

Transport Delivery and Overview Scrutiny Committee

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| Date | 26 February 2024 |
| Report title | Park & Ride Update |
| Portfolio Lead | Transport - Councillor Mike Bird |
| Accountable Chief Executive | Anne Shaw – Executive Director, Transport for West Midlands |
| Accountable Employee | Babs Spooner, Senior Park & Ride Manager email: babs.spooner@tfwm.org.uk |

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Consider and endorse the approach to the continued strategic and operational development of Park & Ride following the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on matters relating to Park & Ride within the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area.

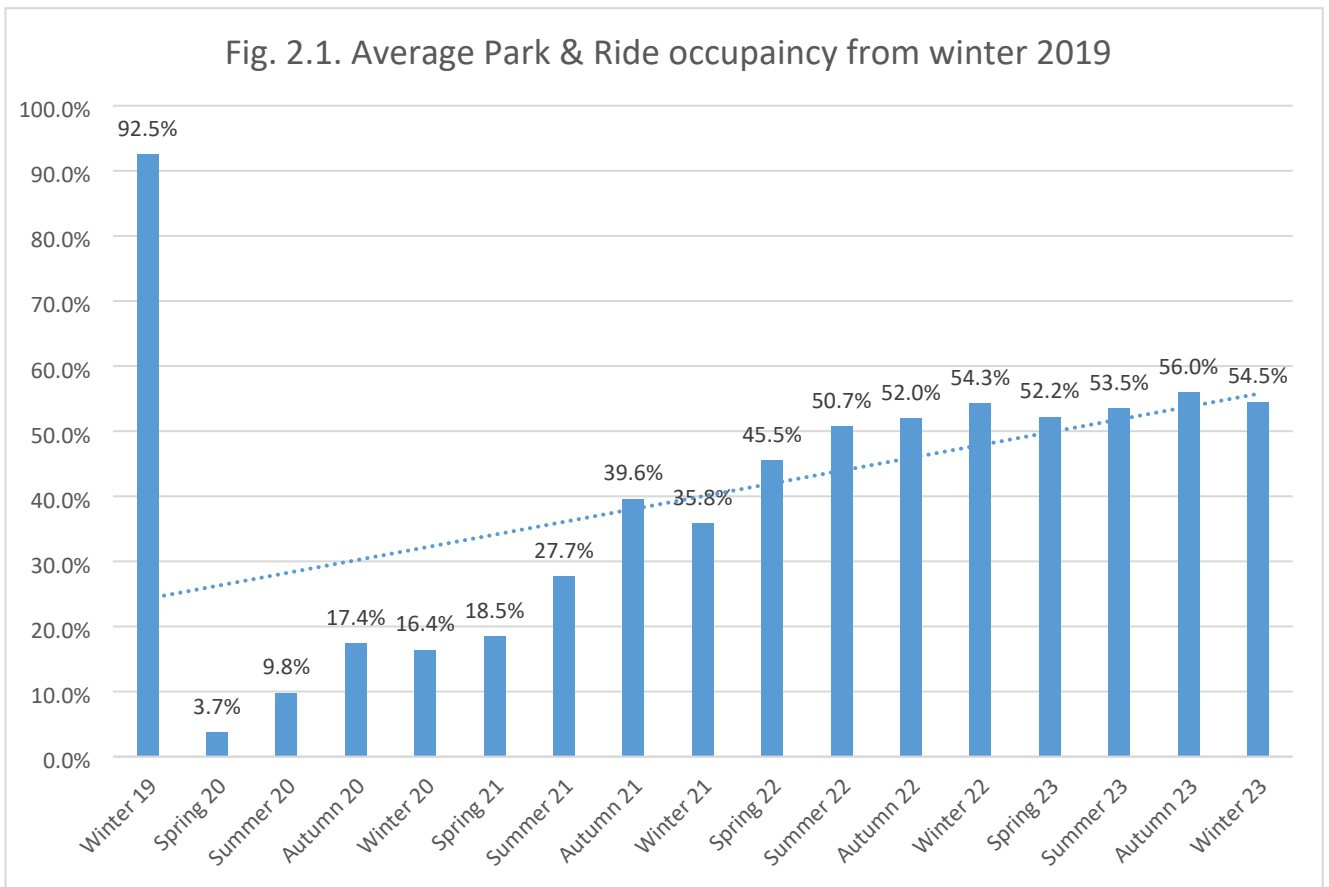
2. Background

- 2.1 Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) currently operates 9,426 Park & Ride spaces at 40 railway stations and five Metro stops within the West Midlands Combined Authority area. The most recent additions to the estate are the 198 space car park at Bradley Lane Metro stop which opened in February 2020 and the 629 space strategic multi-storey at Longbridge railway station which opened in August 2021.

Impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic

- 2.2 Prior to Covid-19, all Park & Ride sites were generally full on a weekday by 8am except for Bescot Stadium and the then recently opened facility at Bradley Lane.

2.3 Covid-19 has had a significant impact on Park & Ride usage since the pandemic, but occupancy has steadily grown as we have moved out of lockdown periods and back into a new period of normality. Figure 2.1 shows average weekday usage of Park & Ride from just before the pandemic to present.



2.4 It is important to note that the above figures provide an average for Monday to Friday at 11am. Some days are much busier than others (particularly midweek days) and people often arrive in the late morning and afternoon after counts have been conducted. There have also been wider impacts on occupancy outside of Covid-19 including rail strikes, reliability issues and reduced service frequencies.

2.5 Table 2.1 gives an indicator of occupancy at specific sites both pre-Covid and more recently (winter 2023). It shows average occupancy (as a percentage of total capacity) but also maximum occupancy during the last three months. On some occasions maximum occupancy exceeds 100% due to people parking outside of marked bays. We have a parking enforcement contract in place to address inconsiderate parking behaviours e.g. parking across bays, outside bays, on footpaths, in roads or in blue badge bays without displaying a valid blue badge.

| | No. spaces | Occupancy Pre-Covid Feb 20 % | Avg. % weekday occupancy winter 23 | Max % weekday occupancy winter 23 |
|---------------------------|------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ACOCKS GREEN | 136 | 96.3% | 59.56% | 75.74% |
| BERKSWELL | 95 | 96.8% | 77.89% | 108.42% |
| BESCOT STADIUM | 122 | 49.2% | 23.77% | 38.52% |
| BLACK LAKE | 87 | 93.1% | 85.06% | 112.64% |
| BLAKE STREET | 163 | 96.9% | 28.83% | 68.71% |
| BRADLEY LANE | 196 | 30.6% | 36.73% | 55.61% |
| BROMSGROVE | 359 | 74.9% | 38.44% | 64.35% |
| CANLEY | 123 | 91.87% | 47.15% | 71.54% |
| CHESTER ROAD | 201 | 99.50% | 73.63% | 111.94% |
| COSELEY | 102 | 94.12% | 83.33% | 97.06% |
| CRADLEY HEATH | 249 | 96.36% | 86.35% | 108.03% |
| DORRIDGE | 90 | 87.02% | 84.44% | 115.56% |
| DUDLEY PORT | 37 | 94.25% | 59.46% | 110.81% |
| FOUR OAKS | 343 | 98.25% | 78.13% | 100.58% |
| GALTON BRIDGE (SMETHWICK) | 77 | 93.51% | 74.03% | 101.30% |
| HALL GREEN | 112 | 88.39% | 66.07% | 100.00% |
| HAMPTON IN ARDEN | 134 | 98.51% | 54.48% | 100.00% |
| THE HAWTHORNS | 185 | 95.14% | 61.08% | 86.49% |
| KINGS NORTON | 321 | 97.82% | 52.34% | 82.87% |
| LANGLEY GREEN | 31 | 93.55% | 54.84% | 87.10% |
| LEA HALL | 29 | 96.55% | 100.00% | 110.34% |
| LYE | 20 | 90.00% | 30.00% | 50.00% |
| LONGBRIDGE | 624 | CLOSED | 11.06% | 19.23% |
| MARSTON GREEN | 122 | 101.64% | 77.87% | 120.49% |
| NORTHFIELD | 194 | 97.42% | 78.35% | 95.88% |
| OLD HILL | 54 | 96.30% | 46.30% | 107.41% |
| OLTON | 93 | 95.70% | 92.47% | 138.71% |
| PRIESTFIELD | 148 | 96.62% | 88.51% | 116.89% |
| ROWLEY REGIS | 741 | 95.28% | 48.45% | 60.86% |
| SANDWELL & DUDLEY | 393 | 98.73% | 76.84% | 96.69% |
| SELLY OAK | 454 | 97.58% | 49.56% | 67.40% |
| SHIRLEY | 71 | 88.73% | 73.24% | 94.37% |
| STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION | 1069 | 96.63% | 28.16% | 45.37% |
| SUTTON COLDFIELD | 317 | 99.68% | 45.74% | 60.57% |
| TAME BRIDGE PARKWAY | 226 | 95.13% | 75.66% | 106.64% |
| TILE HILL | 347 | 97.12% | 54.76% | 71.76% |
| TIPTON | 71 | 100.00% | 70.42% | 109.86% |
| WEDNESBURY PARKWAY | 152 | 93.42% | 74.34% | 113.82% |
| WHITLOCKS END | 324 | 95.37% | 43.21% | 66.05% |
| WIDNEY MANOR | 297 | 97.98% | 59.93% | 77.78% |
| WYLDE GREEN | 57 | 94.74% | 66.67% | 154.39% |
| YARDLEY WOOD | 170 | 100.00% | 59.41% | 85.88% |

Table 2.1 – TfWM car park occupancy pre-Covid and in winter 2023 by site

- 2.6 This data in Table 2.1 that several sites are more than two thirds full on average on a weekday, and many also have occasions where they are at or above capacity. Significantly large sites like Stourbridge Junction, Selly Oak, Bromsgrove and Rowley Regis tend to bring the estate wide occupancy averages down.
- 2.7 It is interesting to note that sites close to the county boundary appear to be recovering more slowly than those further into the urban area. Also, people have not been quick to return to sites more impacted by reduced rail frequencies.
- 2.8 On street parking is significantly lower than prior to Covid-19 as demonstrated in figure 2.2 below – this is due to a lower number of overall car journeys to stations and available spaces within several Park & Ride sites especially on Monday, Friday and weekend days. There are also more people being dropped off.

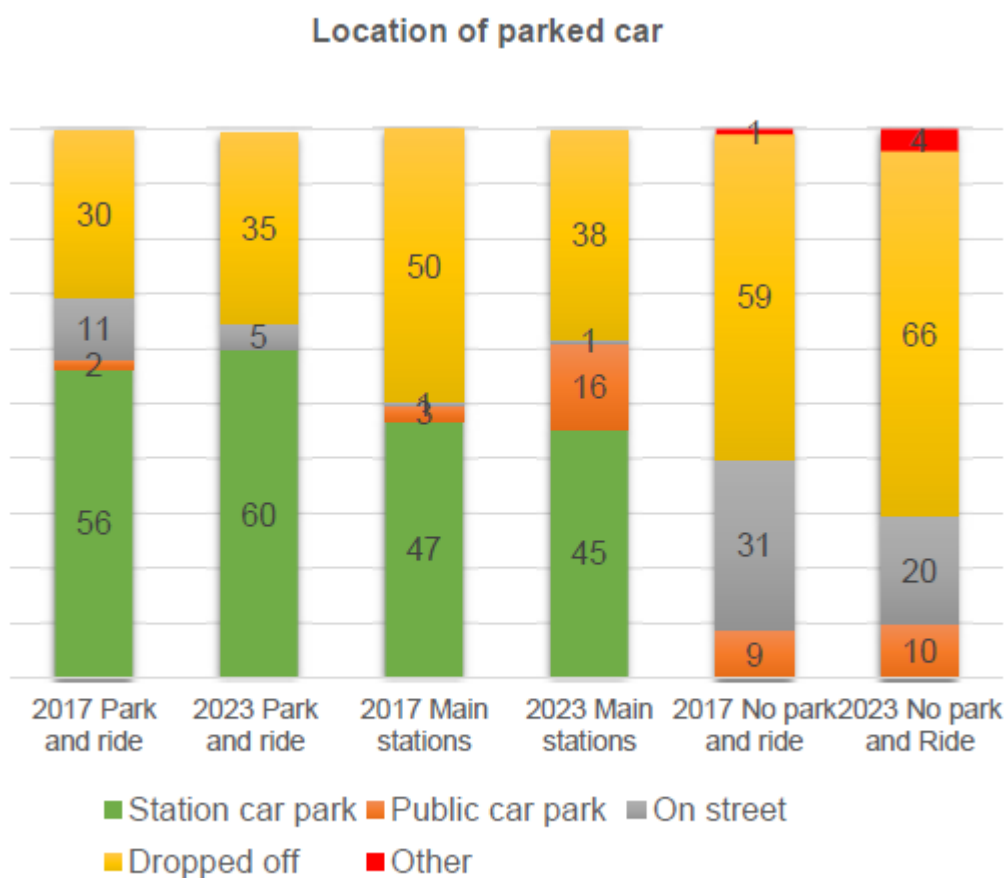


Figure 2.2 – location of parked cars at railway stations in 2017 and 2023

- 2.9 We have had no concerns raised about on street parking since the pandemic, however we will continue to work proactively with local authorities to manage any issues as they occur. Several sites already have on street restrictions nearby from prior to Covid-19. We are having quarterly meetings with local members and Dudley MBC officers about Coseley to review Park & Ride usage and identify if issues might occur as there were specific challenges at this location before the pandemic.

2.10 From December 2022 – June 2023, TfWM undertook a series of mode to station surveys to understand people’s travel behaviours to railway stations and Metro stops post-pandemic. This was compared to similar survey data obtained in 2017. Almost 7,500 people were interviewed.

2.11 The biggest change between pre- and post-pandemic travel habits was the frequency of travel as demonstrated in figure 2.3 below:

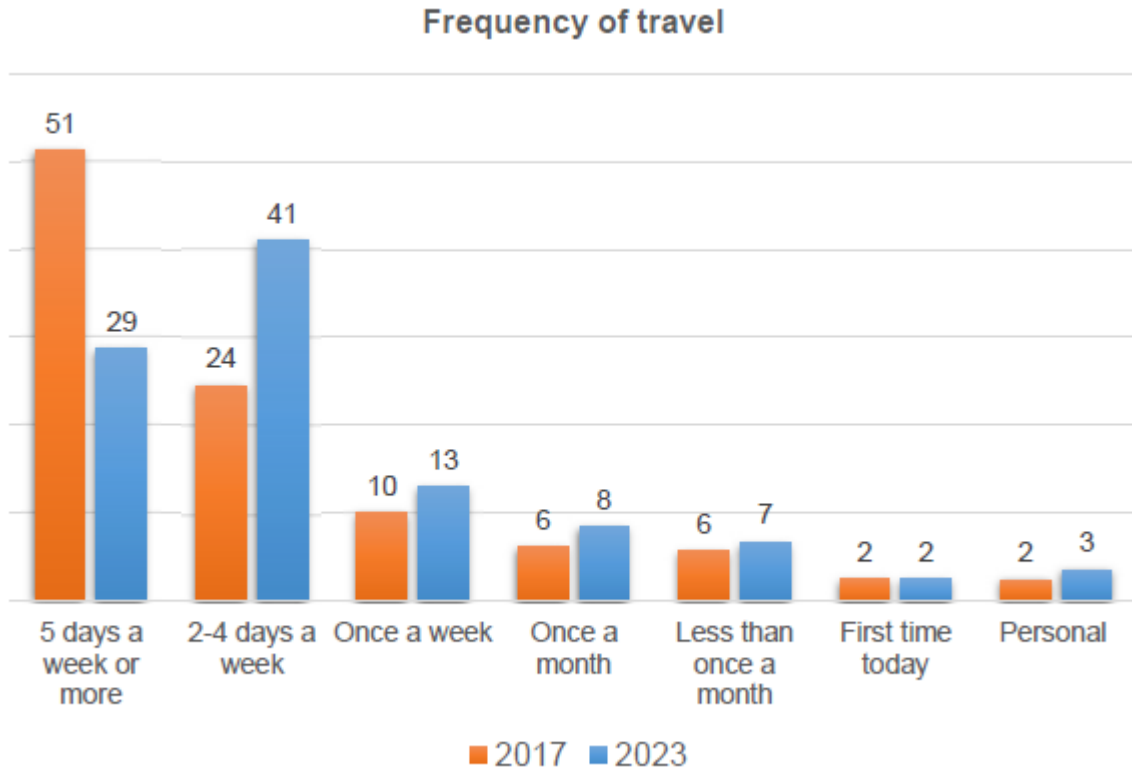


Fig 2.3 – frequency of travel by rail in 2017 and 2023

2.12 In 2017 most people travelled by train five days a week or more, whereas now most people only use rail 2-4 days a week. It is considered that this is due to many rail users being able to work from home for at least part of the week.

2.13 Other useful reflections from the mode to station survey results include:

- The proportions of people travelling for different purposes by train stayed broadly the same before and after the pandemic – the majority for work followed by education. There has been a small increase in leisure users.
- When looking at all stations, most people walk to catch their train (47%), followed by car drivers (24%) and then car passengers (15%). 7% of people catch the bus, 3% use a taxi and 2% cycle. The modal split now is very similar to pre-pandemic.
- Most car drivers park in the station car park. As referenced above, there are fewer people parking on street now, probably due to there being lower numbers of people travelling by rail and therefore a lower demand for parking overall and more availability of parking at the station itself.

- 35% of people drive less than a mile to Park & Ride stations, slightly higher than before the pandemic. 32% of people drive 1-2 miles. The remaining 33% drive from more than 2 miles away – similar to 2017. The average driving distance to stations with a Park & Ride is 2.4 miles.
- Driving habits are very different to main intercity stations compared to other West Midlands stations - 78% of people come from more than 2 miles away and the average driving distance is 5.4 miles.
- At non-Park & Ride stations, 69% of people walk to catch their train compared to 41% when there is a Park & Ride car park.

Park & Ride strategy and development

2.14 In 2019, a Park & Ride strategy was approved by WMCA Board alongside a series of policies and principles which should be applied when developing, operating and funding Park & Ride.

2.15 Now that there is some stability following on from the Covid-19 pandemic, TfWM is reimagining this strategy as a new Integrated Transit Strategy. This will focus on improving access to mass transit services by all modes, including Park & Ride, in alignment with Local Transport Plan 5 and considering significant changes that have occurred over the past six years including:

- Impacts of Covid-19 on usage, travel habits and service levels
- New local, regional and national strategies
- Railway reform – Great British Railways
- Land use requirements and Single Property Estate Strategy
- Local Plans and regeneration/development proposals
- WMCA budget pressures
- Legal and lease reviews relating to Park & Ride
- Opportunities to support net-zero aims
- New and improved sustainable transport options and initiatives

A taskforce is being established to take forward this work during 2024.

2.16 During the pandemic, Park & Ride development activity was largely placed on hold due to a lack of certainty around usage and recovery. The new Integrated Transit Strategy will identify opportunities where future strategic Park & Ride development and sustainable travel measures will help TfWM to meet its objectives for interception and equal access to the mass transit network. However, several schemes are currently in development as outlined in the following paragraphs.

2.17 **Dudley Port Interchange Transformation Scheme** – Dudley Port will be the only interchange between tram and rail on the new Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension. TfWM has been allocated £2.4m from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) to deliver significant improvements to interchange and facilities at the station alongside improved walking, cycling and bus connections from the wider area.

- 2.18 The scheme is being delivered in three phases. Phase One will see a number of enhancements in place ready for when the new Metro stop opens. Phase Two will deliver a holistic network of walking and cycling measures in partnership with Sandwell Council, Dudley Council and Black Country Transport Group. These two phases, funded via the CRSTS allocation, are the stepping stones towards the ultimate transformation of the station.
- 2.19 Phase Three, which is currently unfunded, will deliver a complete redevelopment of the railway station to provide step-free access and cater for future growth. Current budget estimates for Phase 3 are £40m - £55m dependent on scope. TfWM, West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) and Network Rail are awaiting the outcome of an Access for All bid to fund Phase Three (highlighted as the top priority scheme for the region). A decision is expected by Government this financial year. If the bid is not successful, TfWM, WMRE and Network Rail will work together to create a shelf ready scheme for future funding opportunities such as CRSTS 2 or Access for All in Control Period 8.
- 2.20 The Phase One Dudley Port Interchange Transformation measures include:
- Urban realm enhancements including a new community space
 - Vegetation and landscaping
 - Lighting and security improvements
 - Accessibility measures including removing steps from the footbridge
 - A wayfinding and information strategy including multi-modal RTI
 - Improved visibility and identity from A461 and Park Lane East
 - Electric Vehicle charge points
 - Dilapidation works
 - Enhanced walking and cycling routes from local residential areas
- 2.21 The Business Justification Case for the Phase One is in development with the aim for submission in June 2024. We hope to start work on site later this summer. Business Case development for Phase Two will commence in summer 2024 with an aim to start on site during 2025.
- 2.22 Sandwell Council, Dudley Council, Black Country Transport Group, West Midlands Rail, Network Rail and Midland Metro Alliance are partners in the Dudley Port Interchange Transformation Scheme. We are working closely with them to ensure alignment with other projects being delivered in the area including the Active Travel Fund 3 scheme along the A461 and the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Measures project.
- 2.23 **Tile Hill Interchange** – Coventry City Council has been allocated £4m from CRSTS to improve interchange at Tile Hill station. Phase One will focus on improved sustainable access including a new bus interchange, a nicer pedestrian environment, a mobility hub and better walking and cycling access and facilities. Phase Two, which is currently unfunded, will explore options for additional Park & Ride capacity to support increased demand expected from wider housing and regeneration developments in south and west Coventry. Current budget estimates for Phase 2 are c. £2.3m.

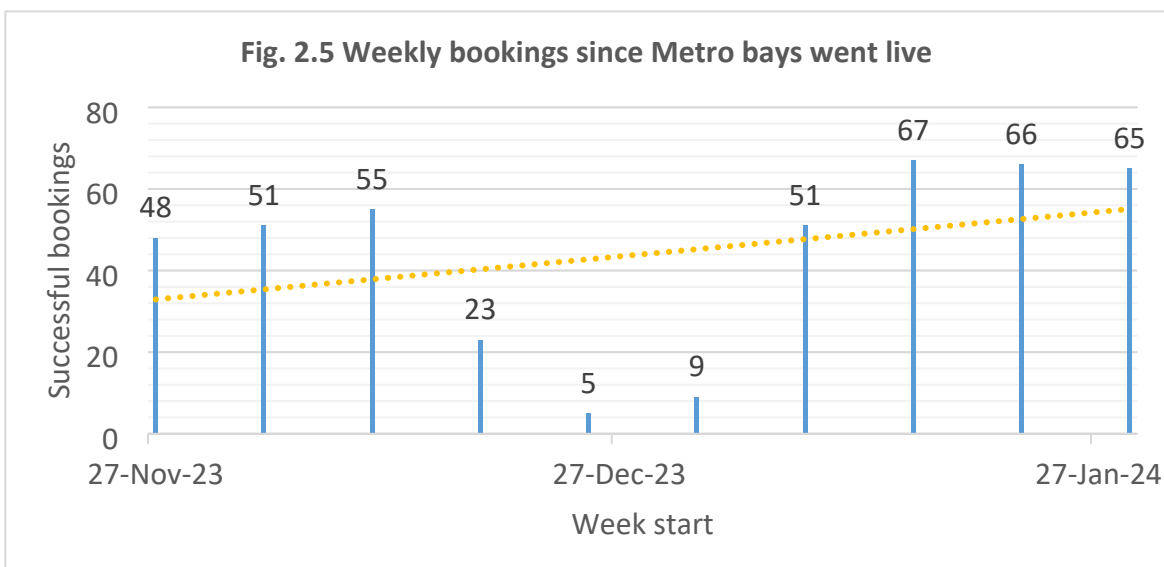
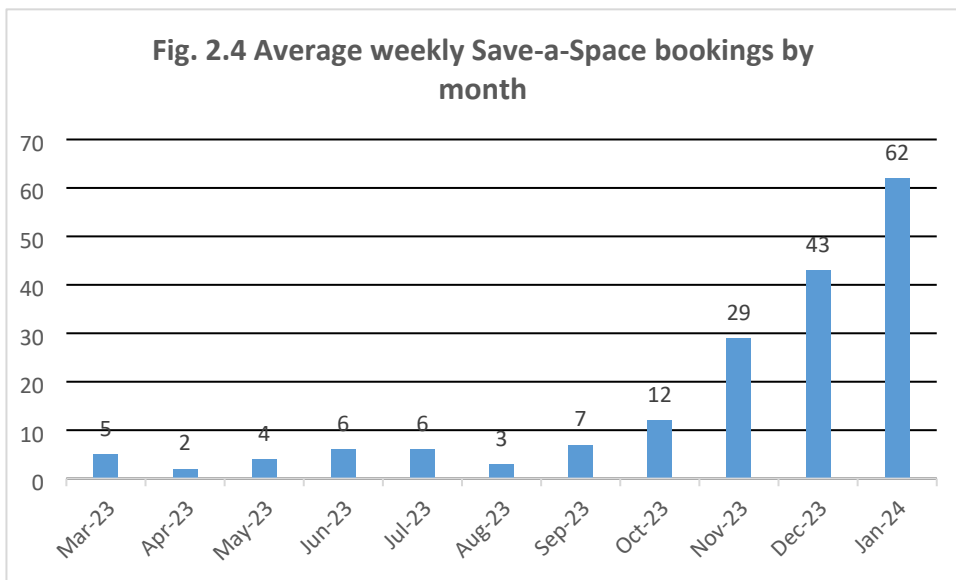
- 2.24 Work has commenced on the Outline Business Case for the scheme which will undertake a detailed options assessments and design work for Phase One alongside higher-level options appraisals for Phase Two. Subject to the outcomes of the options appraisals for Phase Two, Coventry City Council and TfWM will seek funding opportunities to progress this element further e.g. CRSTS 2.
- 2.25 **Whitlocks End** – TfWM is compiling a Strategic Outline Business Case to support improved access to Whitlocks End railway station in partnership with Solihull MBC. As with Tile Hill, this scheme will focus on a two-phase approach to delivery. Phase One will seek to address current challenges at the station including a lack of customer facilities, operational challenges in the car park and poor walking and cycling access from surrounding residential areas. Phase two will be developed in consideration of the Local Plan for significant housing development within the catchment of the station, ensuring that the station and surrounding infrastructure is fit for purpose to cater for the community and encourages positive travel behaviours. There is £500,000 allocated to the project at present, however the completion of business case work will allow future funding bids to be made and conversations to take place with scheme promoters of local development. The current cost estimate for Phase Two is £2.5m – £3m.
- 2.26 **Solihull Park & Ride** – Chiltern Railways currently operates the 444 space charged Park & Ride at Solihull railway station on behalf of TfWM under a lease arrangement. This is due to expire in April 2024 and from 01 May TfWM is taking back the management of the site into its suite of Park & Ride operations.
- 2.27 TfWM will be delivering £160,000 of improvements including resurfacing of the outer area, a new Pay on Exit payment system, upgraded CCTV and general cleaning, repair and maintenance. The car park will offer the same tariffs currently in place with Chiltern Railways. TfWM will be monitoring the usage of the car park over a six-month period to determine if any changes should be made to operation in the future to better support the customer and strategic Park & Ride operations. TfWM is working with Chiltern Railways on a communications campaign to make sure customers are aware of the need to pay in a new way.
- 2.28 Detailed surveys have been undertaken and a full financial model for the car park has been created taking into account capital costs, operational costs and projected revenue to ensure TfWM is not taking on an unmanageable liability. The project is being funded through the Park & Ride budget this financial year and the Network North budget in 2024/25.
- 2.29 **Bromsgrove** – TfWM and WMRE are working jointly to deliver an upgraded payment system for parking at Bromsgrove railway station. The current Pay & Display machines are life expired with regular faults occurring. The new system will be Pay on Arrival giving customers a much smoother payment process by removing the need to pay at a machine and walk back to their car to place a ticket on the dashboard. The new system is Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) based so payment can be made at machines by the ticket office on the way to catch the train or remotely via web, app or phone. This is being funded via the Bromsgrove operational budget.

2.30 **New railway stations** – TfWM is working with WMRE and the project teams delivering Willenhall and Darlaston railway stations to ensure people can access the new facilities effectively. TfWM is acting as client for the new station car parks ensuring they meet the required design and operational standards. TfWM is also supporting the development of the business case for Aldridge railway station with a particular focus on access requirements.

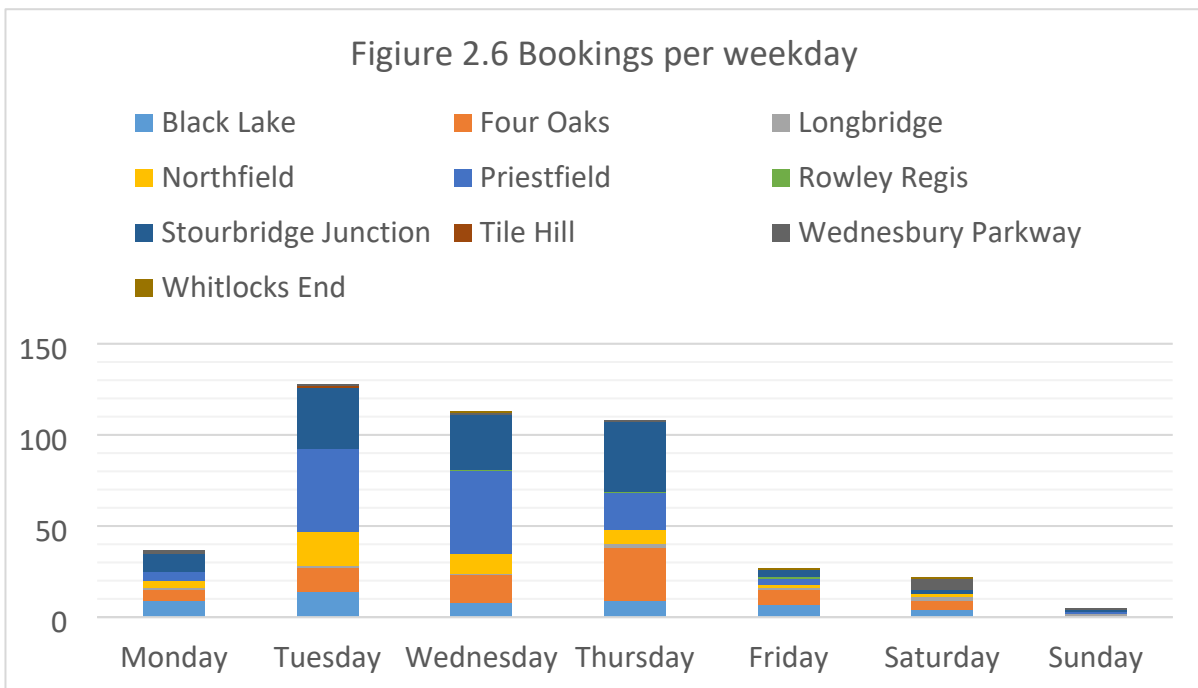
Wider Park & Ride developments and initiatives

2.31 **Save-a-Space** – TfWM’s parking bay reservation system is now in place at seven railway station car parks and three Metro stops. There are between five and 15 bookable spaces per site. Users download the Save-a-Space app and can then reserve a parking space for £3.60 per day.

2.32 The scheme has become increasingly popular since its reinstatement in February 2023. The addition of the Metro sites in November 2023 also led to a big surge in bookings. Figure 2.4 below shows how bookings have risen over the past year (discounting the festive break). Figure 2.5 shows weekly bookings following the introduction of the Metro Save-a-Space bays.



2.33 Figure 2.6 below shows bookings by site and by day since 27 November 2023. This shows that the most popular days are midweek days in line with when car parks and rail services are busiest. The most popular sites are Four Oaks, Priestfield and Stourbridge Junction. The latter is particularly interesting as there is significant capacity available at the car park, so this suggest that people are paying for the convenience of being near to the station. Four Oaks and Priestfield have been fully booked on a number of occasions.



2.34 We are undertaking continuous monitoring of Save-a-Space to determine how to develop the service further, and we are in the process of delivering some marketing campaigns to raise more awareness of the service.

2.35 **Future mobility** - the TfWM Park & Ride team is working closely with the Future Mobility team to explore how Park & Ride can support the development of new transport initiatives and objectives to make the region net-zero by 2041.

2.36 The Park & Ride team is feeding into the delivery of pilot mobility hubs (Local Travel Points) in Halesowen and working with the team to identify opportunities for their delivery within railway station car parks to support and encourage sustainable travel. This includes looking at options as part of the ongoing projects at Dudley Port, Whitlocks End, Tile Hill and Aldridge.

2.37 In 2022 TfWM created a Park & Ride Electric Vehicle Strategy which built upon the regional Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV) Strategy to identify how the Park & Ride estate can support the uptake and ownership of low and zero emissions vehicles. This work delivered a site-by-site assessment of how many public Electric Vehicle Charge Points should be provided by 2030 and 2040 to support use by public transport users, local residents and passing traffic based on a number of factors.

2.38 The ULEV strategy has been recently updated and recommends that TfWM should deliver its Park & Ride EV strategy with standard, fast and rapid charge points to serve different use cases. We will be seeking to refresh the targets in the Park & Ride EV strategy to mirror changes to the ULEV strategy. We are working with the Transport Innovation Team and regional partners to deliver charging infrastructure funded via the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and DfT's LEVI Capital Fund to provide a holistic and strategic network of publicly available charge points across the region including within the Park & Ride estate.

Operational and financial considerations

Budget challenges

2.39 Park & Ride currently costs c. £3m per annum to operate, up £600k (25%) since 2017/28. Costs have increased significantly in particular over the last two years due to the cost-of-living crisis and higher energy costs - at a time when WMCA budgets are increasingly constrained. Park & Ride operations currently form the largest area of non-discretionary spend within TfWM budgets while only benefitting a very small proportion of the population who are generally more affluent.

2.40 The March 2019 WMCA Board Policies and Principles report confirmed:

“Unless there are compelling wider benefits or commensurate savings the proportion of the WMCA Transport Levy budget allocated to the operation of park and ride will not be increased.”

“Park & Ride assets owned or operated by WMCA will be supported by commercial strategies which seek to:

- *Reduce the cost of Park & Ride;*
- *Raise revenue to cover the cost of Park & Ride, including by means of charging;*
- *Enable services supported by WMCA Transport Levy to be as financially self-sustaining as possible.”*

AND

“Any proposals for new or expanded park and ride schemes would generally be expected to be financially self-sustaining beyond the initial construction costs.”

2.41 Direction was given to begin exploring the impacts and opportunities of introducing charging and other commercial options at Park & Ride to reduce the budgetary pressures of the service while also seeking to encourage more positive user behaviours.

2.42 This work was placed on hold during Covid-19, however, now there is more stability in Park & Ride usage alongside increased WMCA budget pressures, TfWM has a responsibility to take an evidence-led approach to exploring how Park & Ride budgetary impacts can be managed more effectively to reduce the amount of levy required to fund this area of service.

Park & Ride security

- 2.43 Crime across the West Midlands transport network has reduced by 9.7% this year compared to 2022/23. There have been no significant issues of crime within Park & Ride car parks for more than a year following the arrest of two car thieves following a well-documented spate of Ford Fiesta thefts across the Black Country. CCTV footage from Park & Ride was instrumental in the conviction of the perpetrators.
- 2.44 TfWM Park & Ride sites are delivered to Park Mark standards with high levels of CCTV coverage, lighting and help points.
- 2.45 TfWM is currently undertaking a replacement of existing CCTV cameras at various Park & Ride locations. These cameras are state of the art in terms of the definition of the images captured. We are also rationalising some cameras using the latest camera technology that gives a complete 360-degree view meaning some cameras can be removed without being replaced whilst still giving excellent coverage of the car parks.

3. Strategic Aims and Objectives

3.1 This report aligns with the following local, regional and national strategies:

- Park & Ride Strategy, Policies and Principles (2019)
- West Midlands LTP5 – reimagining public transport
- #WM2041
- DfT Gear Change Strategy
- DfT Transport Decarbonisation Plan

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The latest patronage data at P&R sites indicates a steady recovery since its dramatic reduction due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The data outlined in section 2.3 and 2.5 demonstrates the continued positive usage of current P&R sites, with some car park locations being oversubscribed. In addition, the Save-a-space chargeable initiative booking numbers are also indicating an uprise in demand over the 2023-24 period.
- 4.2 TfWM currently charge at 3 sites: Sutton Coldfield, Bromsgrove, and Longbridge. In addition, from 1st May 2024, TfWM is taking back the management of Solihull Park & Ride into its suite of Park & Ride operations. The revenues generated at these sites are essential contributions to the continued improvements in the local public transport network.
- 4.3 This report is not asking for a financial decision but is requesting endorsement into the continued commitment into developing the strategy and operations at P&R sites. Members are requested to endorse the approach which not only aims to improve the Park & Ride service but will also allow for further exploration into commercialisation possibilities and revenue generation opportunities with the aim to support towards tackling the continued financial challenges across TfWM. This investment is essential to continue to promote and increase patronage across the local public transport network as part of the wider future transport strategy.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal issues arising directly from the contents of this report. Legal advice will be sought on any specific issues that arise in the usual way.

6. Single Assurance Framework Implications

- 6.1 The Dudley Port Programme Business Case was approved via the Single Assurance Framework in June 2023. The Business Justification Case is being created in line with the Strategic Assurance Framework Requirements with a proposed submission date of early summer 2024 for Phase One and late 2024/early 2025 for Phase Two.
- 6.2 The Whitlocks End Strategic Outline Case will be submitted into the Strategic Assurance Framework in spring 2024.

7. Equalities Implications

- 7.1 The reflections in section 2.14 are not analysed against any protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and it is therefore not possible to say whether there would be any positive, negative or neutral equalities implications. With the identified 3-phase developments summarised, it is recommended that a health and equity impact assessment is carried out as it is likely that there will be some positive equalities impacts as each phased is delivered. The key findings of the HEIA should be summarised and added to this section and to similar or related reports and updates, with the HEIA added as an appendix for reference.

8. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 8.1 Park & Ride and the Integrated Transit Strategy play a key role in delivering Connected Communities by providing physical connectivity through the facilitation of equal and easy access to the mass transit network. This allows people to connect to housing, education, employment, and wider services while stimulating transit orientated development. It helps give businesses access to a wide labour pool and provides improved urban environments and land use for local communities. It encourages use of sustainable transport for some or all of a journey supporting aims to reduce carbon and improve air quality.

9. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 9.1 This report is relevant to the West Midlands Combined Authority area.

10. Other Implications

- 10.1 None applicable.

11. Schedule of Background Papers

- 11.1 Park & Ride Strategy 2019