



**Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

**Monday 19 October 2020 at 10.30 am**

**Minutes**

**Present**

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Philip Bateman MBE (Vice-Chair)	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Rois Ali	Coventry City Council
Councillor Liz Clements	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Ken Hawkins	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Jackie Taylor	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

**In Attendance**

Helen Davies	Transport for West Midlands
Dan Essex	West Midlands Combined Authority
David Harris	Transport for West Midlands
Kashmire Hawker	Young Combined Authority
Lyndsey Roberts	West Midlands Combined Authority
Anne Shaw	Transport for West Midlands
Sandeep Shingadia	Transport for West Midlands
Laura Shoaf	Transport for West Midlands
Councillor Ian Ward	WMCA Portfolio lead for Transport

**Item Title**  
**No.**

**8. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

**9. Q&A with the WMCA Portfolio Lead for Transport**

The Chair welcomed Portfolio Lead for Transport Councillor Ian Ward, members of the sub-committee and representatives from the Young Combined Authority to the question time that was focussing on transport-related matters.

Councillor Ian Ward provided an opening statement to members of the sub-committee. He informed them on bus patronage numbers since the COVID-19 pandemic, which were now showing a steady rate of growth with buses currently operating at a 50% capacity. Information was provided on the joint working with bus operators to ensure that a sufficient level of service had been maintained across the region. An update on Metro infrastructure was also provided. In respect of consultation on future Emergency Active Travel

funds, Councillor Ian Ward indicated that the Secretary of State for Transport had written to transport authorities indicating that the second tranche funding would be prioritised towards those active travel schemes that were able to demonstrate significant community support.

Members in attendance, along with Kashmire Hawker from the Young Combined Authority, then questioned the Portfolio Lead for Transport on a range of transport-related topics. Councillor Jackie Taylor enquired as to Councillor Ian Ward's top three immediate priorities. He informed the sub-committee that bus service recovery and transition through the pandemic was key to help ensure that public transport continued to be a key way of moving residents around the region and continued to be offered as another mode of transport for those who do not have access to a car. He also stressed the importance of continuing to have a strong bus network and the need to encourage residents in the region to walk or cycle over short journeys to promote a clearer, fairer, greener region. Councillor Ian Ward acknowledged the importance of equality impact assessments being undertaken for staff working on the transport network, noting the many safety measures put into place by Transport for West Midlands across the network to ensure the safety of staff. The Chair expressed her concern that some operators appeared not to be providing adequate personal protective equipment to their staff during the pandemic.

Councillor Ian Ward shared his view on the bus franchising model potentially being used in the future and that good practice and learning from other countries was required for this to be better understood, whilst acknowledging that this model of operation did have other drawbacks. He continued to believe that buses would remain the main mode of non-car transport for residents across the region.

Regarding Councillor Liz Clements' question on the cycle hire scheme, Councillor Ian Ward informed the committee that it was hoped that the scheme would be in full operation across the seven constituent authority areas by March 2021. In respect of the eScooters pilot, the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, undertook to report back on how many accidents involving their use had been reported.

Councillor Ian Ward was questioned on the concessionary fares scheme whether further support could be provided to students (including mature students). He indicated that he was happy to meet with the Young Combined Authority to discuss this matter further, but the financial pressures currently being experienced by the WMCA needed to be recognised. He suggested that this might be an issue the sub-committee could explore further when it undertook pre-decision scrutiny on the WMCA's 2021/22 budget.

The Chair thanked Councillor Ian Ward for his participation in the work of the sub-committee and his oversight of the transport portfolio, along with officers in Transport for West Midlands for their hard work and dedication in supporting the transport network during the COVID-19 pandemic. She also congratulated Anne Shaw, Director of Network Resilience for her recent award of the Leader trophy in the customer/passenger category of the Transport & Logistics Awards 2020.

Recommended to Overview & Scrutiny Committee that:

- (1) The key priorities identified by the Portfolio Lead for Transport be endorsed, namely:
  - To ensure the bus network recovered to service and patronage levels across the region that existed pre-COVID-19.
  - To complete all current Metro capital schemes.
  - To pursue further walking and cycling initiatives to help support and encourage the modal shift seen across the region this year.
- (2) Given the current economic situation and the WMCA's financial challenges, existing concessionary travel policies should be maintained in recognition of the wider societal benefits they underpinned.
- (3) The Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee should undertake a scrutiny review of alternative ticketing policies (including their funding arrangements) in use in comparable cities/regions around the world with a view to making appropriate recommendations for the Portfolio Lead for Transport's consideration.
- (4) The WMCA and Transport for West Midlands should consider undertaking a programme of appropriate lobbying in support of the 'levelling up' of funding for public transport services and infrastructure across the UK, to better enable residents to have the ability and capability to play their part in the region's economic recovery.
- (5) Transport for West Midlands should liaise with public transport operators/providers to ensure that all workers on the public transport network were provided with appropriate personal protective equipment.

