



West Midlands
Combined Authority

WMCA Board

Date	9 November 2018
Report title	Strategic Vision for Bus
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Report has been considered by	Strategic Transport Operators Group - 3 September 2019 WMCA Programme Board - 25 October 2018

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Strategic Vision for Bus (Appendix 1).

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) have developed a Vision for Bus in order to clearly articulate how we will create a world leading bus network as part of an integrated transport system.
- 1.2 The vision for forms part of a wider, emerging, proposal for delivering an integrated transport system, which is currently in development and will be shared with the Board in early 2019.

2. Background

- 2.1 Transport is fundamental to economic development and growth and enables the region to deliver the ambitions in the Strategic Economic Plan.
- 2.2 Supporting the Strategic Economic Plan is the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan, “Movement for Growth”, which sets out a vision and the high level objectives of the public transport network. Within Movement for Growth, bus is key to ensuring these strategic objectives are met but places limited emphasis on defining a longer term strategy for bus in the West Midlands.
- 2.3 At the request of WMCA Leaders, TfWM have been working to define a strategic Vision for Bus in the West Midlands to develop a clear view of what the region requires from its bus network.

The importance of Bus travel

- 2.4 The bus carries 4 out of every 5 public transport trips in the region. The bus remains the most adaptable and flexible public transport mode, but is affected by falling patronage, a change in traditional travel patterns and increasing congestion.
- 2.5 Allowing convenient travel across the region by public transport that is affordable, accessible for all and helps to reduce congestion on our roads and helps us meet our wider social and economic objectives.
- 2.6 The development of a strategic Vision for Bus in the West Midlands will support the delivery of all of the 15 policies outlined in Movement for Growth and particularly;
 - Policy 1: To accommodate increased travel demand by existing transport capacity and new sustainable transport capacity.
 - Policy 4 & 8: To improve connections to new economic development and housing locations to help them flourish primarily through sustainable travel connections.
 - Policy 6: To improve connections to areas of deprivation.
 - Policy 10: To help tackle climate change by ensuring a large decrease in pollutants.

- Policy 14: To increase the accessibility of shops, services and other desired destinations for socially excluded people.

New Opportunities

- 2.7 The vision sets out, at the highest level, what kind of bus services the region wishes to see developed and what customers should expect. It anticipates that the subsequent delivery plan will provide a roadmap to a zero emission bus network, supporting zero emission technology corridors in the first instance and utilising new and emerging technology platforms including 5G. It also proposes full network capping of fares and ticketing across all operators, something that has not been developed to date for customers.
- 2.8 The vision also sets out further bold objectives to investigate provision of discounted travel to all under 25 year olds in the region, as well as creating a performance and management regime for the bus network which has not existed since deregulation of the industry in 1986.
- 2.9 A further proposal to undertake a wholesale review of the bus network and ensure it continues to evolve to meet the 24/7 thriving economy of the West Midlands provides an opportunity to work with bus operators across the region to secure the best possible network, as part of a fully integrated system.
- 2.10 The vision supports the regional air quality challenges through greater investment into the bus network. This will help not only by reducing the level of emissions from buses themselves by having cleaner and greener buses, but also by creating a more attractive network that will help to reduce the regional dependency on car trips and target modal shift, supporting the recently approved Congestion Management Plan.

Powers and Next Steps

- 2.11 In partnership with Local Authority transport teams and industry, TfWM will develop a delivery plan with from which it will be able to evaluate the best route to achieving its vision. This will include working with the current and well established Bus Alliance, or similarly looking at other legislative options to see what the most effective and efficient delivery models are.
- 2.12 As a Combined Authority, there are new powers available, which can help to influence, shape and help to exploit new opportunities from a future bus network. Alongside additional powers around the Key Route Network, bus lane enforcement, and safety and security (through the WMCA Functions and Amendment Order 2017), the Bus Services Act 2017 provides new mechanisms to allow for a greater degree of influence on the bus network. The Act provides new powers for implementing Advanced Partnerships, Enhanced Partnerships and Franchising schemes.
- 2.13 TfWM is exploring how these powers can be used to achieve our vision for bus. In addition, we will continue to seek investment and further devolution of powers from Government which will assist in our plans to deliver a bus network that works for everyone in the region.

- 2.14 We will continue the work of the West Midlands Bus Alliance, with a refresh of the Alliance Deliverables, delivery of Network Development Plans to guide local bus investment and a continued bus priority delivery programme to speed up buses.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report, however delivering the vision will require a combination of public and private sector investment which will be considered and form a separate work package as different delivery methods for the Bus Network are explored.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications as a direct result of this report. However, this will need to be revisited as the Vision progresses and develops.

5. Equalities Implications

- 4.2 The vision for bus highlights the important role that bus plays in addressing key strategic equality and inclusion challenges. Young people, BME groups, disabled people and other protected groups, as well as lower socio-economic groups, are more likely to rely on the bus network to access education, employment and other opportunities. Affordable, accessible and well connected services are vital in ensuring these groups are not excluded and marginalised.
- 4.3 The vision document includes commitments to improve affordability for young people and to deliver solutions that will help address inequality barriers for other groups. An equality impact assessment of the document will help identify short, medium and longer-term equality related solutions and initiatives.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 6.1 The WMCA Board has asked for the inclusive growth implications of each board paper to be outlined in this section. We are developing a set of materials that will allow officers and partners to do this robustly, which will be reflected in WMCA Board reports from January onwards.

7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 7.1 The vision covers the constituent area of the Combined Authority but due to the importance of cross boundary services - into and out of the constituent area – partnership working with Non-Constituent and Shire Authorities will be crucial for the further development and delivery of the vision for bus.

8. Schedule of Background Papers

- 1.1 Appendix 1: Strategic Vision for Bus