

Transport Delivery Committee

Date	20 July 2020
Report title	Sprint Progress update
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Report has been considered by	Sprint Lead Member Reference Group

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress of the Sprint Programme
2. Note the relationship between Sprint delivery and other local schemes
3. Note that the service will be operated by zero emission vehicles and the operator(s) will purchase the vehicles

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The previous report to TDC outlined the aspirations for a network of Bus Rapid Transit ('Sprint'). This report will update on progress on key deliverables for the first two routes, the A456 (Hagley Road), and future pipeline schemes. It will also update on the vehicle used on the route.

2. Priority deliverables and key achievements since last report

- 2.1 The A34 Walsall to Birmingham Sprint scheme is a Bus Rapid Transit proposal enhancing the link between Walsall Town Centre, Perry Barr and Birmingham City Centre, ultimately connecting to the HS2 station at Curzon Street.
- 2.2 The A45 Birmingham to Airport and Solihull Sprint scheme is a Bus Rapid Transit proposal enhancing the link between Birmingham Airport, Solihull, and Birmingham City Centre, serving residents and businesses in Digbeth, Sheldon, and Yardley.
- 2.3 It is intended that the A34 two schemes will operate as a cross city route, with direct services between Birmingham Airport and Walsall, and Solihull and Walsall.
- 2.4 In order to reduce delivery risks it is intended that the routes will be completed over two phases; prior to the Commonwealth Games (CWG) and after the CWG. The first phase of delivery will provide all the shelters for the route and the most significant interventions to support bus journey time reliability.
- 2.5 On 14th February 2020, the WMCA approved to fund the first of a two phase delivery of the A34/A45 cross city Walsall to Solihull and Birmingham airport route. This provided £42.3m for delivery of priority infrastructure on the routes, to be delivered before June 2022. It will also provide priority for existing public transport on these routes, and will pave the way for articulated vehicles, which are planned to be incrementally introduced to the Sprint corridor from January 2023.
- 2.6 On 11th March 2020, the DfT also agreed to devolve the previously retained £35m towards the A45 (subject to construction contract entered into within 6 months). In total, with WMCA, devolved DfT, and other contributions from the City Centre Bus Fund, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, and Transforming Cities funding combined, the phase 1 budget for A34/A45 routes stands at £87.8m.
- 2.7 The provision of this funding has enabled TfWM to enter into a further Early Contractor Involvement (ECI)/Construction contract, which has discharged the DfT condition noted above.
- 2.8 The scheme will complement other major schemes in the area, notably Perry Barr station, Perry Barr bus interchange, the Perry Barr highway scheme, and the development of the Athletes village. TfWM is working with Birmingham City Council to ensure that the A34 scheme is considered and integral to any scheme design, ensuring that sustainable travel alternatives can be offered to complement or mitigate the impact of other schemes. A Perry Barr Coordination Group oversees collaboration between this interdependent projects, in addition Sprint progress is reported to the CWG Committee in conjunction with all CWG identified schemes.
- 2.9 In Birmingham and Solihull, TfWM have already attained Cabinet approval or the Cabinet has delegated the decision to the Transport Cabinet member and/or senior officers within the relevant Local Authority. Work is progressing on obtaining Cabinet approvals for Sandwell and Walsall.

3. Vehicles and operator approach

- 3.1 The region's commitment to climate change has escalated since the original scheme proposal, and a Climate Emergency has been declared by the WMCA. As a result, the decision has been taken to use zero emission vehicles for the operation of Sprint. This has increased the delivery timescale risk of the scheme due to additional infrastructure required to support zero emission operation.
- 3.2 The option for the WMCA to part-purchase the vehicles in a grant scheme arrangement (and take on the commercial risk of contracting the service) was discounted in order to reduce the financial risk to the WMCA and remove £12m of cost to the WMCA. Furthermore, a market sounding exercise in 2018 confirmed that the Sprint route could be operated commercially, and an operator has confirmed they are willing to purchase the vehicles with no contribution required from the WMCA. This approach has reduced any ongoing liabilities for the WMCA.

