

## Background

### Impact of Covid-19

West Midlands Metro (WMM) is dealing with unprecedented circumstances since the outbreak of Covid-19. Following lockdown patronage fell by 86% and revenue by 94%. The timetable was reduced to around 50% normal capacity and for a period 40% of staff were furloughed as the operation adapted to changing business needs. The message to customers has been consistent, essential travel only as WMM has been following Government and Public Health England guidance in relation to the continued safe operations.

### Initial Response

WMM adopted a safety-first response from the outset, prioritising the protection of both customers and staff. At the early stages it put in place a number of measures to help prevent the spread of Covid-19, whilst continuing to deliver a vital service for key workers and others who need to undertake essential journeys. These include:

- Enhanced cleaning – Using viricidal disinfectants, we have enhanced our already rigorous cleaning regime with trams cleaned twice daily and tram stops daily, including handrails, seats and key customer touchpoints.
- Reduced surface contact – Drivers are opening doors automatically at stops reducing customer contact with surfaces.
- Reduced customer/conductor contact – Customers are encouraged to pay for their ticket in advance (via Swift or the My Metro app) or use contactless payments.
- Customer communications – Key safety messages are being communicated to customers using at stop and on tram signage, regular announcements on platforms and social media channels.

- Provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) – Staff have been provided with personal issue hand sanitiser bottles and appropriate PPE.
- At stop revenue collection – At the early stages of lockdown customer service representatives (CSR's) were redeployed to platform revenue collection duties, helping to maintain social distancing.
- Staff only zones on tram – Similarly the immediate areas behind the driver's cabs were cordoned off, reducing driver contact with customers.
- Keeping staff informed – Through emails, the staff app, notice boards and weekly sessions in the mess room, staff have been and continue to be kept informed on latest government guidance and we are making sure team members understand to self-isolate if they show symptoms.
- Staff welfare – WMM has also worked with the union to ensure the most vulnerable or those required to shield have the additional support they may require and those affected by furlough are treated equitably. We have also promoted the Employee Assistance Programme which offers a range of advisory and support services including help with mental health or financial issues.
- Understanding best practise – Working with UK tram, Transport for West Midlands and other transport groups WMM are actively exploring the best ways in which to manage the impacts of Covid-19.

### Recovery

Many of the measures already implemented as part of the immediate response remain during the recovery phase. WMM has considered a number of recovery scenarios and in each, safe capacity is paramount. Maintaining a safe social distance when using the service has and will continue to be a key priority. The normal capacity of the Urbos 3

tram is 208 and to maintain a safe social distance at 2 metres this reduces to 40. This creates a capacity challenge. As lockdown restrictions ease and passenger numbers increase WMM are and will continue to manage this through:

- Monitoring capacity and adapting service – Using data from automatic passenger counters on trams WMM are monitoring capacity daily. Where there are sustained increases in patronage WMM have and will continue to increase service frequency through timetable changes. CCTV along the system is also being used to monitor for hot spots and where capacity issues are apparent, “queue buster” trams are being deployed to provide additional capacity.
- Coordinating efforts with the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre (RTCC) – By working with the RTCC, WMM are gaining greater understanding of capacity on the region’s transport network. This allows a coordinated response to hot spots and peaks on the wider network enabling appropriate messaging to customers, including encouraging use of alternative modes where capacity issues are apparent.
- Publishing busiest travel times – WMM have introduced a new section on its website which uses a heatmap format to highlight to customers, the time of day when the network is expected to be busy. This allows customers who can travel at quieter times to make an informed choice, whilst helping to keep everyone safe.
- Intent to travel – Whilst the heatmap on the website is produced using historical travel data, WMM are working to develop its capabilities to better understand future travel. This includes developing the My Metro App so that passengers can declare their intent to travel in advance. Having

this information would provide WMM with an additional tool in understanding capacity.

Other measures:

- New flexible ticket range - Whilst social distancing is important during recovery WMM also recognise that travel habits will change. A Transport for West Midlands survey suggests 75% of people will work from home more in the future. Recognising this, WMM has launched a new range of great value flexible products. These are available on the My Metro app, reducing the risk of spreading the virus through cash transactions.

The range consists of new 3 day and 4 day tickets providing unlimited travel for the consecutive period of days. In addition, the range includes a new Flex and Save ticket which provides 10 days of unlimited travel to be used at the customers convenience. Once the first day is activated the remaining days can be used anytime over six months.

- Enhanced customer communications – Working as part of the Covid-19 Communications Recovery Group led by TfWM, WMM are coordinating its customer communications messaging to ensure a consistent approach with the wider region. This includes contributing to and participating in the “Stay Safe Stay Apart” campaign which has launched across all modes of transport in the region. For WMM the message is communicated across the network with posters at stops, on tram covings, images on the onboard monitors, tailored public announcements and through social media.

- Safety video - WMM has also prepared a video highlighting the key actions it is taking to keep customers safe and what they can do to help. This has been launched on our social media platforms.
- Mandatory face mask for customer facing staff – As part of the recovery, staff have returned to on tram revenue collection and in doing so WMM mandated that they wear a face mask in this frontline role. This follows a thorough risk assessment which was also shared with staff. Staff are issued with the face masks as part of their PPE.
- Mandatory wearing of face coverings for customers – In response to government legislation, mandating the wearing of a face covering when using public transport, WMM swiftly updated audio announcements customer signage, including on tram, and social media channels to inform customers of the changes. It has also undertaken educational activities whereby customers who did not have a face covering in the initial stages were provided with a face mask by WMM staff and a card detailing a website address where they could find out how to make their own for future travel. In return for the face mask it was also suggested that customers may wish to make a donation to the NHS.

## Looking Forward

WMM recognise that it is operating in a period of constant change and as such continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 and the measures it has put in place to help prevent the spread of the virus, whilst continuing to deliver an essential service. It will continue taking a safety-first approach as the situation evolves and will adapt its response accordingly.

### Further Information

<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>NAME</b>
	Sophie Allison
	<b>EMAIL</b>
	<a href="mailto:Sophie.allison@westmidlandsmetro.com">Sophie.allison@westmidlandsmetro.com</a>
	<b>PHONE</b>
	07824547459