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Cllr Liz Clements  
Chair of Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee  
*Letter sent by email*

Our ref: IW/LC/201221

20<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Councillor Clements

**RE: Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee feedback**

Thank you for sharing the feedback from Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee (TSSC) members following the Question & Answer session with myself on 22 October 2021.

As promised, please see below a response to each point of feedback raised by the committee members.

**(1) Commonwealth Games**

***Members were reassured at the transport planning activity carried out to date for the Commonwealth Games but recognised that significant work would follow on from the approval of the Games Transport Plan. They would wish the sub-committee to be sighted on the implementation stages, and to receive regular updates from Transport for West Midlands in the lead up to the Games starting in July 2022.***

The Commonwealth Games (CWG) Team are happy to attend further TSSC meetings to formally report on the transport implementation stages of the games.

Naturally as the Games approach the team's workload and demand on capacity and resources will continue to increase. Therefore, to ensure the correct balance in enabling them to carry out their duties whilst remaining able to report into the various WMCA and CWG boards, I am recommending that Graham Jones, Commonwealth Games Technical Director attends TSSC twice between January and June 2022. Kate Lees (TfWM Business Manager) and Lyndsey Roberts have a meeting arranged for January to schedule this into the TSSC forward plan.

In addition to this, The CWG Team will share regular written updates with TSSC for noting between the attendance at the Boards to ensure members are continually updated on the progress of implementation.

### **(2) Hydrogen Buses**

***Members welcomed the potential rollout of hydrogen powered buses across the region and stressed the value of learning from other local authority areas as to the challenges and mitigations that particularly related to these types of vehicles.***

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) have been liaising with Birmingham City Council relating to their experiences in rolling out the twenty pilot buses. This scheme has been funded through the EU JIVE project, and which provides a platform for several European cities who have benefitted from funding, to share best practice and lessons learned. Many of these experiences are reflected in the project risk register, with appropriate mitigations identified.

It is important to note that TfWM are also engaging with many of the city transport authorities who have led the pilots, and we are working with other UK cities and internationally through the Urban Transport Group and UITP, the International Association of Public Transport.

With our own bid to Government for ZEBRA for 124 hydrogen buses the learning for this business case has come from a collection of locations, as well as the work of TfWM.

### **(3) Bus Franchising**

***Members looked forward to seeing the report that was evaluating the merits of operating a bus franchise model within the West Midlands and urged the mayor and all members of the WMCA Board to consider the matter with an open mind and ensuring that the services provided to passengers were the overriding consideration.***

Members of the Strategic Transport Board, Transport Delivery Committee and other interested members have received a presentation and overview of the work of the Outline Business Case (OBC) along with a summary of the network risks that exist for bus services considering Covid.

A further report will be presented at the West Midlands Combined Authority Board in January 2022, outlining the proposal to continue with the development of an Enhanced Partnership to deliver all bus services across the region, whilst requesting the WMCA to approve simultaneously undertaking a Full Franchising Assessment (FFA) which is the formal process required under the Bus Services Act 2017 to fully evaluate and consider the option having now undertaken an SOBC and an OBC into the options available.

The OBC suggests a further level of regulation is required within any mechanism undertaken, Enhanced Partnership or Bus Franchising. If approved the FFA will be completed by 2023.

It has been agreed that the Bus Delivery Options report for the January WMCA Board will be submitted to TSSC, and the team will give a presentation on the 'next steps' to members at the Board on 17<sup>th</sup> January. This course of action will enable the team to provide members with the most up to date progress following the WMCA Board and decision on the 14<sup>th</sup> and will allow flexibility in reporting those updates to members.

**(4) Autonomous Vehicles**

***The sub-committee would welcome an update at a future meeting on the work being undertaken regarding the use of autonomous vehicles on the region's road network.***

Kate Lees and Lyndsey Roberts will schedule this item onto the TSSC forward plan for 2022 during the meeting in January to ensure members are update as requested.

**(5) Metro**

***Members welcomed the progress being made on the Wednesbury - Brierley Hill Metro extension but shared their concern at the potential impact of shortages in materials that may delay construction over the next 12 months.***

Work is underway to review the overall cost pressures and affordability of the Wednesbury Brierley Hill Extension and potential phasing of work and an update will be provided in due course.

**(6) Transport Levy**

***There was strong concern that current and future reductions in the transport levy would impact on a number of the discretionary concessionary fares currently provided by Transport for West Midlands.***

The Transport Levy was explored further by members at the Mayoral Budget Question & Answer on 15<sup>th</sup> December.

***The sub-committee also wished to see the current usage data for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme within the region.***

A presentation on this item was given to members at the 24<sup>th</sup> November Board by Matthew Lewis, Head of Swift. Matthew is also scheduled to attend TSSC in January to provide members with an update on the work being undertaken around fares and ticketing and raising the public awareness of available products to help with the void recovery of patronage.

**(7) City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Bid**

***Members awaited the outcome of the funding bid that had been submitted to Government, and indicated that, should the bid be not fully funded, they would wish to then understand the process by which schemes would be prioritised.***

An update on the current position of the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) was given to TSSC members at the 24<sup>th</sup> November Board by Carl Beet.

The final CRSTS business case will be presented to the January WMCA Board seeking approval for the final submission to Government later that month. As outlined above with the Bus Delivery Options, the CRSTS WMCA Board report will be submitted to TSSC for inclusion in the document pack and officers will attend the Board to provide a presentation and update on 'next steps'.

I trust this provides a suitable response to the feedback TSSC members provided.

Yours sincerely.



Councillor Ian Ward  
**Leader of Birmingham City Council**  
**WMCA Transport Portfolio Lead**