#### **10. Supported Travel Policies Review Update**

The sub-committee considered a report from the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, on the supported travel policies operated by Transport for West Midlands, the key findings of an equality impact assessment which was undertaken to assess the impacts of COVID-19 across the region's communities, the current budget position for supported travel policies and efficient ways of delivering schemes going forward whilst considering financial pressures.

All bus passengers aged over 66 or those citizens with a disability were entitled to travel free of charge on any off-peak local bus service in England. This scheme was called the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme and was set in national legislation. It was funded through Transport for West Midlands' transport levy at a cost of around £50m per year. In addition, five discretionary supported travel policies were funded by Transport for West Midlands at a cost of around £30m per year from the transport levy. When combined, these five policies assisted over 300,000 people in the region

every year and provided up to 43m journeys, equating to around 14% of all public transport trips.

Given the current environment and ongoing financial strains, it was unlikely any new funding would become available to support new supported travel policies. Only if additional funding sources were found, sufficient savings were made or existing supported travel policy schemes were reduced in scale or removed, creating a budgetary surplus, could new initiatives be developed to support new groups.

Recommended to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that:

- (1) Transport for West Midlands' current supported travel policies and its role in developing and delivering such discretionary travel policies be noted.
- (2) Transport for West Midlands' equalities impact assessment, undertaken to assess the impacts of COVID-19 across the region's communities be noted.
- (3) Transport for West Midlands' current challenging budget position and the impact the pandemic had had on the supported travel policies be noted.
- (4) It be noted that Strategic Transport Board members had asked for options to be developed for its meeting on 6 November 2020, with consideration being paid to this sub-committee's views on any possible changes to the supported travel policies, in response to current budget pressures and equality issues now being faced.

## **11. WMCA HS2 Growth Strategy Refresh**

The sub-committee considered a report from the Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, on the publication of the WMCA's HS2 Growth Strategy refresh - 'The Defining Decade' and advised of the communication and engagement activities that would be taking place to promote the launch of the strategy with key local and national stakeholders.

The 'Midlands HS2 Growth Strategy' was first published in April 2015 and was the first such strategy delivered to Government that evidenced the direct benefits that would be realised within the West Midlands with the arrival of HS2. Following the outcome of the Oakervee Review in to HS2, it was agreed that the time was right to refresh the strategy, to look at the progress made to date and to review whether the priorities as set out in the original strategy were still as important today as they were in 2015.

The sub-committee was keen to understand whether HS2 was still the best use of public money during the financial pressures which had been magnified through COVID-19 pandemic, along with the benefits HS2 brought to the residents of the region and those in deprived and harder to reach communities. The Head of Transport Implementation responded that a key consideration in any assessment of public value needed to include those benefits it brought to the wider region, rather than simply viewing it as an

additional railway track. He indicated that HS2 looked to create regeneration opportunities and growth for businesses in the region, along with up to 175,000 jobs. He also informed the sub-committee on the joint work being undertaken with HS2 Ltd to develop upskilling the region and the links between housing developments and the opportunities posed to future generations of the region.

In respect of the training and employment opportunities provided by the construction of HS2, Councillor Liz Clements sought further information as to how these broke down in respect of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background. She also sought further information on the key environmental projects that formed part of the route's construction. The Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands, undertook to find this information out from HS2 Ltd.

The Vice-Chair considered that public support for HS2 could be enhanced if HS2 Ltd demonstrated great evidence of the benefits of the projects to communities living north of Birmingham, particularly around the benefits of opportunities during the construction phase.

Recommended to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that:

- (1) The publication of the WMCA HS2 Growth Strategy refresh - 'The Defining Decade' be noted.
- (2) A further update on HS2 be provided to the sub-committee in due course.

**12. Bus Byelaws**

The Chair indicated that item was to be deferred until the next meeting of the sub-committee on 16 November 2020 as a report on the item had not been circulated to members ahead of the meeting.

**13. Forward Plan**

The sub-committee noted its workplan of business for consideration at future meetings. In addition, it was agreed that the Bus Byelaws report, and a report on the Emergency Active Travel Fund (including information on tranche 1 and tranche 2 allocations and statistical data on the schemes implemented) be considered at its meeting on 16 November 2020. The sub-committee also requested a further update on HS2 to be considered at a future to be determined.

Recommended to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that:

- (1) The sub-committee work programme, as amended, be noted.
- (2) The sub-committee receive transport-related extracts from the WMCA Board's forward plan at its future meetings.

**14. Date of the Next meeting**

Monday 30 November 2020 at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm.