

## Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date</b>	11 December 2023
<b>Report title</b>	Member Engagement Groups - Progress Report
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<b>Scrutiny Champions</b>	Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact - Councillor Ian Ward Finance & Performance - Councillor Pervez Akhtar Passenger First - Councillor Carol Hyatt Passenger & Road Safety - Councillor David Stanley Rail, Metro & Sprint - Councillor Tim Huxtable Sustainability & Active Travel - Councillor Martin McCarthy

### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

#### The Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider:

- (1) The Rail, Metro & Sprint MEG recommendation that an update on the cancellation of HS2 north of the West Midlands be presented to a future meeting of this committee.
- (2) The Passenger First MEG recommendation that, as a result of only two Birmingham-based home language stations being used to share information, the use other local home language radio stations be considered by Transport for West Midlands.

## Background

1. At its meeting on 9 June, the WMCA Board agreed revised transport governance arrangements for the forthcoming year. These new arrangements included the amalgamation of the former Transport Delivery Committee and Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee into a new Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Part of these arrangements include six Member Engagement Groups, which provide members with an opportunity to meet and discuss in more detail transport-related issues that are grouped around broad thematic areas.
2. Although the Member Engagement Groups are not decision making, they provide a forum for members to develop a deeper understanding of those matters that would not otherwise be able to be discussed in such detail at committee meetings.

## Member Engagement Groups Meeting Updates

3. An update from Member Engagement Groups that have met since the last meeting of the committee is set out below:
  4. **Rail, Metro & Sprint** – 13 November (Councillor Tim Huxtable)
4. The Rail Metro & Sprint MEG met on Monday 13 November.

- **Highlights and Performance**

Presentations were provided by Toby Rackliff from WMRE regarding:

- The implications of the announcement by the Government to cancel the northern leg of HS2 (Birmingham to Manchester) and uncertainty over delivery of HS2 Euston Station
  - An update on Midlands Rail Hub following the Network North announcement, which should mean the project goes ahead with greater involvement in scheme governance for WMRE on behalf on WMCA. However, Midlands Rail Hub East will need to reconsider additional options for improved Birmingham – Nottingham connectivity following the cancellation of HS2 to the East Midlands
5. Toby Rackliff also provided an update on the ticket office staffing proposals consultation, where it was reported that, following objections from Transport Focus (which managed the consultation process) to every single train operator proposal, the Government had instructed operators not to proceed. Whilst positive news in the short-term, it was noted that:
    - The outcome could make reform of station staffing (which might be beneficial to passengers) more difficult to achieve in future.
    - The Government was still seeking operating cost reductions from train operators and the decision could increase pressure for savings to be made elsewhere.
  6. On the Rail Programme, Members heard from Liz Baker (WMRE), who updated on University station, which is nearing completion with work due to start imminently on passenger drop-off area and service layby.

7. At Darlaston and Willenhall (Package 1), the contract with Keir Group has been successfully novated from Buckingham Group, which went into administration in September. Keir Group have done have begun work at both sites and ground works commenced last week.
8. At Kings Heath, Moseley Village, and Pineapple Road (Package 2), the detailed design is due to be finished in early 2024 and the early construction works are progressing well. There was a health and safety incident at Kings Heath w/c 6 November and as a result of this, work has temporarily been paused at the site whilst the investigation is underway.
9. At Aldridge station, intrusive surveys are being undertaken at the site early to understand the ground risk at an early stage. The team are exploring the options for Network Rail to deliver the station on behalf of WMRE

- **Challenges and Risks**

The group noted the constraints the cancellation of HS2 Phase 2 posed due on future improvement of local train services between Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Walsall as well as on longer distance connectivity to the North West and Scotland.

Progress on the delivery of the new stations will continue to be monitored.

- **Recommendations**

It is recommended that an update on the cancellation of HS2 north of the West Midlands be presented to a future meeting of this committee.

10. The next meeting of the Rail, Metro & Sprint MEG will be held in 18 December.

### **Passenger & Road Safety – 14 November (Councillor David Stanley)**

11. The Passenger & Road Safety MEG met on Tuesday 14 November.

- **Highlights & Performance**

Passenger Safety:

- Year to date crime across the public transport network decreased 21.4% compared to 22/23 figures.
- Against last month, West Midlands force crime has increased by 5.4%.
- Bus crime decreased during the past month with 370 crimes (-18.3%).
- Train crime decreased last month with 133 crimes (-27.7%).
- Metro crime decreased with 6 crimes last month (36.4%).
- Anti-Social Behaviour, the number of incidents reported an increase from 325 to 425 (which were mainly vaping reports).

- There were 19.8 million passenger journeys made by bus in that time period and approx. 4.8 million train passenger journeys, and 700,000 tram passengers.

#### Road Safety:

- It appears that at this stage in October, six reported road traffic fatalities and eight serious reported injuries occurred, with two notable hit-and-run incidents, although validation from West Midlands Police is still required. Two of the incidents above involve cars failing to stop for the Police.
- Walsall, Birmingham and Coventry have all received their Designation Orders to implement their plans to enforce moving traffic contraventions. All remaining local authorities have now submitted their applications to the Secretary of State for the powers to enforce moving traffic contraventions. Designation Orders expected in March 2024.
- Regional Road Safety Action Plan: We are about to begin engagement with the public and community groups to validate some of the long-list of actions in preparation for formal consultation in February 2024.
- Average Speed Enforcement and management: We are working with all local authorities and West Midlands Police to agree a new working model for average speed enforcement operations. A recommendation is currently being considered by all partners which will be finalised and brought through the governance process in January 2024. The aim is to have a new Operational Working Agreement in place from 1 April 2024.
- Safer Travel Plan: the Safer Travel Plan comes to an end in March 2024. The new Plan will be based around four key themes: **Feel Safer**: Passengers and Staff feeling safe; **Be Safer**: The network is a safe place for passengers and staff; **Stay Safer**: Implementing sustainable long-term approaches that improve safety; and **Connected Network**: Harnessing the partnership technology resources to maximise the impact of activities.
- The Plan will be brought back to the MEG / TDOSC in June 2024, and will be launched in autumn 2024.

- **Challenges & Risks**

There were no noted challenges and risks this meeting.

- **Recommendations**

There were no recommendations.

#### **Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact – 28 November (Councillor Ian Ward)**

12. The Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact MEG will meet on Tuesday 28 November.

- **Highlights & Performance**

The 28 November agenda for the MEG meeting had the following items:

- Update on Defra review of Euro VI Bus Retrofitting scheme
- Draft Local Transport Plan Area Strategies update
- University of Birmingham WM-Air Presentations:
- Air quality and public health, and ideas to reduce air pollution
- The role of green infrastructure in reducing exposure to air pollution

- **Challenges & Risks**

The agenda items will highlight areas where transport improvements can be made to improve air quality, and challenges and risks related to their implementation.

- **Recommendations**

Any formal recommendations from the MEG will be developed to be included in the 22 January 2024 TDOSC Member Engagement Groups - Progress report.

### **Finance & Performance – 28 November (Councillor Pervez Akhtar)**

13. The Finance & Performance MEG met on Tuesday 28 November.

- **Highlights & Performance**

Members were taken through a presentation that set out the key funding announcements for the Midlands contained in the Network North paper issued by the Government in October following the announcement of the cancellation of the northern leg of HS2. Key revenue announcements were an additional £16.6m of BSIP funds for 2024/25 and £250m of revenue funding over the next 5 years for network stabilisation. Updates were also given on the range of capital funds due to flow to the region including indicative allocations for CRSTS 2. It was noted that further detail would be reported to members as it became available.

The news of the funding was welcomed and it was recognised that this would bring opportunities for transport over the short, medium and long term.

