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## **Birmingham Eastside Tram Extension Consultation – Birmingham Friends of the Earth Response**

### **Introduction**

Birmingham Friends of the Earth is responding to Eastside Tram proposals as a city-wide environmental campaigning organisation. Our General Manager has responded to the consultation on behalf of us as a Digbeth based organisation.

### **The Overall Plans**

Whilst Birmingham Friends of the Earth support improvements to public transport, we would prefer to see further extensions to the Metro done on a larger scale whole route basis, rather than piecemeal short extensions. As Greater Manchester has proven, creating whole extra lines to their Metrolink, they have created a successful, popular and viable tram network across the city. We are concerned that such small extensions will not create a critical mass of passengers to make the routes viable and well used. Serious consideration should be given to attracting funding to extend this proposed Metro addition to an established destination, where there is a significant population to use the new Metro line.

### **Route Options**

Regardless of whether the line is extended further in the first instance (as we would prefer above) we would support the High Street route option. The High Street route allows a direct connection to Birmingham Coach Station from the city centre, providing transfer between different modes of public transport (just as the city centre links the city's rail stations to each other and other forms of public transport). We feel it is essential to have connection with the coach station given how many people currently struggle with baggage and directions to the coach station.

The High Street option will also deliver a radical and desperately needed refurbishment of High Street, with a vast improvement in the public realm, better public transport provision, and a more pedestrian and cycle friendly environment, as well as reducing traffic on this street. It will provide a much needed stimulus to redevelopment in Digbeth and sensibly follows the main route everyone already uses to access Digbeth.

The High Street route will also provide a very visible form of public transport, helping to drive usership. This route would also allow easy extension at a later date from Meridan Street across High Street and into the wholesale market redevelopment site via an extended Meriden/Sherlock Street and onward into Southside at a later date, creating further future value from this extension. The route via Fazeley Street does not achieve very much in the way of wider benefits, certainly not as many as the High Street route.

### **Stop Locations**

The central stop looks to be situated in the correct place, allowing direct transfer to the coach station, but also around half way along the High Street route enabling it to serve the wider area, including the existing Custard Factory, South & City Collage campuses and the prospective development sites throughout the area. We believe a further stop should be considered, perhaps situated between The Rainbow and Custard Factory, which would then allow the coach station stop to be relocated further towards the city centre outside The Dubliner Pub, which would help to connect in and serve the wholesale markets redevelopment site, as well as making the gap between this stop and the Curzon Street Station stop.

### **Subsequent Extensions**

As we have highlighted already, the route should also make provision for the further extension to St. Andrew's and beyond as soon as possible. One further option that could also be given consideration is an additional link onto the Camp Hill railway line, so that tram-trains could run off the Metro lines and onto the heavy rail network to serve Balsall Heath, Moseley, King's Heath, Hazelwell and King's Norton on the Camp Hill line.