

Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

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| Date | 30 November 2020 |
| Report title | Emergency Active Travel Fund Update |
| Portfolio Lead | Transport - Councillor Ian Ward |
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| Report has been considered by | N/A |

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the background, approach and progress with Emergency Active Travel Fund and Active Travel Fund programmes being delivered in the West Midlands.

1. Purpose

To provide Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee with an update on the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) in May 2020 to fund the implementation of cycling and walking facilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Background

The Government announced the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) in May 2020 to fund the implementation of cycling and walking facilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The funding supports local transport authorities with producing cycling and walking facilities and is split into 2 tranches:

- Tranche 1 supports the installation of temporary projects.
- Tranche 2 supports the creation of longer-term projects.

Appendix 1 provides a more detailed summary of key issues, engagement and schemes for both Tranches.

Emergency Active Travel Fund – Tranche 1

Funding application

The indicative funding allocation for the West Midlands set by DfT was £3,446,800, with up to 30% available as revenue funding. An application for the full allocation was prepared by TfWM officers in collaboration with Local Authority officers and submitted to DfT on 5th June 2020.

Funding award

On 2nd July the West Midlands was awarded £3,850,997 of Tranche 1 funding.

The total funding received by each authority was:

- Birmingham - £1,130,982
- Coventry - £479,259
- Dudley - £285,000
- Sandwell - £296,602
- Solihull - £214,496
- Walsall - £255,000
- Wolverhampton - £347,378
- WMCA - £842,280

Constraints

EATF Tranche 1 schemes were required to be delivered over an 8-week period following receipt of the funding. In the West Midlands the deadline for completion of schemes was 7th September 2020.

Key successes

Feedback on infrastructure schemes

An online survey was conducted to gather more information around the perceptions and impacts of EATF infrastructure schemes. The survey was developed with support from TfWM's Human Intelligence team and in partnership with Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The survey ran from 16th October until 2 November and was completed by a total of 1,264 respondents.

Survey respondents have an appreciation of the reasons for the introduction of EATF schemes. Of a total of 974 respondents half (49%) believed the main purpose of the schemes was to make the area safer for cycling, two fifths (39%) to make the area safer for walking and a similar proportion (38%) that they were to discourage car use for shorter journeys.

Importantly survey respondents were generally supportive of EATF proposals:

- Approximately three quarters (72%) of 1,197 respondents were supportive of providing more cycle parking with less than a tenth opposed (8%).
- 70% of 1,213 respondents supported the cordoning off space outside shops/widening pavements to help people social distance when walking/queuing compared to less than a fifth (17%) who opposed such changes.
- Approximately two thirds (65%) of 1,219 respondents supported the implementation of pop-up cycle lanes to protect people on bikes and keep them safe compared to a quarter (23%) of respondents who opposed.
- Almost two thirds (63%) of 1,203 respondents supported providing bus and cycling lanes on main travel corridors, whilst a quarter (24%) of respondents were opposed.
- More than half (56%) of 1,210 respondents supported the removal of on-street car parking space to make more room for people to walk, queue and socialise, with less than a third (29%) of respondents opposed to their removal.

Not all proposals were well supported. Proposals to close residential streets to motor vehicles while maintaining access to create low-traffic neighbourhoods were more divisive, with less than half (47%) of 1,211 respondents supportive of such schemes compared to two fifths (37%) of respondents who were opposed.

Respondents were asked about changes in walking and cycling habits. Whilst the majority of the 1,219 respondents reported no change in their levels of walking and cycling one in six (17%) reported an increase in cycling levels (compared to 9% reporting a decrease). Approximately a fifth (19%) of respondents reported walking more with the same proportion reporting that they were walking less.

The survey also asked respondents about future travel behaviour. More than half (52%) of 1,219 respondents reported that they are planning to increase the amount of walking journeys you do in the next 6 months. Two fifths (40%) of respondents reported that they planned to increase the amount of cycling journeys over the same period.

Park That Bike

With the agreement of partners, TfWM launched a region-wide cycle parking scheme aimed at improving the capacity of cycle parking at organisations across the West Midlands. The Park That Bike project helps support employees, customers or service users by giving them the option of cycling to their destination.

By the end of September Park That Bike had received 206 applications from schools, community groups and businesses across the region and cycle parking had been installed at 35 locations. In October a further 45 applications for cycle parking were received and cycle parking was installed at 12 additional locations.

Online community engagement

An online community engagement platform has been set up for the West Midlands' EATF programme to provide details of the project and collect feedback from communities on implemented and proposed cycling and walking infrastructure schemes. TFWM has utilised the commonplace system to provide the engagement platform.

The engagement platform is currently live for all seven local authorities and up to 19th October the site had been visited a total of 35,739 times with 5,727 respondents making a total of 7,167, an average of 1.25 comments per respondent.

Comments from local stakeholders through the platform have helped to inform the development and design of schemes. feedback post-implementation has also helped to inform modifications, one such example being the Kings Heath Low Traffic Neighbourhood pilot (BIR004).

Issues

One scheme to implement a pop-up cycle lane in Sutton Coldfield (BIR007) was removed following petitions, discussions and correspondence with the local MP and the town council.

A similar scheme to implement a pop-up cycle lane along Stoney Stanton Road in Coventry (COV004) was not progressed following consultation feedback from Transport for West Midlands and bus operators due to the likely adverse impact on public transport services.

