Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

13 October 2020

Questions from Andrew Nicholson

Agenda Item 8 – A350 Melksham Bypass

To Cllr Bridget Wayman – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Statement:

Given that a recent answer to a question put to the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body, on how road-building along the A350 will help toward decarbonisation targets, claimed that A350 improvements will do so through reducing rat-running, reallocation of road space, and agglomeration in the towns along the route, and that the Melksham Bypass has objectives, among others, of reducing journey times and delays and improving journey time reliability on and around the A350,

Question 1:

Can you point to any reports, evidence, strategies or forecasts done by or for Wiltshire Council, or published in the UK, that this scheme, or this kind of road scheme, will bring about an overall net reduction in traffic?

Response:

The scheme is an improvement of the Major Road Network which is being developed to accommodate future traffic growth resulting from increased population and economic activity in the corridor. It would not be expected to bring about a reduction in traffic, but the complementary walking and cycling proposals do have the potential to reduce traffic.

Question 2:

Can you give an example of a road already scheme built in Wiltshire, or indeed anywhere in the Western Gateway area, which has delivered agglomeration in a town and/or led to an overall net reduction in traffic?

Response:

In 2016, Wiltshire Council, Dorset County Council and Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) Council commissioned a study to undertake a wider economic impact assessment of improving north – south connectivity across strategic transport corridors in the area covered by the three counties – essentially M4 to South Coast.

One of the key objectives of that study was to calculate the wider economic benefits that the area is effectively foregoing due to poor north – south connectivity. The methodology is based on DfT "Wider Impacts" guidance - the main feature being the calculation of agglomeration improvements once connectivity has been improved in a defined area.

Agglomeration impacts arise because firms derive productivity benefits from being close to one another and from being located in large labour markets. If transport investment brings firms closer together and closer to their workforce this can be anticipated to generate an increase in labour productivity. Knowledge and technology transfers are also important aspects of agglomeration effects.

If a major corridor is improved, journey times will be significantly better than they are today. It is this change in generalised journey time that drives the improvements in agglomeration.