



## Transport Delivery Committee

<b>Date</b>	16 March 2020
<b>Report Title</b>	Bus Business Update
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Putting Passengers First Lead Members

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

- To note the contents of this report.

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report matters relating to the performance, operation and delivery of bus services in the West Midlands. This report includes:

Section A	<b>Bus Services Performance Summary</b> Punctuality and reliability – January 2020
Section B	<b>Tendered Bus Services Contracts – April 2020</b>
Section C	<b>Bus Operational Matters and Passenger Impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UK Bus Summit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding for Supported Services</li> <li>Superbus Fund</li> <li>All Electric Bus Town Fund</li> </ul> </li> <li>Bus Service Registrations</li> <li>Bus Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Express West Dudley Area Review</li> <li>Partnership Route - Service 40</li> <li>Paradise Circus and Birmingham Westside Extension</li> <li>Birmingham City Centre</li> </ul> </li> <li>Bus Stop Infrastructure</li> <li>Departure Charge and Roadside Information Holiday</li> <li>Coventry Station Masterplan</li> </ul>

## **2.0 Section A – Bus Services Performance Summary**

2.1 TfWM is reviewing how bus network performance is measured and reported. A Bus Performance Board through the West Midlands Bus Alliance has been established involving the Traffic Manager from each of the seven constituent authorities, TfWM Director of Integrated Network Services, TfWM Head of Network Delivery and local bus operators. This Board will enable improved accountability of how well bus services are operating and what we can do to improve them. The available data to inform the bus performance reporting is being reviewed with the proposed bus performance measures, approach and reporting governance to be agreed by the Board and will be brought to the Transport Delivery Committee.

## **3.0 Section B – Tendered Bus Services Contracts – April 2020**

3.1 A review of the contracts which are due to expire in April 2020 has been carried out. It was identified there was a possibility that some contracts may fall outside the cost per passenger threshold when tendered. In addition a review of the existing consultation process to support passengers and stakeholders where significant changes or a complete withdrawal to a subsidised service is proposed.

3.2 Taking the above into consideration Network Delivery have worked with the existing operators of the April 2020 expiries to agree a renewal of most expiring contracts for a period of six months, which resulted in the majority of contracts having a revised expiry date of October 2020. There were five contracts that were issued for general tender and are due to commence in April 2020.

3.3 The award of these five contracts will introduce a further six Euro VI vehicles into the subsidised bus network with effect from April 2020. This will further contribute to the enhancement of the West Midlands bus fleet and contribute to the target that all vehicles will be operated by vehicles with at least Euro VI emission standards by April 2021.

3.4 Following the April 2018 tender round, when the number of bidders, and bids per contract, significantly reduced, there has been a steady improvement in the average number of bids per contract during subsequent tender rounds including an average of 3.8 bids during this round. It is recognised that due to the limited number of tenders issued in this round a slightly higher average would have been expected;

1. April 2018 – bids 1.56
2. October 2018 – bids 2.47
3. April 2019 – bids 2.31
4. October 2019 – bids 2.64
5. April 2020 – bids 3.80

## **4.0 Section C – Bus Operational Matters and Passenger Impacts**

### **UK Bus Summit – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

- 4.1 Lead Members from the Putting Passengers First Group Councillor Hartley and Councillor Taylor, along with TfWM Officers Jon Hayes, Richard Hardman and Andrew Roberts attended the UK Bus Summit held in London on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February. In addition Linda McCord from Transport Focus and the Chair of The West Midlands Bus Alliance spoke and hosted a question and answer session on buses, business and retail.
- 4.2 Baroness Vere, Minister with Responsibility for Buses, (DfT) opened the conference with the keynote address by informing the attendees that the government wants this to be a golden age for buses that will attract new users and will bring an end to the disconnection of some communities. The government are committed to create a new National Bus Strategy which will bring long-term improvements for bus services with passengers at its heart. DfT will be proactive in meeting stakeholders around the country and will commit to £220million of investment including;
- £20million for DRT pilots to assess the viability of this transport.
  - £30million improving current and reinstating lost services.
  - £70million for Superbus pilots the first of which has been confirmed for Cornwall, one of the poorest regions of the UK.
  - £2million for further installation of more audio-visual equipment on buses.
  - £50million for the first UK all electric bus town/city.
- 4.3 Following the keynote address there were speeches and debates involving key bus industry figures from Transport Authorities, Councillors with bus portfolio's, commercial bus operators and industry bodies. Informative, and at times lively, debate over items including National Bus Strategy, utilising the Bus Services Act and the role of bus in achieving clean growth and net zero targets were discussed during the conference. Attendees from the West Midlands agreed it was a very useful day and which highlighted the many opportunities, and also challenges, that the bus industry will face in 2020.

### ***Funding for Supported Services***

- 4.4 The DfT has made £30 million available to local authorities in 2020-21 as a one-off funding stream to enable them to improve current supported bus services and to restore lost bus services where most needed.
- 4.5 The WMCA has been allocated £879k from this fund and have been asked to complete a statement of intent prior to receiving this allocation.
- 4.6 This funding is being provided as revenue support and TfWM officers have prepared the statement for the DfT's submission deadline of 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- 4.7 Local MP's have been made aware of the funding opportunity, the correspondence provides MP's with the opportunity to discuss the use of this funding with TfWM. Additionally TfWM will invite feedback from TDC Members, Local Councillors and

Local Authorities to ensure they will have the opportunity to review and input into the proposals as they are developed over the coming months.

4.8 The initial work has identified that the funding could be used for;

- **Improving current supported bus services**  
Assisting in the upgrading of the vehicles that operate on the supported bus network to at least a Euro VI emission standard working towards The West Midlands Bus Alliance's vehicle emissions target.
- **Restoring Lost services**  
The funding will provide new opportunities to retain appropriate services or journeys that have been withdrawn or will be withdrawn in the future
- **Supporting new bus services or extensions to current bus services**  
It has been identified that there are opportunities to improve the accessibility of off-peak supported services, most notably during the evenings and on Sunday daytimes. The improvements could take the form of increased frequencies, or additional journeys, that provide improved travel opportunities.

### ***Superbus Fund***

4.9 Up to £70 million is available to support Superbus pilots that work to increase bus patronage in a defined built-up area (BUA). The pilots will focus funding on up to three areas that have the potential to transform how people use and perceive bus services.

- Comprehensive network of bus priority measures;
- Fares caps; and/or
- Increased service frequencies.

4.10 New bus priority measures will form the main element of all Superbus pilots. That aim to improve bus reliability and journey time by prioritising buses over other types of traffic.

4.11 TfWM are eligible to bid for the West Midlands, and may only submit one bid, to ensure a focus on the one they believe can be most effective. TfWM are leading the bid development with local bus operators and relevant local highway authorities. Bus operators have already been asked their priority of routes for interventions. An assessment of the routes and interventions to include in the bid will be made against the selection criteria. A condition of funding is that the relevant outcomes are included in a statutory Enhanced Partnership (EP) under the Bus Services Act 2017, with a duration of at least five years. The deadline for expression of interest is 5pm, 30 April 2020. The Department of Transport expect to notify shortlisted places by the end of May 2020, to allow a second phase of more detailed co-development of proposals.

### ***All Electric Bus Town Fund***

4.12 Up to £50 million has been made available to develop an all-electric bus town or city that would see an entire place's bus fleet changed over to vehicles that are fully electric, or capable of operating in electric, zero-emission mode. TfWM are eligible to bid, with the bid to be developed in close partnership with all local bus operators

in the area. All bus companies operating routes in the designated place must sign up to the proposal and the levels of investment that they are likely to need to contribute.

- 4.13 TfWM will assess 19 cities and towns in the West Midlands; with a first stage sift against the bid criteria. This will include confirming the support of local bus companies. Any places that pass the first stage sift, will be developed and subject to a second stage prioritisation, based on costs, benefits, operator ability to deliver and scope. TfWM can submit more than one location in a bid, but will need to rank them. The deadline for expression of interest is 5pm on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020. The Department of Transport expect to notify shortlisted places by the end of May 2020, to allow a second phase of more detailed co-development of proposals.

### **Bus Service Registrations**

- 4.14 TfWM continue to publish bus service changes confirmed by the Traffic Commissioner on the Network West Midlands website ('Upcoming bus changes') every Wednesday. Details of these bus service changes are distributed electronically to the TDC members.
- 4.15 For the period from 1st November 2019 to the end of January 2020. The team has processed 126 bus registrations received from operators, with 62 published service changes. This has included service changes as a result of major events, and festive timetables. TfWM continue to review their processes for bus service registrations, whilst working with local bus operators and other changes to public travel information.

### **Bus Network**

#### ***National Express West Dudley Area Review***

- 4.16 National Express launched a consultation on proposed local bus service changes predominately affecting services in their network to the west of Dudley. The consultation document, which was launched on the National Express website on Monday 22nd July 2019 detailed the proposed service changes and invited customers to give their views on the proposals.
- 4.17 Following this consultation period National Express registered service changes which become effective from Sunday 26th January.

The changes affected 14 services which has resulted in;

- The Introduction of a more simplified network with some service frequencies enhanced to every 20 minutes
- Changes to times of journeys to allow services to operate more reliably
- The bus network coverage is largely maintained with the main revisions to service frequencies (both increases and reductions) and the destinations of some services.

4.18 National Express have communicated the changes directly to local Dudley Councillors and WMCA Transport Delivery Committee Members. This was supported by Councillor drop in sessions that were arranged at Dudley Council House and communications with local stakeholders including Russell's Hall Hospital, Dudley College and Intu Merry Hill Centre.

TfWM Officers liaised with National Express during the consultation period and beyond to contribute to the consultation process, understand how the proposals have been received by passengers and challenge the rationale and impact of the changes.

#### ***Partnership Route – Service 40***

4.19 Diamond Bus, National Express and TfWM have worked in partnership to introduce Partnership operation on local bus service 40, running between Wednesbury and West Bromwich, and operates entirely within the Sandwell district.

4.20 The service is currently operated by both Diamond Bus and National Express independently. The operating model of this Partnership route will replicate that of the existing partnership routes, service 31/32 and service 42/43, which also operate within the Black Country.

4.21 Some of the main passengers benefits include;

- Both operators will operate a co-ordinated timetable.
- Fares and tickets will be valid on both operators services enabling passengers to catch the first bus that turns up.
- Buses will be branded in the red West Midlands Bus livery, replacing operator own liveries. Service 40 will bring in environmental benefits as operators have guaranteed that all journeys on the service will be operated by Euro VI vehicles.

4.22 The partnership route will be introduced on Sunday 15th March 2020. Comprehensive and co-ordinated marketing is being prepared to inform existing passengers of the forthcoming changes and to attract new users and encourage modal shift.

#### ***Paradise Circus and Birmingham Westside Extension***

4.23 From 26<sup>th</sup> January 2020, the National Express services 82 and 87 have resumed their anti-clockwise loop around the city. This means that these services now head south along Paradise Circus to Suffolk Street, and this route operates closer to the Markets in Birmingham once again.

4.24 Phase two of the Birmingham Westside extension is ongoing, as the metro is extended from Centenary Square along Broad Street to Hagley Road on Edgbaston (just west of Five Ways).

4.25 As reported previously, in order to facilitate the delivery of the project the construction is now focussed on the section of Broad Street between Sheepcote Street and the Five Ways roundabout. This has required significant bus mitigation measures to be implemented, in order to facilitate and maintain bus services in the area, and provide suitable passenger facilities. These mitigation measures, prior to

commencement of this phase of work, have included traffic regulation orders, parking restrictions, traffic management and physical highway works.

- 4.26 These temporary measures were introduced from September 2019 and are due to be in place for the duration of the construction works, which will be for up to 14 months, depending on the progress of the work:
- Conversion of the junction of Grosvenor Street West and Sheepcote Street to a traffic light junction. These works will include incorporating the current push-button crossing on Sheepcote Street into the temporary traffic signals. There will be 'No loading at any time' within 30m of the junction.
  - Sheepcote Street bus stop opposite Grosvenor Street West suspended for the duration of the works.
  - Suspension of on-street parking on the south side of Ryland Street between Grosvenor Street West and Broad Street.
  - Enforcement of the bus gate on Sheepcote Street
- 4.27 Services that were using Broad Street are operating via the following temporary stops:
- Inbound:
    - Broad Street entry slip-road as normal, new stop on Ryland Street, new stop of Grosvenor Street West, then back onto Sheepcote Street.
  - Outbound:
    - New stop on Sheepcote Street, outside the Crescent Theatre, then new stops on Grosvenor Street West and Friston Avenue, before calling at an existing stop on Ladywood Middleway.

### ***Birmingham City Centre***

- 4.28 Birmingham City Council is currently consulting on a scheme that will see the introduction of a bus gate on Moor Street Queensway, by Moor Street Station and Primark.
- 4.29 This work is proposed as part of a mitigation measure for HS2's closure of Park Street in July 2020, which is necessary as part of the work to build Curzon Street Station.
- 4.30 The bus gate will help ensure that sustainable transport modes are prioritised within the city core, and prevent dispersed car traffic from routing along Moor Street Queensway, as this would have a detrimental effect on the bus network.
- 4.31 The introduction of the bus gate will also help with the introduction of the Clean Air Zone in Birmingham during 2020.

### **Bus Stop Infrastructure**

- 4.32 TfWM continues to invest in improving the safety, security and appearance of our bus stop infrastructure estate, in line with a key Bus Alliance deliverable. There is a committed programme that seeks to introduce digital advertising, further capital upgrades, and re-branding as part of the West Midlands Bus brand.

- 4.33 Since December 2019, a further 47 new shelters have been installed across the network. This brings the total number of new shelters to 123.
- 4.34 TfWM has completed upgrades to 1020 bus shelters, rebranded with the new West Midlands Bus colours as part of the re-branding programme. This is an additional 415 shelters since the last update.

### **Departure Charge and Roadside Information Holiday**

- 4.35 On 16th July 2018, Transport Delivery Committee approved the proposal to commit to £2.9m funding, to provide bus operators with a bus station departure charge and roadside information charge holiday for a period of 12 months commencing 1st October 2018 up to and including the 30th September 2019.
- 4.36 The outcomes of this proposal saw £2.3 million of funding to provide 11 bus operators with a bus station departure charge and roadside information charge holiday for the stated period.
- 4.37 In return, operators invested in additional commitments to the West Midlands Bus Alliance, including new buses and more bus retrofits, the Customer Charter, ticket machine investment, bus service registrations and consultation, as well as 2 operators running a fully Euro VI bus fleet.

### **Coventry Station Masterplan**

- 4.38 As part of the Coventry Station Masterplan (CSMP) project, the bus interchange at Coventry station closed on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020. From this date bus services have moved to temporary stops that are by the canopy of the station building.
- 4.39 The interchange has been replaced by the taxi and private vehicle pick-up and set down area, that has been moved from the area adjacent to the station to allow for construction work of the new building.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Finance will support the funding opportunities outlined in notes 4.1 to 4.13 that TfWM is eligible for, such as Superbus Fund, All Electronic Bus Town Fund and the installation of audio-visual equipment on buses. Any new funding such as the £879k to support subsidised bus will be noted and built into the forecast (note 4.5).
- 5.2 Other costs incurred or support provided by TfWM from undertaking activity referred to in this report will be from within agreed overall budgets and resources informed from previous decisions. For example, any timetabling activity and promotional work associated with the partnership route can be delivered through existing staffing and marketing resources (note 4.19). Also the renewal of the tendered bus service contracts in April 2020 have been budgeted and the forecast will be updated to reflect any variations (Section B).

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 This report is for information only and there are no new direct legal implications arising. The position will need to be revisited once funding decisions are communicated and appropriate legal / procurement advice and support will be provided as necessary.

## **7.0 Equality Implications**

- 7.1 This report is for information only and there are no new equality implications

## **8.0 Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 8.1 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.

## **9.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

- 9.1 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.