



Transport Delivery Committee

Date	14 th September 2020
Report Title	Bus Alliance Update
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Report Considered by	Chair of Putting Passengers First Lead Members

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Transport Delivery Committee is recommended:

1. To note the content of the report and current status of the West Midlands Bus Alliance.
2. To submit the report to the West Midlands Combined Authority Board for information.

Purpose of Report

1. To report matters relating to the governance, operation, delivery and performance of the West Midlands Bus Alliance.

West Midlands Bus Alliance Board Governance

2. Stuart Everton has been asked to re-join the Board to represent the Black Country Officers Group, replacing Amy Harhoff on the Board.
3. As a result of Covid-19 the West Midlands Bus Alliance Board has adapted to meeting virtually, three full Board meetings have taken place in May, June and July with the Board being kept updated on developments via weekly virtual meetings.
4. Bus Alliance Board member Graham Vidler and the CPT has been working extremely hard to ensure that bus services and operators have been given the priority they deserve in high level discussions with the DfT throughout the pandemic.

A Bolder Bus Alliance 2020

5. At the Bus Alliance Board meeting on 5th February 2020, the Bus Alliance Board approved the 'Bolder Bus Alliance' aspirations and associated governance structure.

- THE GREENEST
- THE BEST VALUE
- THE SIMPLEST TICKETING
- THE MOST RELIABLE
- THE SAFEST

6. Subsequently, with the development of pressures associated with Covid-19, the Board has asked for further development and confirmation of the deliverables and commitments under each aspiration noting that the Alliance needs to be stronger than ever to ensure that bus is safe, available and accessible to help in the economic and wider recovery of the region.
7. Under each of the aspirations there are specific commitments for the different partners to work together to deliver improvements for bus users. These are 'live' commitments and will grow as the recovery from COVID-19 is achieved and further investment for bus users can be committed too. This includes the development of a new sub-group as part of the COVID-19 transport response, recovery and re-start with bus operators.
8. The table below gives a breakdown of Individual Commitments from each of the subgroups in seek to deliver the wider aspirations of the West Midlands Bus Alliance.

Covid-19 Transport Recovery & Re-start (1)

Covid-19 Transport Recovery; Safe Network

- Apply, promote and enforce social distancing standards in a uniform way across all bus operators
- Apply, promote and encourage social distancing measures at stops, shelters and bus interchanges.
- Apply, promote and enforce government guidelines on face coverings and other safety measures when using public transport and public space.
- Promote safety elements of the customer charter and encourage supportive customer behaviour.

Covid-19 Transport Recovery; Cleaner Network

On-board;

- Enhanced cleaning of buses using anti-viral products with particular focus on high touch points and driver cab controls.
- Introduction of on-bus kits and other processes to enable in service cleaning.

Infrastructure and passenger waiting facilities;

- Periodic ‘deep clean’ at key locations
- All bus shelters cleaned weekly with additional reactive cleaning within 4Hr response time.
- Frequency of cleaning at busiest locations increased to every 48 hrs.
- Cleaning to be done outside of busiest times to reduce risk to passengers.
- Bus Stations – enhanced daily cleaning regime including sanitizing all touch points and public toilet facilities with a high impact sterilising cleanser.
- Travel Centres to be deep cleaned twice each day with periodic sanitisation of surfaces in between visiting customers.
- Social distancing measures being implemented and monitored across the estate.

Bus Operators Panel

- All vehicles to be a minimum of Euro VI emission standard by April 2021.
- Update the Low Emission Bus Delivery Plan to determine infrastructure needs and roadmap for the transition to zero emission buses.
- 30 electric buses operating across at least 3 different locations.
- £11m Hydrogen Bus Pilot Project
- Bid for the UKs first all-electric town/city to deliver zero emission buses across at least 10% of the fleet.
- Develop and deliver a new transport interchange in Dudley.
- Coventry Pool Meadow refurbishment

Swift

- Develop and deliver Swift account-based ticketing and Best Value capping
- Develop and deliver Swift One App as a complete mobility solution.
- Consider suite of available tickets and consider new ones to align with revised travel patterns in a post Covid world.

Bus Performance

- Deliver a new and enhanced Real Journey Time (RJT) approach to reporting and managing bus journey speeds for the passenger.
- Create a robust process for reporting, addressing and monitoring highways issues affecting bus journey times including better enforcement of inconsiderate and illegal parking on key corridors to unlock congestion impacting daily bus operations.
- Implement highway 'quick wins' to tackle congestion and speed up buses.

Develop and deliver £120 million Bus Priority Programme;

- Sprint (A34 / A45)
- Sprint Hagley Road enabling works
- Birmingham City Centre cross-city bus priority
- Dudley – Druids Heath cross-city bus priority
- Alcester Road
- QEH Interchange / Hospital Way
- Harborne Road

Local Authority Capital Programmes;

Birmingham City Council (£2.9m);

- Clean Air Zone Early Measures
- Moor Street Queensway Bus Gate
- Bus Lane Enforcement Phase 2
- Journey Reliability Improvement Growth Areas
- Bus priority - Emergency Active Travel Schemes

Coventry City Council (£5.8m);

- Capacity improvements B4106 Spon End
- Bus Gate Michaelmas Road / Warwick Road

Dudley MBC (£1m)

- Completion of DEFRA funded junction improvements A491/A461 corridors.
- Development of highways package to provide improved bus accessibility to Dudley Interchange.
- Traffic signal upgrades at key junctions on high frequency bus corridors.

Communications & Marketing

- High quality and consistent communication and joined up social media strategy resulting in better informed passengers of delays to bus services on-board and to waiting passengers.
- Colour coded network information covering all modes of public transport
- Joined-up public transport marketing, with a targeted pooled marketing budget.
- Clear communication of all network changes, including “you said, we did” messaging.
- Develop and deliver £2m programme for Transforming Real Time Information.

Safer Travel Partnership

- Retain and expand the front-line Safer Travel Policing service through Special constables and other complimentary policing.
- Implement and utilise new and existing civil enforcement powers in relation to Safer Travel, including bus byelaws.

Community Transport Operators Panel

- Launch a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) pilot.
- Investigate opportunities to integrate CT / R&R / DRT into the wider public transport provision.
- Increase awareness and positive perception of Community Transport within the West Midlands Bus family.
- Assist with the Covid-19 recovery and restart and particularly for the most vulnerable members of the West Midlands community.
- Transition to cleaner greener vehicles.

Multi-Modal Interchange

- Cross-partnership and organisational working to deliver improvements on multi-modal timetables, interchange facilities and ticketing to ensure bus, rail and metro information is best in class for the passenger.

Passenger Satisfaction

- A structured approach to surveying passenger satisfaction and requirements, to action feedback and priorities.
- Conduct a review of the Bus Champions scheme to ensure it is fit for purpose and delivers against the objectives of the Alliance.
- Measure the success and reach of the Bus Alliance Customer Charter.

Improving Bus Emission Standards

9. The Bus Alliance has a target for every bus in the region to a minimum emission standard of Euro VI by April 2021. This target is proving to be a significant challenge due to the impact on the sector and suppliers due to Covid-19. It is expected that there will be circa 100 buses operating in the region that are not Euro VI by April 2021. Operators remain committed to achieving this target and are working closely with TfWM to explore options on delivering this in a timely manner. All operators will be meeting any air quality requirements such as Birmingham CAZ and Solihull and Wolverhampton AQPSs.
10. Operators have invested over £95 million in new Euro VI vehicles since 2015, along with £18.1 million secured by TfWM for bus upgrades to Euro VI, including the most recent £340,000 for 2020/21. TfWM have £530,000 of unallocated funding to support operators upgrading vehicles to Euro VI through bus retrofit.
11. National Express, supported by £3m of government grant funding, have introduced 19 electric vehicles on service 6 between Solihull and Birmingham. National Express contributed £11m to the project which also included introduction of power and charging infrastructure in to their Yardley Wood garage. The new buses came into service from the 5th July and have been very much welcomed by passengers. The next set of 10 electric buses will be introduced in Coventry to serve the hospital in the coming weeks. This is the first part of NXs commitment to have purchased their last diesel bus and for their bus fleet to be zero emission by 2030.
12. On behalf of the West Midlands Bus Alliance, TfWM have submitted two bids to the All Electric Bus Town Scheme. If both are successful the bids could see all buses in Coventry and / or West Bromwich being fully electric. The funding meets 75% of the difference in cost between an electric bus and the equivalent diesel vehicles and the associated infrastructure. Operators, TfWM and the associated local authorities will also be required to contribute towards the schemes.

Passenger Satisfaction Autumn 2019 results

13. The figures by independent watchdog Transport Focus from their Autumn 2019 independent survey were released on 26th March 2020. These 2019 results showed 85 per cent of the region's bus passengers are satisfied with their overall journey. This was an improvement on the 2018 overall journey score, improvements have been seen in most of the sub-criteria, including a high 84 per cent of passengers – up 2 per cent on the previous year – who were fairly or very satisfied with journey time and also a 2 per cent increase in those who were fairly or very satisfied with punctuality, up to 73%.
14. Transport Focus is currently looking at how to carry out the national survey this year and further updates will be provided.

Bus Performance

Scheme under Development;

Cross City Region Bus Priority

15. Transport for West Midlands' Vision for Bus sets out the need for a step-change in delivering bus priority infrastructure; to increase the region's effective size and create larger catchments to new and productive socio-economic markets. To achieve this and to combat increasing delays caused by congestion, a first phase of bus priority packages has been proposed, complementing the Sprint, metro and rail networks.
16. The packages are as follows:
 - Package 1: Birmingham City Centre
 - Package 2: Perry Common/Hamstead – Hawksley/Longbridge (North-South)
 - Package 3: Dudley – Druids Heath (North-South)
 - Package 4: Sutton Coldfield – Longbridge (Universities)
 - Package 5: Harborne – Castle Bromwich (East-West)
 - Package 6: West Bromwich – Meadway (East-West)
17. Through the West Midlands Bus Alliance Pell Frischmann have developed concept designs and costs for all the scheme packages (1-6) within Birmingham and Package 3 in Sandwell & Dudley, with the local councils. This provides concept designs and costs to take forward to preliminary design as necessary and subject to funding. Completion of the concept designs has allowed the realisation of passenger benefits to be identified; estimating £122 million of benefits and an overall benefit cost ratio of 2.8: 1.

Priority Packages 1 & 3 – Funding

18. On 30th September 2019, the UK Government announced over £200 million to transform bus services in the Spending Round 2020/21 as part of 'A better deal for bus users' announcement. This included £24.225 million to fund new bus priority measures in Birmingham City Centre (package 1) and Dudley to Druids Heath cross-city corridor (package 3). This is matched by £4.225 million of funding from BCC through the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) revenue. The packages will deliver;
 - Journey times benefits to almost 90million passenger per annum.
 - 10 bus gates
 - 5.5km of new bus lanes
 - 10 junction upgrades
 - Improved passenger waiting facilities and accessibility.

Packages 1 (Birmingham City Centre)

19. In light of COVID-19 and the Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan TfWM, on behalf of the Alliance, asked Pell Frischmann to review the designs to identify any interventions that could be implemented as part of the COPVID-19 recovery and

response. Several interventions have been identified and Pells are preparing the detailed designs for 3 interventions in a priority 1st wave inclusive of;

- Bus gate on Margaret Street and associated pavement widening Edmund St / Cornwall St with removal of parking (temporary form)
- Proposed bus lane on Bristol St from Irving St to Lee Bank Middleway
- Proposed bus gate on New Town Row

Packages 2 & 5 (Local Pinch Point Fund)

20. TfWM and BCC submitted a joint bid for £10 million to the DfT Local Pinch Point Fund in January 2020. The decision on the Fund has been deferred due to COVID-19.

A41 Soho Road BID Transport & Connectivity Study / Package 6

21. TfWM have worked with BCC, Soho Road BID and GBSLEP to undertake concept feasibility designs to improve transport connectivity to, from and along the A41 Soho Road. The designs including bus gates and bus lanes, have been developed by Jacobs. A review of the designs is being undertaken by Jacobs due to the COVID-19 circumstances and recent BCC policies. The designs will enable further preliminary designs to be taken forward, as necessary and subject to funding as part of the package 6 development, enhancing the connection between Birmingham and the Black Country.

Black Country Bus Priority Measures

22. No further development between March and June 2020 has been undertaken on a second phase of cross-city region bus priority measures to speed up bus services in the Black Country conurbation due resource pressures and uncertainty from COVID-19.

23. TfWM will be looking to re-start this work with BCT authorities, to agree the approach and scope of development in light of COVID-19 and ahead of any further announcement in the Spending Review on the £5 billion for overhauling bus and cycling.

SuperBus Fund

24. On behalf of the Alliance TfWM had been developing a submission to the SuperBus Fund which, if successful, would have been significant improvements in journey times and also fares. Unfortunately, due to pressures created by Covid-19 the DfT cancelled and withdrew the Superbus fund on 7 April 2020.

Bus Schemes at Delivery stage;

25. Pipeline of bus priority highway projects at the implementation phase to support the cross-city region bus network;

Alcester Road

26. TfWM is working closely with Birmingham City Council to provide bus priority along the Alcester Road between (south of) Salisbury Road (Moseley) and the Middleway to cut bus journey times through Balsall Heath. The scheme is to be delivered in 2020/21.
27. The BCC Cabinet Member instructed on 4th May 2020, the deferral of the bus priority scheme for at least three months due to the on-going issues around Covid-19. At a time of increasing calls to provide more space for walking and cycling, the scheme would reduce available widths for pedestrians both during construction and in its final form. The Cabinet Member did re-affirm his absolute commitment to the scheme.
28. TfWM are currently reviewing the design due to the impact on utilities after receiving a utilities diversion cost from BT of £900,000, when the project budget for construction is £2.1m; and to understand the impact on pavement widths.

QEH Interchange / Hospital Way

29. TfWM is working closely with Birmingham City Council and the QEH hospital Trust to deliver a bus lane along Hospital Way, across both public highway and private land of the Trust. The scheme will commence on-site in late September/early October 2020.

Harborne Road

30. TfWM delivered the NPIF scheme for a bus lane along Harborne Road in October 2018. Following implementation requests for mitigation measures have been investigated and proposed for delivery, along with a complementary road safety scheme by BCC. TfWM and BCC plan to review the scheme following public consultation and the return of higher than expected construction cost estimates due to COVID-19, in the region of £300,000.

Birmingham CAZ Early Measures

31. Birmingham City Council are delivering a package of complementary bus priority measures to coincide with the implementation of the Clean Air Zone in the city. The first tranche covering schemes for Rea Street, Upper Dean Street, Smallbrook Queensway and Coventry Road had been planned for implementation between March and May 2020. Unfortunately, this has been delayed due to Covid-19.

Financial Implications

32. There are no direct financial implications as a result of this update report. The Bus Alliance has been successful at bringing together development budget funding and in identifying additional funding sources through successful funding applications and operator investment, with further successful funding bids recently announced. Bus operators have invested in their buses to support the objective to improve bus emissions standards. DfT Clean Bus Technology Funding and Tackling Nitrogen

Dioxide funding has also supported the objective to improve bus emissions standards. A £24.225m DfT Grant has been secured in principle to support further investment in highways infrastructure to improve bus journey times. The drawdown of the grant is contingent upon securing £4.225m of matched funding from local partners including TfWM. Any costs incurred by or support provided by TfWM as part of activity referred to in this report will be met from within agreed overall funding and resources.

Legal Implications

33. This report is for information only and there are no new direct legal implications arising.

Equality Implications

34. This report is for information only and there are no new equality implications.

Inclusive Growth Implications

35. 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.

Geographical Area of Report's Implications

36. 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.