Lessons learned from the development and implementation of EATF Tranche 1 schemes is being used to improve the implementation of Tranche 2 schemes.

Summary

- The West Midlands was awarded £3,850,997 of funding, £400,000 more than the indicative allocation.
- Schemes were required to be delivered / fully committed by the 7th September.
- 72% of survey respondents were supportive of providing more cycle parking.
- 70% of survey respondents supported the cordoning off space outside shops/widening pavements to help people social distance when walking/queuing.
- 65% of survey respondents supported the implementation of pop-up cycle lanes to protect people on bikes and keep them safe.
- 63% of survey respondents supported providing bus and cycling lanes on main travel corridors.
- 17% of respondents reported an increase in cycling compared to pre-Covid levels.
- 52% of respondents reported that they are planning to increase the amount of walking journeys they make in the next 6 months.
- 40% of respondents reported that they planned to increase the amount of cycling journeys they make in the next 6 months.
- Park That Bike received 261 applications for cycle parking from schools, community groups and businesses across the region.

Active Travel Fund – Tranche 2

Funding application

The invitation to bid for Tranche 2 funding was issued on 10 July 2020. The indicative funding allocation for the West Midlands for Tranche 2 was £13,787,200, with up to 20% available as revenue funding.

The long list of schemes put forward for inclusion in the application by the seven Local Authorities and TfWM exceeded the available funding. A shortlist of schemes was identified using an assessment framework based on EATF funding criteria and DfT's Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST) using the following scoring criteria:

- Does the scheme meet DfT's Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) criteria?
- Can the scheme be delivered within DfT's required timescale of 31/03/21?
- What level of prioritisation has been undertaken to identify the proposed scheme?
- What level of Value for Money does the scheme provide?
- How complete is the scheme information provided? (i.e. is the level of information sufficient to allow meaningful decisions to be made on scoring).
- Does the scheme benefit both pedestrians and cyclists?

Value for Money assessments were undertaken for all proposed infrastructure schemes using the Department for Transport's Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT).

The scheme assessment was supplemented by discussions with Local Authority / TfWM officers with detailed knowledge of the proposals to finalise the shortlisted schemes.

A funding application for £13,787,200 was submitted to DfT on 7th August. The total funding requested for each authority was:

- Birmingham - £4,477,349
- Coventry - £1,438,816
- Dudley - £841,141
- Sandwell - £1,283,935
- Solihull - £1,280,000
- Walsall - £1,027,801
- Wolverhampton - £1,111,626
- WMCA - £2,326,532

A request was submitted alongside the application for an additional £2,363,114 to support the implementation of the West Midlands Cycle Hire scheme.

Funding award

Ahead of the Tranche 2 award announcements the fund was re-named the Active Travel Fund to reflect that its aim is to deliver longer term projects rather than those of a temporary nature.

Awards for Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund were announced on 13 November 2020, alongside strengthened advice for Local Authorities on consultation and engagement. The West Midlands was awarded £13,097,650, 95% of the indicative allocation, a shortfall of £689,350.

For context one in seven (14%) authorities of the 77 authorities who received funding were awarded the full amount of their indicative allocation for Tranche 2. Roughly half of authorities (48%) received 95% of their allocation. Just under a third (29%) of authorities received less than their indicative allocation, a fifth (21%) receiving 75% of their allocation and approximately a tenth (8%) receiving 60% of their allocation. Only 7 authorities (9%) received more funding than their indicative allocation.

Constraints

The key constraint is that ATF Tranche 2 schemes must be delivered by the end of March 2021. The additional stakeholder and public engagement requirements will make this timescale more challenging; however, this additional work will help to mitigate any potential issues at an earlier stage in the development process.

Next steps

Approaches to address the funding shortfall are being reviewed. Options include:

- Removal of lower Value for Money schemes.
- Removing schemes due to new requirements.
- Removing schemes because they have been progressed using other funding streams.
- 5% reduction in funding applied universally to all parties.

Meetings are currently taking place to agree a way forward. CWOG will discuss on Thursday 19 November, with the ultimate decision being taken by STOG.

Note – Any headroom created by defining the final package of schemes will be allocated to fund the implementation of the West Midlands Cycle Hire scheme which is due to become operational in spring 2021.

Engagement & consultation

One issue which was evident in relation to some schemes in different areas of the country was that some stakeholders and members of the public did not feel adequately consulted about Tranche 1 proposals ahead of their implementation. As a consequence, DfT have provided strengthened requirements for Local Authorities on consultation and engagement in developing and implementing Active Travel Fund schemes. TfWM will coordinate these activities on behalf of all Local Authorities.

3. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications related to this report.

4. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications related to this report.

5. Equalities Implications

There are no financial implications related to this report.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

There are no inclusive growth implications related to this report.

7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

The WMCA exercises transport powers overwhelmingly in respect of the area covered by its constituent authority members, however, there is significant interaction with the wider area. The health and performance of the transport system in metropolitan area has a profound impact on the wider area and vice-versa. Deep engagement with surrounding Local Transport Authorities and with Midlands Connect will essential. Additionally opportunities to align policies and timescales with surrounding Local Transport Authorities will be explored, especially noting that transport does not stop or start at administrative boundaries.

8. Other Implications

N/A

9. Schedule of Background Papers

Gear Change – A bold vision for cycling and walking¹

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf