



Transport Delivery Committee

Date	06 January 2020
Report title	Rail Business Report
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Report has been considered by	Councillor Roger Lawrence – Lead Member Rail and Metro

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:

- **Note** the content of the report

1.0 Purpose

To provide an update relating to the performance, operation and delivery of rail services in the West Midlands including on rail operator partnership agreements and West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) activity.

2.0 Section A – Background

- 2.1 Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and WMRE currently work to influence the management and delivery of rail services and projects.

2.2 This report provides a summary of rail activity in the TfWM and wider WMRE areas between September and December 2019.

3.0 Section B – Williams Rail Review, West Coast Franchise and HS2

Williams Rail Review

3.1 Publication of the William’s Review has now been delayed until after the election.

West Coast Franchise

3.2 The new (FirstGroup / FS Trenitalia) Avanti West Coast company replaced Virgin Trains as the operator of the West Coast franchise from Sunday 8th December.

3.3 The West Coast Partnership franchise connects important West Midlands centres such as Rugby, Coventry, Birmingham Airport/NEC, Birmingham, Sandwell & Dudley, Wolverhampton and Stafford with London, the North West and Scotland. It also provides over 40% of peak time services and over 50% of the total train capacity on the Birmingham – Coventry corridor and is franchisee the Station Facility Owner responsible for Rugby, Stafford, Coventry and Birmingham International.

3.4 The new operator will be responsible for both the current “Avanti West Coast” inter city services and for “West Coast Partnership Development” which will design and operate the initial High Speed 2 services for the first 3 to 5 years of HS2 operation. However, no short term changes to existing West Coast Inter City services and stopping patterns are envisaged.

3.5 Avanti West Coast will also continue to use the existing fleet of Pendolino and Voyager trains, previously introduced and leased by Virgin Trains. In time the Voyaers will be replaced by bi-mode trains from builder Hitachi.



(Examples of new Avanti branding)

HS2 Oakervee Review

3.6 Formal publication of the Oakervee Review has now been delayed until after the election. However, a leaked draft copy of the report appears to recommend that:

- i) The number of trains per hour is reduced from 18 to 14 (or 16)
- ii) The HS2 route is completed in its entirety, apart from:

The scrapping of the Handsacre rail connection to the existing West Coast Main Line north west of Lichfield (which allowed direct HS2 services to Stafford and Stoke-and-Trent).

3.6 This latter suggestion is clearly of key concern and WMRE and TfWM will work with partners in responding to this issue.

4.0 Section C – West Midlands Franchise

3.1 It has been a difficult three months for WMT, characterised by deteriorating punctuality and reliability and industrial unrest. After staging something of a rally in Period 6 (August to September), the performance of the network fell into a steep decline in Periods 7 and 8 (September to November). A Franchise wide PPM for Period 6 of 83.3% (the highest since the May timetable change) was followed up by scores of 74.5% (Period 7), and 69.8% (Period 8).

3.2 In both periods 7 and 8 a number of major infrastructure issues masked a larger number of smaller delays caused by a shortage of traincrew. Period 7 saw an increase in sickness, which when coupled to restrictive annual leave agreements inherited from London Midland, led to large scale cancellations across the West Midlands.

3.3 The traincrew issues have multiple causes. Over a number of years from 2012 WMT's predecessor, London Midland, agreed to changes to the terms and conditions of their drivers and guards. Some of these changes resulted in the situation where more staff can be on annual leave than are required to run the normal timetable. In the past this had been mitigated by traincrew being willing to work overtime or come in on their rest days. However, in recent months a rise in sickness, coupled with fewer staff agreeing to work overtime, has led to numerous train cancellations.

3.4 In response WMT have started rostering conductor managers to cover open turns and have reached an agreement with ASLEF (who represent train drivers) to allow driver managers to do the same (on a 12-month trial). They also recruiting more drivers and guards, and changes to the traincrew diagrams in

the December 2019 and May 2020 timetables should make the schedules more impervious to delay in event that there are traincrew shortages.

- 3.5 In response to the continuing poor operating performance, West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street called a Rail Summit, inviting WMT, Network Rail and WMT's principal shareholder, Abellio. The Rail Summit was held on 22 November and considered the various work streams underway to manage performance. These include the timetable changes in December and May, additional train crew being recruited, an enhanced operational discipline focus and improved communications.
- 3.6 The traincrew shortages occurred against a backdrop of growing industrial unrest on the franchise. Matters came to a head in October, when the RMT formally entered into dispute with WMT over proposed changes to the role of the Guard. This led to a ballot of RMT members, which returned a mandate for strike action and action short of a strike. On 1 November the RMT announced that they would hold seven consecutive Saturday's of strike action, commencing 16th November and ending 28th December.
- 3.7 On strike days WMT deployed trained managers to work trains. However, as there are many more senior conductors than there are managers, only a third of the normal service was capable of being delivered. WMT focused on serving the core West Midlands conurbation, which meant that there were no WMT services to places such as Stratford-upon-Avon, Worcester, Rugeley, and Shrewsbury. WMRE successfully brokered a deal between DfT and WMT that meant that rail replacement buses were provided on those routes without a rail service.
- 3.8 The strike service proved to be reasonably successful in keeping the West Midlands region moving. In this aim, WMT were greatly assisted by the use of the West Midlands Regional Transport Coordination Centre (RTCC). This multi-agency body – only recently introduced by TfWM – brought together all of the main transport providers with local government and enabled more joined up decisions to be made about how best to use the reduced capacity on the region's transport network.
- 3.9 After three Saturdays of strike action, the RMT announced on 5 December that they had decided to suspend strike action following receipt of a revised proposal from WMT. As of 20 December details of the proposal had not been shared with WMRE or TfWM. The proposal will need to be approved by the RMT's members before the threat of strike action recommencing can be completely ruled out.

5.0 Section D – Rail Programme

- 5.1 The West Midlands is in a period of unprecedented investment which includes approximately £160m of investment in the West Midlands, delivering both new and improved stations and train services. The stated vision of the West Midlands Rail Programme is: ‘To transform lives by working together to build stations that connect people with places’.
- 5.2 The West Midlands Rail Programme takes an innovative and collaborative approach to delivery of the project with a co-located delivery team based in summer lane that includes the client, consultants and rail partners (Network Rail and West Midlands Trains).
- 5.3 University Station is a new flagship railway station that will be the gateway to University of Birmingham and Queen Elizabeth Hospital and NHS Trust. The project is funded by multiple partners and will be complete for the Commonwealth Games. Approved in Principle design work is progressing with detailed surveys underway to establish existing conditions and inform development of the design. The Project Delivery Programme has now been baselined, expecting to be Watertight by December 2021 and Fit-out to commence May 2022. WMRE are currently working closely with all partners and stakeholders to agree the configuration state in time for the Commonwealth Games. Following on from the public consultation the planning application was submitted to Birmingham City Council for approval in October 2019. Following review of the returned responses to the Supplier Selection Questionnaire (SSQ), the Invitation to tender (ITT) process commenced on Programme on the 15th November 2019.

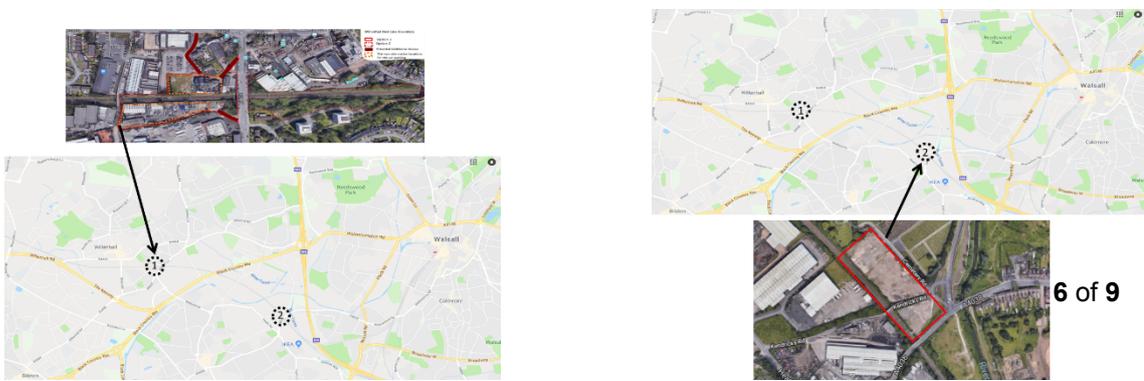


5.4 Perry Barr Station (and Bus Interchange) is the key transport hub for the spectators and athletes attending the Commonwealth Games. The station will provide a legacy after the games and be a catalyst for further economic generation in the Perry Barr area. Following the selection of preferred option design, development continues with detailed surveys being planned for existing infrastructure to inform the designs. Public engagement events commenced on the 19th November 2019 and are due to continue during the month, finishing on the 7th December 2019. The Project Delivery Programme has now been baselined and we are expecting construction to be complete by December 2021, and entry into service February 2022. Regular Working Group meetings have been set up with One Stop to ensure strong communication on the wider Perry Barr area.



5.5 Camp Hill Line connectivity is the reintroduction of passenger services along the Camp Hill Line, with new stations at Kings Heath, Moseley and Hazelwell which will deliver much improved passenger journey times into Birmingham. Approved in Principle design work is progressing in tandem with work on performance and timetabling for the services. For the purpose of the design and planning, the stations are being designed and submitted in sequence. The Planning Submissions for Hazelwell and Kings Heath Stations have been formally submitted to BCC and have now been validated the applications should be determined within 8 weeks, depending on any objections received.

