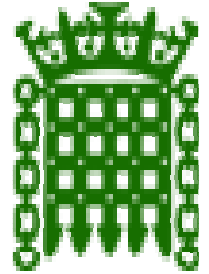




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"The past we inherit, the future we build ourselves"

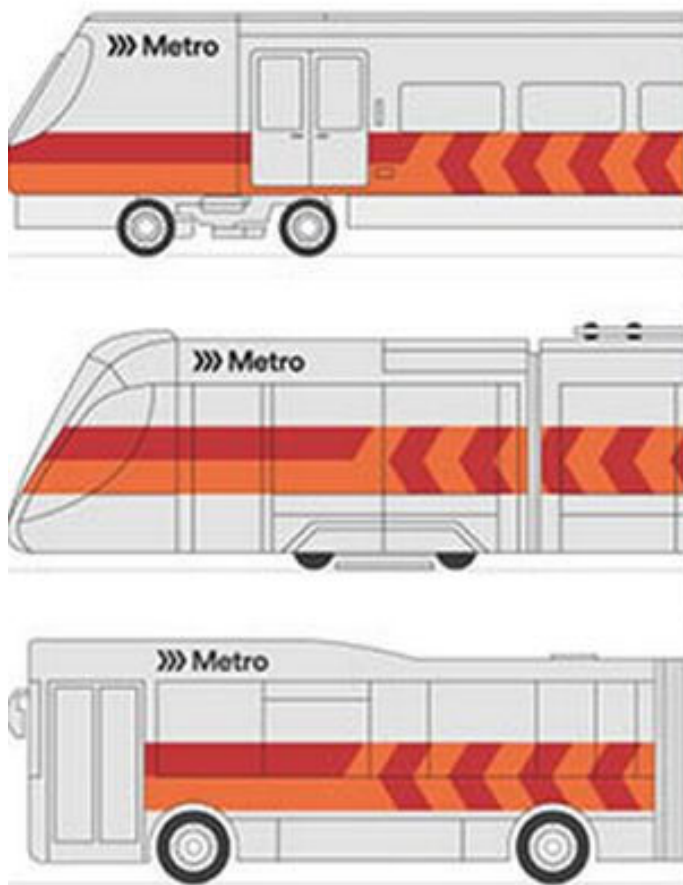


"TramTrain does it Greener and Cheaper on lightly used railway lines and in the streets"

South Wales Metro vision

South Wales Metro vision is set out which could see trams returning to the streets of Cardiff and the Valleys

Trams could replace heavy rail trains on several routes across South Wales, providing faster and more frequent services



30 NOV 2015

Artist impression (above) of a proposed livery for South Wales Metro system vehicles; and (right) a computer image of the metro link in Cardiff Bay

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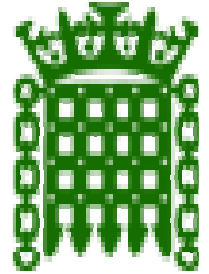
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"TramTrain does it Greener and Cheaper on lightly used railway lines and in the streets"

An ambitious vision that could see trams rolling across South Wales and into Cardiff city centre has been laid out to the public for the first time.

The Welsh Government will today launch a publicity campaign to raise awareness of the Metro project, which aims to revolutionise how the population gets around the region with high frequency services, new stations, routes and a single ticket system.

If the proposals, outlined in a report published on Monday, come to fruition there could be major improvements in frequency on several Valley Lines services by 2023, with trams potentially replacing the heavy rail train-sets that currently run the routes.

A new body dubbed "Transport for Wales" has been set up to deliver the project, which would also include normal trains and upgraded bus routes and will be rolled up with the next Wales and Borders rail franchise.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said: "The Metro project represents the future of public transport in South East Wales which will provide faster journey times and more frequent services covering a greater area. It is an ambitious project linking people and jobs across South Wales in a fast, efficient and environmentally positive way.

"The Metro is far more than just a transport project. It will be a catalyst for transforming the economic and social prospects of South East Wales and the country as a whole."



