

a public transport co-operative
run by passengers and employees

Phil Edge
Chair, Langport Transport Group
3 St Gildas Close
Langport, Somerset TA10 9QH

10th January 2022

Dear Phil and colleagues,

We are pleased to be able to state our support for this initiative. GO-OP has been developing its proposal for a Taunton - Swindon service for several years, and during that time we have consulted extensively with local people in Langport and Somerton and heard strong support for an intermediate stop between Taunton and Castle Cary.

We have just completed a timetable development process prior to submitting an open access application; we expect that this will lead to us securing our licence to operate in June of this year, and the first trains should run early in 2023. Our timetable modelling allows for a stop at Langport and Somerton for all our services, which would amount to at least six calls a day each way and as many as nine if we are able to exercise our contingent rights. To begin with, the route would be operated with basic class 153 rolling stock, but in subsequent years we propose to adopt multiple unit sets to keep pace with demand.

We expect to pay a charge for all the stations that we call at, based on the number of users of the station, its facilities, and the proportion of services calling there that are operated by us. While this is normally collected by Network Rail, we are happy to pay such a charge to any station operator - for example we hope to extend our route to the West Somerset Railway and call at Bishops Lydeard, in which case payment would be made to WSR plc. So whether Network Rail, a community enterprise, or some other body chooses to develop the station (we note the recent paper from the Rail Reform Group, 'Building on success' is a helpful contribution in this respect), it will not affect our willingness to pay for the opportunity to collect and deliver passengers there.

The direct services that we offer will be to all stations to Swindon (via Frome, Westbury and Melksham) and to Taunton. At Taunton, it will be possible to change for services to Bristol and Exeter; at Castle Cary, we hope to enable interchange with trains to and from Yeovil, Dorchester and Weymouth; and at Westbury trains to London, Reading, Bath, Salisbury and Southampton. At Swindon, connections to Cheltenham, Wales, Didcot and London are available with a very high frequency.



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In future, we see every opportunity to develop the service further to achieve hourly departures Monday - Saturday. One option that we are exploring is to combine our Taunton - Swindon service (which is likely to be no more than two hourly) with a Weston Super Mare - Dorchester service in the alternate hour, subject to capacity and modification of signalling. Another possibility might be a two hourly service between Castle Cary and Exeter, to provide further connections with the Heart of Wessex services and additional calls at the proposed Cullompton and Wellington stations.

We are fully committed to supporting a new station at Langport and Somerton and would regard it as a core component of our service offer. Do please let us know if there is anything that we can do to enable it to proceed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Bond'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Martin Bond, Chair

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