



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Wednesday 24 November 2021

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)
Councillor Gurdev Hayre
Councillor Ian Kettle
Councillor Martin McCarthy
Councillor Barbara McGarrity

Birmingham City Council
Coventry City Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
City of Wolverhampton Council

In Attendance:

Carl Beet
Dan Essex
Graham Jones
Matt Lewis
Lyndsey Roberts
Anne Shaw

Head of Strategy & Intelligence
Governance Services Manager
Commonwealth Games Technical Director
Head of Swift
Scrutiny Officer
Interim Managing Director, Transport for West
Midlands
Head of Finance Business Partnering

17. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Thabiso Mabena (Sandwell) and Kashmire Hawker (Young Combined Authority).

18. Minutes 13 September and 22 October 2021

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 September and 22 October 2021 were agreed as correct records.

19. Matters Arising

(a) English National Concessionary Travel Scheme Patronage Review

The committee considered a report of the Head of Swift that showed the impact of COVID-19 on the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) patronage.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the ENCTS patronage, which had recovered slowly following the easing of lockdown restrictions. Patronage for the last three months represented around 61% of the patronage that was achieved in the same three-month period prior to the pandemic. The report also highlighted usage by local authority area.

(b) Transport Levy 2022/23 Update

The sub-committee received an update from the Head of Finance Business Partnering on the transport levy 2022/23. Discussions were ongoing in respect of the transport levy and there would be an opportunity for the sub-committee to discuss this further at the forthcoming Scrutiny Budget Workshop on 2 December.

20. West Midlands Metro Service Suspension

The sub-committee received an update from the Interim Managing Director, Transport for West Midlands on the recent suspension of the West Midlands metro service. Earlier this year, cracks were discovered on the trams which resulted in a temporary interruption to services for inspections and repairs.

Temporary repairs were carried out to return the fleet to service as soon as possible, but inspections had found that more extensive and permanent repairs were required. To ensure the safety of passengers a decision had been taken to suspend all services from 13 November to carry out the repairs required.

Transport for West Midlands continued to work alongside the tram manufacturer to understand the issues and to carry out the repairs as quickly as possible. The Interim Managing Director was unable to confirm when services would resume, but the repairs were expected to take at least four weeks. The sub-committee noted the measures that were in place to ensure that passengers were still able to travel safely and reliably around the region on public transport.

Members discussed and shared comments on the timescale for services to resume, the train derailment in Wolverhampton that had an impact on services and the proactive engagement of Transport for West Midlands and partners to ensure contingency plans were activated, the procurement process used to procure the tram fleet and the potential for tram manufacturers to be based within the UK, the provision and reliability of alternative public transport options during the suspension of services and the work being undertaken by Transport for West Midlands to try and accelerate the entry back into service.

The sub-committee enquired about the engineering report and sought assurances that trams would be safe for future use. The Interim Managing Director explained that there was a level of confidentiality regarding the report, but assured members that independent assurance was taking place to ensure that the repair programme was fit for purpose.

In terms of the engineering report and roles and responsibilities for the tram service, the Interim Managing Director agreed to discuss this further with the Chair.

Resolved that the report be noted

21. Commonwealth Games Transport Plan

The sub-committee received a report of the Commonwealth Games Technical Director on the Games Transport Plan for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

A draft Games Transport Plan was consulted upon with statutory stakeholders and underwent an engagement exercise with the public during June 2021 - September 2021. The plan had been updated to reflected changes as a result of the consultation.

Members discussed and shared comments on the contents of the Commonwealth Games Transport Plan, legacy issues, sustainability, jobs and skills, transport integration hubs, cycling and walking, operational planning and contingency planning. In terms of cycling, it was noted that this would be promoted, although an assessment would have to be made as to the proportion of people that would cycle or walk to the games.

Resolved:

- (1) The responses to the Games Transport Plan consultation be noted
- (2) The Games Transport Plan be approved for progression through Transport for West Midlands and WMCA governance, for publication in January 2022.

22. City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement

The sub-committee received a report of the Director of Policy, Strategy & Innovation that provided an update on the regional transport infrastructure programme with Government, which formed part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. The Government's Spending Review 2021 confirmed a WMCA allocation of £1.05bn for 2022-27.

The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement was a five-year capital settlement to enable the region to achieve its ambitions in terms of transport investment. The fund was overseen by the Department for Transport and aligned with the planned publication of a new Local Transport Plan. The settlement commenced in 2022-23 with £8.9m allocated to the West Midlands in 2021-22 to assist preparation and delivery of the settlement.

The Head of Strategy & Intelligence provided an overview of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, delivery programme themes, programme development and the process used, funding asks including local contributions, Transport for West Midlands schemes, local authority schemes, budget 2021 and allocation of funding to the WMCA, additional considerations and prioritisation process as all of the schemes included with the WMCA's bid submission were not fully funded.

Concern was expressed at the possibility of internal bidding amongst local authorities within the WMCA area to decide the final prioritised list of schemes. The Chair also enquired as to how the balance of investment in public transport, active travel and further investment in the road network was going to feature in the prioritisation process. It was reported that from the Government's perspective, there was an expectation that public transport, walking and cycling and some of the technology measures would be at the forefront of the programme.

Resolved:

The update on the WMCA's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement with Government and the next steps be noted.

23. Work Programme

The sub-committee discussed its work programme of business for consideration at its future meetings and at the WMCA Board.

Resolved:

That the work programme be noted.

24. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the sub-committee would be held on Monday 17 January 2022 at 10.00am.