safety, reliability and capacity.

This Paper looks at the potential future challenges for the railway over a 30-year period. It identifies three long-term agendas for Government and the rail industry working in partnership: increasing the capacity of the railway, delivering a quality service for passengers, and fulfilling rail's environmental potential.

Rail has seen record levels of growth – over 40 per cent in the last decade – and in response the railway is running more services than before, and has provided more trains. But capacity has not kept pace with record demand across the network, and crowding on some of the busiest services has got worse. The priority for this White Paper is to tackle these trends. It is the first plan for major growth since the 1950s.

The guiding principles in this strategy are:

- To invest where there are challenges now, in ways which offer the flexibility to cope with an uncertain future; and
- To put in hand the right preparatory work so that, as the future becomes clearer, the necessary investments can be made at the right time.

The focus on the Government's strategy is on capacity and performance. It is realistic and deliverable, creating a sustainable, modern railway that underpins the anticipated growth in demand.

- 2.15 The **Wales Rail Planning Assessment (WRPA)** report is a joint Welsh Assembly Government and Department for Transport demand based study looking at the potential growth in rail usage between 2006 and 2026 and what might be done to meet this growth.

The objective of the WRPA is to develop an understanding of the priorities for the railway in Wales over the next twenty years, within a wider context of spatial planning policy. It identifies a number of options for what might be done to meet forecast growth in demand -short term referring to a period up to 2014. The Report highlights the most important rail priority in Wales as the enhancement of the capacity of the infrastructure between Cardiff Queen Street North, Cardiff Central and Cogan Junctions.

Regional Policy Context

- 2.16 The **Wales Spatial Plan** for South East Wales, 'the Capital region', sees it as an innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life, international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast, and with the UK and the rest of Europe. At the heart of the vision is a network of strong, sustainable communities, spreading prosperity from the two major centres of Cardiff and Newport to valleys across the region. The emerging Development Framework for the area will measure success against the following elements of a sustainable city region:

- A Working City Region that can adapt creatively to economic change, and can innovate to improve;
- A Learning City Region that grows talent, provides lifelong opportunities and attracts talent from elsewhere;
- A Connected City Region that aids accessibility for goods and people, and encourages sustainable transport choices;
- A Living City Region that provides a high quality built and natural environment, that promotes healthy, strong communities and a strong civic culture;
- A Lively City Region that provides a "buzz" in culture, tourism, shopping and leisure;
- A Low Carbon City Region that manages its resource use, energy and travel;

- A Well-governed City region with community involvement and strategic national engagement.

The WSP identifies 14 key settlements in South East Wales that, in addition to Cardiff, are seen as critical to the success of the region. These are Aberdare, Abergavenny, Barry, Blackwood, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Chepstow, Cwmbran / Pontypool, Ebbw Vale, Llantrisant, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport and Pontypridd. These settlements will be the focus of the area's development, and will be linked through high capacity sustainable transport links, to create a networked city region.

The WSP also identifies three Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOAs) in South East Wales, which are highlighted as having specific sustainable development needs and requiring strong public transport links. The SOAs are:

- Developments linked to the dualing of the Heads of the Valleys Road (A465);
- The area around Llantrisant and North West Cardiff;
- Developments in the Vale of Glamorgan linked to the proposed St Athan military training academy.

The WSP identifies the following agenda for transport in South East Wales:

- All the key settlements should be linked to Cardiff or Newport by high capacity public transport, operating sufficiently frequently that passengers have the confidence to 'turn up and go' i.e. at least four times per hour during the working day;
- Bus priority measures should be implemented on key routes to ensure buses offer rapid travel between settlements.
- Stretching targets should be set for journey times by bus and rail between key settlements.
- Bus services and community transport should link other communities to these main public transport corridors.
- The priority for road transport is to ensure that the existing road capacity is used with maximum efficiency.
- Safe cycling and walking routes should be identified for commuters and communities.

The RTP, as the main mechanism for delivering the transport goals of the WSP, will need to take forward WSP objectives of improving connections to key settlements, improving access to jobs and services, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting economic growth.

- 2.17 The **Regional Transport Plan** (RTP) for South East Wales is founded on and supports the WSP and the WTS. In 2007, Sewta produced an Outline RTP for wider consultation, with a vision "To provide a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system for South East Wales that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and protects the environment; where public transport, walking, cycling and sustainable freight provide real travel alternatives."

The RTP itself, which is now out for further consultation, builds on the Outline version, and promotes:

- a balanced programme of investment and support for all modes of travel;
- a programme of interventions which interlace transport planning with land-use and public service planning and balances the conflicting requirements of

protecting the environment, addressing problems of social exclusion and promoting the economy.

Sewta's priorities build on the RTP's vision, and set the general direction of the RTP, as follows:

- To improve access to services, facilities and employment, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling.
- To provide a transport system that increases the use of sustainable modes of travel.
- To reduce the demand for travel.
- To develop an efficient and reliable transport system with reduced levels of congestion and improved transport links within the region and to the rest of Wales, the UK and Europe.
- To provide a transport system that encourages healthy and active lifestyles, is safer and supports local communities.
- To reduce significantly the emission of greenhouse gases and air pollution from transport.
- To ensure that land use development is supported by sustainable transport measures.
- To make better use of the existing transport system.
- To play a full role in regenerating South East Wales.

2.18 The Sewta RTP will include the adoption of the policies and strategies identified in the **Sewta Regional Bus Strategy**. The primary objectives of which are to encourage:

- Modal shift to buses, through providing safe, attractive and reliable alternatives to the car;
- Economic growth and prosperity through addressing spatial exclusion;
- Reductions in social exclusion.
- To assist in achieving these, the strategy aims:
- To provide investment priorities for capital (infrastructure and vehicles) and revenue expenditure; and
- To provide guidance for the ongoing review, development, implementation and monitoring of bus services, thus providing coordination and consistency across the region.

2.19 Sewta has commissioned Steer Davies Gleeve, in consultation with the bus operators that provide the commercial network, to undertake a **Bus Study** to:

- Investigate initiatives that will provide an enhanced core bus network within the region;
- Determine where express services have an important role to play, particularly where there is a high demand for medium and longer distance commuter, rail and leisure trips, but where there are no alternative rail services available.
- Identify proposals for an enhanced network that can offer improved quality, frequency and reduction in both the length and variability of journey times;
- Capture the level of information and data necessary to justify project development under EU convergence funding or the RTP process;
- Challenge conventional thinking and consider what measures would deliver a step change in bus service delivery in the region. (This will involve reviewing innovative schemes, such as the Fastway project serving Gatwick Airport, or the Fastrack project in Kent and applying best practice from these to the

Sewta region, which will result in proposals that are costed and contain sufficient detail to produce a funding bid.)

- Recommend, in the context of current legislation and the Government's proposals, contained in the recently published Putting Passengers First, for a modernised national framework for bus services, the most appropriate mechanisms available to deliver these aspirations and the scale of funding required;
- Include specific recommendations on the best ways to implement a Quality Partnership (or similar) regime, to ensure Sewta benefits from the best possible bus network for the region.

The draft final report is due to be submitted by the end of November 2007.

- 2.20 Rail travel will play a significant role in meeting the policy outcomes of the Wales Transport Strategy. Investment in rail is an important element of the developing RTP, which will adopt Sewta's rail strategy for the short and longer term, as defined in the following two strategy documents:

Moving People – Improving Rail. The Next Five Years outlines Sewta's five year plan for improving rail provision in the short term (2005 to 2010) reflecting changes to legislation and the structure of the rail industry.

The strategy recognises the need to deliver relatively 'quick wins' to sustain the increasing demand for rail travel (particularly for travel between the valley towns and Cardiff) while also creating new opportunities elsewhere. To this end, four main elements were proposed and are being implemented:

- New Passenger Lines and Stations
- Increased Service Levels
- Capacity and Linespeed Enhancements
- Improved Stations

The strategy also recognises the need for the financial commitment and strong partnership with key organisations such the WAG, Network Rail and Arriva Trains Wales.

- 2.21 The **Sewta Rail Strategy Study (2009 – 2018)**. This provides continuity with the existing 5 year plan and the lifetime of the existing Wales and Borders franchise (which expires in 2018).

Following a review of national, regional economic and transport objectives, consultation was undertaken with regional stakeholders in order to agree the criteria against which strategy options would be assessed and to ensure that the result was practical, deliverable, focussed on our objectives and prioritised.

South East Wales has the most intensive rail network in Wales. The services support the economy of the Capital and have experienced substantial passenger growth in recent years leading to overcrowding and suppressed demand.

The Sewta vision for improving the rail network is shared by the WAG and seeks to provide a more attractive transport option with a minimum frequency of half hourly services made up of at least 4-car trains.

Following publication of the Sewta Rail Strategy a detailed programming exercise was undertaken to provide a robust implementation framework in support of funding applications to the WAG and the Welsh European Funding Office.

- 2.22 The **Rail Prioritised Investment Programme** identifies that funding support is needed to identify schemes in the short term for medium / long term delivery, to develop packages of station and capacity improvements, to take up enhancement options within the Cardiff and Newport Signalling Renewal projects, and to plan for the funding requirements for delivery of the Sewta Rail Strategy.

In determining the priority of each project, account was taken of:

- The need to deliver the Wales Spatial Plan in terms of investment in transport to meet social, economic and environmental objectives
- The need to integrate some projects with Network Rail Signalling Renewal Schemes
- The timetable for land use development in the vicinity of stations
- Key stages of project development in accordance with Network Rail's Guide to Rail Investment Process (GRIP).

The programming highlights the need for scheme development for longer term schemes to be undertaken in the short term, to ensure that passive provision is provided in the Signalling Renewal processes. As a result, some higher priority measures are programmed later than others and vice versa, primarily due to the need to integrate enhancement schemes with other Network Rail investment in the area.

Demand on the Valley Lines has been growing significantly. The Wales Rail Planning Assessment, though conservative in its forecasting, actually recognises that the growth in demand for peak journeys to/from the Valleys will conceivably exceed its own estimates. With growth of between 5% and 10% p.a. likely to continue, further overcrowding will only be avoided if there is:

- Significant investment in additional rolling stock, providing the opportunity to secure increased benefits to the region from a new build of trains for the region
- A moderate frequency increase on the Valley Lines north and south of Cardiff Queen Street / Central of 2 trains per hour in the peak in the medium term, with a further similar increase in the longer term.

As Queen Street station is currently operating at capacity there will be a need for a significant investment in additional capacity for both trains and passengers to be made at the station, and through Central Cardiff, if these peak frequency increases on the Valley Lines are to be delivered. This is partly recognised within the Government's High Level Output specification, published in July 2007, in which the Government set out the level of public expenditure it wishes to devote to rail between 2009 and 2014, and the priorities it wants to see delivered. More funding will be required to complete this key enhancement.

- 2.23 The Sewta RTP will include the adoption of the policies and strategies identified in the **Sewta Walking and Cycling Strategy**.

The strategy seeks to 'maximise the levels of walking and cycling, including their contribution to the prosperity, accessibility and well-being of the people in South East Wales, and the protection of the environment' and has 8 key aims:

- To maximise the number of journeys made by walking and cycling as alternatives to travel by car in south east Wales
- By 2011 to be on target to treble the number of cycling trips by 2016 for a 2006 base and devise appropriate targets and monitoring methods for walking
- To maximise the number of journeys made by walking and cycling in combination with public transport in the region
- To maximise walking and cycling access to employment, services and key leisure and tourism facilities
- To make walking and cycling attractive and practical travel options, through the provision of high quality infrastructure and information
- To achieve modal shift to walking and cycling through effecting travel behaviour change
- To improve standards of health and well-being by encouraging more people to regularly walk and cycle as part of their everyday routine
- To maximise the contribution of transport policy in the Sewta region towards meeting UK Government targets on CO2 reduction.

2.24 In 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government published '**Turning Heads - A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020**'. This programme is a 15 year regeneration strategy developed in full partnership with five of the Sewta local authorities, (Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau-Gwent and Torfaen), and other local stakeholders, to tackle the root causes of economic inactivity and other key issues in the area. The aim is that the Heads of the Valleys will become a rich, dynamic network of communities helping to drive the success of South East Wales.

This was complemented more recently by a Spatial Strategy providing a framework for the 12 Strategic Programmes in 'Turning Heads'. In particular it sets the context for the first three year action programme planned during 2006-2009. It will also provide a spatial context for the employment initiatives of the Heads of the Valleys Programme. The overall strategy proposed for the Heads of the Valleys is one that seeks to minimise as much as possible the need to travel long distances to work, commensurate with the need to improve economic activity in the area.

Sewta is committed to working with the Partnership to secure necessary transport infrastructure to help transform the valley communities.

Local Policy Context

2.25 **Local Development Plans (LDP)** replace the **Unitary Development Plans (UDP)** to integrate economic social and environmental goals through determining patterns of land use and regulating development. Currently each local authority is developing an individual LDP but they are at varying stages in the process.

The deadline for all local authorities to have an approved, adopted LDP is as follows:

Local Authority	Adoption of LDP	Local Authority	Adoption of LDP
Blaenau Gwent	August 2011	Monmouthshire	December 2011
Brecon Beacons NPA		Newport	tbc
Bridgend	October 2010	Rhondda Cynon Taf	tbc
Caerphilly	August 2010	Torfaen	July 2010
Cardiff	August 2010	Vale of Glamorgan	December 2010
Merthyr Tydfil	January 2010		

3 Rail Projects

- 3.1 Rail is an attractive alternative to the use of the private car in the Sewta region and is an important element of the transport hierarchy. Sewta's approach to rail investment aims at maximising increased patronage by making better use of the existing network. Sewta's rail strategy, with increased service frequencies and longer trains, is designed to enable the recent growth in demand to continue.
- 3.2 There is widespread industry and stakeholder acceptance of Sewta's Rail Strategy and Prioritised Investment Programme, which underpins the rail elements within this Programme Overview. This is also reflected in the Wales Rail Planning Assessment. The importance of increasing capacity through Cardiff to accommodate growth on the "Valleys Lines" is specifically recognised in the Government White Paper "Delivering a Sustainable Railway". The maximum opportunity needs to be taken to secure the funding for the required investment in the network, so that its quality and accessibility can be raised to meet the needs of the region.
- 3.3 The Sewta Rail Strategy 2009 – 2018 builds on the work already undertaken and in progress under the Sewta Rail Improvement Programme, providing for passengers' needs, and contributing to regional economic and social objectives. It proposes to invest in:

- **Additional rolling stock** to strengthen peak trains, to provide for passenger growth and avoid overcrowding, and **rolling stock renewal** to replace the ageing fleet and secure performance improvements.
- **Station improvements** to encourage greater use of rail to access Cardiff and Newport, and to make better use of existing trains. It proposes a programme of works as follows:
 - Station facilities, such as improvements to customer information, safety and security, waiting areas and toilets;
 - Station access including interchange;
 - Park and ride (new facilities and expansion of existing sites);
 - Rail-link bus services to extend the reach of the rail services to communities remote from the network.
- **Reliability and capacity improvements;** It proposes network infrastructure improvements to reduce delays and improve performance, requiring significant investment in the capacity of the network **at and between Cardiff Queen Street and Central Stations** and Cogan. Specifically:
 - Additional platforms at **Cardiff Central and Queen Street;**
 - Remodelling of Cogan Junction;
 - Enhanced turnback facilities at **Caerphilly, Porth** and Barry;
 - Track and signal enhancements.
- **Frequency enhancements on existing lines;** It proposes to improve levels of service on selected routes (of at least a half-hourly service, and a turn-up-and-go service within the core journey to work area of Cardiff), and increase the transfer of car trips to rail. Specifically:
 - New half-hourly local services on the **Abergavenny** and Chepstow Lines;
 - A second hourly service on the **Ebbw Valley Line** linking Ebbw Vale and Newport;

- Additional services on the **Rhymney Valley** and **Taff Vale** lines to cope with passenger demand growth; and
 - an additional hourly service on the Vale of Glamorgan Line between Cardiff and Bridgend.
- **New stations on existing lines;** New stations are recommended to improve access to the rail network, especially in association with recent and future development and integrated with the development of new and improved services.
- 3.4 The Strategy is practical, focussed on Sewta's objectives and supports the Regional Transport Plan, but more importantly links into the major investment programmes being made by our partners, Network Rail. The signalling renewal schemes that are programmed within the region over the next five years provide a unique opportunity for investment to be made in further enhancements that will secure the capacity needed to meet future growth and ensure network reliability. This presents a once in a lifetime chance to provide for the future, and by integrating with current work programmes offers the potential for it to be secured in a more cost effective manner.

4 Walking & Cycling Projects

- 4.1 Walking and cycling offer cheap, accessible, healthy and environmentally friendly means of transport. Both modes can provide effective alternatives to the short car trip, and to longer distance journeys when combined with public transport. In order to maximise opportunities to travel by these sustainable modes, it is vital to provide appropriate infrastructure.

Valleys Cycle Network

- 4.2 Sewta, in collaboration through a Project Board with Sustrans and SWWITCH, are developing the Valleys Cycle Network (VCN) to improve the health and quality of life of local people, encourage inward investment and economic regeneration in the area, and help tackle climate change and social exclusion. The proposed network will build on the established 255 miles of National Cycle Network routes in the area. The project has the potential to double this, and to open up the valleys for local people and visitors to explore by sustainable means on two wheels or two feet.

Strategic Fit

- 4.3 The proposed routes extend across the whole of the Sewta Convergence Zone. These proposals are derived from Sewta's Walking and Cycling Strategy, and represent a core component of the Regional Transport Plan. The implementation of the Sewta Walking & Cycling Network will contribute significantly to the objectives of the Wales Transport Strategy and the Heads of the Valleys Strategy.

Phase 1 Proposal

- 4.4 An original proposal to WEFO for the VCN presented a £30million comprehensive proposal to deliver the whole project over the lifetime of the Convergence Programme. However, in recognition of Structural Funds Programme targets, a reduced scale proposition for a 'Phase 1' of the project has been developed, and a full application invited by WEFO. This scheme, of approx £7.5million, is shown in the table below. The match funding required is identified from committed Transport Grant funding, and from the Lottery Connect2 Programme. It is anticipated that an approval for 'Phase 1' will be received in the Autumn 2008, with completion of this element of the project in 2011.

Future Phases

- 4.5 The comprehensive nature of the proposed network will require long-term commitment. Opportunities are being pursued to deliver further sections of the VCN under Convergence Fund priorities other than Sustainable Transport, in conjunction with other partners, including the Valleys Regional Park, Visit Wales and the Heads of the Valleys Programme.

Sewta Walking and Cycling - list of TG schemes - Convergence Zone

Scheme Ref.	Scheme description	Total (£000's)	Comments
<u>Phase 1</u>	<u>Sewta Package WC1</u>		
RCT31 & RCT34	Pontypridd Proposals & Treforest Connect 2	800	Improve existing links from Pontypridd TC to the Celtic and Taff Trails. Improve links to University of Glamorgan Glyntaff Campus to the South, and Coed-y-lan Comprehensive to the North. Scheme also includes improved walking and cycling routes around Treforest.
BG21 & T17	Royal Oak to Swffryd & Crumlin to Pontypool	785	Shared usage off road route linking Royal Oak residential area, Llanhilleth to Swffryd. Would link to new railway station in Llanhilleth. Cross boundary scheme partly utilising old A472 alignment.
RCT30, 32 & RCT35	Pontypridd to Tonyrefail via Church Village and Llantrisant & Route from University of Glamorgan Treforest to Llantrisant	2500	Route follows disused railway line from University of Glamorgan's Treforest campus to Llantrisant then to Tonyrefail, providing a safe alternative to the A4119. Links between uni, Treforest and surrounding employment and shopping areas. Proposal will also link into cycling and pedestrian improvements implemented as part of Church Village Bypass.
MT10	Merthyr Tydfil Connect 2 bid route	520	Construction of a new bridge over the A4060 Trunk Road at Pentrebach and improvements to the network leading into the town centre.
B5	Llynfi Valley Cycle Route	700	Cycleway / community route linking NCN 4 and top of Llynfi Valley. Route would link a number of communities in the valley.
RCT21	Talbot Green to Thomastown	300	Upgrade of existing route and completion of missing section of route to provide complete route to Thomastown past Coed Ely land reclamation scheme. Scheme follows route of the old railway line.
Phase 1 Total		5,605	

Scheme Ref.	Scheme description	Total (£000's)	Comments
<u>Future Phases</u>		(07/08 prices)	
BG3 & BG10	Link between NCN 46 and Cwm via Ebbw Vale following the route of the Ebbw Valley Railway in places Link between Cwm and Aberbeeg to CCB	680	Will provide continuity of cycle route in Ebbw Valley. Will link Ebbw Vale, Cwm and Aberbeeg. Also link to new railway station at Ebbw Vale Parkway
B1	A4061 Bridgend Northern Distributor Road cycle route	544	Facility adjacent to Bridgend Distributor Road. Will link town centre with shopping outlet
C17	Caerphilly Basin / Town Centre – Radial Routes	1360	Network of radial routes with links to NCN4
BG8	Completion of NCN 46 following dualling of the A465	136	Part of important NCN46 in Heads of the Valleys corridor
BG12	Link to Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate from the existing Heads of the Valleys Cycle Route	102	Link to important employment site in Heads of the Valleys area
T6	Link between Blaenavon town centre and Kays and Kears and Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estates. Link to additional over attractions such as Big Pit National Mining Museum.	163	Links to important employment sites in Blaenavon from NCN46. Also links to Blaenavon World Heritage Site attractions
T13	Mamhilad to Coed-y-Gric Road, Griffithstown	204	Link from Pontypool town centre to employment opportunities at Mamhilad Park Estate
RCT16 & RCT9	Heads of the Valleys Cycle Route & Links to Hirwaun Industrial Estate from planned and aspirational routes	680	Part of important NCN46 in Heads of the Valleys corridor. Also a link to important employment site in Heads of the Valleys area
RCT24	Aberdare Access Improvements	136	Newtwork of routes between residential areas in Aberdare and town centre
B6, B7& B8	Bridgend Active Travel Network - Maesteg, Pencoed, Pyle	408	Enhanced pedestrian and cycle facilities in three key towns in Bridgend County Borough

RCT1, RCT2 & RCT3	Cynon Valley Cycle Route Phase 3 Cynon Valley Cycle Route - Beyond Phase 3 (Asda, Aberdare to south end of Ynys Sports Field, Aberdare) Cynon Valley Cycle Route - Beyond Phase 3 (all remaining sections)	1123	Completion of the Cynon Valley Cycle Route
RCT31 & RCT34	Pontypridd Proposals & Treforest Connect 2	1224	Improvement of links between town centre and Celtic and Taff Trails. Also University
BG11 & BG4	Extension to the South Griffin Cycle Route south of Abertillery to Aberbeeg & South Griffin Cycle route providing completion of missing sections through Blaina and south Abertillery	680	Completion of a cycle route throughout the valley from Blaina to Aberbeeg
B3	Bridgend to Porthcawl	1020	Link between Bridgend and Porthcawl complementing proposed All Wales Coastal Path
BG6 & BG7	Links from NCN 46 into Ebbw Vale Town Centre west & east	408	Links into Ebbw Vale from east and west. Will depend upon completion of NCN46 in area
BG13	Link between the proposed Heads of the Valleys Cycle Route extension and Rassau Industrial Estate	102	Link to important employment site in Heads of the Valleys area
BG5	Links through Brynmawr town centre to NCN 46 - including link from Warwick Road to A467 footbridge.	272	Link between town centre and NCN46. Improved access for residents of Brynmawr and link to South Griffin Cycle Route
RCT28	Pontygwaith to Maerdy	544	Continuation of existing community route provided as part of Porth Relief Road
C3 & C15	Extension of Route NCN 46 into Bute Town and along through to Bryn Bach Park & Completion of NCN46 within Heads of the Valleys corridor	272	Important section of NCN46 in Heads of the Valleys area
B2	Bridgend to Pencoed	544	Link between Bridgend town centre and Pencoed commercial centre
RCT20	Route through the Rhondda Fawr	68	A community route in the Rhondda. Links to employment sites

B9	Porthcawl to Pyle	1632	Will provide a link from NCN4 and pass through attractive area including Kenfig Nature Reserves
B4	Garw Valley Cycle Route - Missing Link	136	Missing link between Garw Valley Community Routes
C8	A local link from Bargoed Country Park Cycle Route to Bown Industrial Estate at Aberbargoed	68	Link to important industrial area from cycle route through Country Park
C16	Blackwood / Newbridge – Crosskeys & Link to Sirhowy / Oakdale	204	Sustainable links for walking and cycling. Partly using dismantled railway lines
MT2	Extension to the Taff Trail to provide a western link across the Heads of the Valleys into RCT along with an eastern link into Caerphilly CB	1364	Important eastern and western links in NCN46 in Heads of the Valleys corridor. Improved access to industrial areas
C20 & C23	Rhymney Valley Linear Route & HotV's to Bedwas/Caerphilly	204	Remaining section of route between Pengam and Bedwas and on to NCN47 near Hengoed Viaduct
C1	Completion of Rhymney Valley Cycle Route NCN46 to Lawn Industrial Estate and Continuing south to Rhymney SRTS	408	Link from proposed NCN46 north of Bute Town through Rhymney to Rhymney Comprehensive School SRTS
C2 & BG2	Northern extension to the Sirhowy Valley Cycle Route to the boundary with Blaenau Gwent CB from Hollybush to Bedwellty Pits	1020	In combination with other planned sections will complete Sirhowy Valley Cycle Route.
		15,706	

5 **Interchange Projects**

- 5.1 Improving interchange is a key factor in achieving integrated transport. Sewta's strategy for interchange and integration is about providing good quality connections for journeys that involve a change of transport mode or service. The strategy aims to improve the integration of transport modes to create a seamless journey, provide transport users with better journey choices and encourage greater use of public transport services and car sharing. Measures to improve interchange and integrate transport modes will help to achieve the RTP objectives of improving accessibility, reducing traffic congestion and achieving modal shift to more sustainable transport modes.
- 5.2 Sewta's proposals for interchange and integration strategy focus on the need to:
- a) Improve interchange and integration between public transport services. Journeys by public transport often require within or between mode transfers, e.g. bus to bus, bus to rail and vice versa. Measures include improvements to the quality of existing interchange facilities, and the development of new interchange facilities.
 - b) Improve the integration of public transport interchanges with walking, cycling and the private car. These improvements focus on the transfer from private transport to public transport. Measures include the provision of park and ride facilities and cycle parking at stations.
 - c) Encourage car sharing as an alternative mode to single occupancy car travel, through the provision of park and share facilities.

Current Position

- 5.3 Sewta's proposals for interchange schemes within the Convergence area are derived from the development of an interchange strategy for the RTP. This work has identified proposals of regional importance that have been divided into the following scheme types:
- Rail park and ride
 - Public transport interchange
 - Bus park and ride/ Park and share
- 5.4 Sewta has identified a substantial programme of rail park and ride expansion within the Convergence area. These proposals include new sites currently lacking park and ride facilities, as well as extensions to existing park and ride sites. Increased park and ride capacity will improve access to the rail network, and encourage modal shift. These schemes are closely linked to the rail programme, and will need to be delivered alongside the rail programme.
- 5.5 In terms of public transport interchange schemes, Sewta has identified a number of short and longer-term schemes that will provide high quality interchange facilities and a point of integration for public transport services. The quality of the facilities provided at the interchanges is a key influence on passenger perception of public transport services. These schemes have important regeneration benefits and are crucial if public transport is to offer an alternative to the private car. These schemes are needed because:
- The existing public transport interchange may be unattractive and outdated, which limits wider regeneration benefits, and restricts the ability to increase public transport usage e.g. Maesteg, Tonypany.
 - There may be no existing interchange facility, which again constrains integration potential e.g. Ebbw Vale, Pontypool, Newbridge.

- 5.6 In addition to new or redeveloped interchanges, a range of smaller scale improvements to existing interchanges may be necessary to enhance facilities. These could include access improvements (e.g. pedestrian and cycle access, cycle parking, integrated bus and taxi facilities), customer information improvements, and safety and security measures (e.g. CCTV). Sewta's interchange programme includes a package of such improvements.
- 5.7 Sewta has identified a number of bus park and ride, and park and share schemes that will be important in targeting commuter journeys and reducing single occupancy car travel. However, these schemes need further development to identify regional priorities. These schemes will come on line beyond the first two years of the RTP programme.

Timescales

- 5.8 Schemes as outlined above will feature in Sewta's Structural Funds Programme, through phased packages of schemes. The first phases will identify schemes to be delivered up to 2012, featuring rail park and ride and public transport interchange schemes. This phased approach will allow flexibility to react to changing circumstances, with some interchange schemes closely linked to wider town centre regeneration, impacting on the timing of scheme delivery and availability of match funding.