- 3.3 The Enhanced Partnership (EP) will provide the maximum level of protection of the WMCA investment proposed, best using the tools currently available through the Bus Services Act 2017. Approval to develop an EP Plan for the Region and EP Scheme for these corridors was provided by the WMCA in June 2019. The EP Scheme will mandate TfWM to deliver the infrastructure within the Pre-CWG Delivery Strategy by the end of June 2022 and set a target date for delivery of the Post-CWG Delivery Strategy infrastructure by the end of December 2024. The EP Scheme will, in return, mandate bus operators on the corridor to meet certain vehicle standards in the scheme area. The EP affords the West Midlands and Local Highway Authorities more control over the bus network than ever before (vehicle requirements, ticketing, branding, passenger information), whilst operating in a de-regulated market.
- 3.4 For Sprint, the EP will be supported by a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA). The VPA will be used in conjunction with EP Scheme to secure levels of service. The VPA will be developed following the EP Scheme, and will cover frequency, hours of operation and service offer. The VPA can be legally binding between the WMCA and the operator(s), and is expected to include a compensation mechanism in the event infrastructure to support the scheme is not delivered as committed to within the EP.
- 3.5 The public consultation (a statutory requirement of making the EP), went live on Monday 6th July, for a 10-week period, until Sunday 13th September.
- 3.6 The period of consultation has been extended due to the current COVID-19 circumstances. Awareness raising will be enhanced with radio and social media publicity, alongside traditional posters across the network. There will be no public drop-in events due to COVID-19.
- 3.7 Following the public consultation, if changes are required to the Plan and/or Scheme, they will be made with input from partners in the EP Reference Groups. Another operator voting period will then be held to approve the final Plan and/or Scheme. Subject to passing that operator period, we will bring a report on the final Plan and Scheme for approval to TDC on 9th November 2020, before legally making the Plan and Scheme.

4. Park and Ride

- 4.1 Transport for West Midlands are undertaking further work to deliver a park and ride site on the A34 Sprint route in advance of the Commonwealth Games. The location will be near to M6 Junction 7, and we are working with local authority colleagues (including planning officers) and landowner(s) to deliver this. Development and enabling work are ongoing.

5. Engagement

- 5.1 Our commitment to engage throughout the development and disruption phases of Sprint remains, and we are working with each of our LHA partners and their Cabinet Members to understand specific requirements and tailor our approach according to local need. TRO consultation is currently underway in Birmingham in support of the works and changes proposed to the corridors in this authority area, and a similar activity will follow in due course and where appropriate in other Local Authority areas.
- 5.2 In addition, and where COVID 19 may have impacted on our public's ability to go through specific designs or issues, we are putting extra measures in place over and above statutory requirements to help facilitate access to information and the option to comment.
- 5.3 An example of this includes the recently published TRO notices in Birmingham. In addition to published notices on lamp columns which is the statutory requirement, we have written to all properties within 100m of the route alerting to the formal TRO consultation. We have also provided further additional information online to support this process, and will provide support for those who want to further understand the proposed changes. All plans and newsletters are available as paper copies.

5.4 Where statutory undertakers are currently doing preparatory works on the network, residents will be contacted in real time by those undertaking the works, to ensure that any inconvenience or access restrictions are managed and minimised. As we get into the construction disruption phases, the contractor's comms and engagement team will support local residents, and it will be very much a joint effort between the contractor, TfWM and the LA's to ensure that the messaging is correct into the purpose and duration of these works as they happen.

6. Critical path

6.1 Our next key milestones include

- Local Authority Legal agreements
- Approval of Phase 1 BCC Target price – September 2020
- Approval of Phase 1 Sandwell, Solihull, and Walsall target price – November 2020
- Start of main construction works – October 2020

7. Other development work

7.1 The WMCA committed in 2017 in a network of Sprint for the opening on HS2. All schemes have Strategic Outline Case status. The next scheme to commence detailed feasibility is the further works on A456 Hagley Road to Halesowen and Dudley, which is being progressed as part of our development programme. Lessons learned from the A34 Walsall to Birmingham and A45 Birmingham to Airport and Solihull schemes have been incorporated.

7.2 Additional work is also taking place to consider the advanced delivery of bus priority on the Sutton Coldfield to Birmingham corridor that responds to the recommendations of the refreshed Birmingham Eastern Fringe Bus Study.

7.3 Detailed feasibility work on the remaining Sprint schemes (Longbridge to Birmingham, and Hall Green to Interchange via Solihull) will follow the development of the A456 route.

8. A456 Hagley Road (Advanced works)

8.1 £7.85m has been secured to deliver 'Advanced works' on the Hagley Road – notably bus priority between Five Ways and Monument Road. This is mainly funded through the GBSLEP, with a contribution from the WMCA.

8.2 It was concluded in 2019 by the Sprint Programme Board that given the proximity of works to the West Midlands Metro Edgbaston Extension, the £7.85m for infrastructure (including land and other previously related costs) would be delivered by the Midland Metro Alliance, overseen by the TfWM Metro projects team.

8.3 The Sprint team committed to secure the land required, and in January 2020, under the approval of the TfWM Leadership team, the scheme was handed over in its entirety to the TfWM Metro project teams.

8.4 The Sprint team maintain to support both GBSLEP (as scheme funders) and TfWM Metro team on a need to basis in support of delivery of these works, and to provide information and continuity as and where required.

9. Focus of activities for end 2020/early 2021

- Start of construction works – for A34 and A45 Phase 1
- Business case approval – pursue appropriate business case and/or funding for A34/A45 phase 2, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and Park and Ride. Also to progress OBC for main A456 scheme
- Operator attainment for Sprint – TfWM plan to conclude EP/EPs/VPA and secure a more public message around the operator of Sprint and progress made on vehicle and operation planning.

- Vehicle procurement – Vehicle Procurement will be undertaken by the Operator and is expected to commence around 30 days following signature of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme and any associated agreements.
- Assurance – LHA Cabinet approvals, TfWM/LA's legal agreements in place
- Contractor target price approval
- Additional resourcing for programme to support construction delivery where required
- Localised shelter engagement

10. Sprint Member Reference Group

- 10.1 This is an active group including members of TDC to monitor and report on the future development of Sprint within the West Midlands, including supporting the delivery of the objectives within the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan and other strategic planning documents including Birmingham Connected and Solihull Connected. The group ensure that progress on programme and scheme delivery and initiatives remain in line with agreed WMCA policies, strategies and timescales. This group will continue to meet 8 times a year (in line with TDC dates) for progress reviews and updates.
- 10.2 Invitees of the Sprint Member Reference Group are Cllr Tim Huxtable, Cllr Ted Richards, Cllr Richard Worrall, Cllr Kath Hartley and Cllr Chaman Lal.

11. Site visits

- 11.1 We will continue to explore opportunities and involve TDC in site visits moving forward (COVID 19 restrictions pending), including visits to construction site compounds and works on site where requested and/or of interest.

12. Legal Implications

- 12.1 There are no direct legal implications to the recommendations/points to note in regards to the recommendations section of this report. The legal team has supported and will continue to support the Sprint Programme in regards to the commercial and procurement requirements as relating to the operator and related outputs which include construction deliverables that are required in regards to Sprint BRT infrastructure works; as well as any property, and partner agreements with our district partners which will address ancillary land requirements.

13. Finance Implications

- 13.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this overall update report.

14. Media Implications

- 14.1 There are no direct media implications in regards to the recommendations/points to note in regards to the recommendations section of this report.

15. Equalities implications

- 15.1 No equality implications arising from this report. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken in early 2019 that concluded the scheme is likely to have a mainly positive impact. It will increase travel options for residents in the affected wards and improve transport connectivity, journey time and journey reliability.

16. Inclusive growth implications

- 16.1 The scheme will support many of the WMCA's growth objectives:
- Economic Growth - businesses will be more confident to invest, remain, locate or start up in vicinity of the Sprint route.

- Business Competitiveness - businesses will have improved access to labour to enable growth, particularly in central Birmingham. The improved connectivity will provide enhanced access to labour benefitting business.
- Increased employment rate in target growth sectors - the route serves areas where there are unemployed residents. The scheme will improve access to training and employment, particularly town and city centres where growth is targeted.
- Social Impact - the new infrastructure will improve bus connectivity and will encourage travel by bus to training and employment opportunities.
- Health & Wellbeing - the removal of car traffic from the congested highway network through mode shift to bus will improve air quality. Broaden travel choice for residents, reducing barriers to travel and bringing key health and leisure facilities within shorter journey times.
- Environmental Impact - supporting and promoting greener travel solutions is a key part of the Sprint programme.

16.2 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

16.3 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.

17.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications

17.1 This report considers the A34 Walsall to Birmingham Sprint and A45 Birmingham to Airport and Solihull Sprint schemes which are located within the Metropolitan Area, but will also improve connectivity across the wider WMCA through improved interchange links on a key corridor, including to the HS2 Stations at Curzon and Interchange.

18.0 Schedule of Background reports

18.1 Published reports, including;

- Consultation response report (December 2018) – A45, A34, SBL
- Progress update report (March 2019) – A45, A34, SBL
- Newsletter updates (quarterly) – A45, A34, SBL
- Perry Barr scheme update brochure (Autumn 2019)
- WMCA Board Report – A34, A45 (February 2020)