



Transport Delivery Committee

Monday 14 September 2020 at 1.00pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor Kath Hartley (Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Tim Huxtable (Vice-Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Richard Worrall (Vice-Chair)	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Adrian Andrew	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mary Locke	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Celia Hibbert	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Diana Holl-Allen	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Chaman Lal	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Roger Lawrence	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Ted Richards	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Councillor Cathy Bayton	Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee
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36. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Les Jones (Dudley), Councillor Alan Taylor (Dudley) and Councillor David Welsh (Coventry).

37. Chair's Remarks

The Chair updated the committee on a number of developments since the last meeting, including the 21st anniversary of the commencement of Midland Metro services, the work being undertaken by Transport for West Midlands to support pupils and parents in the return to school, progress being made with the Longbridge Park & Ride car park and Pool Meadow bus station projects, the trial of free wifi at Walsall bus station, and news that Travel de Courcey had recently gone into administration which had led to its school services being taken over by other operators.

38. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

39. Action Tracker

The actions taken on matters determined at previous meetings of the committee were noted. The Chair indicated that she would like the briefing note on the award of the new security contract to be submitted also to the Bus Alliance and to passenger champions. Councillor Robert Alden requested an update to the next meeting of the committee on the rail schemes within the capital programme. Councillor Tim Huxtable noted concerns that the stakeholder engagement relating to rail schemes may not be comprehensive. The Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, undertook to liaise with Councillor Tim Huxtable on this issue outside of the meeting to ensure any concerns were addressed.

40. Financial Monitoring Report

The committee considered a report from the Director of Finance setting out the financial position of the transport delivery revenue and capital budgets as at 31 July 2020.

The favourable variance in the transport revenue budget was primarily driven by lower patronage volumes across the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme and child concessions, along with savings realised during the set up of the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre. These savings were somewhat offset by the impact of COVID-19 driving lower digital advertising revenue and the implementation of the departure charge holiday until June 2020.

Councillor Ted Richards noted that the report indicated the annual budget was £276.3m, but this had been reported as £268.8m at the meeting of the committee on 20 July. The Financial Controller undertook to clarify this matter and update the committee accordingly. Councillor Cathy Bayton noted the reduction in Metro fares revenue in recent months. The Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, reported that the Government had provided financial support until 24 October to help with this reduction in fare receipts. It would then be necessary to negotiate further support, and this had been highlighted within the WMCA's Comprehensive Spending Review consultation response to Government.

Resolved:

- (1) It be noted that the year to date net revenue expenditure to the end of July 2020 showed a favourable variance of £0.093m compared to budget.
- (2) It be noted that total capital expenditure to the end of July 2020 for the overall transport programme was £45.4m, which was £22.6m below the budget of £68.0m. The annual forecast had been reduced to £255.6m, which was £20.7m below the annual budget of £276.3m.

41. Capital Programme Delivery Monitoring Report

The committee considered a report from the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, on progress on the approved Transport for West Midlands-led 2020/21 capital programme and projects.

The report provided detailed monitoring of the capital programme, including deliverables and target completion dates. During July/August, elements of the capital programme had been completed relating to Perry Barr, Bradley Lane Park & Ride and University station. There had been variations to the baseline programme in respect of the network-wide cycling programme, digital panel rollout and network-wide Park & Ride lighting enhancements.

In respect of updates on the delivery of the Commonwealth Games Transport Plan, the Director of Development & Delivery, Transport for West Midlands, indicated that he would ensure regular updates were submitted to this committee, as well as making use of a pre-committee briefing sessions to keep members updated.

Resolved:

- (1) The achievements since the July meeting of the Transport Delivery Committee be noted.
- (2) The progress of deliverables and outturn of the 2020/21 capital programme be noted.
- (3) Variations from the baseline programme be noted.

42. Transport Network and COVID-19

The committee considered a briefing note from the COVID-19 Transport Recovery Cell setting out recent actions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for public transport across the region.

The briefing note provided details on the latest Government guidance, developments on the bus, rail, tram and road networks, as well as developments within the wider public realm and active travel initiatives. The briefing note also set out the work planned to support pupils' return to school in September.

Councillor Chaman Lal enquired as to the support being provided to smaller bus operators. The Head of Bus, Transport for West Midlands, reported that the Bus Service Operators Grant was being paid at pre-pandemic levels and the Department for Transport was also making COVID-19 support payments to operators. Concessionary travel reimbursements were also being paid at pre-pandemic levels.

The Director of Network Resilience undertook to update the briefing note further with the most recent developments and to circulate this to members of the committee.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

43. Bus Alliance Update

The committee considered a report from the Director of Integrated Transport Network Services, Transport for West Midlands, on matters relating to the governance, operation, delivery and performance of the West Midlands Bus Alliance.

At its meeting in February, the Bus Alliance approved the 'Bolder Bus Alliance' aspirations and associated governance structure and had asked for further development and confirmation of the deliverables and commitments under each aspiration, noting that the Alliance needed to be stronger to ensure that bus travel was safe, available and accessible to help in the economic and wider recovery of the region. The report also set out the work being undertaken by each thematic sub-group reporting to the Bus Alliance.

Resolved:

- (1) The content of the report and current status of the West Midlands Bus Alliance be noted.
- (2) The report be submitted to the WMCA Board for information.

44. Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme Update

The committee considered a report from the Director of Integrated Transport Network Services, Transport for West Midlands, on the development of the Enhanced Partnership Plan being developed for the West Midlands and the associated scheme covering the A34 (north) and A45/Lode Lane corridors.

An Enhanced Partnership was a formal agreement between a local transport authority, local highway authorities and local bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. The public consultation on these proposals were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and necessitated a change to the consultation strategy to limit any physical interaction with members of the public whilst ensuring the widest coverage and accessibility. The consultation period ran through to 13 September. A full report on the outcome of the formal public consultation would be submitted to the next meeting of the committee along with any subsequent changes to the enhanced partnership plan or scheme. Subject to approval, this report would also seek formal sign-off of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme for the West Midlands.

Resolved:

- (1) The update on the development of the Enhanced Partnership and the proposed next steps be noted.
- (2) The progress with the formal (public) consultation, as authorised by the committee at its meeting in March 2020, be noted.

45. eScooters

The committee considered a report of the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, on the activity undertaken during July and August on the eScooter trial throughout the West Midlands region.

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 around the country. The West Midlands, led by Birmingham City Council, developed a regionally co-ordinated programme that incorporated trial zones within each constituent authority. Additionally, areas within Warwickshire formed a key part of the programme, connecting Coventry to Kenilworth, plus offering opportunities within Leamington Spa and Warwick.

The report set out details of the procurement process that led to the contract being awarded to Voi, along with local authority activities and obligations.

The committee was informed that a number of measures were being looked at to eliminate anti-social use of the eScooters, including the possibility of number plates to help with identification and pressure pads to prevent multiple passengers riding at the same time. In response to a question from Councillor Chaman Lal, it was confirmed that Voi had public liability insurance to cover accidents that occurred during public use.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress in planning the eScooter trial be noted.
- (2) The intended rollout plans and next steps for the programme be noted.

46. Questions

The committee considered a report of the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, on a question submitted by Councillor Richard Worrall and the response from the Director of Rail. The question related to whether the Rail Delivery Group, who organised the national railcard scheme, would compensate railcard holders for pandemic-related loss of discounted rail travel opportunities by extending the validity of the expiry dates by the amount of time that had been lost as a result of restrictions on travel.

The Director of Rail had responded:

Transport for the West Midlands has contacted the Department for Transport and has been informed that there has not been much change in the position since the question was originally raised. Department for Transport officials have been engaging with colleagues at the Rail Delivery Group to explore what options may be possible regarding a potential redress offer to railcard holders.

Transport for West Midlands has been informed by the Department for Transport that they are close to reaching a decision on the preferred option, although they haven't been able to share any details at this stage. The Department for Transport advised that they are expecting an announcement to be made this month, and that this will likely come from the Rail Delivery Group.

The Managing Director, Transport West Midlands, confirmed that West Midlands Rail Executive had lobbied on this issue to support the concerns of Councillor Richard Worrall.

Resolved:

The question submitted by Councillor Richard Worrall and the response from the Director of Rail be noted

47. Forward Plan

A plan of items to be reported to future meetings of the committee was noted.

48. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 9 November 2020 at 1.00pm

The meeting ended at 2.55pm.