



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Transport Delivery Committee

Date	15 November 2021
Report title	Member Engagement Groups Update
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Recommendation(s) for decision:

Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the update in relation to recent meetings of the committee's Member Engagement Groups.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To note recent developments and meetings of the six Member Engagement Groups.

2. Background

- 2.1 Since the last meeting of the committee, the following Member Engagement Groups have met and the following paragraphs summarises the discussions held at these meetings.
- 2.4 Further work is currently being undertaken to refresh to scope and terms of reference for each of these MEGs and will be shared in due course.

3. Member Engagement Group Updates

- 3.1 An update from each of the Member Engagement Groups is provided below:

Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact (Councillor Chaman Lal)

The next Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact Member Engagement Group is not due to take place until Friday 12 November and therefore a verbal update will be provided at committee.

Finance & Performance (Councillor Pervez Akhtar)

The group met on Wednesday 27 October 2021 and discussed two items.

An update was given on the latest financial monitoring report as at 30 September 2021 with an opportunity for members to ask questions.

A presentation was given on some of the initiatives happening within the Future Transport Zone, funded by Department for Transport grant. Focussed updates were given on two live schemes: mobility credits and demand responsive transport, and one scheme in development: mobility hubs. The programme seeks to better understand the local population and develop new transport services to support modal shift and transport decarbonisation. The importance of this was noted by the group.

Putting Passengers First (Councillor Kath Hartley)

The Putting Passengers First Member Engagement Group met virtually on Wednesday 27 October 2021. Members received an update on the Coventry All-Electric Bus City project. A number of questions were put to the lead officer, including the distribution of funding (infrastructure, vehicles, land etc) and what disruption would be caused during the works to install upgraded cabling across the city.

An update was provided on the project to transform the West Midlands Ring & Ride service. A number of concerns were raised regarding recent high refusal rates, particularly affecting Coventry. A request was made for an officer to assist with a member enquiry from a fellow councillor.

Members were advised that for the first time since before the pandemic there were two bus shelter appeals currently being prepared for members to consider in due course. A progress report on these appeals will be reported in a future update.

Members were given an update on the decision by National Express to close their travel centres and provided details of the mitigation measures being implemented by TfWM, including staff availability at bus stations and looking at availability of timetables and bus ticket information at other locations, including PayZone outlets near to bus stations.

Officers provided an update on the two green roofed bus shelters that had been installed as a trial in Halesowen with members raising support for more of these shelters across the area, with specific requests recorded from Coventry and Solihull. The group was provided with an update on Metro operations with information provided on the current consultation to increase the penalty fare on Metro to £100. Concerns were raised regarding the occasional lack of conductors on trams and a request was made for a future member visit to the depot at Wednesbury to look at the new trams.

Finally, concern was raised by a member regarding poor performance of Diamond Bus from their depot at Tividale and a request was made for tendered bus services to be on the agenda at the next meeting. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for Wednesday 15 December 2021.

Rail & Metro (Councillor Richard Worrall)

The Rail and Metro Member Engagement Group met on 25 October 2021 via a hybrid meeting, the first time this set up had been used for this forum.

The main focus of the meeting was a presentation by Richard Godwin (Network Rail) and Dave Robert (Samaritans) on suicide prevention on the railway. This covered a broad range of topics, including data, training, joint suicide prevention plans, and communication campaigns.

The MEG also discussed the new West Midlands National Rail Contract (NRC), which commenced on 19 September. A presentation was made explaining the key differences between this new contract and the franchise agreement that preceded it. These are largely with regards to the commercial terms, with the NRC seeing cost and revenue risk sit with the Department for Transport rather than with the private sector operator.

Finally, the MEG heard from the Metro team regarding the progress of the capital works programme. The Corporation Street works were close to completion, with services to the library to resume very shortly. On the Westside extension, the MEG was advised that commissioning works were expected to take place by the end of the year, although timescales were challenging to have services operating during 2021. Also, in early 2022 services are expected to extend to Wolverhampton railway station. On Eastside, a decision is expected in March 2022 as to whether urban realm works in Digbeth can be completed in time for the Commonwealth Games. If not, Metro will make good and return after the games have been held.

The MEG agreed to hold the next meeting at the Wednesbury Metro Depot, and combine the visit with a tour of the depot itself.

Safe & Sustainable Travel (Councillor Bob Grinsell)

The meeting for the Safe and Sustainable Member Engagement Group took place on 1 November 2021. Updates were provided on Safer Travel, West Midlands Cycle Hire and TfWM Cycle Parking. The Safer Travel Plan (2021-2024) will shortly be signed off. The seven bus bylaws will be made and publicised, with the plan to implement in 2022. Although a seasonal uplift in crime/anti-social behaviour is to be expected during this time of year, levels are on the increase, there were six arrests for sexual offences/assault during October. The team reminded all members that 81018 is the Safer Travel anti-social behaviour reporting number.

West Midlands Cycle Hire is rolling out the final bikes as part of the initial plan of 1500 - 400,000km has been covered by 55,000 people. There are now standard bikes and docks available in all seven local authority areas and a fleet of 150 ebikes will be added shortly. Encouragingly, our scheme is experiencing lower vandalism than other UK schemes. TfWM continues to provide and maintain a network of cycle parking across all stations and interchanges to allow people to cycle as part of their public transport journey. Pre-Covid occupancy was stable, although current trends are in line with lower public transport use generally. The team have worked on new facilities at several locations during this financial year, including the New Street secure hub which has space for 46 cycles including an accessible space for adapted cycles. Four new cycle parking facilities are currently in development and delivery for Wolverhampton, Coventry, University and Perry Barr.

Sprint (Councillor Timothy Huxtable)

The Sprint Member Engagement Group met on Monday 1 November 2021.

Members of the MEG received the upcoming and required member briefings for both Walsall and Solihull.

Members were also updated regarding the search for a suitable Sprint Park & Ride site on the A34 (North), and whether the temporary Park & Ride sites for the Commonwealth Games serving the Sprint routes could be made permanent.

A plan of the Sprint network for the West Midlands overlaid with the ward boundaries was also shared, so the wards through which the Sprint route travels could be easily identified.

The MEG also considered future site visit opportunities including Perry Barr interchange in February 2022, to which all Transport Delivery Committee and ward members would be invited.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising out of recommendations contained within the report.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

7. Inclusive Growth Implications

7.1 There are no inclusive growth implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

8. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

8.1 There are no geographical implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

9. Other Implications

9.1 There are no further specific implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

10. Schedule of Background Papers

10.1 n/a