



Transport Delivery Committee

Date	10 February 2020
Report Title	Bus Alliance Update
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Report Considered by	Chair of Putting Passengers First Lead Member Reference Group

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Transport Delivery Committee is recommended:

1. To note the content of the report and current status of the West Midlands Bus Alliance.
2. To submit the report to the West Midlands Combined Authority Board for information.

Purpose of Report

1. To report matters relating to the governance, operation, delivery and performance of the West Midlands Bus Alliance.

West Midlands Bus Alliance Board Governance

2. Cllr Ian Ward has been asked to join the Board in his capacity as the Portfolio Holder for Transport, replacing Cllr Roger Lawrence on the Board.
3. The Chief Executive of CPT UK, Graham Vidler, has joined the Board as the representative for CPT UK.
4. The new Community Transport Operators Panel (CTOP) representative on the Board is Chris Busst, from Shencare Community Transport.

A Bolder Bus Alliance 2020

5. The West Midlands Bus Alliance formed in September 2015 and adopted 14 original objectives (aligned closely to the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan) for the five years to 2020, against which success could be judged. There was a refresh of the Bus Alliance in 2017, with a further 50 deliverables set out and adopted to improve travel for bus passengers in the region. The success and progress of the Bus Alliance against the original objectives is detailed in the following table.

Objective		We Did (31 December 2019)	Red, Amber, Green Rating
Outputs	Zero or ultra-low emissions with every other bus at least Euro VI.	62 per cent of the bus fleet is Euro VI through a combination of new buses and bus retrofit. Commitment to get all buses at least Euro VI by April 2021	
	More intuitively understandable core turn-up-and-go routes.	29 Platinum routes which provide passengers with an enhanced user experience and 2 partnership routes with branded 'West Midlands Bus' livery offering a turn up and go service.	
	Fare rises of no more the RPI +1% per annum.	The overall fares basket has met this. Examples for National Express shown are within RPI per annum increases: 2015 Adult NX Daysaver £4.20 2020 Adult NX Daysaver £4.60 2015 Adult 1-week Travelcard £16.50 2020 Adult 1-week Travelcard £17.50 2015 Child Daysaver £2.90 2020 Child Daysaver £2.30	
	Discounted young person's travel for everyone under 19 years old.	Child Concessionary Fares Scheme Discounted travel to all 17-18 year olds including apprentices	
	Integrated ticketless travel in line with intelligent mobility policy.	cEMV contactless payment solutions are now available on Diamond Buses, West Midlands Metro and NXWM services. A single capped solution is not available across all operators, but account-based ticketing and best value capped is being developed.	
	Network Development Plans to support the economic objectives of the next decade.	75% of the region have Network Development Plan created, with 2 areas to be developed.	
	Increased investment in highways infrastructure to aid journey times and reliability.	£25m invested across Birmingham (i.e. Harborne Road), Wolverhampton (i.e. Willenhall Road), Dudley and Solihull (i.e. Lode Lane). £30m secured in principle for further investment in bus priority and highways	

		infrastructure (i.e. Dudley and Birmingham).	
	Improvement on board through improved seating, next stop announcements and Wi-Fi.	293 new vehicles with improved seating, next stop announcements and Wi-Fi, along with a further 115 new buses	
Outcomes	Customer satisfaction levels remain over 85%.	2015 – 85% 2019 – 84% Up in all sub areas of satisfaction.	
	Improvement in peak time journey speeds.	2015 – 19.4 km/h 2019 – 17.4 km/h (-10 per cent) Improvements on routes with bus priority implemented (i.e. Harborne Road)	
	Increase bus patronage by 5%	-3 per cent (275.9m / 267.1m), but an increase in the last 2 years	
Impacts	The financial benefits of increased patronage contribute towards infrastructure and buses.	Over £85 million invested by operators in new buses since the Alliance launched.	

6. Going beyond 2020, the specific focus of the Bus Alliance is to deliver improvements that makes travel for bus passengers great, with our aspirations and headline commitments for bus in the West Midlands to be:

- **The greenest**
- **The best value**
- **The simplest ticketing**
- **The most reliable**
- **The safest**

A Bolder Bus Alliance 2020 - Headline Commitments

- All Buses to be at least Euro VI with 10% of the fleet zero emission
- Swift account-based ticketing and best value capping
- Swift One App as a complete mobility solution
- A new and enhanced approach to managing bus journey speeds for the passenger
- One single source of communication and information that passengers can trust
- Continuing to improve the safety of bus travel

7. Under the Bus Alliance aspirations and headline commitments, will be specific commitments that the different partners will work together to deliver for bus passengers. These specific commitments will be accountable and monitored by the Bus Alliance Board and the Alliance sub-groups of partners:

- Communications and Marketing Steering Group
- Bus Performance Board
- Bus Operators Panel
- Bus Operators Group (Ticketing)
- Safer Travel Partnership

- Community Transport Operator Panel
- Bus Passenger Satisfaction Steering Group
- Multi-Modal Steering Group

8. The specific commitments are being developed with partners for agreement by the Bus Alliance Board at its 5th February 2020 meeting; before a public launch in February 2020. This will set out the commitments for the next 18 months of the Bus Alliance to bus passengers in the West Midlands.

Passenger Satisfaction Autumn 2019 results

9. The figures by independent watchdog Transport Focus from their autumn 2019 independent survey are expected to be released on 26th March 2020. The 2018 results showed 84 per cent of the region's bus passengers are satisfied with their overall journey. Although this was one percentage below the 2017 overall journey score, improvements had been seen in each of the sub-criteria, including a high 66 per cent of passengers – up 2 per cent on the previous year – who felt the cost of travel was good value.
10. Transport Focus is holding its Bus Passenger Survey briefing event in Birmingham on Thursday 26 March 2020. This is the 10th anniversary of the survey, which measures what over 40,000 bus passengers have to say. The event will be held from 11am to 1pm at Aston Villa Football Club. For more information, or to attend contact Yvonne.Fox-Burmby@transportfocus.org.uk.

Achievements 2019

11. An achievements brochure of the successes and deliverables by the Bus Alliance in 2019 has been produced. This is to be published in February 2020, following approval by the Bus Alliance Board at its meeting on the 5th February 2020. The achievements brochure acknowledges the successes from partners in improving bus travel in the West Midlands, whilst recognising there are still challenges ahead and that the Bus Alliance will need to continue to evolve to improve bus services for passengers. Some of the key improvements in the past 6 months are described in the rest of this report.

Tackle congestion and make bus journeys quicker

12. In very challenging times with unprecedented levels of development works, resulting in additional congestion particularly, but not exclusively around Birmingham City Centre, Alliance partners have made really good progress in tackling congestion hot spots across the bus network and have continued to secure investment from Government and other funding sources. Notable successes in the past 6 months include bus priority funding in Birmingham and the Black Country, as well as the opening of the Regional Transport Coordination Centre (RTCC).
13. £30 million funding package to upgrade bus routes across Birmingham and the Black Country. The funding package will go towards the creation of new bus lanes, upgrades to junctions and better bus stops to improve journey times and reliability. Improvements will be focused on Birmingham city centre and links to south and west Birmingham and Dudley. It is expected that the improved bus priority infrastructure and investment will benefit 73 million passengers a year.

14. The RTCC was officially opened on 17th January 2020 by the Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps MP. The new centre provides a single hub for the West Midlands transport authorities and agencies, emergency services and bus, rail and tram operators to manage the network during major events and incidents. Managed by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the RTCC is the first of its kind to bring together real time information across all modes of transport in one place working with existing control centres around the West Midlands to provide up to the minute journey information, better alternative options during disruption and more reliable journey times for residents, businesses and visitors.

Improve bus emissions standards

15. We have seen continued investment in new buses by operators to tackle poor air quality in the region. National Express has invested £22 million on 75 new Euro VI smart hybrid Platinum double decker buses. These hi-spec new buses are operating on routes across the West Midlands and are also Low Carbon certified.

16. Landflight has invested £1.4 million in 10 new Euro VI buses operating in the Solihull area, becoming the first bus operator in the region to operate only Euro VI emission standard buses.

17. Bus operators have continued to deliver upgrades to existing buses through bus retrofits to achieve Euro VI equivalent standards. During 2019, over 500 buses were retrofit across six operators. Through a combination of new bus purchases and retrofit, over 60 per cent of the buses in the West Midlands were Euro VI or better at the end of 2019.

18. TfWM have made a bid to the DEFRA Air Quality Grant Scheme 2019/20 for 20 bus retrofits, to support smaller operators. An announcement on the outcome is expected by March 2020.

Make bus journeys better value

19. The largest operator in the region, National Express West Midlands, met the Alliance deliverable to limit fare raises to no more than inflationary levels.

Make it easier to catch the bus

20. As technology improved partners have been able to embrace new technology to make paying bus fares and catching the bus easier.

21. Contactless ticketing is thriving, with less than a year after National Express rolled out contactless ticket machines across all their buses, the 3 millionth customer payment was made. Other operators have continued to roll out contactless ticketing, whilst with TfWM support, all bus operators in the West Midlands will be able to offer contactless ticketing from Summer 2020.

22. The Swift smart travel card has been rolled out to Cannock Chase, so thousands of bus passengers can now benefit from Swift for pay-as-you-go on all Arriva bus services in the district.

23. Students at the Queen Alexandra College in Harborne are better able to travel independently on public transport, thanks to support offered by National Express West

Midlands. The operator has continued its annual offer, taking a bus to the college so that the students can learn how to travel safely and independently.

24. A DVD developed to assist with disability awareness has been used by several operators to help improve driver awareness and confidence in supporting passengers with a disability, both visible and non-visible. TfWM also has a range of accessibility products available for West Midlands residents. Free products include “please offer me a seat” badges, communication pocket guides, RNIB key fobs, and assistance cards with a range of messages that customers can keep with their ticket or pass. For more information and to order your free accessibility products visit wmnetwork.co.uk/seat

Shape the bus network to deliver economic growth

25. Network Development Plans (NDPs) for Bus have continued to be developed and rolled out across the region and reviewed annually, so that we ensure that both the current and future bus network meets local needs and has the flexibility to adapt to forecasted growth and change. Whilst the NDP for Bus in Dudley has been reviewed, the NDP for Bus in South and West Birmingham has been published, with the Walsall & Wolverhampton and Sandwell NDPs for Bus awaiting approval before their publication. A dedicated page for all the current and future NDPs for Bus can be found at: <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/operations/network-development-plans/>

26. The future of the West Midlands door-to-door transport service has been secured, as National Express Accessible Transport took over the operations and contracts in August 2019. This saw the 12,300 registered users in the region provided with continued support on essential services, following the administration of the former operator in March 2019.

27. Partners continued to support access to leisure and retail, with the biggest Boxing Day bus service outside London for over 200,000 shoppers, sports fans and those heading to work across the West Midlands. A total of 162 services ran thanks in part to a financial subsidy from TfWM and commercial operations by Diamond and National Express bus operators.

Make it more pleasant and safe to travel by bus

28. The region’s public transport network has seen crime fall by 5% in the six months between April and September 2019 and compared to figures for the same period last year, against a national trend of rising crime.

29. Our partner, the independent transport user watchdog, Transport Focus, urged people to ‘Give Bus a Go’ across the West Midlands in September 2019, as part of a campaign to encourage more journeys by bus with ‘buskettters’ recruited to try the bus and report their experiences.

30. Local school children helped to transform Walsall St Paul’s bus station by brightening it up with colourful flowers. The planters were installed as part of the £680,000 transformation of St Paul’s Bus Station which included new cycle racks, information screens, refurbished toilets and waiting area and rebrand in the region’s new West Midlands Bus red.

Financial Implications

31. There are no direct financial implications as a result of this update report. The Bus Alliance has been successful at bringing together development budget funding and in identifying additional funding sources through successful funding applications and operator investment, with further successful funding bids recently announced. Bus operators have invested in their buses to support the objective to improve bus emissions standards. DfT Clean Bus Technology Funding and Tackling Nitrogen Dioxide funding has also supported the objective to improve bus emissions standards. A £24.225m DfT Grant has been secured in principle to support further investment in highways infrastructure to improve bus journey times. The drawdown of the grant is contingent upon securing £4.225m of matched funding from local partners including TfWM. Any costs incurred by or support provided by TfWM as part of activity referred to in this report will be met from within agreed overall funding and resources.

Legal Implications

32. This report is for information only and there are no new direct legal implications arising.

Equality Implications

33. This report is for information only and there are no new equality implications.

Inclusive Growth Implications

34. This report is for information only; however, bus is a vital component to inclusive growth as it directly supports access to the labour market, and allows people to access education, employment and services. The flexibility of the bus network also makes bus the perfect means of providing public transport options in areas of growth, changing travel demand and new housing; directly supporting our West Midlands Housing Deal and Local Industrial Strategy. This means that buses are central to supporting regeneration, inclusive growth and social integration. Where there may not be a case for investing in permanent rail and light rail infrastructure, new bus infrastructure can be planned to connect new communities and support housing and jobs growth.

Geographical Area of Report's Implications

35. This report 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 is crucial in undertaking activities referred to in this report.