



West Midlands  
Combined Authority

## Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date</b>	26 February 2024
<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:

- (1) Note the report, and consider whether it wishes to any of the matters discussed at the recent Member Engagement Groups to be incorporated into the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee's work programme..

## **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 Subcommittee 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:

#### **Rail, Metro & Sprint - 5 February 2024 (Councillor Tim Huxtable)**

4. The Rail, Metro, and Sprint Member Engagement Group Meeting met on 5 February with an agenda covering topics across all three modes.

- **Highlights and Performance**

5. The MEG received a presentation on the Dudley Port Integrated Transport Hub project. Dudley Port is a major focus for transport investment with a new tram stop on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill West Midlands Metro extension, currently under construction, alongside plans for high-quality walking, cycling, and public transport measures in the area. Together, these contribute to a future network of sustainable transport options for residents who want to use an alternative to the private car to get around. These works are due to be completed by the end of 2024, ready for the launch of phase one of the Metro extension from Wednesbury to Dudley town centre.
6. The MEG then heard about the Buy Before You Board (BBYB) concept being introduced for Midland Metro. BBYB is a model used by others across the UK, including Manchester and Nottingham. BBYB will include moving Metro from on-tram sales to buying before you board via at platform ticket machines (TVMs) and at stop ticket validators. Passengers will validate their travel permits (e.g. Swift card) prior to boarding the vehicle compared to buying on the tram but also validate when leaving the vehicle (Tapping in and out). There will be revenue teams with validator devices doing inspections throughout. Metro will include having TVMs and validators throughout the network to accommodate the demand at the stops, at certain tram stops there will be additional equipment to serve customer. The go live

date is proposed to be in late 2024. A paper is due at WMCA Board in March 2024 to close out the final requirement relating to the introduction of an increased Penalty Fare.

7. The MEG were updated on the progress of the Birmingham to Longbridge, and Hagley Road (Edgbaston) to Halesowen Corridors – Mass Transit Options Appraisal Studies. The aim of the brief for each corridor is to develop an options assessment to improve connectivity and produce a consistent approach to strategic and multi-modal travel planning and growth. Procurement is underway with a consultant(s) expected to be appointed February 2024 (Longbridge Corridor) and March 2024 (Hagley Road Corridor). The Appraisal Studies (Stage 1) are anticipated to be completed by the end of 2024 followed by SOBC (Stage 2) submission to WMCA's SAF early 2025.
8. The MEG discussed the proposed open access rail proposals from the Wrexham, Shropshire and Midlands Railway (WSMR) company. Unlike other train operators, open access companies receive no government subsidy and take full revenue risk. The WSMR proposals would see five trains a day in each direction (Monday-Saturday, four trains a day on Sunday) operate between Wrexham and London Euston via Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Walsall, and Nuneaton.
9. The MEG were updated on the new stations studies currently being undertaken by WMRE. This work has seen a long list of potential stations assessed against a range of criteria. Internal approval is being sought for a Programme Business Case application to release funding for further Strategic Outline Case work for those with the strongest case.
10. Finally, the MEG received an update on the West Midlands Rail Programme. The expanded University station opened to the public on 28 January. The planned MEG site visit to the Camp Hill Line stations was postponed due to availability, but the group reviewed progress slides for all three stations. The MEG heard that the timetabling and car parking studies for Aldridge were due to be completed imminently. In relation to Witton station, the MEG were advised that consultants WSP were working on the SOBC.

- **Challenges and Risks**

11. The new WSMR service potentially delivers strong benefits for a number of towns in West Midlands and aligns well with economic, social and environmental objectives. WMRE therefore is supportive of the proposal in principle. However, there are a number of technical issues that still need to be resolved. WMRE is in dialogue with the promoters to find solutions to these issues.