5.6 Walsall to Wolverhampton connectivity is the reintroduction of passenger services with new stations at Willenhall and Darlaston, which will deliver an



improve connectivity between Walsall and Wolverhampton along with improved journey times into Birmingham to meet the projected demand forecast. Approved in Principle design work is progressing in tandem with work on performance and timetabling for the services.

Map of Willenhall site

Map of Darlaston site

- 5.7 In parallel with the development work on the stations themselves, considerable activity has been underway to confirm the proposed train services that would serve the stations. This work has been particularly challenging because of the requirement to demonstrate that the new stations would not impose an unacceptable level of performance risk onto the network. WMRE has been working closely with West Midlands Trains and Network Rail to identify timetable solutions which both deliver a reasonable level of service to the new stations while protecting performance. This work has been made more challenging due to the significant changes to future timetables which are planned in May 2020 to restore underlying performance levels on the network to acceptable levels.
- 5.8 The proposed service to Willenhall and Darlaston has therefore been identified as:
- Hourly Walsall to Wolverhampton
 - Hourly Birmingham New Street – Wolverhampton – Crewe (existing service diverted via new stations)
- 5.9 This will give Willenhall and Darlaston hourly services to Birmingham, Walsall, Stafford, Stoke and Crewe and half-hourly services to Wolverhampton.
- 5.10 The proposed timetable for the Camp Hill line is a half-hourly Birmingham New Street to Kings Norton service calling at the three new stations, with services turning back in Platform 4 at Kings Norton between Cross City line services. Some minor retimings of Cross City line services will be required to accommodate the new services.
- 5.11 Network Rail has indicated that it is comfortable with the proposed Willenhall/Darlaston service, but requires additional analysis of the performance impact of the Camp Hill service before it is ready to support any application for future access rights.
- 5.8 The Snow Hill Third Access scheme is subject to a separate paper at this meeting.
- 6.0 Section E – West Midlands Grand Rail Collaboration (GRC)**
- 6.1 The GRC Board met for the third time in late October, and given the performance challenges facing the region, focused mainly on punctuality and reliability. As a result of the GRC, the rail industry in the West Midlands has

completely overhauled the way that it manages performance. Previously, engagement between Network Rail and the train operators was mostly on a bi-lateral basis. This was not always conducive to reaching decisions that put the customer first. Under the auspices of the GRC Performance Taskforce, it has been agreed to create a new performance management architecture that has multi-lateral working at every level.

- 6.2 Alongside the GRC Performance Taskforce, the Board also approved the customer experience workstreams that the GRC will also progress over the next 12 months. There are 12 in total and include creating a consistent approach to passenger assistance across the region, improving the way the industry communicates to customers during disruption, joint revenue protection exercises, and more effective oversight of timetable development to avoid a repeat of the May 2019 timetable change.

7.0 Section F – Rail Investment Strategy and West Midlands Stations Alliance

- 7.1 Tawhida Yaacoub has joined WMRE as the West Midlands Stations Alliance Delivery and Fundraising Lead. Prior to joining WMRE Tawhida worked for London Midland and WMT in a number of operations and customer service roles. Prior to entering the railway, she was employed by the UN in a variety of fund raising positions. This combination of train operator, governmental and fund raising experience should make Tawhida an excellent match for this role.

- 7.3 Tawhida's immediate focus will be on reviewing the progress of the Stations Alliance against its objectives, namely its code of behaviours, its brand identity, its delivery of Access for All schemes, the Stations as Places programme, the realisation of cleaning and maintenance efficiencies, asset management planning, and process streamlining.

- 7.4 There is no significant update on the Rail Investment Strategy.

8.0 Section G – Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this update report. Although the latest status position covering the Rail Programme, Rail Investment Strategy and Stations Alliance is for noting in this report there are a number of financial risks and challenges against these that will be need to be carefully considered. This will form a key element as part of progressing the further development and/or delivery of these.

- 8.2 Any costs incurred or support provided by TfWM or West Midlands Rail Executive from supporting the activity in relation to the GRC will be met from within agreed funding and resources.

9.0 Section H – Legal Implications

9.1 No specific legal implications arise from the contents of this report itself however there is considerable legal activity supporting several rail and station projects which are mentioned in section 5. Legal services are advising on land acquisition, procurement and commercial contract issues as an integral part of the team supporting these projects.

10.0 Section I – Equalities Implications

10.1 There are no equality implications in relation to this report. Individual schemes (i.e. Snow Hill, University Station, Perry Barr) are undergoing individual equality impact assessments and consultation/engagement with equality groups is also taking place.

11.0 Section J – Geographical Scope

11.1 This report covers rail services within the WMRE geographical area, which includes the seven authorities which make up WMCA as well as the nine Shire and Unitary authorities which ring the Met area.

12.0 Section K – Inclusive Growth Implications

12.1 There are no inclusive growth implications.