Artist impression of a proposed livery for the South Wales Metro system

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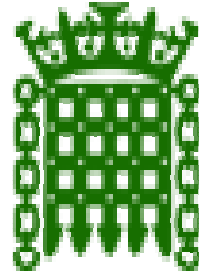
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The report, which reveals a distinctive chevron-style branding for Metro and comes ahead of a formal consultation on the project early next year, talks about the potential for trams to provide more frequent and faster services to Rhymney, Coryton, Cardiff Bay, Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil lines, which are currently served by heavy-rail services.

While just six or seven trains per hour could be provided from Pontypridd with heavy rail, for example, some 10 to 12 could be provided with trams.

A recent poll asked "Is the South Wales Metro system a good idea?"

The results were an overwhelming yes (89%) for and only (11%) no against

And while two trains an hour can be provided by traditional trains from Merthyr, three to four an hour could be the service in Merthyr if it was served by new Metro light-rail services.

Trams, the report says, can also be extended more easily and affordably than traditional heavy rail systems.

'South Wales Metro project could become a reality under Cardiff's regional city deal', says Welsh Secretary

However, the vehicles might not suit every part of the Valley Line network, and it is most likely that the Ebbw Valley, Maesteg and Vale of Glamorgan lines would be served by electric or diesel standard trains. Even they could be upgraded, though, with new trains that promise increased capacity and frequency enhancements.

Bus rapid transit – where buses use dedicated or prioritised road space – is also included in the mix and is already being considered for Newport.

The Welsh Government is to tender for the bulk of the project, which would be delivered between 2017 and 2023, as it awards the new Wales and Borders Franchise. Schemes to upgrade the Rhymney, Coryton, Treherbert, Aberdare, Merthyr and Cardiff Bay lines are proposed in that time.

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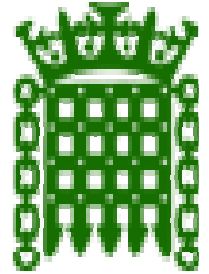
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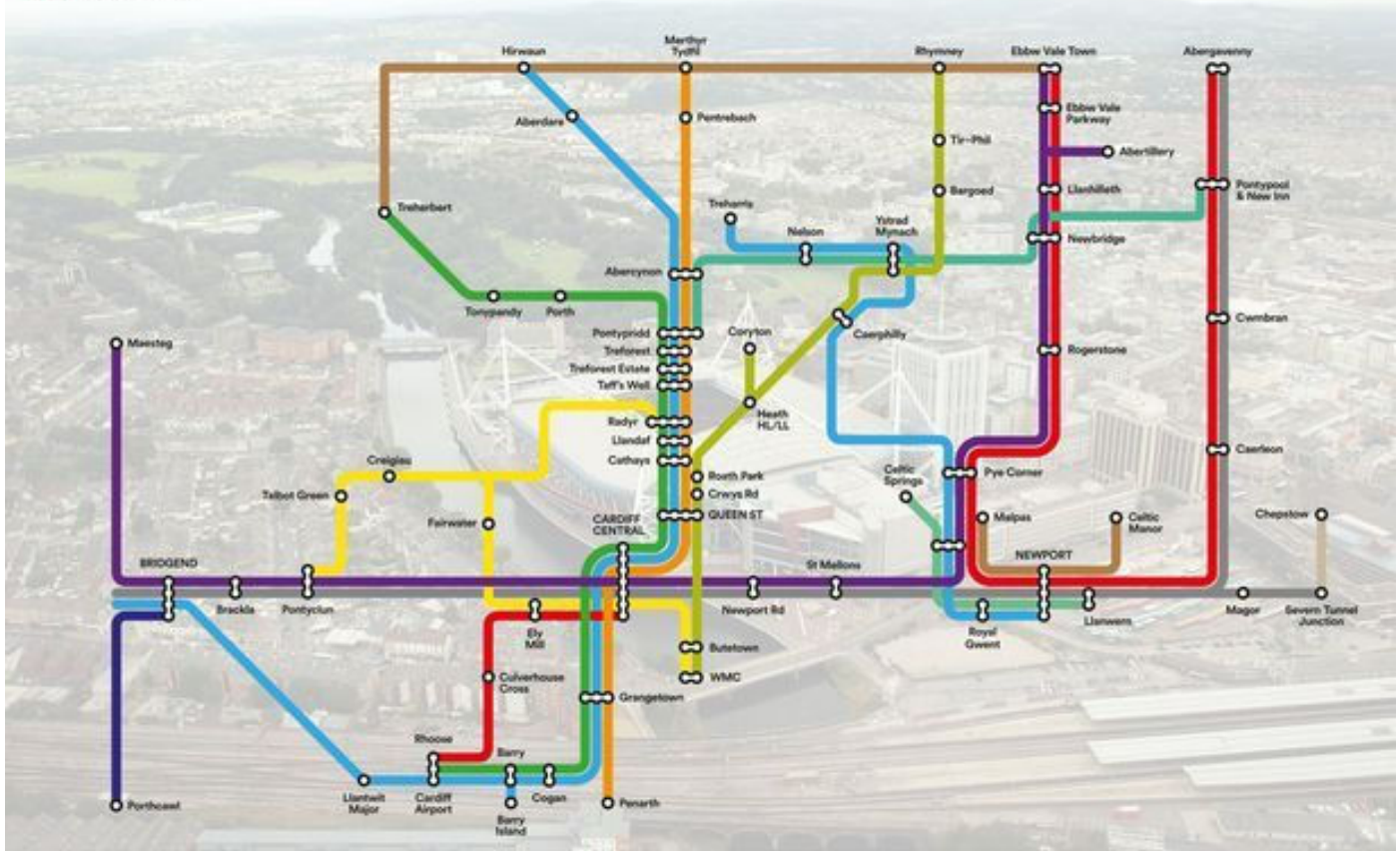
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An image of the proposed Metro for South Wales

That phase may also see extra stations on the Bay branch, and at Hirwaun, Nelson, Treharris and at Crwys Road, Gabalfa and Wedal Road in Cardiff.

Ebbw Valley line improvements, including a spur to Abertillery, are proposed, with potential new services to Newport.

A new Newport Rapid Transit scheme could link up the rail network with sites such as Celtic Manor, while there could be enhancements on the Maesteg lines within the phase.

Beyond 2023, further features could be added to the network, such as on-street trams in Cardiff city centre, extending the Cardiff Bay branch line further into the Bay itself, and providing a direct link to the Bay from Cardiff Central.

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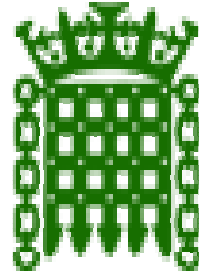
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Other routes that could be looked after the main stage is complete include the corridor from Central Cardiff to North West Cardiff, and onto Rhondda Cynon Taf, and rail extensions from Caerphilly to Newport.

Bus rapid services across the Valleys, such as between Hengoed to Maesycwmmmer and on to Blackwood, may also warrant further study.

The report says that a required feature of the Metro programme is that it can be extended – saying that light-rail systems could be much more easily extended than heavy rail.

However the government insists that, despite the arguments made for trams, that the analysis "will not prejudice the procurement process" and alternative solutions may be found.

But it says that the options may provide better value than the original concept of electrifying the heavy rail Valleys Lines.

The electrification project itself has now been integrated into the Metro programme as the "Valley Lines Modernisation Scheme".

The UK Government has promised £125m towards the cost of electrifying the Valley Lines, and has said that the offer would not fall if the Welsh Government went for light rail.

The Welsh Government is looking for EU match funding that could take it to around £250m. With its own funding it has in principle around £600m committed to electrifying the Valley Lines.

David Stevens, Admiral CEO and a member of the senior advisory panel on franchise negotiations and the development of the Metro for the Welsh Government, said: "Many of Admiral's over 5,000 employees travel to work by train. The quicker, more frequent, more reliable services that the Metro can ultimately offer will make a huge difference to their quality of life and help encourage even more of our staff off the roads and onto trains."

Chair of Crossrail Terry Morgan said: "The Metro project will be transformational for the Cardiff City Region providing additional transport capacity, reduced journey times and new journey opportunities. Metro will support regeneration and growth and unlock the economic potential of South Wales."

A commercial consultation on the project began in June and since then potential bidders, rolling stock operators, financiers and others have discussed the project with the Welsh Government.

Courtesy of : DAVID DEANS
Wales Online

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