- **Recommendations**

12. It was agreed that the following items would be considered by the MEG at its March meeting: -
  - West Coast 250
  - Update on Network North and Midlands Rail Hub
  - CrossCity Bus
  - Pay As You Go on Rail

**Passenger & Road Safety - 1 February 2024 (Councillor David Stanley)**

13. The Passenger & Road Safety Member Engagement Group met on 1 February 2024.

- **Highlights & Performance**

14. Passenger Safety:
  - Year to date crime across the public transport network decreased 22% compared to 2022 figures.
  - We now have 12 Transport Safety Officers on the network
  - Against Last month West Midlands force crime has decreased by 6.9%.
  - Bus crime has decreased during the past month with 338 crimes (8.7%).
  - Train crime has increased last month with 159 crimes (16.4%).
  - Metro crime increased with 13 crimes last month (116.7%).
  - Anti-Social Behaviour, the number of incidents reported a decrease from 423 to 415 (1.89%).
  - In November there were 18.9 million passenger journeys were made by bus in that time period and approx. 5.3 million train passenger journeys, and 754,129 tram passenger journeys.
  - On the bus network 0.002% of journeys were impacted by a crime, on the rail network 0.003% were impacted, and on the Metro 0.002% of journeys were impacted.

Road Safety:

15. Darren Divall stated that the first part of the partnership delivered the refreshed regional road safety strategy 2023 – 2030, with a link in the slides to the strategy. The strategy was launched 15<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023, with the next step now to launch the action plan which currently has 50 actions spread across the principles of the safe system. The strategy will support the broader transport policy.

16. Darren Divall stated that there is no date set in stone for vision zero, when we look at London and Leeds who have a date set 2041 the stats currently show they are going in the wrong direction, with the concern of putting a date and not achieving it will only lead the plan to be discredited.

- **Challenges & Risks**

17. There were no noted challenges and risks this meeting.

- **Recommendations**

18. Councillor Hyatt recommended improved communications be made with Local Authority Comms leads for future events such as Time to Talk which was held in Wolverhampton recently. Action noted by Kerry Blakeman and closed.

19. The next meeting of the Passenger & Road Safety MEG is to be confirmed.

**Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact - 30 January 2024**  
(Councillor Ian Ward)

20. The Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact MEG met on Tuesday 30 January.

- **Highlights & Performance**

21. The MEG considered the position of Public Health England in promoting active travel. This related to the discussion of walking and cycling schemes at TDOSC on 22 January, following Dr Emma Ferranti's air quality and green infrastructure presentation.

22. Public Health England's position promoting walking and cycling in England is set out in its 2018 report "Cycling and Walking for Individual and Population Health Benefits".

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bf41840e5274a2af47c464e/Cycling\\_and\\_walking\\_for\\_individual\\_and\\_population\\_health\\_benefits.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bf41840e5274a2af47c464e/Cycling_and_walking_for_individual_and_population_health_benefits.pdf)

23. This includes the point that "the evidence is that the health benefits of walking and cycling outweigh any potential health risks and harms – for example from injury or pollution."

24. The meeting also considered:

- Presentations from the University of Birmingham WM-Air Project:

- i. an overview of source apportionment of PM2.5 in the West Midlands

- ii. the impact on air quality of lowering motorway speed limits in the West Midlands
- iii. the impact on air quality of bus fleet electrification

- Update on DEFRA review of bus retrofitting programme

- The role of hydrogen for buses and the wider transport sector, including an update on the ZEBRA funding bid. Expert speakers will be invited to a future meeting of the MEG on the role of hydrogen in the transport sector.

- **Challenges & Risks**

25. Challenges of improving bus vehicle fleet emissions and emissions from motorway traffic were considered.

- **Recommendations**

26. A report will be taken to TDOSC on 22 March with an update on the ZEBRA hydrogen bus funding bid.

The MEG recommended that TDOSC urge TfWM and bus operators to accelerate the transition to a zero emission bus fleet in the West Midlands.

The MEG will also seek to engage National Highways to consider the issues related to reducing 70 mph motorway speed limits in the West Midlands. This is in relation to the 2023 WMCA regional air quality framework action “TRN15 Speed limit reduction (or dynamic speed limits) on high-speed roads”.

27. The next meeting of the MEG will be held on 21 March 2024.

**Finance & Performance – 16 January (Councillor Pervez Akhtar)**

28. The Finance & Performance MEG met on Tuesday 16 January. This meeting focussed on year to date financial position, 24/25 budget update and information on proposed changes to ENCTS reimbursement by HMG for 24/25.

