

Transport Delivery Committee

Date	14 September 2020
Report title	West Midlands eScooter trial - update
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Report has been considered by	TDC Lead Members

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress in planning the eScooter trial
2. Note the intended rollout plans and next steps for this programme.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report details the activity undertaken during July and August on the eScooter trial throughout the West Midlands region. Reference is also made to the plans and objectives for September and October 2020.

2. Background

- 2.1 eScooters are one of the new forms of emerging transport mode, enabled by evolving technology, cost effective manufacturing and improving batteries. 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. 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.

- 2.2 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. Originally planned for 2021 these were to have been limited to the new Future Transport Zones (FTZ), 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 is open to any interested area.
- 2.3 The West Midlands, led by Birmingham City Council, developed a regionally coordinated programme that incorporated trial zones within each constituent authority. Additionally, areas within Warwickshire form a key part of the programme connecting Coventry to Kenilworth, plus offering opportunities within Leamington and Warwick. A close partnership was formed between Local Highway Authorities and TfWM. Local Highway Authorities led the zone identification, road safety and traffic management issues, with TfWM being asked to provide support through coordination, resourcing and facilitating, plus Monitoring and Evaluation and maximising Future Transport Zone synergies.

3. The Programme

- 3.1 To guide the programme several key documents have been created. These include

APPENDIX I: **Trial zone overview** – detailed geography of each trial zone where deployment is planned. As the deployment activity is developed it is likely the larger zones areas will be subject to a phased rollout.

NOT IN APPENDIX **Deployment Specification** - includes requirements for the e-scooter trial, alongside supplementary technical requirements, that are assumed fixed and apply across all zone areas e.g. training requirements, PPE use.

NOT IN APPENDIX **Zonal Operational Playbook** - this document sits alongside the Deployment Specification document. Where the aforementioned document contains fixed elements, the Operational Playbook contains details that will have to be updated and matured, reflecting the specific areas they govern e.g. parking locations, non-operational roads. *A work-in-progress example is attached to this report.*

4. Objectives

- 4.1 Objectives for the trial can be summarised in both general terms and ones specifically related to transport. More generally success of the trial will constitute the demonstration of:

- Supporting a healthy and green re-start post COVID
- Supporting clean air and de-carbonisation, including a cultural shift to a shared economy and sustainable active travel
- Enabling inclusion and increasing accessibility across the social spectrum
- Stimulus to drive manufacturing and management of micro-mobility to the West Midlands
- Provides a catalyst to attract further innovation schemes

- 4.2 Specific transport related objectives include:

- Provide another financially viable and sustainable mode of transport that encourages a transition from single occupant car travel.
- 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.
- Providing learning:
 - Improving the evidence base, which globally is inconclusive
 - Understanding if eScooters could be made safer for wider deployment
 - Informing future legislation and/or regulation
 - Better understanding pricing / operational models

5. Procurement Update

- 5.1 TfWM continues to work on behalf of all Local Authority areas to procure supplier(s) for the trial. TfWM (WMCA) is acting as the sole contracting body with chosen supplier(s). MOU contractual agreements are being put in place with each constituent authority to formalise their engagement in trial.
- 5.2 A detailed tender was released on 7th July, preceded by two rounds of supplier consultation. Engagement with other 30 separate operators/suppliers was achieved in advance of tender release, ensuring a balanced set terms and conditions were included. The tender was operated on a “one lot” basis whereby all zones were offered on equal footing. An option of procuring a maximum of two suppliers was maintained, a decision on the final number was made on review of the tender responses.
- 4.3 16 responses were received by the deadline on 29th July. These were scrutinised on an 80/20 Quality/Financial ratio by members of TfWM, Birmingham City Council, Coventry City Council and Walsall Council. The moderating group were impressed with the overall quality of responses. There were 8 high scoring bids, of which two stood out specifically due to their regional commitment and detailed understanding. After a second round of clarifications on their financial commitments offered, it was decided to nominate a single supplier to operate regionally. This was a balanced judgement based on:
- Not wanting to dilute significant regional investment made by either supplier
 - Proven record of successful deployments elsewhere from highest scoring bidders meant there was reduced risk for a West Midlands deployment. Mitigation by having multiple operators was viewed as unnecessary
 - Allows for a more streamlining mobilisation
 - Allows for a clear division of responsibilities during operation
 - Allows for a clear customer proposition and communications message
- 4.4 On Friday 14th August WMCA published supplier response letters, detailing their intent to nominate. On publication of this draft note (24th August) we remain in a procurement stand-still period. This ended on Tuesday 25th August, so the contract is currently being negotiated, with a target date of completion w/c 31st Aug.

6 Nominated eScooter operator

- 6.1 **Voi** have been awarded the exclusive contract for all West Midlands zones.
- 6.2. An operator since 2018 they are one of the fastest growing providers globally, having completed over 25 million rides already, operating in 11 countries.

- 6.3 They have committed up to £40million as investment in the total scheme over the next 12months, giving an allocation of up to 10,000 eScooters.
- 6.4 Highlights of capabilities and offer:
- Have unique and AA affiliated rider training programme – RidelikeVoi
 - Have sub 1m geofence capability and tracking on all eScooters to allow for appropriate restrictions and delineation of roads / parking / no go areas etc.
 - Offer a 24/7 service that always has teams on the ground to address issues, conduct maintenance, cleaning, battery swapping and rebalancing.
 - Comprehensive pricing strategy including concessions for students, NHS staff, low income households and access for unbanked. Highlight includes a Voi-for-all package that is available for all those earning under £15k per annum access to unlimited riders for £10 a month.
 - Free helmet giveaway for all registered users and incentivised use is also possible.

7 Local Authority activities / obligations (pre-deployment)

- 7.1 As part of this trial there is remains no financial commitment (apart from officer time) on behalf of either the Local Authorities or TfWM.
- 7.2 In advance of the trial starting each Local Authority has responsibly for refining the zone plan, as per the Operational Playbook. This must be concurred with the eScooter provider, ensuring a robust set of instructions for deployment. Key elements include (but not limited to):
- Agreements on local generalised rules (e.g. no use on any >30mph road) beyond those already agreed in the Deployment Specification.
 - Specific road use or exclusions
 - Specific speed restrictions in defined areas (e.g. pedestrian dense areas)
 - Parking areas defined
 - Infrastructure features / junctions to avoid or limit speed
- 7.3 Each Local Authority has responsibility for amending and/or raising relevant Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's)
- 7.4 Each Local Authority has responsibility for amending and/or raising relevant licensing agreements to enable highways installations (e.g. parking signs)

8 Wider pre-deployment activities and considerations

- 8.1 Dedicated sessions with the supplier and West Midlands / Warwickshire Police have been arranged. These will also include live demonstrations and tutorials for officers to understand eScooters more comprehensively. Close collaboration with Police is a key consideration to ensure rider compliance. The nominated supplier will have a sizeable ground team in each deployment zone to assist in addressing concerns, rebalance eScooters and educate riders.
- 8.2 Similarly to the Police, dedicated sessions have been arranged with West Midlands Fire Service to complete an education and familiarity agenda.
- 8.3 TfWM and Birmingham City Council have held several wider stakeholder engagements including members of various cycling bodies, organisations representing blind or partially sighted, ROSPA amongst others. These sessions have proved valuable in agreeing suitable programmes for rider

training and establishing solutions to mitigate impact on pedestrians. With the provider now nominated, these sessions will continue to focus on rollout and applying the learning to date.

- 8.4 In order for the trial to legally operate a license must be granted from Secretary of State for the specified operator in a specified geography. Each eScooter provider must demonstrate separately that their vehicle meets a required standard and that the provider can supply a list of data streams to the DfT, suitable for their Monitoring and Evaluation programme. On release of the nomination letters TfWM submitted a proposal to the DfT, seeking license approval. On receipt of initial feedback it is expected this will be granted in the w/c 31st August.

9 Rollout plans

- 9.1 When the DfT initially announced the trial, July and August were targeted as the start dates for the 12-month programme. The Tees Valley were the only local authority that were able to meet this timing, but it is understood they ran a light touch procurement process, nominating a relatively inexperienced supplier, Ginger. For the West Midlands it was decided to run an accelerated, yet established procurement programme that still targeted a rollout in late August / early September. We are still on track to have one of the first and also the largest deployment in the UK.

- 9.2 Key dates in August and beyond include (these a subject to adjustment as rollout matures)

- **25th August:** Stand still ends and contracting completes
- **3rd September:** Press launch of scheme
- **10th September:** First widescale deployments – anticipated to be elements of Birmingham Zone (circa 600 eScooters) and Coventry Zone (circa 200 eScooters)
- **14th September – 12th October:** Weekly launch events covering all other Zones and scaling in each established zone with a total fleet deployment after six weeks of circa 3,500 eScooters)
- **12th – end Nov:** Continued scaling of each area, rebalancing where necessary. West Midlands has access to an allocation of up to 10,000 eScooters, should market demand necessitate and LA's agree to their deployment.
- **September 2021:** Trial ends. It is anticipated that in early Summer TfWM will present Monitoring and Evaluation findings to DfT and further decisions about potential extensions, licensing options for eScooters be discussed in advance of the trial ending. This would enable a local dialogue on how to manage eScooter use post September 2021.

10. Parking strategy

- 10.1 All Local Authority areas are committed to a robust policy and enforcement of eScooter parking. In order to be most effective, dedicated parking locations need to be in areas where riders want to begin and end journeys. Given this is a new mode of personal mobility not all trip generators are known. Many new opportunities may arise, especially if eScooters attract current car drivers out of existing behaviours. To understand this behaviour, the provider strongly recommends that in the first month parking locations are relaxed. Geo-location data will be used to define where parking locations are then most appropriately positioned from month two. In order to mitigate the risk of parked eScooters causing a hazard during this time the following mitigations are proposed:

- Incentivised parking where areas are set up from day 1 which are agreed with the LA at areas of expected high use. Riders are incentivised financially to park at these locations.
- Education and training via the app as to best practise even if not parking in a dedicated bay.

- Photographic proof that the eScooter is upright and not parked obstructively in order to complete ride.

- A dedicated team (circa 20) be deployed on site (24/7) to rebalance all eScooters and to ensure parking guidelines are met

10.2 After month one, rider application mapping, rider incentivisation and rider education matures, reducing the reliance on ground teams to rebalance. This method of rollout has been repeated numerous times globally and through careful management generates a user centred parking map, which ultimately improves customer experience and ridership.

11 Equalities Impact Assessment

11.1 An equality impact assessment was conducted in relation to the e-scooter trial which identified a number of actions that would help mitigate any adverse negative impact for different protected characteristics. These recommendations will, where possible, be embedded within the trial contract requirements.

12 Monitoring and Evaluation

12.1 The chosen supplier has the ability to generate and publish data on how, when and where each eScooter is being used. This is valuable information in establishing how eScooters fit into the wider transport ecosystem.

12.2 The DfT are running a central Monitoring and Evaluation programme, taking a data stream from each regional deployment to form a national picture of usage. They anticipate also doing selected detailed studies. Given the West Midlands' position in running an existing Future Transport Zone (FTZ) programme it is anticipated we will be asked to support their activity.

12.3 As part of FTZ, there is already a plan in place to monitor eScooter usage regionally. This will be controlled via TfWM but will rely heavily on Local Authority input to draw its conclusions. In summary it will focus on four high level objectives:

- Propose and estimate impacts in trial areas.
- Monitor live trials and data gathering across numerous domains and transport services.
- Compare observed and expected outcomes and establish elasticities
- Forecast results for a bigger roll-out and expected benefits – combination of forecasting and the M&E learnings

Report Ends