

## WMCA Board

<b>Date</b>	5 June 2020
<b>Report title</b>	Recovering the Transport Network - Towards a New Normal
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Transport - Councillor Ian Ward
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Strategic Transport Operators Group Senior Leadership Team Programme Board

### The WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Terms of Reference for the multi-agency Local Resilience Forum Transport Cell, established as a temporary and evolving measure to coordinate the collective response to managing the transport network through the COVID 19 crisis (as set out in Section 4 and Appendix A).
- (2) Approve the outline of the TfWM Covid-19 recovery action plan which will remain under development as detailed in Section 6 and Appendix C.
- (3) Approve the approach to the co-ordination and administration of the Emergency Active Travel Funding from DfT and delegations as set out in Section 7.
- (4) Approve the partnership approach and associated delegations for responding to the Department for Transport's proposed call for national eScooter Trials set out in Section 8.

- (5) Note the longer-term impacts and challenges for the West Midlands Transport System in responding to the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 impact as well as tackling pre-existing strategic issues such as climate change, as set out in Section 9.
- (6) Note the potential need for TfWM to manage its financial resources to ensure priorities are delivered, subject to TfWM gaining the necessary supplementary approvals to do so.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown, the UK transport sector has faced the biggest crisis in modern times as the pandemic affects the country's way of life. The national priority has been to reduce the loss of life from the spread of the virus. Economic and social activity has been, and will continue to be, compromised to achieve this. Passengers and commuters have been advised to follow strict Government advice to limit travel and social interaction and to take special measures when travel cannot be avoided.
- 1.2 From the end of March to early May, strict lockdown arrangements have been in place and transport operators have reduced services in response to reduced levels of demand whilst maintaining essential service levels to support key workers.
- 1.3 On the 11<sup>th</sup> of May the Government laid out an initial route to a relaxation of those restrictions. Before and since publication of guidance from Government, TfWM has, working with regional partners, sought to develop its preparedness for potential increases in transport demand and to highlight the challenges for the transport system in the short, medium and longer term.

## **2. Initial Operational Response from 23 March 2020**

- 2.1 Working with transport operators, the local resilience forum, and Government, TfWM coordinated service changes to maintain a reduce transport network ensuring a comprehensive network of public transport for critical and key workers such as NHS, carers, food and distribution workers, etc. This network was specifically enhanced for those that needed it most. This was accompanied by a national and regional communication plan to discourage travel, with the key message to stay at home in line with the government restrictions that were in place at the time.
- 2.2 Throughout this period Transport for West Midlands focused initially on:

### **Protecting Staff**

- Ensuring we support our customer facing staff including those at bus stations, travel centres/shops, Customer Intelligence, and Metro staff who interact with the public on a day by day basis.
- Supporting an emergency transition of TfWM business activity to working from home where this has been possible.
- Supporting transport providers and their employees through a coordinated approach to welfare of staff, such as the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The West Midlands Bus Alliance operators have tragically seen three bus drivers lose their lives to Covid 19 which is a stark reminder of the implications for front line staff.

### **Supporting passengers**

- By providing one version of the truth via the West Midlands Network website for all modes of travel and giving advice around social distancing and essential travel in line with government messaging.
- Temporarily suspending the pre 9.30am restriction for concessionary travel so older and vulnerable groups could access shops opening early for them during the period of lockdown and up to the end of May 2020.
- Temporarily introduced during the lock-down on West Midlands Metro, and gained agreement from all Bus Alliance bus operators, a period of free travel for NHS employees. This is currently operating and proposed for a period of up to the end of June 2020.

- Regular service and travel information sharing across partners and NHS trusts to help inform key workers
- Maintained first and last journeys on all modes to support essential key workers shift patterns.
- Facilitate Direct Debit suspensions and ticket refunds.
- Enhanced cleaning regimes across the transport modes and on TfWM infrastructure.

### **Supporting operators and securing essential services**

- Worked with national bodies and authorities to secure funding from government for bus operators and Metro to support the loss of revenue.
- Provided a wider regional financial support package for bus operators for lost journeys as requested by government.
- Coordinated the reduction in transport services based on Government advice, supporting the emergency processes put in place for rail, bus and Metro.
- Worked in collaboration with the NHS and Department of Health and Social Care to ensure all frontline public transport staff could access testing as quickly as possible.
- Coordinated service changes for bus and Metro across the network with bus operators and Midland Metro Limited to ensure the required level of services were maintained where they were most needed.
- Implemented an enhanced cleaning regime at bus stations, bus shelters, tram stops and tram vehicles and have continued to clean and maintained all on street infrastructure.
- Retained a critical service for the monitoring of CCTV and the RTCC on the transport network to ensure we keep the network safe, monitor capacity and manage any other incidents with transport partners.

### **Supporting key workers & the NHS**

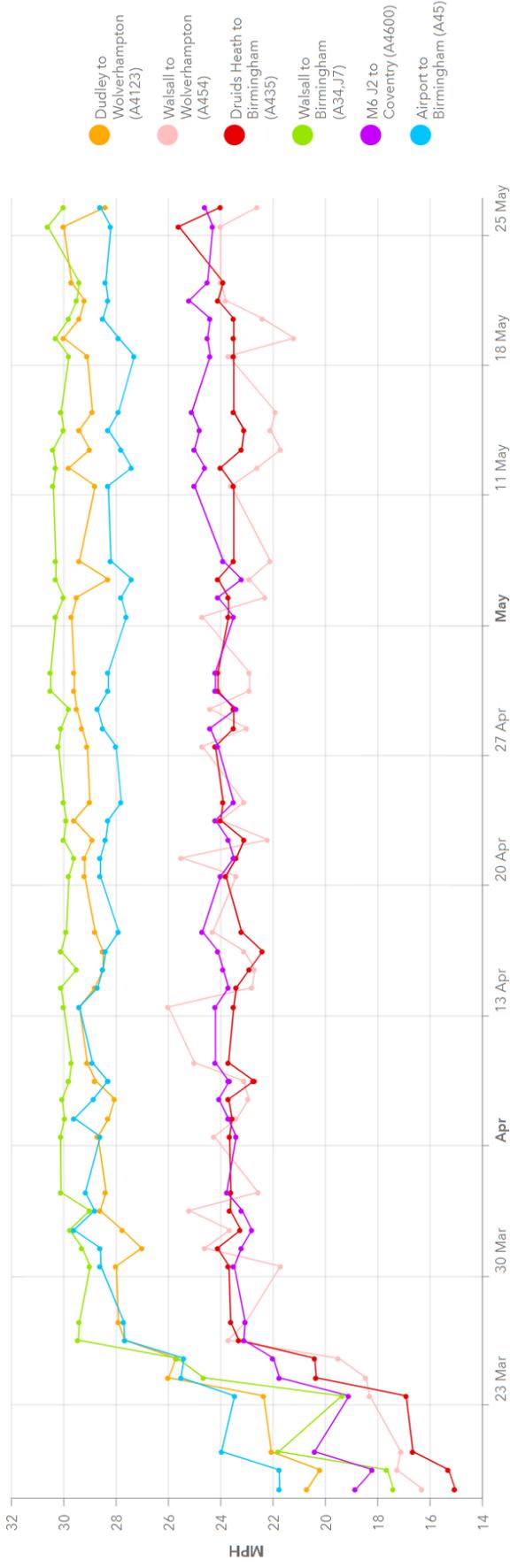
- Coordinated data sets from NHS trusts to understand key worker journeys which helped to shape the maintained network during the lockdown period.
- Gained agreement across local bus and Metro operators to offer temporary free travel to NHS workers.
- Maintained service levels on key routes serving key worker locations.
- Provided shuttle services from Park and Ride and key interchanges to hospitals using the Ring and Ride fleet as a demand response service. Noting that to date we have seen over 3,000 journeys made on this service.
- Provided free Park and Ride for NHS workers at stations managed by TfWM which usually charge for parking.
- Coordinated the travel planning around the set-up of the Nightingale hospital at the NEC.

## **3. Impact on the Transport System**

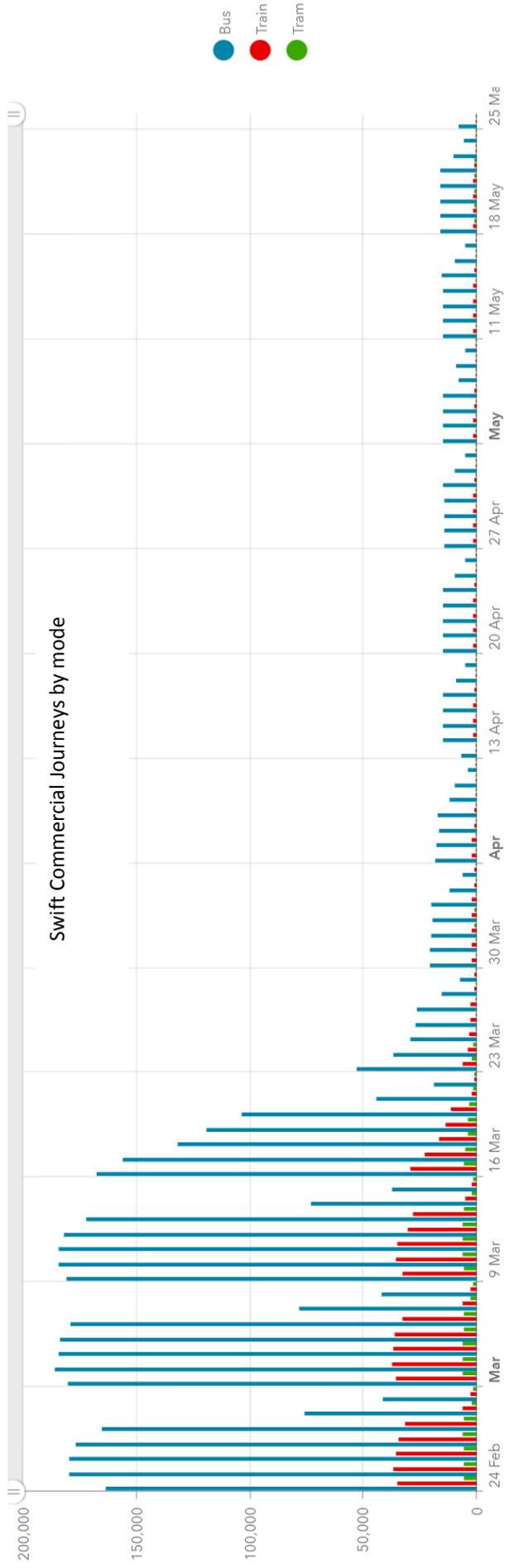
- 3.1 The lockdown has resulted in significant changes to the transport system. Demand for travel has reduced significantly and the UK public transport network is currently being publicly funded in its entirety as it cannot operate commercially at this time. The significantly reduced demand and capacity of the public transport system means this financial pressure is likely to remain for an extended period. There are consequent public and private sector risks arising from this and a likely impact of increased transport demand on other modes as a recovery from the pandemic takes place.

3.2 The following graphs illustrate some of these changes to the transport system e.g. levels of Commercial Swift usage (the West Midlands Smart public transport fare system) have plummeted as patronage has dropped. Across the highway network average traffic speeds have increased as the roads have emptied.

Weekday AM Peak (0630-0830)  
Average Traffic Speed



Daily data from Waze, updated by TfWM



3.3 These reductions in travel have had a number of positive impacts:

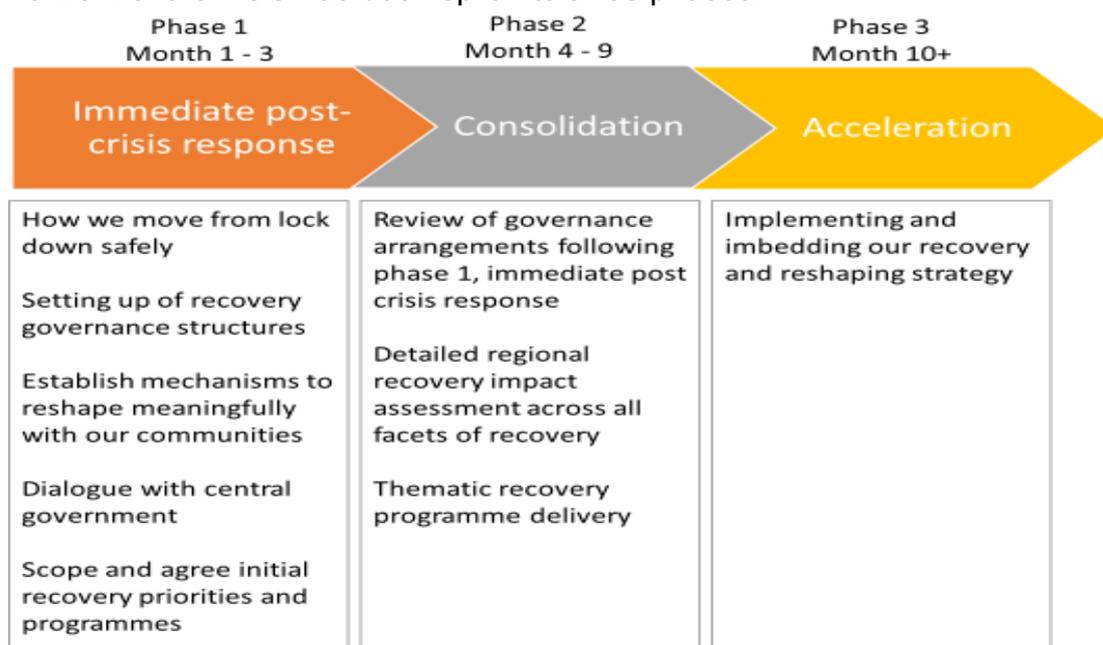
- In early April, nitrogen dioxide levels reduced by the following percentages, compared to the previous five year average for the same time period: Monitoring suggests that levels have reduced in Birmingham by around 42%.
- There have been reductions in carbon emissions related to recent reduced traffic levels. UK figures from Sia Partners show UK emissions have reduced by 36% from the start of the lockdown to early May.

#### 4. Moving out of Lockdown – Transport working through a LRF Transport Cell

4.1 On May 11<sup>th</sup> the Government set out a strategy for the lifting of Lockdown restrictions in the UK. This seeks a balance between the risks of incurring a second wave of COVID-19 restrictions and enabling a restart of the economy. Transport is and will continue to play a key role in facilitating this national strategy.

4.2 To transition from response to recovery, the Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG), led by the WMCA and built around the WMCA’s programme board, is developing a Recovery Strategy.

4.3 The work of the RCG has been split into three phases:



4.4 The transport focus for recovery is being led by Transport for West Midlands through the Local Resilience Forum ‘Transport Cell’. This brings together the transport operators, authorities, Local and strategic Highway Authorities, Police and Transport Focus to support the development and implementation of the regional transport recovery activity.

4.5 The group is broad as it is tackling the complexity of a transport system which has a number of parties responsible for its operation and management as they collective rise to the challenge to delivering a co-ordinated approach. The cell allows Transport for West Midlands to work closely with our Local Authorities, transport operators, Highway England and West Midlands Police to begin to plan for the West Midlands transport system to respond as the UK moved into the next phase as Lockdown restrictions are relaxed in a series of phases.

- 4.6 The Transport cell is providing updates to the RCG on the scale-up of transport services as we emerge from the national restrictions. The Transport cell is also providing an operational response, with information from the transport cell being reported through to the Strategic Coordination Group set up to respond operationally to the pandemic.
- 4.7 TfWM teams have been working with partners and Government to understand the issues for each mode and to anticipate and prepare for the lifting of lockdown restrictions and ensure that the response is now being co-ordinated effectively across all modes of travel.
- 4.8 The Transport Cell has responsibility to support the execution of the Transport Recovery Plan by providing a safe, clean and functioning transport system for those that need it, increasing transport capacity in line with national and regional exit and recovery strategies.
- 4.9 Terms of Reference for the Transport Cell are attached at Appendix A and the CA Board is asked to approve these.

## **5. The West Midlands Local Transport Recovery**

- 5.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) wrote to all Combined Authorities/Local Transport Authorities and Local Highways Authorities in England, outside London, on 12th May 2020. A copy is attached at Appendix B.
- 5.2 DfT is looking to Combined Authorities/Local Transport Authorities (i.e. TfWM) to lead the overall transport planning working across their area, bringing the most important local partners together on a very regular basis to drive forward work at pace.
- 5.3 The DfT set out that they expect all authorities to co-operate fully with, and respond rapidly to, area-wide planning, particularly where their action is required – e.g. to re-allocate road space or manage pedestrian movements.
- 5.4 The Government's has also published a number of pieces of supplementary guidance for passengers and operators and for the use and management of public realm. These have been used to inform and shape our responses.
- 5.5 There are a number of key challenges for the transport system as we move out of lockdown:
- Remaining uncertainties over both the detailed timing and the nature of the phasing of the release from lockdown 'Exit Roadmap' published on 11th May.
  - Despite current advice not to use public transport unless it is essential in order to protect it for those who need it the most, the level of anticipated demand for public transport remains unclear as we move through future phases of release from lockdown (aligned with ongoing requirements to maintain social distancing).
  - Funding the cost for the operation of a public transport network which may be operating at full pre-Covid 19 service levels or better, but is generating as little as 25% of the revenue it was based on social distancing requirements.
  - Addressing any need for increased capacity to support demand in the context of social distancing at a time when reduced revenue may drive commercial providers to reduce costs in order to manage commercial impacts.
  - Factoring in additional costs such as staff to support increased levels of cleaning, providing information, and customer support.

- Assessing the medium-term implications of the pandemic on how we plan for and deliver transport, such as powers to better manage an integrated transport system holistically across the region. These must strive to enable seamless coordination between modes and operators at the appropriate times during a period of emergency measures such as social distancing.

5.6 Beyond the Transport Cell we will continue to work closely with our Local Highway Authority partners, other Local Transport Authorities, Urban Transport Group and the Department for Transport to understand these issues. We are also drawing on lessons and experiences emerging from other areas of the world which are ahead of the UK in their emergence from lock-down and tackling the challenges we are likely to face in the West Midlands.

## 6. TfWM Recovery Plan

6.1 To support the wider recovery and co-ordinate activity, TfWM has developed an initial recovery plan for its own activity. The plan considers both the short-term issues we face as we start to remobilise the transport system and the longer term questions about what the impact of the pandemic will have on how we plan for and deliver our transport system in future.

6.2 A summary of the plan is attached at Appendix C, which is based on six overarching programme themes:

- **Network Operations and Planning** – Making travel safe and secure, ensuring a clean and functioning transport system for those that need it, increasing transport capacity in line with national and regional recovery and exit strategies.
- **Funding for a safe, resilient and financially secure essential transport system** – Securing funding for transport measures to support social distancing, including rolling out walking and cycling improvements. Developing a revised financial model for delivery of schemes and operation of transport services, in particular for bus, rail and metro.
- **Creating a transport information campaign and behaviour change programme** – Implementing a coordinated and consistent communications plan that provides up to date information on services and advice on travel. This will promote choices for travellers about how and when to travel if necessary and influence those industries that can to minimise their demand on the network to do so.
- **Infrastructure Delivery Programme** – Re-starting critical projects to support the regional economic recovery and flexing the programme to reflect increased costs and available funding.
- **Transport Data & Intelligence** – Develop insight and data tools to support policy development and operational decision making, including attitudinal and behaviour surveys of travellers, acceleration of sensor deployment and modelling scenarios for a ‘new normal’.
- **Developing a Transport Recovery Strategy** (aligned to the review of the Local Transport Plan already underway) – Adapting existing workstreams to ensure that in the medium to long-term the region is best place to maximise the positive opportunities such as increased receptiveness to home working and minimise potential negative pressures such as increased car usage.

6.3 Within this programme significant effort has been placed on Communications and Engagement Activity:

- A communications working group has been established which links into the Transport Cell with representation across internal teams and key partners such as National Express, West Midlands Trains, West Midlands Metro, Highways England and Local Authorities.
- The group aims to provide a joined-up and consistent approach to communications and information across the integrated transport network, specifically around the social distancing guidelines from government and the operational recovery of the network.
- Various forms of artwork, to encourage people to maintain social distancing, have been developed under the West Midlands Network brand family to ensure consistency of look and messaging across all modes, stops and stations, using the key strapline of **Stay Safe. Stay Apart**. These measures are being rolled out from w/c 18 May 2020.
- Further work will then commence to push active travel and support people switching to cycling or walking to support the public transport capacity reductions and new or temporary cycling and walking measures developed. The RTCC will be monitoring the public transport and local road network and we will be reactively supporting any issues or incidents with communications as required.
- A summary of key messages being given to the public is attached at Appendix D

6.4 Managing and coordinating the bus and Metro network as key local transport solutions has been a critical part of the process where over 82% of public transport journeys in the region were undertaken by bus and Metro prior to Covid 19.

6.5 Once the national emergency measures started to be developed TfWM worked with the office of the Traffic Commissioner who has powers over bus service registrations and put in place an emergency process to support service changes. We worked with the NHS to develop bespoke shuttle services to support NHS staff, and worked closely with bus operators to develop a network that provided services to key workers and other critical journeys safely, supporting changes where demand outstripped supply to ensure a safe network.

6.6 As set out earlier in the report providing a temporary lifting of the pre-09.30 concession for English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) pass holders supported some of our most vulnerable residents to get to shops and supermarkets earlier during a time when they were being offered special opening times earlier in the day, prior to the general increase in both services and customer levels from June 1st. This concession was terminated at the end of service on 31st May 2020 at a time when peak time capacity on bus services was expected to be increasing and potentially putting ENCTS pass holders at increased levels of risk on the network and a greater chance of not being able to access services.

6.7 On the back of this TfWM are working with stakeholders and partners to identify additional processes and powers that will support improved management of the recovery, along with improved resilience to any future emergency situation. These are being developed in conjunction with transport providers and we will expect to report back to the WMCA in the very near future with further proposals.

## 6.8 Also Data and Insight has been a critical focus:

- Developed by TfWM's Data Insight team an operational dashboard drawing on progressing more data sources has been established and opened to DfT, transport operators, highway authorities and others as required to provide a daily view of the state of the network.
- A public survey seeking views on the impact of the pandemic on people's travel choices now and their perceptions and attitudes of how they might choose to travel in the future was released.
- The survey closed on 11th May with over 6000 respondents. This highlights:-
  - Of those expressing an opinion, 65% felt the bus operators' response had been excellent/good. 61% held a similar opinion in respect of rail operators and 59% in respect of Metro.
  - 43% of public transport users are extremely concerned about using public transport post lockdown.
  - Increased cleaning patrols (88%), Social distancing when queuing (82%) and when travelling (72%) are essential in renewing passenger confidence.
  - The top-3 things respondents wanted to see change/ learn lessons from were cleaner air (81%) and reduced traffic on roads/ reduced car use (75%), followed by a better work/life balance (67%).
  - The two things people are most likely to do when lockdown restrictions are lifted are walk more (47%) and working from home more (39%). The thing they are most like to do less of is use public transport (36%).
  - The need to continue engagement with the circa 3000 respondents who have provide consent to be contacted for this.
- Accelerating the use of resources available through the Future Transport Zone to help deliver a sensor programme to address our lack of data on the live visibility of the operational highway network – where a regional view is currently patchy. This will enhance the Regional Transport Coordination Centre, providing benefit for road users, including public transport and our local highway authorities.

## 7. Emergency Active Travel Funding

- 7.1 On 9 May the Government announced an 'Emergency Active Travel Fund' (EATF) and guidance to work with local authorities across the country to help make it easier for people to use pedal cycles and walking for commuting or to get daily exercise. An allocation of £250 million from the £2 billion investment in cycling and walking, previously announced at the March 2020 budget is to be made available immediately to support the delivery of temporary schemes such as pop up cycle lanes and widening pavements. The fund also includes opportunity to introduce temporary bus priority measures to maintain bus service performance at a time when it may come under increased strain if there is an increase in car travel.
- 7.2 In the letter from DfT which outlines the collaborative approach for delivery of a Green Transport and Restart and Recovery in addition to the cycling and walking infrastructure, additional measures were proposed such as walking to school and working with businesses and organisations.

- 7.3 Guidance for the Emergency Active Travel funding is yet to be published, but it is understood that up to £17.2 million will be made available to the West Midlands. Access to this will be subject to the ability to meet specific criteria set out by the Department for Transport and the monies will be made available in two tranches. The ability to implement ambitious measures very quickly is understood to be a critical factor in DfT's assessment of any proposals. A verbal update will be provided at the CA Board on the latest position by the Portfolio Lead for Transport.
- 7.4 Allocations have been made by a formula which reflects levels of public transport usage, because areas with higher levels of public transport use will come under the greatest pressure as lockdown restrictions are eased. Therefore walking and cycling will be the most important to relieve the pressure.
- 7.5 Combined Authorities will be expected to co-ordinate proposals for their areas. It is also expected that the £250 million will need to be spent by the end of March 2021 so proposals will need to demonstrate that there is political will and that they can be delivered very quickly.
- 7.6 TfWM has been in discussions with DfT, Urban Transport Group (UTG) and other Transport Authorities to help influence the Government's approach on the funding.
- 7.7 Following discussions at STOG on 15 May 2020, the following themes were identified for the EATF:
- **Infrastructure** – make the most of existing and develop and deliver new, initially temporary leading into more permanent measures
  - **Access to cycles** – owning, loaning or providing
  - **Supporting people** – Ensure that residents are capable, provided the opportunity and have the motivation to choose active travel.
- 7.8 Ahead of guidance from Government, TfWM has asked local authorities to propose potential infrastructure schemes and are working to forward fund LA's so they can implement them at pace. These are subject to relevant review and approvals but demonstrate the level of ambition in the region. In addition, TfWM are working with all local authorities on potential priority schemes for the highway, as well as emergency measures for bus infrastructure to support social distancing.
- 7.9 As well as infrastructure proposals, there is a need for an overarching regional programme of communications and supporting measures which would be coordinated by TfWM.
- 7.10 On a national level DfT are commissioning packages of work with several of our partners including Sustrans and Cycling UK. These plans are currently in development.
- 7.11 In the interests of being able to respond to the Government timescales the WMCA is recommended to delegate its powers in respect of this initiative to the Managing Director, TfWM and Director of Development & Delivery, TfWM (working in close liaison with the Finance Director, WMCA) in order to
- 7.11.1 Act on behalf of TfWM and WMCA to develop and deliver the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) programme jointly with the Local Highway Authorities.
  - 7.11.2 Work with STOG (strategic transport officers working at Director level from constituent Authorities) to shape the detail of EATF.

7.11.3 Operate through TfWM and the WMCA's standard assurance, governance and Member oversight processes to shape and deliver the programme.

7.12 The delegations are to be exercised under the direction of the CA Portfolio Holder for Transport in consultation with the participating LHA Cabinet Members for transport. The initiative will be delivered and resourced alongside the existing Walking and Cycling Programme to maximise project management efficiencies and the use of scarce technical skill sets. As part of this the existing structure of Officer based Cycling and Walking Officers Group (covering the Black Country, Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry) will ensure integration with all local programmes and will co-develop any necessary Local Authority Cabinet or Cabinet Member briefings as required.

## **8. eScooters**

8.1 eScooters are one of the new forms of transport emerging as technology, cost effective manufacturing and batteries improve. As with electric bikes, they are starting to be used by private owners. They are also being used in various cities across the world as part of public sharing and hire schemes.

8.2 In an urban context they can help with providing easy first and last mile access to points of interest and transport interchanges. Being generally more portable they can be more easily carried on public transport and into workplaces - and so can make multi-mode journeys easier. However, as with any emerging technology there are concerns about unintended consequences, particularly the safety of riders and other road users such as pedestrians.

8.3 Currently eScooters are not legal for use on the public highway and should only be used on private land. Enforcement of use on the highway is difficult and increasing usage is being observed. There are no rigorous studies of the issues and limited information on which to base new regulation on which could ensure vehicle safety and standards, or to set out what acceptable and safe use should look like.

8.4 In a wider initiative to promote walking and cycling as part of a green and healthy recovery from COVID 19 the Secretary of State for Transport announced the acceleration of eScooter trials planned for 2021. These were to have been limited to the new Future Transport Zones, of which the West Midlands is the UK pathfinder. However, in a bid to see wider engagement and take-up of trials across both rural and urban areas the call for trials will be open to any interested area. It is expected that the FTZs will be significant participants and the DfT remain keen to see eScooter trials brought forward in a coordinated way with the other initiatives in these zones. The objectives of the trials are understood to include:

- Providing faster access to more places
- Accelerating the ability of the transport system to return to normal
- Off-setting the potential for a mass reversion to car use in urban areas
- Supporting a healthy and green re-start post COVID
- Providing learning:-
  - Improving the evidence base, which globally is inconclusive
  - Understanding if eScooters could be made safer if they are not safe enough
  - Informing future legislation and/or regulation
  - Better understanding pricing models

- 8.5 No extra dedicated grant money is formally available to support the trials and participating areas are expected to work within existing funding. eScooter operators are expected to front the main cost of the trials. Informally there is potential to work with the £250m Emergency Active Travel funding allocations, but this is currently unconfirmed.
- 8.6 In line with the intent to support the COVID recovery the trials are expected to go live over the Summer of 2021 or earlier if feasible, with preliminary evaluation in the Autumn and in total operating for a minimum of 12 months. Regulatory changes to enable legal use with the official trial zones are expected imminently with the formal consultation launched on the 18 May 2020. This closes on the 2 June and trials are expected to start from as early as late June 2020 with no trials starting later than August 2020.
- 8.7 It is proposed to bring forward a regionally coordinated programme of eScooter trials for the West Midlands in response to the call. This would be a close partnership between Local Highway Authorities and TfWM. Local Highway Authorities would lead the zone identification, road safety and traffic management issues, with TfWM supporting through coordination, resourcing and facilitating, plus M&E and maximising Future Transport Zone synergies:
- A lead LHA (Birmingham City Council have volunteered) would provide a coordinating perspective for all the involved LHAs supported by an Officer project group open to all willing LHAs (constituent Authorities and non-constituent Local Transport Authorities to the WMCA) to put forward and include zones.
  - TfWM would provide a single point of contact to other national Trial Zones and the DfT, supporting open sharing and collaboration with the objective of securing legacy benefit and coordinated expansion of the operations if proven beneficial.
- 8.8 As well as fulfilling the overarching national trial objectives, a critical goal would be to embed eScooters within a cohesive overall transport experience associated with the Network West Midlands brand and information / travel guidance (but with local identity / or event specific identity as appropriate). Placing safety at the heart of any trials will need to be a critical component of any trial specification. A range of individual but coordinated trial zones across all interested LHAs could include:
- Targeting several operators to maximise learning about the user response to different service models and charging regimes
  - Integration / interaction with pre-existing initiatives such as bike hire and Swift as central to the trials to ensure they complement the transport system and other Future Transport Zone work
  - Assessing mode-share impacts, from other sustainable travel and car use – as well as overall active health impacts
  - Exploring vehicle performance and data sharing standards
  - Different environments such as campuses, transport interchanges, Park & Ride access, access enhancements to local centres, city centre locations, longer corridors urban corridors and more rural settings.
  - Investigating safety; interaction with other vulnerable road users (to ensure specific needs are addressed); understanding social inclusion and accessibility impacts, cultural and physical barriers, enforcement and vehicle performance issues.

- 8.9 There are significant potential synergies for any eScooter trials with the existing Future Transport Zone programme, especially the committed enhancements to Swift, Mobility as a Service trials and Mobility Credits initiatives. The FTZ programme is wholly grant funded and has capacity to support any anticipated small additional local costs of the trials that cannot be covered by participating eScooter operators.
- 8.10 A further critical synergy is the interaction with the regional bike hire scheme. The eScooter trials will be required to be limited in physical scope and duration, and as such will not have an immediate direct material commercial implication for the bike hire contract. As the wider strategic bike hire scheme is implemented and the learning from the eScooter trials emerges measures will need to put in place to ensure maximum benefit for the region. These will need to ensure any wider roll-out post trial of positive aspects of eScooters is compatible with and doesn't undermine the bike hire arrangements, but that also the bike hire contract doesn't fetter the ability to exploit the learning from the trials.
- 8.11 In the interests of being able to respond to the Government timescales the WMCA is recommended to delegate its powers in respect of this initiative to the Managing Director, TfWM and Director of Policy, Strategy and Innovation, TfWM (working in close liaison with the Finance Director, WMCA) in order to
- 8.11.1 Act on behalf of TfWM and WMCA to develop and deliver an eScooter trial programme working with the relevant participating Local Highway Authorities, expediting procurement and contracting to meet national timescales as required.
  - 8.11.2 Work with STOG (strategic transport officers working at Director level from constituent and non-constituent Authorities) to shape the detail of the trials.
  - 8.11.3 Operate through TfWM and the WMCA's standard assurance, governance and Member oversight processes to shape and deliver the programme.
- 8.12 The delegations are to be exercised under the direction of the CA Portfolio Holder for Transport in consultation with the participating LHA Cabinet Members for transport. The initiative will be delivered and resourced alongside existing transport innovation programmes to maximise project management efficiencies and the use of scarce technical skill sets. As part of this the existing structure of Officer based partnership delivery boards for Transport Innovation (covering the Black Country, Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry) will ensure integration with all local programmes and will co-develop any necessary Local Authority Cabinet or Cabinet Member briefings which are required support any trials.

## **9. From Consolidation to Acceleration - Longer Term Challenges for Transport**

- 9.1 Covid-19 is likely to have long lasting impacts on societal norms and the way we live our daily lives, including the way we travel for work, education, shopping and leisure. In the short term the need to continue with social distancing will require many to continue working from home. Whilst some shops, businesses and leisure facilities may reopen these will also be subject to restrictions and this will shape peoples travel patterns.

- 9.2 The capacity of the public transport system is currently circa 25% of pre-Covid 19 levels, assuming that all pre-Covid 19 service levels can be mobilised (which is not currently commercially viable). This is a significant threat which is likely to have a long-lasting impact on viability of public transport services. Whilst there could be some positive travel behaviour changes, including more working from home and more walking cycling, there could also be negative impacts as a result of more car use as people retreat into the isolated environments of their cars. Critical potential impacts include road safety, air quality and carbon emissions increases.
- 9.3 Practically there are already significant implications for the levels of subsidy that public transport has required since the start of the pandemic in order to retain the levels of accessibility and service frequency that many in society consider essential.
- 9.4 This will also have varying degrees of impact on public sector finances both in terms of how the transport system is paid for – where revenues are raised from and how different segments of the transport system are operated and delivered - but also the costs that transport imposes on society and the environment e.g. health issues related to air quality could reduce as a result of behaviour change.
- 9.5 For Transport for West Midlands key issues will be to consider the role of our services and assets in a new transport paradigm. There are potentially challenges for us in terms of how we fund existing and new infrastructure e.g. Metro extensions. The implications at this time are not fully quantifiable due to uncertainties on future demand and the speed of return towards a new normal.
- 9.6 In the short to medium term there are a number of key areas of activity which will continue to support recovery and will support a path towards a zero carbon, green future West Midlands, delivering our #WM2041 ambitions.
- Building on HS2 which has now received Notice to Proceed from Government and seeking to boost resources for our HS2 Connectivity package.
  - Accelerating our wider transport investment programme investing in corridors and supporting the regeneration of centres (including 2021 Capital of Culture and 2022 Commonwealth Games)
  - Improved 5G infrastructure to support a longer-term switch to home working.
  - Accelerating Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure.
  - Active Travel and Behaviour Change Investment at unprecedented levels is required- continuing to build on behaviour change accelerated by measures such as the Emergency Active Travel Fund and changes to travel patterns and working from home.
- 9.7 In the longer term our transport strategies will need to evolve to respond to the changes in travel demand as a result of the pandemic and to help us deliver inclusive growth but also to meet the reductions in carbon emissions that we have committed to.
- 9.8 There are already a number of problems particularly with regard to delivering inclusive growth which are in part a failure of our current transport system:
- Climate emergency
  - Loss of local assets
  - Physical inactivity
  - Transport inequality (inequality of access and inequality of impacts)

- 9.9 There are real risks that Covid-19 induced behaviour changes could make these issues even more difficult to address through:
- A high carbon recovery - due to the current cost of fuel and the perceived 'safety' of car travel and an associated reluctance to tackle the real and pressing danger presented by climate change.
  - Long-term increase in congestion, poorer air quality and impacts to road safety.
  - Increases to the costs of operation in tandem with reduced demand risk undermining the long-term financial viability of the public transport system.
  - Potential fare increases for public transport in response to changed operations and demand risk increasing social isolation and inclusion agendas.
- 9.10 Historically, recessions have seen environmental issues side-lined and associated challenging decisions put-off. As the WM2041 strategy has highlighted there is no longer the luxury to continue deferring difficult decisions. Positive action to manage highway demand and accelerate travel behaviour change is essential to maximise opportunities to support change in people's lifestyles and wellbeing i.e. continued working from home, further building on digital innovation such as WM5G, securing an active travel/positive public health legacy etc.
- 9.11 The WMCA has adopted an ambitious carbon budget which requires immediate and deep cuts to carbon emissions requiring actions that are affordable and can be bought forward quickly with high impact. WMCA has developed the carbon budget based on analysis and research undertaken by Tyndall Centre and is based on the aims and principles of the Paris Agreement.
- 9.12 Transport emissions have broadly stayed the same over the last 20 years. However, they dipped during the last recession and we can expect them to dip during the Corona virus national emergency. The majority of transport emissions are from surface transport and the majority of these emissions are from internal combustion engine cars and total energy consumption of transport of all forms.
- 9.13 As noted above there are significant challenges for achieving inclusive growth as a result of the pandemics and its legacy. People facing the greatest deprivation are experiencing a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 and existing poor health puts them at risk of more severe outcomes if they contract the virus. The measures to control the spread of the virus and save lives now are exacting a heavier social and economic price on those already experiencing inequality.
- 9.14 The consequences of this action and the economic recession that is likely to follow could see public transport become less available and / or more expensive coupled with an even more car orientated hypermobile society. This will create a significant risk of exacerbating inequalities now and in years to come.
- 9.15 As we move from crisis management to recovery, our transport policies will need to take into account the evolving inequalities as well as the need to address the established shortcomings of our transport system in the delivery of inclusive growth. There is an opportunity to use transport strategy and investment as part of a green recovery strategy to create a new 'fairer, greener and healthier' normal and to bounce back better.

- 9.16 As noted a data and insight exercise is already underway both regionally and at a national level to start to build an understanding of the sorts of change we can expect to see. To help us understand how the transport system in the West Midlands may need to evolve we are developing a number of future scenarios to test policy options and guide our approach. This will form part of our ongoing wider review of the Local Transport Plan.
- 9.17 It is proposed that officers will engage with Leaders and relevant portfolio leads initially through conversations on wider climate change and recovery strategy discussions. This will help to shape a new West Midlands vision for transport.

## **10. Next Steps**

- 10.1 The situation will continue to change at pace over the coming weeks and months as the UK moves towards a new normal. This will require TfWM and partners to continue to be responsive and flexible in our approach.
- 10.2 In the short term the Transport Recovery Action Plan will help guide the key areas of focus for the organisation and as a live document and will continue to be updated as the recovery and approach on lifting lockdown restrictions unfolds. Tactical decisions will be made through the Transport Cell and will continue to report through to the RCG.
- 10.3 Transport for West Midlands will support the development of the wider WMCA recovery strategy and actions from the WM2041 plan which relate to transport. A key element will be the update of the West Midlands statutory transport plan, work on which is well progressed. Engagement with members on key issues and policy scenarios is proposed for later in the summer.

## **11. Financial Implications**

- 11.1 Covid-19 and the resulting lockdown has had a significant financial impact on the TfWM/WMCA. The implications for Transport can be broadly categorised into three elements; immediate costs and loss of revenue resulting from the rapid and wholesale change to the transport environment, the opportunity cost of providing support to operators despite disruption to normal service provision and the longer term implications for transport provision.
- 11.2 The immediate financial impact has been largely felt in lost revenue where the enforced shutdown of businesses and working from home arrangements have removed income-generating opportunities such as ticketing commission, digital advertising income and the ability to recharge infrastructure costs to operators. In addition, Bus Station Departure Charges have been suspended from March to June at a cost to TfWM of approximately £174k per month.
- 11.3 The income shortfall will need to be accommodated within existing TfWM resources if further funding is not available from Government to cover it. Given the current environment and the need to ease restrictions in a cautious and planned manner, it is anticipated that income will continue to be impacted for some months, albeit at a gradually lower level. The reintroduction of Bus Station Departure Charges and the gradual resumption of social and business activities will start to generate income although the scale will depend on how quickly normal activity resumes.

- 11.4 The DfT has confirmed two short-term funding allocations for Metro. The first should cover the anticipated loss of fares revenue until the end of June, based on operating a more limited service. The second element of funding, announced in late May, will provide support for some weeks beyond June; specifically for how long will be established once further details from Government are received.
- 11.5 TfWM will also need to support the easing of restrictions, including communication of service changes and reinforcement of the social-distancing message as well as potential work to infrastructure to enable social-distancing. Where possible, existing budgets will be redirected to these activities but the cost, which could be in the region of £0.100m, will depend upon the nature and scale of work required and will be a further pressure on TfWM's budget if existing funds cannot be redirected. Additional costs as well as lost revenue are being monitored and will form part of any funding bid to Government.
- 11.6 As well as temporarily suspending Departure Charges, the WMCA, following guidance from Central Government, has supported bus operators by basing Concessionary, tendered service and Ring and Ride payments on comparable pre-Covid-19 patronage rather than actual journeys which have been as low as 5-10% of normal levels. This arrangement is in place until 9th June. These payments are within budget so do not represent an additional financial pressure. However, they have been made for services which have not been received in full and have prevented TfWM from diverting any savings to other activities required to meet new demands.
- 11.7 The longer-term financial impacts are difficult to quantify as a number of factors, such as emerging Government guidance, public behaviour and availability of funding sources, will impact them significantly. Because there has been such a seismic impact on everyday life, the way in which people work and socialise, and thus the way in which they travel, may change considerably over time resulting in significant changes in the way in which resources are allocated going forward. TfWM also recognises that social distancing, disruption to supply chains and the general environment of uncertainty brought on by the pandemic may manifest itself in higher prices to develop and build capital infrastructure. Evidence from TfWM stakeholders suggests that in some instances the cost escalations are upwards of 20%. In the context of having a finite financial resource, TfWM will be required to look closely at its capital programmes and ensure that investments are prioritised against those schemes which provide the most significant benefits to the region. This work to ensure the plans are affordable is ongoing and will also be formalised as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan development over the Summer of 2020.

## **12. Legal Implications**

- 12.1 At this stage in the response and recovery process, the main legal implications arise from the urgent actions taken which are set out in this report (and also in the report elsewhere on the Board Agenda from the WMCA Statutory Officers) Urgent actions have been taken in line with Government advice around emergency reshaping of the transport network and support for suppliers/providers and are reported here.
- 12.2 The Combined Authority continues to follow advice and guidance in regard to the recovery phase and legal advice has been sought over the implications of actions. Additional assurance is being sought before contracts and legal agreements are entered in excess of a value of £250k to ensure that the implications of Covid19 are being assessed. The legal implications are being kept under review and the Authority is ensuring that it is involved in national discussions with regard to the legal implications through the Urban Transport Group of Transport Authorities.

### **13. Equalities Implications**

- 13.1 The report makes reference to a likely widening of transport inequalities following the Covid-19 outbreak. Groups likely to be impacted include; people on lower incomes and those with poorer levels of education; those with health and social care needs ; older age groups; those living in deprived areas and in poorer housing conditions; BME communities; those on lower skilled jobs who are not able to work from home and rely on public transport to get to work.
- 13.2 Further widening of inequalities (the region already faces significant inequality challenges) will have an impact on WMCA's inclusive growth aspirations. An EqIA of Covid-19 transport inequalities will help determine potential impact in more detail and help direct future priorities and allocation of resources to support vulnerable groups.

### **14. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 14.1 As noted Covid-19 has exacerbated many already underlying inequalities – be it socio-economic or health. As more evidence comes to light, it demonstrates how vulnerable groups are suffering more – which are then further exacerbated as we move into Recovery. These present a significant challenge for delivering Inclusive Growth and there is a need to consider how best to use existing tools such as the Inclusive Growth Toolkit, to ensure all WMCA investment drives more inclusive and sustainable growth.
- 14.2 The impact of the contents of this report on delivery of the 15 Strategic Transport Plan Policies and/or the development/operation of:
- The National & Regional Tier
  - The Metropolitan Tier: Rail and Rapid Transit Network, Key Route Network, Strategic Cycle Network
  - The Local Tier
  - Smart Mobility Tier
- 14.3 The policies that are supported include:
- Policy 1 - Accommodate increased travel demand by existing transport capacity and new sustainable transport capacity;
  - Policy 2 - Use existing transport capacity more effectively to provide greater reliability and average speed for the movement of people and goods;
  - Policy 3 - Maintain existing transport capacity more effectively to provide greater resilience and greater reliability for the movement of people and goods.
  - Policy 4 - Improve connections to new economic development locations to help them flourish, primarily through sustainable transport connections
  - Policy 6 - To improve connections to areas of deprivation.
  - Policy 8 - To improve connections to new housing development locations to help them flourish, primarily through sustainable transport connections.

### **15. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

- 15.1 The WMCA exercises transport powers overwhelmingly in respect of the area covered by its constituent authority members.

15.2 There are opportunities for the response to the eScooter trials to extend to interested non-constituent authority members and irrespective of active participation particular effort will be made on information and knowledge sharing regarding this emerging travel trend.

## **16. Appendices**

**Appendix A** – Transport Cell Terms of Reference

**Appendix B** – DfT Letter 'Local Transport Restart',

**Appendix C** – Transport Recovery Plan Summary

**Appendix D** – Key Recovery Travel Messages