



West Midlands Combined Authority

Transport Delivery Committee

Monday 15 November 2021 at 1.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor Kath Hartley (Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Samiya Akhter	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Linda Bigham	Coventry City Council
Councillor Christopher Burden	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Robert Grinsell	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Celia Hibbert	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Timothy Huxtable	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Mohammed Idrees	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Ziaul Islam MBE	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Rizwan Jalil	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Morriam Jan	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Chaman Lal	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Mark Parker	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor David Stanley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Alan Taylor	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Richard Worrall	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Pete Bond	Transport for West Midlands
Matt Lewis	Transport for West Midlands
Anne Shaw	Transport for West Midlands
Sandeep Shingadia	Transport for West Midlands
Kate Taylor	West Midlands Combined Authority

Item Title No.

26. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Adrian Andrew (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council).

27. Chair's Remarks (if any)

The chair formally congratulated Laura Shoaf on her permanent appointment as Chief Executive of the West Midlands Combined Authority, this appointment was due to be ratified at the West Midlands Combined Authority Board on Friday 19 November 2021.

The chair updated the board in relation to the Bus Service Improvement Plan which had been submitted to Government on Friday 5 November 2021. The Bid set out the regions bid to transform bus services, reforming ticketing for customer, additional bus priority across the region and introduce a target of 100% zero emission buses by 2030. The feedback from Government on this submission was due later in the year and would be shared with committee members in due course.

The committee noted that National Express West Midlands Travel Centres had all been closed on the 29 October 2021. Both Transport for West Midlands and National Express ensured that staff were at the closed locations to support customers using the new channels for information and ticketing. A positive uptake had been seen in people using the Swift self-service ticket vending machines.

In regard to the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area Funding bid it was noted that following discussions with the Department for Transport a resubmission of the business case was made following their request. It was hoped that an announcement would be made shortly and shared with the members of the committee as appropriate.

28. Minutes - 13 September 2021

The Governance Services Officer sought to ensure that any outstanding actions which arose from the last meeting be completed.

The minutes dated the 13 September be approved subject to an amendment to the apologies list as Councillor Mark Parker was in attendance and had not submitted his apologies.

29. Forward Plan

The committee requested that an item on Rail Freight be included and possibly scheduled into this year's forward plan of items. Councillor Robert Alden also requested that at the either the February or March meeting a substantive item on University and Perry Barr Train Station be considered by the committee.

That the items to be reported to future meetings be noted.

30. Capital Programme Monitoring Delivery Report

The committee received a report outlining the progress monitoring update on the approved TfWM led 2021/2022 programmes and projects, the financial aspects of the TfWM Capital Programme were reported separately under the Financial Monitoring Report.

The Director of Development & Delivery also provided information on the WM Cycle Hire Scheme developments whereby e-bikes would be introduced shortly into the scheme. Councillor David Stanley requested further detail on how popular the scheme was and if any problems arose from the bikes not being returned. The Director of Development & Delivery felt that currently the scheme was successful but was still in the early stages of operation and therefore the scheme continued to be in a rebalancing phase, he also highlighted that work was being undertaken to ensure that there was good availability of the scheme across the region. Data on usage continued to be sought to understand the popularity of the scheme and the regions hot spots. Members of the committee also now received dashboards on the overall usage of the scheme. In relation to the return of bikes the Director of Development & Delivery commented that this had not been much of an issue however a penalty would be charged to the user if not correct returned with a five mile radius of the docking stations. All bikes are fitted with GPS trackers, therefore can be located very quickly and returned to the service provider.

Councillor Timothy Huxtable referenced item 5 of the Capital Programme Dashboard relating to University Station and the commentary of additional scope for the project been identified. The Director of Development & Delivery noted that the work with the contractor had been undertaken to accelerate the baseline date of official entry into service, he provided some detail on the reasoning behind the additional scoping work taking place to enhance the facility. He also assured Councillor Timothy Huxtable that the relevant Ward Councillors were being engaged and updated on the changes.

Resolved:

- (1) The achievements since the September 2021 meeting of the Transport Delivery Committee be noted.
- (2) The progress of deliverables and outturn of the 2021/2022 Capital Programme be noted.
- (3) Where indicated, any variations from the baseline programme be noted.

31. Financial Monitoring Report

The committee received a report which outlined the financial position as at 30 September 2021, the contents related to the financial position of the Combined Authority's Transport Delivery Revenue and Capital budgets.

Councillor Robert Grinsell commented that the report demonstrated how little capital investment was occurring in Solihull and ask officers to look at readdressing his comments.

Resolved:

- (1) It be noted that the year to date position as at the end of September 2021 against the TfWM Revenue Budget showed an overall favourable variance of £1.911m as detailed in Section A.

(2) The TfWM Capital Programme expenditure as at the end of September 2021 totalling £121.9m, which was £47.6m below budget, as detailed in Section B, be noted.

32. Metro Operations Monitoring Report

The committee received an update on the operational performance of Midland Metro Limited, operator of West Midlands Metro network. The report outlined the operational performance and patronage recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councillor Christopher Burden referenced point eight of the report relating to the zonal fares structure and queried as to how the structure was agreed, why it was decided and who the recommended body suggesting the zonal system due to be introduced. Officers agreed to respond via a briefing note to this query. Councillor Christopher Burden felt that the current approach would not work and requested that the integration of Bilston into Wolverhampton zone for the benefits of the residents be considered.

Following Councillor Chaman Lal's comment on crew availability both the Interim Managing Director Transport for West Midlands and Director of Integrated Transport Services confirmed and assured the committee that there was a full complement of resources not only just drivers but mechanics and other support around the entire operation was in place. The organisation was also working with relevant schemes such as Kickstart to drive recruitment.

Councillor David Stanley noted that he was aware of issues relating to the conductors ticketing machines running out of battery during service and requested that this be looked at.

The committee received an update from the Interim Managing Director Transport for West Midlands on the Metro Suspension to service following recent announcement. The suspension was due to safety concerns relating to a number of cracks identified on the tram. She noted that although the announcement came at short notice the safety of customer was paramount. Work was being undertaken to support customers and ensuring that they have access to other forms of public transport.

All committee members voiced the importance of ensuring the tram service resumed as soon as possible but also in a safe manner. They sought assurances that rigorous checks would be maintained and even enhanced. The Interim Managing Director Transport for West Midlands informed the members that all trams would be checked, and they would be working with various colleagues and an independent regulator to ensure a safe service resumed. She understood the members concerns, noting that the organisation would be working hard to implement a full repair programme.

Following Councillor Christopher Burden query on the recent delivery of the third generation trams the Interim Managing Director Transport for West Midlands confirmed that the specification was different to the trams identified in current service. She went on to explain that those newly delivered trams were required to go through a lengthy programme of entry into service and therefore could not be rushed into service.

Resolved:

The contents of the report be noted.

33. Swift Delivery Monitoring Report

The committee received a report from the Head of Swift updating them on the progress made towards delivering the Swift Programme and an overview of the transport ticketing matters. The report was broken down into section relating to the project that had been delivered, planned projects in the delivery phases, projects in the planning phase prior to delivery and the project concepts that were being explored before commitment to planning. Information was also provided on ticketing options being considered through the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Councillor Robert Grinsell highlighted that Solihull had recently retendered their car parking contract and therefore proposed an opportunity for Swift in Solihull and asked that the Head of Swift contacted Paul Tovey.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar raised his concern over the closure of the Travel Centre and in particular for Coventry's main bus station Pool Meadow. The Head of Swift noted his concerns but highlighted that dialog had been undertaken with National Express prior to the closure of the centres, Transport for West Midlands continue to ensure staff across those stations were prevalent and available for customers.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress achieved within the Swift Programme be noted.
- (2) The projects in delivery be noted.
- (3) The progress towards developing the intended future projects be noted.
- (4) The general update in the area of transport ticketing be noted.

34. COVID-19 Recovery Update

The Director of Integrated Transport Services provided the board with an update on the commercial recovery to Bus, Rail and Metro. He noted that bus data currently reflected recovering patronage levels of around 75 – 80 %. He provided some detail on the operational challenges relating to driver shortage affecting both bus and rail. In regards to the highways network the data continued to show an increase in traffic levels and volumes with issues relating to congestion being managed in partnership with the RTCC and local authorities. Information was also provided on the changes to funding elements relating to bus services would be supported until April 2022 through the Bus Recovery Grant but no further commitment from Government had been provided.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

35. WMCA Board Transport Reports (for information only)

The Director of Integrated Transport Services provided the committee with a brief overview of the single WMCA Board Transport related report which related to Compulsory Purchase Order for Rail Package 1.

Resolved:

That the transport related report submitted for information only being considered by the WMCA Board on 19 September 2021 be noted.

36. Report back from Member Engagement Groups

The committee noted the recent developments and meetings of the six Member Engagement Groups.

Councillor Timothy Huxtable requested that the attendance of the Member Engagement Groups be noted in future reports.

Resolved:

The update in relation to recent meetings of the committee's Member Engagement Groups be noted.

37. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 10 January 2022 at 2.00pm.

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm.