

Transport network response to the Covid pandemic

Government advice has been clear: ***“Do not travel on public transport unless it is essential”***

- As a result, at the end of April 2020, public transport trips in the region declined by circa 90% across all modes, based on Swift data.
- The response to the pandemic has had a significant impact on transport operators and travel behaviours.
- This presents a number of challenges for us as we move into the next phases of recovery.

Summary messages: Moving to resilience; and into recovery

- TfWM will work closely with all regional partners to aid economic resilience and recovery.
- TfWM, will work closely to support local highway authority colleagues, in order to **keep a safe, clean and functioning transport available for those that need it.**
- We won't be able to turn the transport system back on overnight – it needs planning and preparation, not least of which as a result of transport staff being furloughed.
- Capacity to service demand will be constrained – social distancing impacts, construction acceleration as stimulus creating highway disruption, potential for increased levels of car use could adversely affect PT reliability. Reduced capacity will also have a significant impact on the financial viability of the transport system.
- Unequal impacts on our citizens likely worsened – our most vulnerable and deprived are likely to be less able to respond and adapt to a new normal.
- The potential to pull levers in the transport system to support economic recovery and manage impacts needs to be thought about carefully now and in sync with other economic policies – e.g. free parking could drive unwarranted travel to locations where social distancing continues to be a challenge and ongoing unsustainable car demand - choking the network for the most economically vulnerable freight and logistics operations, free public transport for targeted groups could

be helpful and off-set inclusion impacts and support transport operators etc.

- Need to ensure that government understands, and that regionally, we have a clear view about the steps needed to ensure a well-managed process out of the current situation.
- We will need to ensure that our messaging to the public are well timed, consistent and clear

West Midlands Regional recovery approach

- It is understood that Government are exploring options for relaxing current lockdown as well as developing thinking on an economic recovery.
- In anticipation of this WMCA, working with partners, have developed a Regional Recover Strategy.

Transport's role in supporting the recovery

Transport's role within the regional recovery will be critical to help securing a fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands; post pandemic.

In particular this means the safe and well-coordinated remobilising of the transport system in the short term and accelerating our infrastructure delivery programmes to support recovery in the longer term.

TfWM have developed four principles to aid the regional recovery strategy and more detail on this will be presented to WMCA Board in June. A summary is provided in Appendix A.

Immediate recovery challenges – moving from Response into Resilience

Recovering the transport system.

TfWM, working with local authorities and operators, will work to ensure that the appropriate level of transport is available in a timely and co-ordinated way and messaging around the need to travel is clear. This will need to be in line with guidance on lifting of restrictions and carefully managed and considered alongside the wider economic recovery planning. Key issues to be considered include:

Ensuring an essential and safe network - Social distancing and capacity

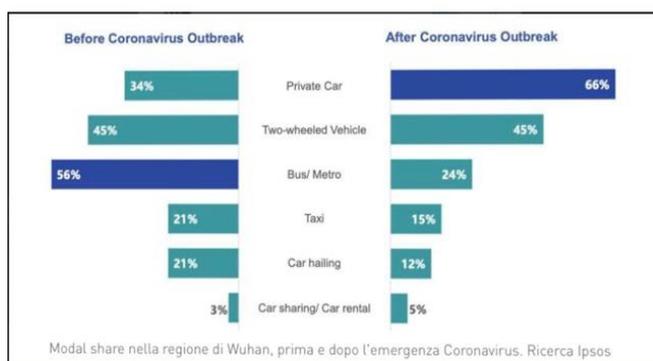
With social distancing measures in place it could result in capacity issues in response to levels demand. The reduction in capacity will also have an impact on financial viability of the transport system and operator's ability to make these services commercially viable. Ongoing funding for a core public transport will be a key issue, and TfWM will have to work with government to secure a financial package to support the transport system, to ensure the remobilisation of services can be coordinated across different modes.

TfWM are working with operators and the Local Resilience Forum (*Strategic and Tactical Groups*) to understand how infrastructure may be changed to support social distancing e.g. *additional highway space to accommodate queuing and marshalled passengers*.

Managing public perception, restoring trust

If the remobilisation of services and advice on social distancing/PPE are not carefully managed and coordinated, there could be a negative view of returning to public transport *i.e. perceived as a way of increasing the risk of infection*.

Concerns about returning to public transport may lead to increased car usage. For example, Wuhan, China, has seen a significant increase in car trips, as shown below.



Maintaining positive behaviour change

A joint approach to travel demand measures across partners, may need to be developed and adopted. This would include coordinated promotion of ongoing home working and engaging with residents and businesses to help us to flatten the demand for travel especially in the peaks - *for example the staggering of working hours, rotations and the phasing of the release of lockdown for different journey purposes and demographics*.

Travel demand could then be managed in a way which is consistent with protecting the safety of staff and passengers. Some cities such as Wellington, New Zealand, have made bold moves to reallocate roadspace away from private cars, in order to support healthy travel.

Local authorities may also need time to look at any traffic and parking management measures that will also need to be restarted.

Longer Term Challenges for Transport

Evidence emerging from elsewhere suggests that there could be significant long-term risks for our recovery and strategic outcomes if we are not

- A high carbon recovery - due to the current cost of fuel.
- Long-term increase in congestion, poorer air quality and impacts to road safety.
- Increases the cost and undermine the long-term financial viability of the public transport system
- Undermine/set back the infrastructure investment to the transport system, which will support inclusive economic growth and a fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands.
- Lose momentum on some of the progress we have already been making to improve public transport and walking and cycling use.
- Lose the real opportunity 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.

Summary and Next Steps

- TfWM, will work closely to support local highway authority colleagues, in order to keep a safe, clean and functioning transport available for those that need it.
- Need to ensure that government understands, and that regionally, we have a clear view about the steps needed and a clear and consistent message on our path out of the current situation.
- TfWM will work closely with all regional partners to aid economic resilience and recovery.
- TfWM will report to WMCA Board in June on '**Recovering the Transport network – towards a new normal**' which will set out how we see the transport system will need to change to reflect the impacts of the Pandemic and achieve our longer-term ambitions.



Appendix A

Response → Resilience	Travel that is safe and secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make available a safe, clean and functioning transport system for those that need it i.e. NHS workers, key workers. • Managing the transport network effectively with operators and local authorities to ensure social distancing measures can be respected.
Response → Resilience	Getting workers and businesses back up and running (where safe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote home/agile working for those that still can. • Continue to support the free flow of freight and goods to support critical services. • Slowly increase transport capacity, where appropriate and safe. • Develop and secure a financially viable and trusted public transport system, working with operators, community transport sector and government.
Resilience → Recovery	Keeping the clean air and physical exercise that came out of the crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain increased active travel – working with local authorities to explore road space reallocation opportunities. • Secure a public health legacy from the pandemic.
Resilience → Recovery	Boost green growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting upon existing regional and local strategies, such as the WMCA's #WM2041, to exploit growth in new markets, such as EV's and battery.