



DIGITAL BIRMINGHAM
PRESS RELEASE: 26.05.09

ROUTE MARKED OUT FOR UK'S FIRST INTELLIGENT CITY

Birmingham could become the UK's first city to have an 'Intelligent Transport' network under proposals from a consortium of leading names in digital technology and research.

The project - which would combine a range of data including traffic congestion, car parking availability and bus scheduling to provide real time tracking information that's specific to where the individual is at the point of enquiry - could lead to quicker and 'greener' journeys within the city.

Importantly, the project is targeted at car users, public transport and pedestrians, providing a completely integrated transport concept for the future.

The proposals were unveiled by a consortium led by Birmingham Science City Partnership and including Birmingham City Council, Digital Birmingham, Coventry University Enterprises, Microsoft and Virtual Earth developer Shootill.

Focusing on bringing together two of the region's strengths – digital media and transport technologies, The concept unveiled by the consortium would present the commuter and visitor with information specific to where they are at the point of enquiry.

For example, a would-be traveller located at Birmingham International Airport would be able to find the quickest and most fuel-efficient route to the Hagley Road, avoiding traffic jams and bottlenecks, and discover which is the nearest car park with available spaces.

As people travel around the city the information would be constantly updated, linking public service travel information to in-car systems, allowing the driver to respond accordingly.

It would be equally applicable for pedestrians and public transport users, who could use their mobile phones in the same way as a driver would use a sat nav. GPS links would show the walking route to the bus stop and the time of the next bus, or advise an alternative route if the bus is delayed.

Cllr Len Gregory, Cabinet Member for Transportation and Street Services, believes the concept will revolutionise travelling around the city. "Birmingham has an ambitious integrated transport policy and the logical progression of this concept would put the citizen, business person or visitor firmly in the driving

seat," he said.

"Digital technologies are vital to our vision of an 'Intelligent City' and, with transport impacting on the life of virtually everyone in the region, there's no better place to start."

Birmingham's 'Intelligent Transport' concept builds on and complements existing systems such as the Help2Travel website and Network West Midlands portal. According to Dominic Gill, West Midlands regional manager for Microsoft, it is the first in the UK and the first step in a multi-million pound demonstrator programme for the consortium aimed at addressing key urban issues relating to transport, tourism, security and climate change through the exploitation of information technology.

"This is the first application to use available data intuitively to put real power in the hands of individuals to make and refine their travel plans," he said.

"It's no overstatement to say that the strategy of linking with many separate information sources so that they can continuously react to an individual's changing circumstances will transform people's travelling experiences within Birmingham."

Discussions are at an advanced stage to develop a demonstrator project along one of Birmingham's busiest commuter roads - the A38 - to showcase the role this project can play in easing traffic flow and reducing both congestion and carbon emissions.

ENDS (535 words)

For press enquiries, please contact: Mary Whitehouse or Roz Golds betterpr, tel: 01527 881965, fax: 01527 881985, email: mary@betterpr.co.uk/ roz@betterpr.co.uk

Notes to editors:

CAPTIONS:

Intelligent City 1: website showing the traffic routes in Birmingham and highlighting real-time traffic conditions, parking availability and bus locations. It is also possible to integrate real-time train information and stations along with other transport data such as cycling routes into this solution. This website would be accessible via PC or Internet enabled mobile phone or PDA and allows users to see current conditions in Birmingham and plan a journey across the city using real-time information.

Mobile User Interface 2: the planned route viewed through the same mapping interface used on a mobile device, taking advantage of GPS technology to update information real-time during the journey allowing for accurate navigation across the city.

Intelligent City 2: Here it is the same planned route on the mobile device and shows directions via walking and bus transport.

Intelligent City 3: Intelligent Transport information could be overlaid on in-car Sat Nav system to provide up to the minute parking information which would provide dynamic information on parking availability to provide a much more accurate experience for drivers. The mobile device shown earlier could then take over to successfully complete the journey from car park to final destination.

Notes to editors:

Digital Birmingham is a Birmingham City Council initiative and a strategic partnership of private, voluntary and public organisations throughout the city. It aims to establish Birmingham as a leading European digital city in 2010 and ensure that the benefits of digital technologies are available to all in the city. For more information visit www.digitalbirmingham.co.uk.

Birmingham Science City is one of six designated Science Cities in the UK and aims to develop and use science and technology to improve the prosperity and quality of life of the city-region, the West Midlands and the UK. The Government defined Science Cities as "those with strong science-based assets - such as a major university or centre of research excellence - which have particular potential ...[to] attract a critical mass of innovative businesses and become drivers of regional growth". The aim is to develop city-based strategies to exploit centres of world-class scientific research. This will be achieved by, among other things, developing policies on knowledge transfer, business support, skills, infrastructure, and communication links. These strategies will also promote a closer partnership between RDAs, city government, local businesses, and the research base.