

Bus Franchising Consultation Plan

Consultation Objectives

1. Conduct a legally compliant consultation, compliant with industry best practice standards.
2. Increase residents' understanding of bus franchising, providing multiple sources of information in different formats that support respondents in shaping their opinion.
3. Receive 2000 responses to our consultation from a demographics that reflect the residents across the West Midlands.
4. Work with residents from marginalised demographics as peer-to-peer researchers. Receive 500 responses to the consultation through the community research network.

Audience

As well as the public, there are a number of statutory consultees that we must consult, and other stakeholder groups identified.

Statutory consultees	Non-statutory consultees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current bus operators in the WMCA and representatives of their employees • Current coach and community bus operators • Organisations representing local users, such as Transport Focus • Constituent local authorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority • Neighbouring local authorities who may be affected by any proposed scheme • The traffic commissioner • The chief police officer • The Competition and Markets Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and Crime Commissioner • Internal WMCA / TfWM staff • West Midlands' local government bodies • Local Councillors (including scrutiny) • MPs and other parliamentarians • Business groups • Large retail organisations • Other large businesses • Large public sector employers • Bus industry groups • Other transport operators • Other industry bodies • National Highways and road user groups • Environmental groups • Universities, schools and colleges • Private developers • Academics and think tanks • Parish councils • Representatives of older and disabled people • Representatives of young people • Representatives of other persons with protected characteristics

Response Mechanisms

Consultees will be able to respond to the consultation by:

- by completing an online response form -we will have a short and long survey that people can respond to.
- by taking part in a community research session and completing a response form in person.
- by posting a hard copy of the response form to our freepost address
- by sending an email to a dedicated email address

Promotion

An extensive marketing campaign, utilising out of home, print and digital tactics, will raise awareness of the consultation and direct people towards the consultation and details about it.

The marketing campaign will mainly be targeted at the general public.

Marketing tactic	Target audience
Out of home marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billboards • Digital screens • Posters at bus stations • Vinyls and Filler Ads at bus stops • Press ads 	All residents Any other interested parties
Digital marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid social media • Paid search 	All residents Any other interested parties
Animation explainer videos	All residents Any other interested parties
Comms toolkit	Effected Local Authorities Local businesses and organisations Any other interested parties
Email signatures on WMCA staff emails	Internal WMCA / TfWM staff Any other interested parties

Engagement

Direct engagement will help us target audiences that may be missed, or not specifically targeted, by the marketing campaign as well as amplifying the message to those targeted by the marketing campaign.

Engagement tactic	Target audience
Public online Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaire on Commonplace 	All residents
Peer to Peer Researchers	Groups from seldom heard voices across the West Midlands
School and College Toolkits	16-19 year olds
Public Events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person and online across the West Midlands 	All residents
Physical Consultation Copies in public spaces	Digitally excluded citizens
On Street Surveys	Digitally excluded citizens Bus passengers
Statutory Consultee Online Surveys Snap survey for specific consultees	Bus operators
Statutory Consultee Briefings	All statutory consultees
Statutory Consultee Letters	All statutory consultees

Peer to Peer Community Research

Peer researchers are members of communities who are trained to conduct research and gather feedback. This is a useful tool to reach seldom-heard voices and hear views from people with less trust in institutions.

We will work with pre-existing networks of community researchers within the WMCA and further develop this network to specifically include people of colour, disabled people, and people with English and an additional language.

Researchers will receive training delivered by WMCA to gather verbally recorded, online, or written answers to the questions in the response form. Where the response form is not the best option for a respondent, they will be encouraged by the researcher to submit a written or verbal response. All responses from community researchers will be recorded, response forms will be coded as per forms received through other means; and less traditional responses, written responses or recordings of responses will be recorded as per letters or emails.

To support researchers, we will commission additional resources such as explanatory videos and fact sheets. These can be translated into additional languages on a case by case basis.

Focus Groups

Given the complexity of the subject that is being consulted upon, we will work with members of the community research network alongside an external provider to deliver deliberative research.

The aim of this is to explore the consultation concepts with focus groups to draw out their ‘intelligent considerations’ of the consultation questions. The focus groups will be delivered during the formal consultation period, with public transport users, non-users, residents and local businesses of the West Midlands.

The results can be extrapolated to provide an analysis of the views of the wider West Midlands population with a higher degree of certainty, and provide more robust evidence for analysis as part of the formal consultation. This is a particularly useful technique to get the views of the public on issues which are either complicated or which for various reasons may not illicit a high level of response in the consultation.

On Street Surveys

As per the guidance for consulting on bus franchising, we will ensure that bus passengers have access to consultation by conducting on street surveys at bus stations and major stops around the West Midlands.

Respondents will be asked to complete the short questionnaire on site, but given access to the longer questionnaire to complete if they would like to in their own time. This could be via QR code to access Commonplace; a printed copy to take home; or information about where to pick up a printed copy.

Events

Online

We will host online webinars for the public which people must sign up in advance to in order to attend. This is for the safety of our staff and members of the public. Residents can sign up via Eventbrite and this link will be made clearly available on our websites and Commonplace.

The aim of these events are for the public to learn more about franchising, and to ask questions in a Q&A with members of the project team, before they submit a response.

A recording of these sessions will be made available to people who cannot attend.

Live

We will host at least 7 events, one in each local authority area. These events will be to promote the consultation and provide access to consultation materials.

These events will be in areas of high footfall, for example in vacant shops in major shopping centres. They will include engaging activities such as bus themed arts and crafts.

We will not be recording specific responses at this event, although an overview will be logged. The only exception to these as outlined above is if a written response is handed to staff or if a resident has significant access needs and recording a response at an event is the best available option.

Access and Inclusion

We are committed to making the consultation as accessible as possible. The need to comply with tightly-drawn and often highly technical requirements presents significant challenges when seeking to highlight to the public why the consultation matters.

We will seek to ensure that the meaning of what we are communicating is clear, and that the documents are as approachable as we can make it and not unnecessarily ‘corporate’ and off-putting.

Printed versions of all key documents will be made available in public buildings across the West Midlands. Requests for versions in additional formats and alternative languages will be considered in accordance with TfWM’s working practices on inclusive communication.

How do we want to work with members?

1. Respond to the consultation
 - a. You will receive an email to the consultation when it goes live.

2. To help reach as many voices as possible across the West Midlands, we want to work closely with members.
 - a. Shortly before consultation launches, all members will have access to a toolkit of images, suggested social media or newsletter text and other important information for your residents.
 - b. We will update you on planned events and any other relevant updates in good time.