



**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**

## **Transport Delivery Committee**

<b>Date</b>	9 September 2019
<b>Report title</b>	Midland Metro Limited – 1 Year of Operation
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Councillor Roger Lawrence – Lead member Rail and Metro

**Recommendation(s) for action or decision:**

**The Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report**

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide Transport Delivery Committee (TDC) with an overview of the last 6 months of Midland Metro Ltd.'s performance as operator of the Metro network.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 On the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018 Midland Metro Limited (MML) trading as West Midlands Metro (WMM), took over responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the Metro under a Public Service Contract (PSC), awarded to MML by the asset owner West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- 2.2 The transition followed a 15-month period of mobilisation in which preparations for the handover of the operation from National Express West Midlands to MML were undertaken.
- 2.3 In February 2019 TDC were updated on the first 6 months of MML's operation. The Committee were informed of improvements made over the period which included MML's fresh new identity, better value fares and tickets, new ways to pay and the introduction of the new Customer Service Officer role into the organisation. Building upon these foundations, over the last 6 months MML has continued to drive improvements to the operation. These are detailed below.

## **3. MML Improvements**

### **3.1 Rebranding roll out**

At transition a programme of rebranding commenced across West Midlands Metro network. The branding forms part of the transport brand for the region and gives West Midlands Metro a new identity. The roll out of rebranding has continued with all tram stops between Grand Central and Black Lake now completed and nearly half of the tram fleet in the distinct new livery. The opportunity has also been taken to enhance the customer information including new line guides fitted prominently to shelters, signage showing options to 'buy before you board,' clearer identification of the city hops zones and a uniform approach to directional signage for local amenities and at interchanges. This builds upon the re-branding undertaken at transition which included a new branded website and smart new branded uniform.

### **3.2 Buy before you board**

During peak times, Metro services can be extremely busy making it difficult for conductors to manoeuvre through the tram to collect fares. In April 2019 MML commenced a trial of

at stop selling. Using patronage and sales data by stop and time of day, MML applied a targeted approach placing conductors at key tram stops to actively sell Metro tickets. Following a successful trial this initiative has been extended with a dedicated team of at stop sellers now covering key locations during the weekday am and pm peaks. Whilst this provides customers with greater opportunity to purchase a ticket for travel it has also been well received by Metro season ticket holders, many of which view its introduction as a more equitable approach to revenue collection, capturing those who actively avoid paying.

This initiative supports the wider promotion by MML of 'buy before you board,' which saw the launch of a new MyMetro ticketing app in January 2019, alongside a trial of 'Swift on Mobile' both of which retail a selection of Metro tickets. Through promotion of the apps via social media and at stop and on tram marketing, usage of apps to purchase tickets has seen strong growth with nearly half of these customers previously buying from the conductor on board.

### 3.3 Delivering your 'Personal Best'

MML are committed to ensuring all its customers have a positive experience when using the Metro. It recognises that its frontline staff are instrumental to achieving this and has developed a customer care training plan to provide both conductors and drivers with the knowledge and skills to enhance the customer experience. The programme titled and focused on delivering your 'Personal Best' has been introduced to the induction programme for all new members of the operations team. It is also being delivered to existing staff during their personal development days. The training is aimed at building staff awareness and understanding about what makes a great journey, considering different customer groups and the role they play in making that difference.

### 3.4 Metro Matters

MML began the operation with a commitment to better understand what its customers want and how best MML can deliver it. To help achieve this MML has introduced 'Metro Matters', a re-invigorated former Metro Passenger Panel which provides a platform for Metro users to feedback on the service but also be involved in shaping its future. The launch involved a campaign to broaden the existing passenger panel membership, to encourage a wider customer demographic to join the group. An induction meeting was held in May 2019 with members selected from many applicants, with some being placed on a waiting list, demonstrating its popularity.

At the induction panel members shared their enthusiasm and discussed ideas of how the panel can be utilised to drive improvements and collaboratively represent the customer voice. The panel members were presented with an overview of the history and future of West Midlands Metro and MML pledged to listen to its members and provide them with direct contact to its management team.

The focus for the first year of Metro Matters will be to empower the panel members to actively participate in their voluntary role, consulting with them on new initiatives and proposed changes to the service as well as extending invitations to key events. This commenced by inviting members to join in the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of West Midlands Metro held at the depot on the 30<sup>th</sup> May.

### 3.5 Sector Based Working Academy

MML is committed to building success within the West Midlands community by setting up local links and partnerships. These include partnerships which help people who are unemployed get into work and to grow their talents. In doing so MML has partnered with the Sector Based Work Academy.

A Sector Based Work Academy (SBWA) is a training course and employment programme that can last up to 6 weeks and has 3 main components: Pre-employment training – relevant to the needs of the business and sector, a work experience placement – of great benefit to both the individual and a business and a guaranteed job interview provided to all candidates with an opportunity to have feedback on areas of their interview.

Working with key stakeholders such as the Department of Work & Pensions and Local Community Colleges within Dudley and Wolverhampton, MML has developed its own training and employment programme which equips individuals with the knowledge and skills to become potential future drivers and conductors. The initiative has been a great success and resulted in job offers to over 10 people. All are now passed out as conductors with 6 also certified as drivers. Not only has this improved their personal circumstances, but they are a great addition to the team.

### 3.6 Spotlight

Safety is the number one priority for MML, and it is important that staff are able to report near miss incidents and other safety concerns efficiently, without the need for long winded forms which can often discourage individuals from doing so. To make reporting easier, MML has introduced a new app-based reporting system, 'Spotlight. Spotlight has been installed on every mobile phone utilised in the business and provides a platform for easy and instantaneous reporting. The app is simple to operate, allows for real time completion and has the facility to upload photographs. It also provides alerts and notifications to relevant parties who would need to be informed, in order that they can take appropriate action swiftly.

Since the introduction of Spotlight, near miss reports have risen sharply and with its instant notification features, managers have been able to address issues prior to an incident occurring. A notable reduction in incidents and accidents has been observed.

### 3.7 Working with the Samaritans

Following several incidents on and around the Metro network during 2018/19, MML has engaged with the Samaritans charitable organisation, who have provided adverts of their latest "Small Talk Saves Lives" campaign for MML's tram stops. MML has also promoted awareness of this campaign internally on its employee engagement application MyA and externally on social media accounts.

The Samaritans has also provided training for MML personnel. This has focused on communication techniques for dealing with suicidal contacts. In addition, all frontline employees have received information on how they can direct vulnerable persons to the Samaritans helpline.

MML will build upon its partnership with the Samaritans, with an aim to have all frontline employees trained on the Samaritans “suicidal contact awareness” during 2020.

### 3.8 Asset Management Information System

Working with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), MML have been progressing the procurement of a new AMIS. The introduction of the AMIS will enable a step change in effectiveness of maintenance management, chiefly by making more and better information easily available. This will support the necessary improvements to tram and infrastructure reliability. It will also make easier the collection and reporting of information about the condition of the assets, whilst enabling standard times to be assigned to tasks to better understand productivity and drive improvements. A supplier for the AMIS has now been selected and MML will be working on its delivery over the next eighteen months.

### 3.9 Vegetation Clearance

During the year MML has experienced service disruption due to overgrown lineside vegetation which poses significant risk to the operation. The risks include interruption to service (trees falling on the track and overhead line) and failure to achieve required speeds (loss of sightlines). To reduce these risks MML has invested in a landscaping programme, letting a contract to address the overgrowth in vegetation. Whilst this will help to improve service reliability it will also improve the perception of safety at stops where overgrown vegetation can impact the customer experience.

The whole line was assessed and stretches of embankment with high risk tree and vegetation growth were identified. These stretches, between Bradley Lane and Kenrick Park tram stops, were cleared between February and July 2019.

### 3.10 Building resilience of the Overhead Line Equipment (OLE)

Following a turbulent start to the operation with OLE failures, MML commissioned an asset condition survey and put in place a programme of prioritised improvement works. The initial work was to identify and repair high risk defects. Following this a medium term programme of work was developed, to carry out a high level close inspection and maintenance of the OLE, followed by re-tensioning works which are normally required ten to fifteen years after installation. This work has been tendered and it is expected that the contract will be placed during September 2019. The contract will include a rapid response element so that if there is an OLE failure the contractor will be able to mobilise rapidly with the necessary specialist machinery. Following completion of this work, further modifications to increase the resilience of the system will be delivered.

## 5.0 The Future

Following a positive first 12 months of operation, in the coming year MML will continue to focus on making improvements to the operation and the customer experience.

MML plans to:

- Prepare for and open the Centenary Square extension in December 2019. This includes recruitment of additional drivers and Customer Service Representatives providing additional job opportunities in the region. It will also offer improved connectivity for MML's passengers;
- Increase the number of park and ride spaces on the network by 50%, through the opening of a new park and ride facility at Bradley Lane tram stop;
- Make tickets more affordable for groups who potentially need more support. This includes joining the Workwise scheme and introducing better value student season tickets;
- Introduce Mystery Shops, utilising the data to inform service improvement action plans, with a focus on enhancing the customer service delivered by frontline staff;
- Overhaul Bilston and Lodge Rd lifts to make them more robust and reliable, thus improving accessibility;
- Complete the rebranding roll out, delivering an easily identifiable and presentable network;
- Introduce a new app for cleaning staff which facilitates live reporting of work undertaken and of any faults, enabling a faster response;
- Develop a systematic approach to Asset Management by adopting the principles within the ISO 55001 Asset Management standard, so that robust long term funded lifecycle plans can be developed to achieve sustained performance of the system's assets into the future;
- Continue the programme of vegetation management, improving the stop environment and reducing risks to operational service;
- Develop the resilience of the OLE by designing out features of the system that have failed consistently in preceding years;
- Complete the procurement of and implement the new Asset Management Information System, improving the management of metro assets; and
- Continue to work with the Samaritans to deliver training for all staff on Suicidal Contacts; increasing their awareness of the issue whilst giving them confidence in dealing with potential suicide situations.

## 6. Financial Implications

No financial implications in the nature of this document.

## 7. Legal Implications

No legal implications are recognised in this report.

**8. Equalities Implications**

No equalities implications in relation to this report.

**9. Inclusive Growth Implications**

None.

**10. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

None.

**11. Media**

None.

**12. Other Implications**

None.