

Notes of Meeting with DfT to discuss Connect3: DaSTS Taunton Gateway Study Modelling and Data Collection

18th March 2010 – DfT offices

Introduction

Richard Sweet (RS)	SCC	Liz Chandley (EJC)	Halcrow
Emma Cockburn (EC)	SCC	Helen Spackman (HS)	Halcrow
Mark Ledbury (ML)	DfT	Carl Sutcliffe (CS)	DfT

Background

EJC set out the purpose of the meeting, namely to seek approval for the proposed modelling approach and data collection programme. The existing SATURN model has now been fully reviewed and used for initial option sifting. It will be made clear in reporting which issues will have been resolved and which carried through.

HS summarised the currently available models: the existing SATURN model, an EMME/3 public transport model and a mode-choice model. The 2006 base SATURN model has had TEMPRO v6.1 factors applied and the flows compared with 2009 data to identify areas of strength and weakness.

- Inter-urban links generally validate well, with some exceptions such as the A38 between Taunton and Wellington.
- JTs generally ok for inter-urban routes
- Some urban links do not validate well.
- Overall about 70% of links validate, compared with the 85% required for a DMRB-compliant model.
- The matrix appears to be too big (by 40-50%), resulting in validation problems and presenting possible problems when considering mode shift.
- ODs on M5 is a large unknown.

CS emphasised the importance of documenting these issues. EJC confirmed that this would be done.

Option sifting

EJC noted that some options were being left in at this stage simply because there is insufficient evidence to rule them out. EJC also confirmed that a range of criteria (feasibility, deliverability, affordability) were being applied at this stage. Modelling was being carried out only using the PM peak, a pragmatic approach given time limitations.

Proposed Model refinement

HS summarised the proposals as follows:

- Focus will be on improving the SATURN model

- Redistribution function for highway trips likely to be required (views sought as to whether DfT consider this essential or desirable)
- Data collection:
 - RSI on A38 north of Taunton (13% of budget)
 - M5 turning counts, with OD data preferred to overcome the unchanged seeding carried over from earlier models. EJC also pointed out that this would determine whether 'junction hopping' is a genuine issue. (30%)
 - ATCs and turning counts in and around the main settlements, including full cordoning around the towns. (50%)
 - Journey time runs (10%)
- Use of existing SCC data.
- Re-run matrix estimation (with only a small amount of count data held back for validation). With only one RSI the matrix cannot be redeveloped from scratch.
- JT data and queue lengths to be used for validation.

HS considers that this will render the model suitable for strategic schemes.

CS confirmed that some funding has been brought forward from next year's budget to be used in April/May. He felt that the OD information could be very useful.

CS also clarified:

- The need to ensure that objectives are met
- That areas of uncertainty should be caveated.
- That any issues should be highlighted, with commentary on what could be done moving forward and how valuable that work would be.

ML noted that the robustness of a MSBC is not required, and that such a level of scrutiny would not be applied. He considered that redistribution of traffic does need to be considered as this tends to occur before mode shift.

Both ML and CS confirmed that the approach sounded reasonable, provided weaknesses were understood.

Current Options and Appraisal

EJC stated that the options focus on:

- Increasing the attractiveness of towns, to encourage self-containment;
- Increasing the attractiveness of the A38 relative to the M5, with minor improvements;
- Existing air quality and safety concerns.

EJC raised concerns with regard to the likely value for money of transferring trips to the slower A38 (from the M5) and mode shift to slower modes than cars. The shift to the A38 is also likely to increase the likelihood of accidents. ML noted that although guidance on journey time reliability is under development this may not help with these particular problems.

CS suggested that the benefits against objectives will need to be emphasised.

Data on journey time reliability may be available from ITIS/Trafficmaster, and CS should be able to provide a contact for this. Other data may be available from ATCs (speed) and journey time monitoring.

EJC raised some general points with regard to the options:

- A38 improvements would include bus stop and cycling enhancements
- Bridgwater is a particular challenge, with traffic management being considered. Station and bus stop locations are not ideal. Developer funding tends to be diverted to flood mitigation rather than transport.