Sources of Match Funding

- 5.9 Potential match funding sources are as follows:
- All interchange schemes are included within the RTP 5 year programme, and funding through WAG TG / RTP Grant from 2009/10 onwards will be the main source of match funding;
 - Developer contributions could be a source of match funding for some interchange schemes e.g. those linked to wider regeneration schemes.
 - Heads of the Valleys funding could be a potential source of match funding for schemes within that area.

6 Structural Funds Bid Packages

6.1 Rail Packages

Rail travel plays a significant role in meeting the needs of the travelling public and the aspirations of the WAG and the Wales Transport Strategy. Accordingly, Sewta has placed emphasis on the development of rail strategies.

The development and implementation of rail schemes remain subject to considerable lead times due to a range of practical and operational constraints. Accordingly, Sewta has developed rail strategies which reflect the complexities of the industry to ensure a robust and realistic programme of improvements can be delivered. Schemes will progress through Network Rail's Guide to Railway Investment Projects which follows a stage gate process from outline conception, through considering options, single option development, construction, commissioning and handover. This ensures a stage approach to project development and delivery, in a manner which minimises and mitigates risk. However an early allocation of funding is required to commence the process.

European funding has been a critical factor in the current Sewta Rail Improvement Programme. Sewta is engaged with WEFO in the development of the Convergence Funding Programme. An important element will be improving connectivity through transport investment in a sustainable manner. These schemes focus on the regional spatial strategy which embraces the European focus on growth and jobs. The schemes also focus on building capacity to deliver high quality services, whilst also increasing accessibility through infrastructure, all of which are key drivers within the Strategic Framework. The schemes are supportive of, and can be delivered in tandem with, the Regional Transport Plan, which will provide the additional match funding.

Sewta seeks EU funding to implement improvements to the rail network in three geographic areas - western valleys, central valleys and eastern valleys. Within the convergence zone, the network serves areas of deprivation, particularly at the northern ends of the Valleys. The projects are supported by the Welsh Assembly Government's vision to extend half hourly services to all the heads of the Cardiff Valleys Rail Network.

6.2 Rail Package R1 Western Valleys

6.2.1 Western Valleys - Maesteg Line Frequency Enhancements including Brackla Station and Wildmill Park & Ride

The passenger rail service to Maesteg recommenced in Autumn 1992. Levels of patronage reached projected year 3 levels within four months of opening, with peak services becoming heavily oversubscribed. Passenger demand has since fallen back to a level more compatible with capacity, though usage of the line is now growing at around 10% per annum. Platforms on the line are currently being extended to accommodate the operation of four car trains, in an attempt to address the peak period demand increases without overcrowding and demand suppression.

The project will implement the infrastructure enhancements to allow a more intensive train service to operate every half hour between Cardiff, Bridgend and Maesteg. The project will also demonstrate the feasibility of including an additional station at Brackla, and if appropriate take forward its implementation. A park and ride at

Wildmill will also be constructed. The project will offer significant benefits to the communities between Cardiff, Bridgend and Maesteg, as well as improved connections to the wider rail network.

The service to Maesteg is currently limited to one train per hour because of the signalling arrangements between Tondy and Maesteg. A passing loop does currently exist, just to the north of the Tondy signal box, but this is not currently suitable for regular use by passenger services. The scheme will therefore provide a new fully signalled dynamic passing loop with the optimum location and length in terms of maximising performance and securing even headway operation.

In addition, the scheme will need to ensure that a train from Cardiff to Maesteg is not required to wait at Bridgend before proceeding to enter the Maesteg branch, thereby avoiding delays to Swansea and West Wales trains.

Brackla Station, if feasible, will consist of the construction of a two platform station on the South Wales Main Line. Served by the Maesteg line services, it will be DDA compliant providing access for all. Park and ride facilities will also be provided at the station, which will serve both the adjacent Brackla Housing Estate and the Bridgend Industrial Estate.

Wildmill Park and Ride will provide 40 spaces at the station, encouraging its use from Litchard, Pendre, Parc Derwen and Wildmill. It is also envisaged that it will serve the Garw and Ogmore Valleys, both of which are not connected to the rail network.

6.3 Rail Package R2 Central Valleys

6.3.1 Central Valleys Phase One - Scheme R2.1 Rhymney Line - Bargoed to Rhymney Frequency Enhancements including Energlyn Station

Passenger rail services on the Rhymney Line have been growing at 7% p.a. However in the year following the introduction of the Standard Pattern Timetable in December 2005, which increased the frequency of services from Bargoed to Cardiff from two to four trains an hour, growth of up to 13.7% was recorded. Platforms on the line are currently being extended to accommodate the operation of six car trains, in an attempt to address the peak period demand increases without overcrowding or demand suppression.

The project will implement the infrastructure enhancements to allow a more intensive service to operate between Rhymney and Bargoed/Cardiff. Three trains an hour are currently provided in the peak, with a gap in service contra flow. Between the peaks an hourly service operates in each direction. The project will provide an hourly service to operate against the peak flow and a half hourly service to operate during the off peak. It will help to re-generate the Rhymney Valley by improving access to leisure and employment opportunities. It will offer significant benefits to the communities along the route, providing improved connections to the wider rail network.

Other than during the peaks when a tidal flow of operation is fed by the train stabling facility at Rhymney, the service north of Bargoed is limited to one train per hour because of the track layout at Bargoed and limited signalling arrangements associated with the single line. The scheme will therefore provide a passing loop at

Tirphil Station, together with the construction of a second platform. The loop will be fully signalled to control entry and egress, enabling dynamic operation from both ends. Its location is at the optimum position to ensure maximum performance, minimising the potential for disruption to other trains on the network.

The provision of the passing loop at Tirphil Station improves the stock utilisation and increases the turn round times at Bargoed, enabling all four services from Bargoed to Cardiff to serve a new two platform station at Energlyn, linked by an improved underpass. It will be DDA compliant, providing access for all, with passenger waiting shelters, CCTV, passenger information boards, real time information, help points and high quality lighting.

6.3.2 Central Valleys Phase Two – Scheme R2.3 Intermodal Facilities Park & Ride - Provision of new or extended facilities at Rhymney, Bargoed , Pengam, Abercynon and Taffs Well.

This project will provide 468 extra rail park & ride spaces on the Taff Vale and Rhymney lines. To capitalise on capacity and frequency enhancements, modal interchange will be improved by introducing or extending park and ride provision at five stations, with four becoming of strategic significance:

At Abercynon, the new park and ride will be accessed from the east via a new river bridge. It will accommodate 150 parking spaces;

At Taffs Well the existing park and ride site will be extended from 93 to 149 spaces;

At Rhymney, the car park will be doubled with the addition of 25 spaces;

At Bargoed, which currently has no park and ride provision, a 100 space car park will be provided;

At Pengam, provision will be increased from 60 to 160 spaces.

The new facilities and services will address constraints which are suppressing rail patronage. They will offer more comprehensive and easy to use services, opening up the rail network to the surrounding valley communities, enhancing accessibility and capacity, and providing better connections to the wider network. They will strengthen the role of rail as an alternative to the car, facilitating modal shift, and removing traffic from the busy radial routes into Cardiff. Serving areas of high economic inactivity, they will offer better access to jobs and services in the lower Taff and Rhymney Valleys, Cardiff and beyond.

The Abercynon and Taffs Well schemes represent a further stage of the Taff Vale package, which has received Objective 1 funding. The Abercynon park and ride, on derelict land to the east of Abercynon Station, will be accessed via a new river bridge. It is expected that within three years of its opening, the new facility will be used by 30,000 cars p.a.

The Taffs Well extension will respond to evidence of excess demand, with cars parking in the turning heads, and within the internal circulatory system. It is expected that within 6 months of its opening, the extended facility will be used by a further 15,000 cars p.a.

6.3.3 Central Valleys Phase Three - Scheme R2.2 Queen Street North - Cogan Junction / Valley Lines Frequency

The key network constraint in the region relates to Cardiff Queen Street and Cardiff Central stations, and the corridor from Queen Street North Junction to Cogan Junction. This corridor constrains the practical capacity of the network. Continued

passenger growth is leading to peak train overloading, and there is a pressing need, to increase the frequency of services operating into Cardiff from the Valleys, which form the key demand generators in Cardiff's Journey to Work Area.

Sewta is working with Network Rail to identify and deliver a reliable layout within the Cardiff Area Signalling Renewal Scheme, that will deliver performance improvements in 2011. Sewta is also working to secure a network enhancement scheme which will provide additional capacity to improve reliability and increase services in the future. This would involve additional infrastructure measures at Cardiff Queen Street, Cardiff Central and Cogan Junction. Sewta places this scheme as its highest priority, as it affects the majority of Valley Lines Services.

The identified capacity improvement project includes:

- New signalling;
- An additional platform at Cardiff Queen Street for through trains;
- A new single line bridge span over Newport Road;
- An additional bay platform at Cardiff Queen Street;
- Additional turnback facilities at Caerphilly or Ystrad Mynach;
- Additional turnback facilities at Pontypridd or Porth;
- A new platform at Cardiff Central for westbound Valley Line services;
- An additional west facing bay platform at Cardiff Central;
- An additional eastbound connection for Valley Line services.

At Cardiff Queen Street, these measures will initially allow for the provision of four bi-directional platforms, followed by the bridge span, which will facilitate the operation of additional hourly services to Pontypridd or Porth, and to Caerphilly or Ystrad Mynach in 2012, and a further frequency increase on both lines in 2017.

The scheme would provide significant performance benefits to users, and additional capacity for further growth, and would accommodate additional freight traffic while providing the opportunity to fill the gaps in passenger services currently created by freight trains.

The Cardiff Area Signalling Renewal Scheme is being delivered to replace life expired signalling. Scheme R2.2 offers the opportunity at additional cost to enhance the network, and to remove the constraints on long term growth. Failure to invest in tandem with this major renewal scheme would cost significantly more to undertake separately, and would also involve further network disruption.

A further scheme seeks to target the resolution of the reliability problems and the improvement of capacity through Cogan Junction. The problems relate to the single track branch line to Penarth and the timetabling constraints imposed. The base scheme will allow passenger trains to use the down freight loop but further enhancement is required to maximise performance through doubling the junction. This option is being assessed and will involve extending the up loop back beyond the junction and / or providing more capacity on the branch.

The project is supported by the Welsh Assembly Government and Department for Transport's High Level Output Specification. Both accept the need to accommodate growth of more than 20% at the busiest peak times on services to and from the Valleys, and recognise that the key infrastructure along the corridor from Cardiff Queen Street North Junction to Cogan Junction is under extreme pressure, and needs to be upgraded.

The proposed project will offer significant benefits to the communities in the Rhondda, Cynon, Taff and Rhymney Valleys, as well as improved connections to the wider rail network.

Whilst most of the enhancements within R2.2 strictly lie outside the Convergence funding area, the scheme focuses on the regional spatial strategy, and provides the necessary infrastructure to enable residents to access the jobs and growth in the wider region, and embrace the European focus on economic activity.

The scheme focuses on building capacity to deliver high quality services, whilst also increasing accessibility through infrastructure, all of which are key drivers within the Strategic Framework. It is supportive of, and can be delivered in tandem with, Network Rail's Cardiff Area Signalling Renewal Scheme, the Department for Transport's High Level Output Specification and the Regional Transport Plan, which will provide the additional match funding.

6.4 Rail Package R3 Eastern Valleys

6.4.1 Eastern Valleys Phase One - Scheme R3.1 Caerleon, Pontypool & New Inn, Abergavenny

A package of measures is proposed to be delivered in phases between 2011 and 2013 on the Abergavenny line leading to half hourly local services, calling at existing and new local stations at Caerleon and St. Mellons. A new half hourly service between Abergavenny and Cardiff would have to be additional to the existing regional services which are unable to call at additional station stops due to timetable constraints at both ends of the route, and the need to provide fast services to meet passenger expectations.

Faster and more frequent services between North and South Wales are supported by the Welsh Assembly Government's "One Wales" manifesto. The scheme will bring wider benefits by removing the need for long distance services to call at Pontypool and New Inn, which will be served by the new local Abergavenny services. Cwmbran will also receive increased frequency of service both locally and regionally, whilst Pontypool and New Inn would receive a level of service to support significant development within the station catchment.

The package of measures if feasible includes a new turnback platform at Abergavenny, and increased signalling capacity through Pontypool and New Inn to Cwmbran and Newport. The project will offer significant benefits to the communities along the corridor from Abergavenny to Pontypool, Cwmbran and Newport, as well as improved connections to the wider rail network. The scheme will also have the potential to enable the locations for the new station proposals at Llantarnam and Sebastopol to be determined, taking account of railway engineering, operational and planning issues. Further development work will assess the origin and destination of existing and future demand, as well as undertaking a wide ranging business case assessment. This work will ensure that the scheme is ready to move forward to design and implementation at the earliest opportunity.

Whilst many of the enhancements within this scheme strictly lie outside the Convergence Funding Programme, the development of this scheme focuses on the regional spatial strategy, and provides the necessary infrastructure to enable residents to access jobs and growth in the wider region, and thereby embrace the European focus on economic activity.

The scheme is supportive of, and can be delivered in tandem with, Network Rail's Newport Area Signalling Renewal Scheme and the Regional Transport Plan, which will provide the additional match funding.

6.4.2 Eastern Valleys Phase Two - Scheme R3.2 Ebbw Valley Phase 2

The recent successful extension of passenger services on the Vale of Glamorgan line has been followed by the introduction of passenger services to Ebbw Vale Parkway, involving six new stations and hourly services to Cardiff.

The Ebbw Valley Phase 2 project will further extend the rail services on that corridor to Ebbw Vale town, providing a half hourly service, one of which will offer an hourly Cardiff facility, and the other an hourly Newport facility.

Track and signalling enhancements at Gaer and Park Junctions are an essential precursor to the provision of a train service between Ebbw Vale and Newport. Network Rail is promoting the early implementation of these works in tandem with the Newport Area Signalling Renewal project in 2010. Once these works are provided, a fully signalled dynamic passing loop at the optimum location and length in terms of maximising performance and securing even headway operation is needed, extending the existing provision.

The scheme will ensure that the Cardiff bound train does not have to be split en route at Rogerstone, or undertake a longer and potentially more unreliable journey via Newport. It will ensure that the Welsh Assembly Government's vision to extend half hourly services to all the Heads of the Valleys Rail Network is delivered, making journey times more competitive with the private car. The proposed project will also offer significant benefits to the communities between Newport and Ebbw Vale, as well as improved connections to the wider rail network.

The scheme is supportive of, and can be delivered in tandem with, Network Rail's Newport Area Signalling Renewal Scheme and the Regional Transport Plan, which will provide the match funding.

6.5 Rail Package R4 Valleys Station Improvement Schemes

- 6.5.1 In parallel with service capacity changes, and to ensure continued rail passenger growth, there is a need improve access to the network and the attractiveness of stations. It is important not to overlook the overall travel experience. Measures include:
- Station facility improvements - such as improved waiting shelters and, at larger staffed stations, toilets;
 - Station access improvements - such as improved vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access, cycle parking, integrated bus and taxi facilities, and facilities for the mobility impaired;
 - Customer information and marketing improvements - including real-time information (and associated trackside train detection) which increases passenger confidence;
 - Safety and security measures - including CCTV and lighting; and
 - Park and ride expansion and quality improvements.

- 6.5.2 These station improvements will be developed as packages of works on their respective lines, particularly where the investment involves line side measures such as the provision of cabling for electronic customer information systems and the extension of the CCTV system. Investment will take account of the latest standards for station design, and where appropriate the measures implemented will seek to improve access for the mobility impaired, as well as for those with pushchairs, prams, shopping and heavy luggage.
- 6.5.3 The stations identified include some of the busiest within the Sewta region, and the co-ordinated approach will not only secure improved access to and from the Convergence zone, but will also coincide with the frequency increases. The priority locations within the Convergence Zone for general station facility improvements are:

Rail Package R4.1 Station Improvement Schemes Phase One 2008 - 11

- Western Valleys: Bridgend, Maesteg, Pencoed and Pontyclun;
- Central Valleys: Aber, Aberdare, Caerphilly, Llanbradach, Mountain Ash, Pengam, Pontlottyn, Pontypridd, Porth, Rhymney, Taffs Well, Tonypany, Ton Pentre, Treforest, Treorchy and Ystrad Mynach;
- Eastern Valleys: Pontypool & New Inn.

Rail Package R4.2 Station Improvement Schemes Phase Two 2012 - 15

- Dinas Rhondda, Llwynypia, Penrhiwceiber, Pyle, Sarn, Treforest Estate, Ystrad Rhondda;
- New Station Studies: Llanbradach Park & Ride, Llantarnam, Sebastopol.

6.6 Sewta Bid Packages - Summary

Scheme	Convergence Zone (£000s)			Total
	ERDF	TG	Other	
R1	10,663	12,337		23,000
R2.1	9,726	11,254		20,980
R2.3	2,850	3,298		6,148
R4.1				
WC1	2,598	2,200	807	5,605
Total				

Notes: EU / TG Conversion = 46.36% intervention rate;