It was also noted that members had been invited to a 2024/25 budget scrutiny prep session on 1 December to help them prepare for the Mayoral budget Q&A session on 14 December.

- **Challenges & Risks**

No specific challenges or risks were identified in this meeting.

- **Recommendations**

None.

14. The next meeting of the Finance & Performance MEG is on 16 January.

## **Passenger First – 15 November (Councillor Carol Hyatt)**

15. The Passenger First MEG met on Wednesday 15 November.

- **Highlights & Performance**

The group received a communications update, including details of the “AnyBus” campaign. Members were made aware of the different media channels and reach of the campaign since the last update. Of note was to highlight that nBus sales had grown considerably. Details of the upcoming winter campaign were also presented and agreed to be shared with Members.

The group received a presentation to update on the Dudley Interchange works, including details of slight changes to the design and that proposed static shops on the site will not now go ahead, but will be replaced by pop-up shops on the concourse. Information was also provided on the plans for alternative bus stops during the closure.

An update on BSIP Network Support Grant and BSOG+ funding was given, with the group advised that due to the value of the grants there was a need to go through the subsidy control process overseen by the Competition and Markets Authority. The submission has been made to the Subsidy Advisory Unit to scrutinise our plans to ensure all is acceptable. Currently in a 4-week review period with the outcome due on 22 November, followed by 5-day standstill period, after which, from 27 November it is hoped that we will be in a position to inform operators and make the payments due to them for period 1 July to 31 December 2023, to be followed by payments every 4 weeks. Terms and conditions associated with this funding includes maintaining a stable bus network until 31 December 2024. Therefore, not expecting any significant service changes, other than business as usual changes, until January 2025.

TfWM have started discussions with National Express and other bus operators on bus network options from January 2025. However, the absolute focus within the next 12 months is to grow patronage to ensure the network is sustainable as continued funding at similar levels is extremely unlikely.

Members were then provided with an update on the Coventry Demand Responsive Transport trial, which had seen Ring and Ride and West Midlands On Demand merged into one ‘co-mingled’ service across Coventry and into Warwickshire. The expanded area of operation, covering Warwick Parkway, Kenilworth, a campus in Wellesbourne and Leamington Spa was funded by the University of Warwick. Future Mobility Zone grant for this service has now finished and we are no longer receiving any funding from the University of Warwick. The MEG were provided with some proposed changes to the service to make it sustainable within the available budget to end of March 2024 which were endorsed.

- **Challenges & Risks**

*Communications:* Members asked for more details on the reach of the radio campaign and asked that we explore local language stations across the area. In response, members were advised that the Race Equalities Taskforce has met with the Bus Alliance Board and a commitment has been made to better understand and engage in this area. Concerns were also raised that whilst the marketing campaign looks good, the major problem is that the service currently provided by some operators is not reliable enough. A further challenge was made to ask if there was more we could do around explaining why there are delays and getting better at sharing this information with passengers.

*Dudley Interchange:* Concern was noted about the disruption the closure of the bus station, combined with the Metro works will bring to traders in Dudley town centre. To mitigate this, members were advised that the proposed temporary bus stops would aim to bring customers further into the centre of the town, therefore minimising any disruption to local businesses. Concern was also raised about buses driving in and reversing out of passenger bays, these were allayed through an understanding that although this arrangement is new to the West Midlands it is in common use in other areas of the country, with this model bringing many passenger and safety advantages as well as having the advantage of reducing the footprint of the site. Members requested a site visit to a bus station operating a similar service to view the operation.

*West Midlands on Demand:* The main complaint that Coventry members receive is that students are taking the most journeys leaving it very hard for other users to book a trip. Members also asked to receive further updates in due course.

- **Recommendations**

As a result of only two Birmingham based home language stations being used to share information, using other local home language radio stations was recommended.

16. The next meeting of the Passenger First MEG will be held on Wednesday 3 January 2024.

### **Sustainability & Active Travel – 21 November (Councillor Martin McCarthy)**

17. The Sustainability & Active Travel MEG met on Tuesday 21 November.

- **Highlights & Performance**

The MEG received a presentation from Philip Havenhand, Active Travel Implementation Lead, TfWM and Pete Howarth, Technical Support, TfWM.

The presentation outlined a £335m investment in active travel from 2020 - 2027. Unprecedented opportunities exist for achieving step change if we can begin to address the timing and project delivery issues that currently stymie many fully funded projects across the region. The ambition is to increase segregated cycle lanes from 17 miles to a network of 60 miles by 2027 and from 21 'school streets' to 33 by 2024.

Local Transport Note (LTN)1/20 sets out design guidance and standards that should be adhered to, enabling safe cycling and walking. The TfWM workforce includes technical support to enable high quality schemes to be developed within the region and it is crucial to collaborate closely with Local Authorities who are the delivery bodies for the majority of schemes.

Active Travel England (ATE) work closely with TfWM and the local authorities and sit within 16 Summer Lane for part of the week. The WMCA is highly regarded by ATE and has a current capability score of 3 which is the highest current level across authorities in England.

'School streets' were highlighted as a cross cutting area demonstrating benefits for both air quality and pupil well-being.

Coventry have had particular success in Active Travel infrastructure delivery. The MEG were joined by Pete Howarth who designed Binley Road cycle way. Pete works for Coventry for 4 days and TfWM for 1 day per week. Monitoring and data collection is ongoing for the Coventry Cycleways.

- **Challenges & Risks**

Changing delivery time scales have meant the programme is delayed and has never been in the ideal position of having 'shovel ready' schemes in line with the awarding of funding.

Roadblocks to delivery were outlined by TfWM as: design quality, consistency, public support and improving joint working.

- **Recommendations**

The Chair and members are interested in setting up a task and finish group to better understand the roadblocks that slow delivery of these projects. The task and finish group would undertake an Active Travel Programme current state mapping exercise and a future state map in order to identify the gaps and any powers that may be required.

Officer resource was identified as a key challenge to supporting this, we may be able to examine the potential for undergraduate and post graduate development personnel being integrated into the process to support progress. The Chair suggested we could influence the work of WMCA workforce at university. Another member added that universities across the West Midlands could incorporate this into their studies. Mark Corbin will explore this idea with the Transport Skills Academy.

Councillor Huxtable asked TfWM to consider quick wins which he had sent to Philip Havenhand by email. He mentioned specifically a ford that causes issues for school children at a specific school in his ward. Better street lighting would make a difference. Solar stud wayfinding lights had been used 2007 but has not been continued. The Chair mentioned an idea of park and stride/safe route to school. All parties agreed geographical context is a better way to consider making improvements, irrespective of the source of the funding.



18. The next meeting of the Sustainability & Active Travel MEG will be held on Tuesday 9 January.

### **Strategic Aims and Objectives**

19. Whilst a robust and effective overview and scrutiny function impacts on all of the WMCA's corporate aims, there is a direct link to the following:

Aim 5 - Securing new powers and resources from central government.

Aim 6 - Developing our organisation and our role as a good regional partner.

### **Financial Implications**

20. There are no direct finance implications arising out of this report.

### **Legal Implications**

21. Overview and scrutiny is a statutory function of the WMCA and the activity highlighted within this report contributes towards meeting this responsibility.

### **Single Assurance Framework Implications**

22. There are no direct implications for the Single Assurance Framework arising out of this report.

### **Equalities Implications**

23. There are no direct equalities implications arising out of this report.

### **Inclusive Growth Implications**

24. There are no direct inclusive growth implications arising out of this report.

### **Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

25. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee comprises members from across the constituent and non-constituent authorities participating within the WMCA.

### **Other Implications**

26. There are no other direct implications arising out of this report.