



**West Midlands**  
Combined Authority

## **Transport Delivery Committee**

<b>Date</b>	13 September 2021
<b>Report title</b>	Bus Delivery Monitoring Report
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Putting Passengers First Member Engagement Group

### **Recommendation(s) for action or decision:**

The Transport Delivery Committee is recommended:

- (1) To note the content of this report.

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To report matters relating to the monitoring and delivery of the high-level deliverables and wider performance monitoring of bus services in the West Midlands.
- 1.2 The high-level deliverables within the TfWM Business Plan directly relating to the delivery of bus are;
  - Delivering our bus vision to support growth, inclusion and reduced car dependency.
  - Enhance infrastructure and improve customer experience at TfWM passenger waiting facilities, our bus stations and major interchanges.
  - Creating and maintaining a world class system for accurate and reliable public transport travel information including the requirements set out in the National Bus Strategy and regional Vision for Bus.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 *Delivering our bus vision to support growth, inclusion and reduced car dependency.*

Covid-19 Response & Recovery

*Local Bus Services*

- 2.2 As lockdown restrictions have continued to ease and the demand for travel has increased bus patronage has shown a steady rate of growth. There are fluctuations by service but the network in total is currently carrying approximately 68% of expected patronage in comparison to what would be expected for the equivalent period pre-covid. Patronage is expected to increase further from September onwards as the holiday period comes to an end, schools and colleges return and workers are encouraged back into their places of work following the removal of the national working from home guidance. A further boost will be realised later in September when the university academic year begins with a greater focus on site learning generating increased travel by bus.
- 2.3 On most routes service levels are now at 100% of pre-covid levels with only minor variances on some corridors to reflect seasonal variations or changes in travel behaviour.
- 2.4 Buses are now able to operate at near full capacity following the most recent changes in social distancing although many operators are still taking some measures to protect drivers such as preventing passengers from sitting in seats closest to the cab and also encouraging passengers to be mindful of when buses are less busy.
- 2.5 The use of face coverings is no longer mandatory on public transport including bus but is expected. This message is being portrayed to passengers along with passengers being asked to be respectful and mindful of other users when travelling. These messages are being conveyed through various means including digital channels, social media, posters & notices and announcements.

- 2.6 TfWM and bus operators are maintaining enhanced cleaning processes in place this is inclusive of vehicles and passenger waiting infrastructure including bus shelters and bus stations. National Express are currently maintaining in service cleaning of the high touch points on bus although this is currently under review.

#### *Supporting Bus Operators*

- 2.7 The reduced number of passengers using local bus services means that fare revenue for operators is also reduced. To support bus operators through this period and ensure the bus network continues to operate to aid the recovery of the region, TfWM have worked with the Department for Transport (DfT) to develop and administer a number of measures.
- 2.8 TfWM have continued to provide support in the form of maintaining contract payments for tendered services at pre-covid levels as well as maintaining payments for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) at the predicted rate assuming the pandemic hadn't occurred. Subject to agreement and managing other budgetary pressures, this support could continue to the end of March 2022.
- 2.9 Commercial bus operators and TfWM are receiving funding from the DfT Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) which is designed to ensure bus services can continue to operate to full-service levels during the pandemic. This grant will continue to be provided through to the end of August 2021.
- 2.10 From September the DfT will continue to support operators and local authorities but this will be based upon a grant formula rather than 'topping-up' operators to cover their costs. Under the revised conditions for this grant operators will need to maintain a minimum of 90% of mileage of pre-covid levels, will be able to make a profit and also make commercial service changes. However, the conditions of the grant are such that any service changes must be undertaken in consultation with the Local Transport Authority. If agreement cannot be reached locally an appeals process has been put in place by the DfT.
- 2.11 The period of this new Bus Recovery Grant will be from September 2021 to the end of March 2022 and we will seek to maintain service stability and continuity from operators during this period. Beyond March 2022 TfWM with operators will be seeking to secure funding through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) process to maintain the current baseline network.

#### *Ring & Ride*

- 2.12 Use of the West Midlands Ring & Ride service continues to grow with customer levels currently at approximately 18% of pre-covid levels. This is expected given the demographic of the users and the number of regular destinations currently being closed. We are forecasting an increase from September as destinations start to reopen and confidence to travel continues to grow.
- 2.13 The service is currently operating reduced hours and is operating Monday to Friday 0800 to 1730 and Saturday 0830 to 1530. From October the service level will be increased to operate Monday to Saturday 0800 to 2300 and Sunday 0800 to 1530. During peak times we have also agreed an increased number of vehicles to be available to provide additional capacity on the service.

- 2.14 We are in the process of agreeing a revised contract with National Express Accessible Transport (NEAT) up to the end of March 2022. We continue to have discussions regarding contractual and service arrangements to ensure the service reflects any changes in travel demand and aligns with the ambitions of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which may include wider use of Demand Responsive Services in the region.

#### Bus Service Changes and Enhancements

##### *National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plans*

- 2.15 The National Bus Strategy (NBS) published in March 2021 sets out the requirements for all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to access transformational funding from April 2022. TfWM is the LTA for the WMCA constituent area. The first step was to publish a notice of intent to pursue an Enhanced Partnership (EP) and/or franchising by the end of June 2021. By 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021, TfWM must publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan. By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 the LTA should have either an EP in place or be following the statutory processes for a franchising assessment.
- 2.16 The BSIP will drive forward productive partnerships delivered through an EP or a franchising assessment to make a step change in bus services required to achieve the objectives of the NBS. Having an adopted BSIP in place will be critical when Government decides how the new £3 billion of discretionary funding is allocated – covering both revenue and capital. Overall, the BSIP should:
- Be developed by LTAs in collaboration with local authorities and bus operators, community transport bodies and local businesses, services and people.
  - Focus on delivering the bus network that LTAs (in consultation with operators) want to see, including how to address the under provision and overprovision of bus services and buses integrate with other modes.
  - Set out how it will grow bus use.
  - Set out how it will be delivered.
  - Be updated annually and reflected in the Local Transport Plan (LTP).
- 2.17 TfWM has an existing EP in place for the region and is also undertaking an assessment of the wider bus service reform options available through the Bus Services Act 2017. This ongoing assessment includes bus franchising options, and a report outlining the outcomes of this will be considered by WMCA Board in November 2021. Therefore, the BSIP will set out the vision and provide an updated EP including delivery details (by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022); with a separate franchising assessment detailing how, the vision could be delivered and pursued. If principles, objectives and outcomes cannot be agreed between TfWM and bus operators, franchising is identified as a mechanism which authorities can still turn to if the operators cannot deliver the objectives within an Enhanced Partnership to deliver the BSIP.
- 2.18 The BSIP guidance encourages, LTAs, local authorities and bus operators to work at pace with communities to plan and deliver a fully integrated bus service with simple, cheaper, multi-modal tickets, more bus priority measures, maintaining high-quality information for all passengers in more locations and more zero emission buses and better turn-up-and-go frequencies including during evenings and weekends.
- 2.19 The BSIP is currently under development and TfWM are facilitating discussions with all stakeholders including bus operators and Local Highway Authorities.

### *Birmingham Outer Circle*

- 2.20 During this reporting period National Express have made a change to Bus Service 11A / 11C Outer Circle. Prior to the change the service operated as a continuous orbital service connecting the outer commercial centres of the city region. Buses were always in service with no ability to build in recovery time to the timetable to ensure the services maintained reliability and punctuality. Due to increased reliability concerns on the route caused by a number of congestion hotspots, including the highways work at Perry Barr, the decision was taken to make changes to the route.
- 2.21 From Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July the service was changed to operate as two overlapping sections rather than as a continuous circular service. Section 1 operates Acocks Green to Erdington and Section 2 operates Acocks Green to Perry Barr. All sections of the route remain served and most passengers c. 96%, have experienced no change in service. Where passengers are required to change between services National Express have introduced through ticketing to prevent any financial implication of changing buses.
- 2.22 Prior to the change reliability on the service had dropped to as low as just 74.5% of buses being on time. Now the change has been implemented this has improved to just under 89%. Anecdotal feedback from passengers suggests that service satisfaction has improved as a result of the change.
- 2.23 National Express and TfWM have committed to reviewing the decision at each fundamental change to the Traffic Management arrangements at Perry Barr. The corridor will also be considered as part of the BSIP proposals to ascertain whether the route could benefit from bus priority to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the circular route.

### *Network Changes*

- 2.24 From Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August National Express are making a number of changes to Bus Services across the region. Full details can be viewed at; <https://nxbus.co.uk/west-midlands/service-updates/timetable-and-route-changes-from-29th-august-2021>

The rationale for changes include;

- Uncertainty over the level and speed of patronage recovery and changes to passenger travel habits observed for different demographics and communities during the Covid period.
- Changes in journey speeds and the typical daily traffic profile. For example changes in the traffic volumes in the morning peak, the inter-peak period including school pick up and the evening peak have all been observed requiring variations in pre-Covid running times.
- TfWM have been involved in reviewing the details of these service changes and have provided feedback to ensure that the rationale and supporting data of service changes was provided, analysed and understood and therefore changes are not detrimental for passengers. Additionally, as TfWM have ensured the changes meet the service requirements for continued public subsidy.

- Bus Recovery Funding replaces Covid Bus Service Subsidy Grant with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September.
- Due to the uncertainty around the mechanism and the quantum of Bus Recovery Funding the date the service changes were confirmed meant there was not sufficient time for a comprehensive passenger and key stakeholder engagement exercise. However National Express did provide direct communications to Councillors and MP's and subsequently direct passenger communications were made using on bus posters, at stop posters (on routes where there was a more significant change), website and using social media channels.
- A limited number of other service changes by other operators have taken place to either co-ordinate with the National Express network changes as a result of National Express's network changes or alternatively timetable changes to accommodate departure headways at bus stations. In both cases there was not a material impact upon service provision or coverage.

#### *Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)*

- 2.25 The first pilot mainstream Demand Response Transport (DRT) scheme in the West Midlands was launched successfully in April 2021 under the brand of West Midlands Bus On Demand, with operating hours of Monday to Friday from 0700 until 2000.
- 2.26 The service is centred on the University of Warwick campuses and links into the wider South West of Coventry. The Service is being operated by CoachScanner supported by technology and service planning by Via, with customer support by TfWM's Customer Relations team.
- 2.27 The service is managed through Via's Operations Centre (VOC), which manages booking requests, pick-up and set-down locations, vehicle routings, driver breaks, gives real time locations of vehicles and works in conjunction with the West Midlands Bus on Demand App.
- 2.28 Whilst the service functions at best when customers make use of the app, there is also the opportunity to contact the team by email and telephone, helping ensuring access to all user groups. The Customer Relations team has been overseeing customer interactions and are feeding back on queries. The number of queries has been low in recent weeks, however, there have also been very few issues with the system and app and few reported issues regarding general user experience.
- 2.29 The service was offered for free in the initial stages of the trial and saw a healthy growth in patronage through the early months. The service is no longer free and there has been a decline in patronage however this can also be partly attributable to the summer holiday season in addition to the fare. Offers have been sent out to entice users to use the service, and a survey to understand those who have previously used the service are no longer doing so is also being undertaken. The current fare structure is based on distance travelled and ranges from £1 for the shortest trips to up to £6 for the longest trips. Additional passenger can travel for £1 up to a maximum of 3.

- 2.30 A new 'Multi-Pass' ticket will be available when the University of Warwick has students joining and returning in October, and there is a concerted effort from all parties to ensure new students are aware of the service and see the benefit of DRT over use of a private car. This new ticket product will allow passengers to purchase a book of tickets at a reduced rate of the single fare. Books of tickets at different values will be available with books of 10, 25 and 50 tickets being available. The tickets will be limited to use on this specific service although we are exploring options to include WM ON-Demand in multi-modal products.
- 2.31 A second scheme being developed for another area of Coventry, in conjunction with Coventry City Council. Whilst the operator and technology partner are yet to be awarded TfWM is working with Via on the Mobility Innovation Strategy presently. The anticipated start date of this additional service is late 2021.

#### Scheme Development and Delivery

##### *Coventry Electric Bus City*

- 2.32 In March 2021 TfWM were awarded £50m of grant funding for the Coventry Electric Bus City programme to replace all 291 diesel buses operating in Coventry with electric buses by the end of 2025. The total cost of the programme was estimated as £136m with the remaining £86m coming from Commercial Operators, WMCA and Local Authorities. The grant is to fund 75% of the cost difference between a diesel and an electric bus plus 75% of the cost of installing the necessary charging infrastructure.
- 2.33 The grant has been made available to operators through an application process in two stages; one for commercial operators and the second to cover buses and charging infrastructure for Subsidised Services in the City.
- 2.34 This grant application process is currently underway and detailed commercial discussions are currently taking place with operators, vehicle manufacturers and charging equipment suppliers to ensure we achieve the best value and maximise the return from the the available grant whilst seeking to deliver the overall objectives of the scheme.
- 2.35 The introduction of the Electric Buses will also be supported by a programme of highways improvements to remove congestion hotspots and improve journey times and reliability for bus passengers. This programme, being led and delivered by Coventry City Council, will ensure that the investment in the fleet is maximised and passengers see this wider benefit.

##### *Birmingham Cross City Network*

- 2.36 As part of the Better deal for Bus Users funding package TfWM received over £20 million to fund the first phases of prioritised bus priority measures to compliment Sprint and deliver a Birmingham Cross City bus network and benefitting the wider region. The overall package will benefit almost 90 million passengers per year, providing 5km of new bus only roads, 8 junction upgrades, 5km of new bus lanes and enhanced waiting facilities.

2.37 The elements of the overall package not being delivered either through Sprint or as part of the Better Deal for Bus Users settlement will be incorporated and prioritised within the West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan submission to DfT in October. Current progress on the delivery of the first 2 phases is detailed below;

#### *Phase 1*

2.38 Phase 1 consists of schemes in Birmingham City Centre (Margaret Street, Snow Hill and Newhall Street) and also Balsall Heath, Alcester Road. Public consultation and briefings to Cabinet Members, Ward Councillors and BID organisations have been undertaken. This has allowed progression of the above schemes to achieve Full Business Case Approval through Birmingham City Council's Governance process.

2.39 These projects are currently awaiting Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) Consultation. It is important to note that Birmingham City Council resource for undertaking TRO Consultation is currently limited due to priority works centred around projects such as Metro/Commonwealth Games. Further work is being undertaken to identify where TfWM can support and assist. Construction is anticipated to commence later this year and be completed prior to the Commonwealth Games.

#### *Phase 2*

2.40 Phase 2 consists of the following individual schemes;

- Kings Heath (Alcester Road South)
- Birmingham City (Dudley Road, Summer Hill, Suffolk Street)
- Burnt Tree Island
- Cape Hill

2.41 The proposals are currently at the feasibility stages that include traffic studies and surveys in the individual areas. These studies and survey work will provide us with the basis to draft the best design to consult on. Once the survey data is reported, the ambition is to progress the draft designs for public consultation in October 2021.

2.42 Further details of each of the schemes is included in Appendix A.

#### *Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme*

2.43 On the 30th March 2021, the Department for Transport (DfT) invites Local Transport Authorities to submit expressions of interest in receiving funding to become a Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA); a place based scheme that will allow areas to bring forward zero emission bus proposals. The scheme is designed to support the wider government commitments to Net Zero, and plans to decarbonise the transport system.

2.44 ZEBRA includes a number of key aims;

- To support the government's commitment to decarbonisation and to reduce the transport sector's contributions to CO2 emissions;
- To support the roll-out of the 4,000 zero emission buses that the Government committed to in February 2020;
- To support bus manufacturers in the development of zero emission technology;

- To support partnership working between Local Transport Authorities, bus operators, and other local stakeholders as set out in the National Bus Strategy;
- To understand better the challenges of introducing zero emission buses and supporting infrastructure to inform future government support for zero emission buses.

- 2.45 In May 2021, Transport for West Midlands submitted an Expressions of Interest (EOI) on behalf of the WMCA to the ZEBRA Phase 1 fast track process. On 24th June 2021, the DfT advised that our Phase 1 EOI had been shortlisted to be taken forward to Phase 2 Full Business Case, alongside 5 other local transport authorities. The business case has been developed following HM Treasury's Green Book, DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) and Value for Money Framework and WMCA's Single Assurance Framework.
- 2.46 The West Midlands Bid includes the most ambitious hydrogen bus project ever seen and if approved by Government and WMCA Board, over the next 2 years the project will see 200 new hydrogen double deck buses and 24 articulated hydrogen buses come into operation in all parts of the region with the exception of Coventry (that was successful to be the UK's first all-electric bus city in March 2021); 7 electric single deck buses on subsidised bus services in Wolverhampton, as well as a new pantograph at Bilston bus station and hydrogen refuelling at 2 bus depots in the West Midlands.
- 2.47 The full business case was submitted to DfT on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and we are currently awaiting the outcome of the decision which is due in mid-September. The project is not without significant risk and we are continuing to seek mitigation in order that WMCA would be able to accept a funding offer from Government should it be forthcoming.

#### Tendered Bus Services

- 2.48 Due to the continued unusual and difficult market conditions, including the on-going public sector financial support and a level of uncertainty in estimating future patronage, it has been deemed not an appropriate time to issue tenders as part of a competitive tender process. The exception to this has been where it is felt appropriate to test costs in the market or where there is a new requirement.
- 2.49 The Bus Delivery Team have worked with the existing operators to agree an extension of applicable contracts for suitable periods in adherence to procurement rules. In most cases contracts will be extended to the end of March 2022 in line with Bus Recovery funding for the sector from the DfT. We are currently awaiting guidance from the DfT to confirm the level of funding to maintain funding for the contracts prior to confirming this extension.
- 2.50 As with the commercial network the average patronage on tendered bus services is lower than the equivalent pre-Covid usage and in some cases is relatively lower. It has been seen the recovery level of concessionary passengers is lower than fare paying passengers which has impacted some tendered services which have a high proportion of concessionary passengers.
- 2.51 The level of usage is an important factor in the rationale for the provision of subsidised bus services so TfWM Officers are closely monitoring usage especially over the coming months.

## Partnerships

### *West Midlands Bus Alliance*

- 2.52 The West Midlands Bus Alliance has continued to oversee and influence the bus network response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic and has sought to ensure that operators and wider stakeholders are fully aligned on issues affecting passengers. This has included developing a consistent approach to passenger communication at the various stages to the release from covid measures including changes to social distancing on-bus and continuing to encourage and expect passengers to continue to wear a face covering.
- 2.53 The Alliance has continued to hold fortnightly bus operator sessions to discuss operational issues relating to the current operating environment. This has evolved from the practical considerations of operating buses during the pandemic and the various funding mechanisms and related Terms and Conditions to developing a network to meet the changing requirements of passengers and establishing a forum for developing the ambition for the Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- 2.54 The Alliance continues to receive updates on the development and delivery of initiatives to deliver the overall outcomes as stated under the bolder bus alliance. This includes the continued delivery of bus priority measures to facilitate the implementation of the Cross City Bus Network in Birmingham, measures to improve bus emission standards at the decarbonisation of the fleet, initiatives to improve the fares and ticketing structure and RTI passenger information as part of an integrated network.
- 2.55 The Bus Alliance board is currently giving consideration to the governance structure and the part it will play in developing the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the resulting enhanced partnership agreement. This will need to reflect that current and future initiatives being delivered by partners will move from a voluntary partnership arrangement to a legal / statutory requirement.

### *Advanced Quality Partnership Schemes*

- 2.56 TfWM continues to monitor adherence to the Advanced Quality Partnership Schemes (AQPS) in Birmingham City Centre, Solihull Town Centre and Wolverhampton City Centre. Current elements receiving closer scrutiny include operator adherence to Euro VI emission standards in Solihull and Wolverhampton, and dwell times and vehicle idling in Birmingham City Centre. Where individual issues are identified TfWM are engaging with operators to understand any barriers and seeking better adherence.

### *Enhanced Partnership*

- 2.57 On the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021 WMCA became the first city region and only the second local transport authority to make an Enhanced Partnership. The scheme aims to support the development of improved bus service on two corridors; A34 (N) Walsall to Birmingham City Centre and A45 Birmingham Airport / B425 Solihull to Birmingham City Centre. This includes the introduction of bus priority measures to support the delivery of Sprint and improvements to services on these corridors and improvements to emission standards.

- 2.58 The first operator requirements will be effective from Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September from which date all buses serving stops on these corridors will need to meet a minimum of a Euro VI emission standard.
- 2.59 It is a requirement of the BSIP that LTAs deliver any enhancements through an Enhanced Partnership or through Franchising. TfWM will initially seek to amend this existing enhanced partnership to deliver the aspirations of the BSIP. This will involve public consultation on a revised EP Plan to reflect the BSIP proposals.
- 2.60 The further development of the EP and coverage of a greater geographical area will have an impact on the existing AQPS areas. Under the Bus Services Act 2017 legislation, it is not possible to have two statutory partnerships covering requirements in the same geographical area. TfWM are currently exploring the removal of the AQPS as the EP scheme is expanded in the region under the BSIP proposals.
- 2.61 Under the Enhanced Partnership Scheme TfWM are exploring adopting bus service registration powers from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner to give a greater level of oversight and local management. We have engaged with senior officers and the West Midlands Traffic Commissioner directly to seek to adopt those powers under the Enhanced Partnership during 2022.

Enhance infrastructure and improve customer experience at TfWM passenger waiting facilities, our bus stations and major interchanges.

#### *Bus Stop Infrastructure*

- 2.62 In accordance with a key West Midlands Bus Alliance deliverable TfWM continues to invest in improving the safety, security and appearance of our bus stop infrastructure estate.
- 2.63 Digital advertising is continuing to be introduced as part of a committed programme that also seeks to provide further capital upgrades, and re-branding of existing infrastructure as part of the West Midlands Bus brand update.
- 2.64 Between the previous update from 21st October 2020 until 20th August 2021, a further 88 new shelters have been installed across the network with 9 of these being the new style Sprint shelter. 31 have been installed in this financial year. This brings the total number of new shelters to 331.
- 2.65 TfWM has completed upgrades to 1250 bus shelters, out of a total of 5,100, all of which have been rebranded with the new West Midlands Bus colours as part of the re-branding programme. The majority of stop flags have now been changed to the new brand.
- 2.66 TfWM will shortly be implementing in partnership with supplier Bus Shelters Limited 2 ENV Bus Shelters as part of a pilot in Halesowen. The shelters are made from recycled materials, have a full sedum roof, are equipped with solar panels for lighting and to power mobile phone charging units. This is ahead of 4 additional ENV shelters to be implemented in Coventry. In addition to customer satisfaction the trial will also assess the maintenance costs and the potential of wider roll out.

## *Putting Passengers First on the Network*

### *Birmingham – City Centre*

- 2.67 In June 2021, Bull Street and part of Corporation Street were closed to all traffic in order to facilitate the construction of Section 1 of the Metro Birmingham Eastside Extension. TfWM Bus, Resilience and Metro have all worked with Birmingham City Council and Bus Operators to provide suitable alternative locations for bus stops and stands for the duration of this phase of work.
- 2.68 Two new shelters and four new stopping locations have been added into the city centre area to facilitate the closure, with other stopping locations being amended to make best use of the space available.
- 2.69 At the point of the change-over there was a major communications exercise undertaken, which included a revised city centre map, social media updates and customer support staff in the area to assist with queries and to direct customers.
- 2.70 These changes are expected to be in place until Spring 2022.

### *Birmingham – Eastside*

- 2.71 Construction of Section 5 of the Metro Birmingham Eastside Extension commenced in July 2021 and this has seen changes to bus services and their stopping arrangements through the Digbeth area whilst it is prepared for the introduction of the Metro. Only one carriageway is currently available for traffic.
- 2.72 Temporary stops have been provided along the route, although these will move as the available carriageway switches in the Autumn.
- 2.73 There have been further challenges with the demolition of the Moat Lane Car Park, in preparation for the Commonwealth Games, as this has further reduced highway capacity in the Digbeth area, however the routes affected by this are likely to be restored during September.

### *Birmingham – Westside*

- 2.74 Phase 2 of the Birmingham Westside extension continues to be ongoing, as the metro is extended from Centenary Square along Broad Street to Hagley Road on Edgbaston (just west of Five Ways).
- 2.75 The significant bus mitigation measures that were previously implemented, in order to facilitate and maintain bus services in the area and provide suitable passenger facilities, are still in place and are benefiting bus services operating along this corridor.
- 2.76 It had been previously anticipated and reported that services would be able to return to Broad Street from late Spring 2021, however this was subject to Metro work progress and a date in the Winter 2021 is now more likely. Discussions are on-going with National Express regarding which services will operate on Broad Street to provide integration with the tram and which services will continue to provide services along the current route. The long-term diversion has created new travel patterns for passengers and local residents and we are keen to maintain a service for these passengers.

### *Birmingham – Perry Barr*

- 2.77 TfWM has been working closely with bus operators and the Birmingham City Council team regarding the removal of the Perry Barr fly-over, and associated works, in advance of the Commonwealth Games in 2022.
- 2.78 Work is also underway between partners to manage the communication and support regarding the closure of the Perry Barr bus interchange, which is to allow a new facility to be constructed  
*Coventry Station Masterplan*
- 2.79 Work is continuing with the Coventry Station Masterplan (CSMP) project team regarding the construction of the new bus interchange, which is located the other side of the Warwick Road from the existing facility. This new facility, which is expected to open in Winter 2021, will provide space for both scheduled and rail replacement services.
- 2.80 When the bus interchange opens there will be changes to bus service in the area to ensure the facility is served and that passengers are able to conveniently change between modes. The interchange will also include access to other modes including a cycle hub and West Midlands on Demand.
- 2.81 Creating and maintaining a world class system for accurate and reliable public transport travel information including the requirements set out in the National Bus Strategy and regional Vision for Bus.

### *Passenger Information*

- 2.82 Digital information, through journey planners and apps, is being kept up to date on a minimum of a weekly basis and information on real-time information screens is being updated as service changes occur.
- 2.83 Given that the service provision has needed to react due to the easing of lockdown restrictions, it has been difficult to “keep up” with all changes on roadside information. However, the focus has been on aligning updates with significant (and somewhat permanent) service changes such as Bull Street closure on 6<sup>th</sup> June and “return of schools” from 29 August. The latter service change has resulted in the third largest ever update to roadside information, with 1850 flags and 7,586 timetable posters being printed and in the process of being rolled out, likely to take until the end of September. Bus Stations and key interchanges have been prioritised as part of this update.
- 2.84 A small number of service / corridor specific leaflets are being produced for core services where a specific need has been identified including a more extensive service change or the potential for service growth.
- 2.85 The TfWM Integrated Information Team also continue to support specific service changes a result of infrastructure works including Metro work on Bull Street and Digbeth High Street, with the provision of enhanced disruption information at stop.

2.86 The team is also supporting the creation of new types of information that will be provided in Sprint shelters, including “vicinity” maps showing how to get to key trip attractors from the bus stop or find cycle hire docks, “next fastest service to” information on the real time information screens and the most appropriate naming of stops in line with DfT guidance and to maximise customer understanding.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 Covid 19 has had a considerable impact on Bus service and infrastructure provision and resulted in significant financial pressures. Bus operators have lost ticketing revenue on both commercial and tendered bus routes and TfWM has lost a significant amount of income, for example through lost ticket commission and payment holidays provided to operators during the first lockdown in 2020. Additional costs have been incurred by both operators and TfWM on Covid19 related activity such as enhanced cleaning, infrastructure modifications and additional information provision on social-distancing.

3.2 The DfT has provided financial support to compensate operators for lost income on commercial and tendered routes, the latter passported through the WMCA as CBSSG funding. CBSSG has also helped to fund additional enhanced cleaning and information provision as a result of the pandemic. The MHCLG has also provided funding which has compensated Authorities for some of the lost sales, fees and charges income experienced during Covid19.

3.3 Funding from the DfE has also been passported to Authorities to fund additional services and measures required for the safe transportation of children to and from home and schools / colleges. TfWM has also used some of the £10m funding to provide additional services on the network to facilitate social distancing.

3.4 Throughout the pandemic, the WMCA has provided financial support to operators through its Concessionary and Subsidised Services payments. Subsidised services returned to pre-Covid levels partway through 2020. However, the WMCA continues to support operators through Concessions by paying at pre-Covid levels. This arrangement is currently in place to 31<sup>st</sup> August and will be reviewed in the light of the DfT terms and conditions for Recovery funding being made available from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

3.5 Work on the BSIP, including associated costs, continues in readiness for its publication in October. The BSIP will outline proposed measures to improve the bus network and customer experience, including infrastructure and service improvements, fares and ticketing changes and information and accessibility enhancements. The level of work undertaken will be determined by the level of funding made available to the WMCA. The proposals will work alongside other proposed measures which will be funded from other income streams such as CRSTS and ZEBRA.

- 3.6 The WMCA was successful in obtaining funding of £50m for the Coventry All Electric City project which will see Coventry's Bus fleet transition to electric by 2025. A further ZEBRA funding bid of £149m has been submitted to the DfT to fund hydrogen and electric buses and associated infrastructure. Of this total, a cost of £2.8m would fall to the WMCA and a separate report will go to the WMCA Board in September to provide the full details of the project, the associated costs and how this would be funded if approved and the bid is successful. The WMCA contribution does not represent a new funding requirement; some of the costs are a known, current liability for the Authority, representing existing Subsidised Services costs, and therefore budgeted and some of the remaining costs will be substitutional.

#### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the contents of this report. The legal team will continue to support specific work streams including development of the BSIP, the resulting Enhanced Partnership and the adoption of powers.

#### **5. Equalities Implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific equality implications from this update report. However, individual schemes and initiatives (e.g. zebra, BSIP) are/have been equality impact assessed to ensure key equality and inclusion considerations have been embedded

#### **6. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 6.1 There are no specific inclusive growth implications arising from noting this update however, buses are the most important part of the public transport system to the majority of people in the West Midlands, and it is therefore crucial that people can access bus services in a way which is safe, convenient and affordable. Buses will also be an important component of the region's transition to net zero. As such, bus patronage will be a key indicator of how clean and inclusive the region's economy is and should be watched closely.

#### **7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

- 7.1 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.