



West Midlands Combined Authority

Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 30 October 2023 at 1.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor John McNicholas (Chair)	Coventry City Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Timothy Huxtable	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Carol Hyatt	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Mary Locke	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Emma Marshall	Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Martin McCarthy	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Barbara McGarrity	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Steve Melia	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor David Stanley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Alan Taylor	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council

In Attendance (MS Teams)

Councillor Saddak Miah	Birmingham City Council
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In Attendance

Anne Shaw	Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands
Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Janna Simpson	Governance Services Officer
Paula Higgins	Head of Swift on Rail
Mal Drury-Rose	Executive Director (WMRE) and Director of Rail (TfWM)
John Hayes	Head of Bus, Integrated Transport Services
Peter Sargant	The Head of Rail Policy and Strategy

Item Title No.

31. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aqeela Choudhry (Sandwell), Councillor Amo Hussain (Walsall), Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner (Birmingham), Councillor Josh O'Nyons (Solihull) and Councillor Alan Taylor (Dudley).

32. Minutes - 4 September 2023

The minutes were agreed as a correct record, subject to a minor amendment to minute no. 22.

33. Rail Ticket Office Closures

The Executive Director (WMRE) and Director of Rail (TfWM) presented a report to the Committee on the status of the rail ticket office closure proposals made by the rail industry.

He reported that on 5 July 2023, 13 train companies contracted by the Department for Transport (DfT) launched a consultation on proposed changes to the way that tickets are sold at railway stations. He continued to say these changes looked to move staff out of traditional booking offices and into the public areas of stations. The Head of Rail Policy and Strategy reported that, TfWM (through the wider regional response submitted by the West Midlands Rail Executive) responded to the consultation. He closed and stated that TfWM recognised the need to modernise the way railway stations are managed and staffed, but they could not support the proposed closures due to insufficient information around how passenger needs would be met.

Councillors echoed their support for the WMRE/TfWM consultation response on the proposed rail ticket office closures, while raising their own concerns about the impact of the closures on passenger safety, security, and accessibility. The committee will receive an update on the consultation report from responses.

Resolved:

(1) The update on rail ticket office closures be noted.

(2) A report would be submitted to a future meeting providing further details on the on-going process.

34. Member Engagement Group Progress Reports

Scrutiny Champions presented on their specific areas of the Member Engagement Group Progress Report. The Scrutiny Champions provided updates on air quality, congestion & environmental impact; finance & performance; passengers and passenger and road safety, rail, metro & sprint; and sustainability & active travel.

There was specific discussion around the Diamond bus service and the regional air quality framework. The committee proposed that Diamond be invited to attend a briefing to discuss their performance. The Head of Bus, Integrated Transport Services and the Partnership Coordinator would notify Diamond at the next bus alliance meeting.

[Councillor Tim Huxtable declared an interest in the bus alliance as a member].

Resolved:

(1) The report was noted.

The recommendation of the Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact Member Engagement Group that the WMCA Board considered adopting, as part of development of the Regional Air Quality Framework, stretch targets which were more ambitious in terms of timescales and pollutant concentration targets than the Government's air quality targets, and which were closer to World Health Organisation targets for NO₂ and PM_{2.5} was supported.

35. Work Programme

The work programme was presented by the Governance & Scrutiny Manager. The chair requested that the work programme be aligned with the WMCA forward look in light of the additional items being proposed for the next committee.

Resolved:

The work programme be noted.

36. Exclusion of the Public and Press

The public and press were excluded for the remainder of the meeting.

37. West Midlands Rail Fares Reform Update

The Head of Rail Policy and Strategy presented a report to the committee on the progress that is being made on rail fares reform in order to simplify the ticketing offer for rail passengers and support the implementation of the Swift on Rail programme.

The report highlighted the need for simplification and consistency in the current fares structure, which would be beneficial for all rail users; and proposed implementation of a PAYG solution on TfWM's Swift card. This would further simplify rail travel by allowing passengers to tap-in, tap-out and automatically be charged the best value fare for their journey. It was acknowledged that the proposed fare changes were complex but was argued that the downsides are outweighed by the benefits of a simplified and consistent fares structure.

In response to questioning, The Head of Rail Policy and Strategy zone 1-5 season tickets would remain, he also confirmed that robust research in to the design of the proposed new fare but concession fares for disability would be reviewed under a different project. He also confirmed that while the fares are currently unconfirmed it would be clear and simple for customers to understand. In response to Councillor Mary Locke, it was noted that communication of fares would not just be online but through newspapers, library events and other avenues.

Resolved:

(1) It was noted that under the Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal, there was a commitment for the Great British Railways Transition Team, the Department for Transport and the WMCA to agree the scope of a pilot Pay-As-You-Go smart ticketing scheme by the end of 2023.

(2) It was noted that the current range of rail fares did not provide a simple, consistent passenger offer and was not compatible with the

future Pay-As-You-Go scheme.

- (3) It was noted that it was proposed to implement a two-stage process to reform rail fares with an initial package of rail fare changes planned for implementation next year, to be followed by further packages of changes aligned with the implementation of Pay-As-You-Go.

38. Any Other Business

Councillor Mary Loack raised a petition for the reinstatement of routes 25 and 600.

39. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 11 December 2023 at 1.00pm.

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm.