



Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 4 November 2024 at 11.00 am

Minutes

Present In Person

Councillor Timothy Huxtable (Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Samantha Gethen (Vice-Chair)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Keith Archer	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Liz Clements	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Carol Hyatt	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Leslie Kaye	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mary Locke	Birmingham City Council
Councillor John McNicholas	Coventry City Council
Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council

Present Virtually

Councillor Harbinder Singh	Wolverhampton City Council
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In Attendance

Pete Bond	Director of Integrated Transport Services
Mark Corbin	Director of Network Resilience
Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Jon Hayes	Head of Bus
Jenni MacKenzie	Head of the Transport Portfolio
Catherine Moore	Ring and Ride Transformation Lead
Lyndsey Roberts	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Jat Sekhon	Lead Solicitor
Anne Shaw	Director for Transport for West Midlands
Kate Taylor	Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning
Janna Simpson	Governance Services Officer

**Item Title
No.**

109. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Zaker Choudhry (Birmingham City Council), Councillor Rinkal Shergill (Birmingham City Council), Councillor Amo Hussain (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council), and Councillor David Wilkes (Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council).

110. Inquorate Meeting

The Chair reported that the meeting was inquorate and therefore the decisions taken at the meeting would be referred to the next meeting of the committee 13 January 2025 for formal adoption.

111. Chair's Remarks

In relation to veteran's bus passes, the Chair confirmed that it was addressed during the recent question and answer session with the Mayor. Councillor John McNicholas confirmed that there was an opportunity to explore this further should the West Midlands move to a franchised bus model.

The Chair also addressed the use of the word "accident" at the last committee meeting and encouraged members to avoid using the word when referring to road traffic collisions and expressed the importance of noting them as collisions.

112. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 September and 21 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

113. Matters Arising

(a) Mayoral Q&A Minutes - 21 October 2024 (minute no. 10 refers)

It was confirmed that an update on active travel and road safety commissioner role profile and job description would be shared with members once finalised, and would include responsibility regarding governance.

114. WMCA Summary Board Report

The WMCA Summary Board Report was presented by the Director for Transport for West Midlands. She confirmed that six reports were due to be presented to the WMCA Board on either 15 November or 13 December.

The Bus Depot Strategy aimed to remove barriers for bus operators and support competition as fleets transitioned to zero emissions. The update on Bus Network Proposals discussed negotiations to maintain the bus network from January 2025. The Provision of Ring and Ride Services introduced a new operating model for demand-responsive transport from April 2025. The Road Safety Action Plan aimed to reduce road fatalities and serious injuries by 50% by 2030. The Best Value Fare Capping for Buses considered a pilot for fare capping using contactless payments. Lastly, the Metro extension requested funding for Phase 2 of the Wednesbury Brierley Hill Metro Extension.

In response to a query from Councillor John McNicholas, the Director for Transport for West Midlands confirmed that the reports would be shared as soon as possible with the committee. The Chair expressed that, in the future, the aim was for the committee workflows to feed into WMCA Board more to allow the committee to review reports before they go to the WMCA Board.

The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands provided an update on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro extension as a result of questioning from councillors. She included information and funding for both phases 2a and 2b.

Councillor Liz Clements enquired about the scale of borrowing and the timescales for individual business cases for the Bus Depot Strategy. The Director of Integrated Transport Services provided clarity around the borrowing scale and timescales, and confirmed that each depot's self-financing status would be determined on a case-by-case basis. He also confirmed that further information would be provided at a member briefing. Updates on the Bus Network Proposals and the Road Safety Strategy, including the expansion of average speed strategies, were also discussed. Councillor Robert Alden emphasised the need for a robust timeline and programme for the depot strategy and all other board report items to ensure the opportunity for effective scrutiny.

Recommended:

- (1) The observations and comments received on the reports summarised be noted.

115. Financial Position Update 2024/25

Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning gave a verbal update on the Financial Position for 2024/25, covering the year-to-date revenue position, performance, operational variance, and concessional performance information. The quarter one forecast highlights were shared, along with updates on programme costs and changes within them. She also provided updates on local authorities and CRSTS programmes and confirmed revenue performance was holding well, and variances were explainable. It was confirmed that the Financial Monitoring report would be shared with members following publication.

Councillor Liz Clements stressed the importance of members receiving papers for effective scrutiny to be undertaken. A discussion was held around ensuring that the committee received papers in a timely manner to ensure that effective scrutiny could be undertaken. This was noted by both officers and the Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning confirmed that future reports could be specifically provided for the committee.