- **Highlights & Performance**

29. Year to date revenue performance continued to perform to expectations with the year to date position to 30 November showing a £2.7m surplus, £2.2m favourable to budget. The reasons for these were noted as timing variances and staff vacancies.

30. It was noted £2m of the 23/24 efficiency target (£3m) has been delivered year to date with the remaining £1m to be delivered over the remainder of the year.

31. The revenue position for the full year quarter 2 forecast was a surplus of £1.3m, which is an improvement on the previous forecast where a balanced budget was being anticipated.
32. The year to date capital expenditure position was noted to be behind budget by £60.8m for internally delivered schemes and £53m for externally delivered schemes.
33. Within internally delivered schemes, the variances were across the entire programme, but the most significant were within Metro (£38.5m), Rail (£7.9m), Data and Digital (£4.0m) and Bus (£3.5m). Further detail on the specific schemes causing significant variation was given.
34. The 2024/25 draft budget was approved by WMCA Board for consultation at 12<sup>th</sup> January meeting. This includes an assumption of a 3% increase in the transport levy giving an additional £3.5m of transport funding. £24.9m of Network Stability Fund (total £250m over 5 years) to be utilised to fund ongoing transport operations.
35. Final budget will be presented at 9 February WMCA Board meeting for approval to meet statutory deadlines including issue of levy letters to Local Authorities.
36. It was explained that the DfT is currently updating its model for future ENCTS reimbursement to providers with the latest target date for implementation being April 2024. It has been suggested that this will on average increase reimbursements to providers by an average of 11% but with a larger expected impact in urban areas.
37. The revised model has been released and is currently being reviewed by WMCA technical teams.
38. WMCA has always been an active participant in discussions with DfT about ENCTS payment methodology and will continue to provide any feedback as necessary on the new model to ensure it remains a sound tool to determine reimbursement in the future.

- **Challenges & Risks**

39. It was noted that the financial impact of the ENCTS reimbursement change was still to be determined but at this stage it was anticipated that it could be funded from existing resources. Updates would be provided to members when information was available.
40. The ongoing challenges around a sustainable funding solution for transport were noted.

- **Recommendations**

None

41. The next meeting of the MEG will be held on 19 March 2024.

**Passenger First – 7th February 2024 (Councillor Carol Hyatt)**

- **Highlights & Performance**

42. This was the final meeting of the Passenger First Member Engagement Group and the following items were discussed:

- Communications
- Network Planning for January 2025 Bus Network
- Real Time Information
- Customer Services
- West Midlands Cycle Hire Scheme and E-Scooters
- An overview of operation of Air Quality MEG

43. During the meeting Officers extended an invitation to all Members to visit the Regional Transport Coordination Centre (RTCC) at 16 Summer Lane to learn about the value of this facility and the role it plays in communicating disruption information, invitations will be sent out once a date is confirmed.

44. Following on from a previous agenda item, it was also noted that Tilly from Crafty Gardeners is to visit the Ring & Ride booking centre, sharing best ways of communicating with learning disabled adults with the staff.

45. Due to the proximity of the meeting to the February TDOSC a full report will be brought to the additional TDOSC meeting on 18th March 2024.

- **Challenges & Risks**

46. To be included in the next update.

- **Recommendations**

47. A report on customer services to be brought as a standing item to each future meeting.

An update on Community Engagement be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

That the proposed visit to the RTCC takes place on the date of the next TDOSC (18th March 2024)

48. This was the final meeting of the Passenger First MEG for 2023/24.



**Sustainability & Active Travel – 23 January 2024 (Councillor Martin McCarthy)**

49. The Sustainability and Active Travel MEG met on Tuesday 23 January.
- **Highlights & Performance**
50. The MEG received presentations from Emma Crowton, Behaviour Change Manager, TfWM on Sustainable Travel to School, and Christopher Brown, Senior Future Mobility Developer, TfWM on Mobility Hubs & Supporting Net-Zero Targets by Reducing Car Travel.
51. The **Sustainable Travel to School** presentation explored how we are encouraging the use of Active Travel Infrastructure, which is known as Activation or Travel Behaviour Change specifically around schools.
52. The Living Streets Walk to School Programme is funded by Active Travel England (ATE) and is in response to the second cycling and walking investment strategy which sets out the government's ambition for walking and cycling until 2025. The ambition is to make cycling and walking a natural choice for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey by 2024, with a target to increase the percentage of children who usually walk to school from 49% (2014) to 55% in 2025.
53. The Walk to School Programme supports primary aged children and families to walk to school. In this academic year, Living Streets will be working with at least 114 primary schools across the West Midlands region to encourage and promote walking to school. The Living Streets team are eager to recruit new schools; schools within the region have the opportunity to be recruited through liaising with TfWM, as well as other methods, such as [interest forms online](#), media campaigns and newsletters.
54. The presentation introduced members to Mini-Street Reviews, where Living Streets and Local Authorities work with schools to undertake class-based street audits with children, allowing them to identify barriers of walking to school such as blocked pathways and parking on zig-zag lines. An approach to tackle this was seen in Walsall where there is currently a trial of CCTV cameras to enforce poor driver behaviour on zig-zag lines outside school grounds.
55. The **Mobility Hubs & Supporting Net-Zero Targets by Reducing Car Travel** presentation was based on Local Travel Points – an innovative transport intervention, which has seen success in cities across Europe and increasingly within the UK also. Local Travel Points bring together a range of transport and community services to ensure they are where the community need them to be, such as transport interchanges.

56. Local Travel Points are green public spaces that bring together everything the community require to get from A to B, sometimes avoiding the need to travel at all. This includes shared micromobility schemes, such as West Midlands Cycle Hire, helping residents travel actively by providing local services such as bike storage and social space, and car clubs for when cars are needed, such as EV charging ports and by-the-hour rental services.
57. The pilot project includes a mini-network of Local Travel Points in Halesowen. The current hubs for the pilot are: Andrew Road, Huntingtree Park and Cross Street. In terms of future hubs, the project team are still at SOBC stage, therefore, specific locations have not yet been set out. However, the team are exploring different use cases for intervention in various areas with a priority for areas of high car-dependence.

- **Challenges & Risks**

58. **Sustainable Travel to School.** Members queried what approach is taken by enforcement agencies in terms of poor driver behaviour on zig-zag lines. This is reliant on resources available within Local Authorities to enforce the legal restrictions. Members added that a deterrent is required to tackle poor driver behaviour on school streets. Members agreed we need to make our school streets safer by addressing the parking issues that often divert disabled chair and buggy users onto the road. Typically, pavement parking and delivery vehicles cause such issues.
59. Members raised concerns on the lack of school take-up as compared to the number of schools within the West Midlands area. Members were reminded that it has only been approximately three months since the start of the academic year, which could be a factor in the numbers, however, a challenge was identified of a lack of school resource.
60. **Local Travel Points.** Problems to solve were identified as the share of UK carbon emissions from transport is 26%. This highlights that transport is an unignorable aspect of our journey towards net-zero and tackling the climate emergency. 7 in 10 trips between one and two miles taken by car. Factors associated with this include air pollution from trips being taken by conventional fuel vehicles. 85% share of trips in the morning peak are not between our strategic centres. There is a lot of traffic and trip demand, going to and from destinations which are not well-served by the conventional transport system.
61. Members raised concerns about the location of the Local Travel Point pilot project on Cross Street, Halesowen. This may appeal to the wrong audience and transform into an outdoor youth club, rather than the intended focus, increasing the risk of anti-social behaviour.

- **Recommendations**

62. Members to put forward schools that may benefit from the Living Streets Walk to School Programme.

Members identified similarities with Mobility Hubs in the Netherlands. They recommended that TfWM use real photography of similar schemes to reinforce that Mobility Hubs can be a reality in the future.

One member recommended considering a location for a future Local Travel Point in a specific ward and has asked for feedback on the request. Within the location, a transport study has been undertaken by specialist planners and outcomes have been shared with TfWM.

The Chair recommended that any Local Travel Point planning application should reflect Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.