

VLRRP Highlight Report

Project Summary Information			
Project Name	VLR (Very Light Rail) Regional Programme (VLRRP)		
SRO	Anne Shaw	Programme	CRSTS
VLRRP Programme Director	Nicola Small (Deputy SRO)	Date	5 th December 2024
Funding Allocated:			
CVLR		£40.5m	
VLRNIC		£12m	
TfWM Mass Transit Corridor Studies		£5m	
Total		£57.5m	
Brief Description (Project scope and deliverables)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) scheme promoted by Coventry City Council (CCC) (£40.5m) Dudley Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC) promoted by the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation (BCIMO) and Dudley Council (£12m) Mass Transit Options Appraisal study which is to include an assessment of urban VLR promoted by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) (£5m) <p>The three schemes within the business case complement each other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CVLR is the pilot scheme, with Coventry leading the development of the VLR product (CVLR Vehicle and CVLR Track) and facilitating the construction of the first in-highway section of CVLR track as the final demonstration of the proof of concept for the system. 			

- VLRNIC is supporting the CVLR R&D (Research & Development) programme by providing test facilities for the system before the installation in a live highway.
- TfWM are in the early stages of exploring the use of CVLR technology (as well as other mass transit options) for corridors in the West Midlands

VLRRP Update

Update from CCC on CVLR Programme

- Coventry City Council are currently preparing to do an on road test in Coventry City Centre in early 2025. The following provides a work stream update in preparing for the on road test.
- Vehicle: The CVLR vehicle is undergoing a period of engineering design validation and testing at a component and whole vehicle level. This testing will be complete by March 2025. Final modifications to align to the case for safety will be completed prior to demonstrations in May 2025. Case for safety documentation is being compiled to present to the independent competent person prior to demonstrations.
- Track: Slabs to be used in the on road test have been ordered. Development of the Uni-Track (slab that can accommodate standard weight trams) has started and being fully scoped to determine performance requirements. Development of the Ultra-Thin slab (to be used where there is insufficient space in the highway to accommodate 300mm such as bridge decks) is progressing well with the concept proven as feasible.
- Route: Long lead time items (rail, slabs etc.) have been ordered. Detailed design of alignment is complete with operational detail being defined. Construction contractor contract is in process award is anticipated early in the new year. The on road is 220 meters, and will be segregated from pedestrians and vehicles.
- Operator: Concept of operations document has been compiled and procurement of an operator for the on road test will begin in early 2025. Current operator input is being provided by PMOL.
- Communications and commercialisation: CVLR continue to represent the project at industry events. The project continues to generate significant interest from all aspects from potential customers, funders and suppliers.

Update from BCIMO on VLRNIC Programme

- DMBC, BCIMO and WMG have developed Funding, Finance and Governance working groups to progress long term sustainable business plans. Update provided to WMCA for Dec Board meeting. Plan to have a comprehensive business plan in place by March 2025 and new business activities 'live in October 2025.
- BCIMO/ WMG are exploring technical developments required to support future of VLR and Light Rail
- The current Clean Futures programme continues to be a success, exceeding many of the KPIs in its first year – the next cohort of SMEs have been appointed and it is hoped that the project will be extended to a third year.
- BCIMO/ WMG/ DMBC are optioneering future capital deliverables required to support the business plan and Light Rail/VLR industry – these will be documented in the Full Business Case – timing for completion of this is part of the Funding working group activities.
- Industry wide events continue to be held on a regular basis promoting the VLRNIC and the CVLR project.
- CVLR vehicle continues to be located in the workshop at VLRNIC whilst undergoing component testing

Update from TfWM on Mass Transit Corridor Studies

East Birmingham North Solihull (EBNS) Corridor

- Strategic Outline Business Case (SOC) demonstrating the need for mass rapid transit intervention along the EBNS corridor was approved by WMCA's Single Assurance Framework (SAF) on the 20th September 2024.
- The next stage of work will now commence following approval of the SOC subject to procurement of consultants to further explore demand and define a single mode to develop further towards an OBC.

Birmingham to Longbridge (via Smithfield and Edgbaston Cricket Ground) Corridor

- A site visit was held in June and an initial workshop held with stakeholders to review the situational assessment work being progressed was held with a further workshop planned later in July.

- Draft Situational Assessment, Corridor Objectives and Appraisal Framework have been submitted for review and a workshop was carried out during September 2024 with key stakeholders to discuss these further in detail.
- A workshop was held in November with key stakeholders to develop the concept designs for the corridor, with a follow-up meeting being planned during December.
- Study anticipated to be completed and submission to WMCA's SAF early 2025.

Walsall to Stourbridge Corridor

- A workshop was held during October with key stakeholders to help with the development of the Situational Assessment, which has since been issued in draft.
- A further workshop was held in November to develop the corridor objectives.
- Study anticipated to be completed April 2025.

Coventry Rail Station to Investment Zone Corridor

- Additional funding has been identified to carry out feasibility study on another corridor in Coventry.
- The corridor to the Investment Zone has been selected.
- A brief was agreed by TfWM and Coventry City Council and the procurement of suitable consultants is underway.

VLR Track form Research and Testing for Light Rail Vehicles

- Dialogue between TfWM and Coventry City Council has been undertaken to establish the scope and required outputs from study. The study scope has been developed around a series of work packages, which includes; Slab material/ Structural performance (WP1); Stray current (WP2); Bedding material and rail (WP3); Track stability and alignment (WP4).
- TfWM's Client Representative Team for Metro Operations continue providing support to this activity.
- We are anticipating the commencement of this commission in early 2025 subject to presenting and obtaining approval to commence from TfWM's governance and successful procurement.