In response to Councillor Liz Clements, further information on concessionary performance and spend was provided. Councillor Liz Clements also queried whether concessionary travel could be promoted more, which was noted by the Chair and TfWM officers. The Director of Integrated Transport Services confirmed that the Bus Services Improvement Plan included a communications plan to promote concessionary and other travel within the region.

The Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning confirmed that budget allocation work was ongoing, and updates would be provided as soon as possible.

An update on the East Birmingham Metro Extension was provided, the Director for TfWM noted ongoing discussions with the DfT, Network Rail, and Birmingham City Council regarding delivery. She confirmed the business case has been refreshed, but no dates could be given yet.

It was confirmed that the Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning would provide a briefing note on the recent budget statement.

Recommended:

- (1) The update be noted.

116. Ring & Ride / Demand Responsive Transport Fare Change Proposal

The Ring & Ride / Demand Responsive Transport Fare Change Proposal report was presented by the Head of Bus. The report requested comments on a fare revision for the West Midlands Ring and Ride and On-Demand service from 1 January 2025, to be taken to the WMCA Board on 15 November. It highlighted that fares would be reviewed annually and communicated to passengers. He reported that the proposed fare increase aligned with inflationary changes and confirmed that the service was currently delivered with 50% less funding than a decade ago. The Director of Integrated Transport Services added that the increase was needed to ensure the continuation of the existing service without the need to withdraw services.

In response to comments regarding the role of the committee when receiving reports, the Governance & Scrutiny Manager clarified that the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee was not a decision-making board. He confirmed that its role was to input views and comments for the WMCA Board to consider when making a decision. The Chair of the committee added that he attended the board to ensure the committees comments were considered before decisions were made.

Councillor Mary Locke suggested collaboration and information sharing with other combined authorities in relation to best practise. Councillor Leslie Kaye noted that fare collection only amounted to 2.5% of the budget and queried whether the cost of collection might outweigh the actual revenue. He suggested considering alternative service providers like Uber. The Head of Bus confirmed that other operating models were being explored and that they would be shared with the committee. The Director of Integrated Transport Services added that the target operating model would be presented to committee for scrutiny at a later date. Councillor Liz Clements noted the significant fare increase of 53% but acknowledged it was reasonable considering inflation.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar asked if Ring and Ride and On-Demand Transport could be separated, with prices raised for one to compensate the other. The Head of Bus confirmed the service was oversubscribed, making it unlikely to be discontinued. He stated that an impact assessment would be updated and could be shared with the committee. Councillor Liz Clements asked for lessons learned from the pilot and usage to be provided to the appropriate MEG, which the Head of Bus noted.

Following a discussion regarding additional information required, the Director of Integrated Transport Services also confirmed that the requested information would be shared with the committee and the board report would be deferred.

Recommended:

- (1) The WMCA Board defer its decision that was to be taken at its meeting on 15 November, on the Ring & Ride fare changes, to enable the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee to review the additional information requested and to assess the impact of any fare change.
- (2) The observations and comments of the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the proposed Ring & Ride fare changes from 1st January 2025, be considered by Transport for West Midlands.

117. Strategic Operations Dashboard Report

The Director of Network Resilience presented the Strategic Operations Dashboard Report. He shared that it was developed to provide insight into metrics measuring progress against TfWM business planning objectives. He stated the metrics aligned with the organisation's strategic goals and offered awareness of key performance indicators and the dashboard aggregated data from sources such as TfWM, the Department for Transport, and West Midlands Police, compiling figures into quarterly segments. Specific metrics included usage, affordability, reliability, and safety. The Chair confirmed that information specific to MEGs could be provided to them on request to the Director of Network Resilience.

In response to a question from Councillor Ian Ward regarding the increase in fatal and serious casualties for car occupants in Birmingham and Walsall and the reported crime on public transport, the Director of Network Resilience confirmed that the increase was within the average fluctuation for reported crime on the network. He praised the work of public transport safety officers and confirmed the baseline for fatal and serious casualties and noted that Walsall and Birmingham figures, while concerning, were in line with the regional picture. The Director of Network Resilience stated he would bring a report further explaining the Walsall and Birmingham figures to the relevant MEG.

There was a discussion on park and ride facilities. Councillors and officers discussed how usage had increased in some locations, but many car parks remained underutilised. The need for detailed reports on revenue and capital strategy for park and ride facilities was emphasised and it was confirmed that a report on Park & Ride sites would be added to the work programme.

The impact of small sample sizes on statistics for killed and seriously injured was also discussed, with a recommendation to present actual numbers alongside percentages for better clarity. Specific issues with car parks, such as Stourbridge, were noted, including their capacity and user experience challenges.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar queried how the intelligence within the report would be used to which the Director for Transport for West Midlands confirmed that the committee would use the intelligence to raise areas for scrutiny and subsequent improvement.

Councillor Liz Clements welcomed the report and noted the difference between e-scooters and e-bikes, suggesting more exploration to be conducted via a MEG. She also noted the increase in cycles using parking spaces and the need for increased and secure storage and asked for graphics to be included in the report.

In response to queries from councillors, the Director of Integrated Transport Services confirmed a monitoring and evaluation update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan would be provided to members during the afternoon's briefing.

Recommended:

- (1) The observations and comments on the dashboard be considered by Transport for West Midlands.
- (2) The current version of the Strategic Operations Dashboard be noted.

118. Transport Capital Delivery Programmes

The Head of the Transport Portfolio presented the Transport Capital Delivery Programmes and provided an update on the status and recent progress across the TfWM and Local Authority portfolios. The update highlighted the inclusion of all City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and Active Travel Fund (ATF) schemes, as well as local authority promoted schemes funded by WMCA resources. She also made reference to the roadmap for delivery and shared plans to broaden it with local authorities to provide a more regional view in the next quarter. The committee was informed that CRSTS 1 data remained largely the same, with only minor updates to TfWM status, as the most recent data available was from the quarter 1 2024 reporting submission. She confirmed the work aligned with preparations for increasing the portfolio's scope with future CRSTS programmes and the integrated settlement due in April 2025.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar praised the progress of the report. Councillor Leslie Kaye asked for more granularity of information regarding the performance of TfWM projects that had red RAG ratings. This was noted by the Head of the Transport Portfolio, who confirmed that these were moving into amber, and the next report would reflect that. The Director for Transport for West Midlands highlighted the benefits and advantages of Sprint, the metro schemes, and the actions taken to solve the transport challenges of the region. Councillor Carol Hyatt asked for a further breakdown of costs for figures spent. This was noted by the Head of the Transport Portfolio, who confirmed that the next iteration of the report would improve the presentation of the figures.

The delivery roadmap was discussed. The Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands highlighted the milestones that indicated the project's current stage, and it was noted that financial information should be read alongside the delivery roadmap to understand the actual delivery status and spending levels. It was also acknowledged that the time lag in cost reimbursements to authorities did not always reflect the delivery stage. Councillor Carol Hyatt and Councillor Liz Clements raised concerns about the reliability of deadlines, particularly for the Camp Hill line stations, and requested updates on potential risks to meeting deadlines. It was agreed that the delivery roadmap would be included in the ongoing scrutiny pack, with more detailed updates provided through the MEGs.

Recommended:

- (1) The update of key transport capital programmes and how they are progressing across the delivery portfolio be noted.
- (2) Further progress to develop and mature the monitoring and management of transport capital delivery programmes to support the creation of a single view of the portfolio be noted.
- (3) The current version of the Dashboard and Roadmap for transport capital delivery programmes be noted.

119. Member Engagement Groups - Proposed Revisions for 2025/26 Municipal Year

This item was deferred until January 2025 to allow time for adequate discussion.

120. Member Engagement Group Progress Report

The Member Engagement Group Progress Report was presented. The report provided a summary from each Scrutiny Champion regarding their recent Member Engagement Group meetings.

Recommended:

- (1) The report received from each Scrutiny Lead in respect of their recent Member Engagement Group be noted.

(2) Specific recommendations made by the Member Engagement Groups to the committee be agreed, specifically:

(a) that steps be taken to look at ways of speeding up the process for active travel projects to progress at local authority level, including streamlining the process for funding to be made available to local authorities.

(b) a members' knowledge briefing session be delivered to provide training on Safe System. That would provide an understanding on what Safe System is and how it is fed into the Regional Road Safety Action Plan.

(c) an area on the TfWM website be created where public recordings of road safety incidents could be uploaded/submitted.

121. Work Programme

The Work Programme was presented by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer. It was confirmed that new items as discussed during the meeting would be added to the work programme and the WMCA Board Forward Plan was noted for information.

122. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 12 December 2024 at 10:00am (Mayoral Q&A - Draft Proposed Budget)

Monday 13 January 2025 at 11:00am (Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee).

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm.