

Informal WMCA Board - WMCA Chief Executive's Consultation/Guidance

Date	14 January 2022
Report title	West Midlands Local Transport Plan 5: Draft Core Strategy
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Report has been considered by	TfWM Leadership Team WMCA Senior Leadership Team Strategic Transport Officers Group Strategic Transport Board

Recommendations for action or decision:

The informal WMCA Board is recommended to propose that the WMCA's Chief Executive:

- (1) Notes the responses to the 'Reimagining Transport' LTP Green Paper engagement (see appendix 2).
- (2) Agrees the proposed approach and timetable to developing the new West Midlands LTP (WMLTP5)
- (3) Approves the attached draft LTP Core Strategy document for statutory consultation, noting that final design editing work supporting communications material will be completed following comments from WMCA Board (see appendix 1).

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report seeks WMCA Board's endorsement of the approach for developing the new West Midlands Local Transport Plan and approval to undertake public engagement on the draft Core Strategy document.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Transport Act 2000, Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) have a statutory duty to produce and review a Local Transport Plan (LTP). As a consequence of the Local Transport Act 2008 and the West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016, WMCA is the LTA for the seven constituent metropolitan districts/boroughs. The LTP will align to the core priorities of WMCA ensuring that all future funding bids and transport activity is optimised to meet the Corporate Aims and Objectives signed off by WMCA Board in November 2021.
- 2.2 The LTP must set out policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within the LTA area as well as proposals for the implementation of those policies. WMCA and the seven-metropolitan district/borough councils of the West Midlands must carry out their functions so as to implement these policies. The LTP carries statutory weight in a range of decisions made by many public authorities as they execute their functions under their relevant statutory provisions. It is a critical document for ensuring the West Midlands public's interests with regards to transport and its impacts are considered in such decisions. The LTP must be developed collaboratively between the WMCA as LTA and the 7 local authorities and implemented in partnership with other agencies and organisations such as National Highways, Network Rail and public transport operators.
- 2.3 Since Movement for Growth (the fourth West Midlands LTP) was published there have been significant changes to the policy context including changes to the political, social and economic landscapes which have implications for transport policy and plans. Most significant of these are the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenge of climate change, with the WMCA declaring a climate emergency in 2019 and committing to ambitious plans of becoming a net zero region by 2041.
- 2.4 The first WM2041 five year carbon plan was adopted in March 2021. This set out a priority for WMCA to support changes in travel behaviours through reduction in car usage and a much higher modal share of public transport and cycling. A key deliverable for WMCA was producing a new LTP aligned to WM2041. In July 2021, Transport for West Midlands published the 'Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands' Green Paper. The purpose of the Green Paper was to start a conversation with politicians, public and stakeholders on how transport policy and strategy in the West Midlands could change. The focus was to engage on how the region could better respond to the big challenges it faces, including responding to the economic downturn and the climate emergency, as described in the Green Paper through five 'Motives for Change'.

3 Green Paper Engagement

3.1 The Green Paper engagement over the summer of 2021 saw over 600 full responses (and around 700 partial responses) to the public survey and around 20 detailed responses from a range of stakeholders including local businesses. In addition, a series of deliberative engagement and citizens panel sessions also took place with around 60 stakeholders and a group of around 70 individuals through the Transport for West Midlands online community. This group was demographically representative of people from across the region. A summary of the results of the engagement is appended, but the key messages include:

- The issues raised in the motives for change resonated with respondents who felt that these were important. Climate change and addressing inequality were the areas of most concern.
- There was a clear sense from responses that the current approach to transport was not delivering sufficient improvements, or that things were getting worse. 92% of respondents were fairly concerned or very concerned by climate change and 83% agreed that a key policy aim should be to tackle inequalities in transport access.
- There was a view that the West Midlands could not build its way out of the problems and should adopt an approach which places greater emphasis on using existing transport infrastructure better.
- Two thirds of respondents felt that levels of traffic on local roads were now a problem.
- The majority of people acknowledged that increasing levels of active travel were important, but that a lack of safe infrastructure and busy roads were a barrier to more people choosing to walk and cycle.
- The shift to electric vehicles was supported, but there was concern that the challenges of congestion would not be resolved.
- Whilst the car is still going to be important for many people's travel choices, a majority of people agreed that car use needed to be reduced. Many were open to new ways of accessing cars instead of private car ownership.
- When subsequently polled, 68% of a sample of respondents to the original consultation strongly agreed or agreed with the need for the use of 'sticks' to achieve significant change in travel behaviour. However, less people believed that either national or local government would use them within the next 5 years.

4 National Policy

4.1 The last 18 months have also seen a number of policy statements from Government which have placed an emphasis on transport's role in responding to the need to rapidly decarbonise; delivering HMG's levelling up agenda; and supporting the post pandemic recovery of the UK. This has included an ambition to see half of all journeys in cities and towns walked or cycled by 2030. The Government has made it clear that local authorities will be expected to take the lead on bold decisions to influence how people travel; and to take local action to make the best use of space. These changes are in order to enable active travel and transform local public transport, including though considering appropriate parking or congestion management policies to promote and support the desired behaviour change.

- 4.2 Government has said it will drive decarbonisation and transport improvements at a local level by making quantifiable carbon reductions a fundamental part of local transport planning and funding. This has influenced the approach to the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement programme. Further LTP guidance is expected to be published by Department for Transport in early 2022; and future funding decisions are likely to be directly informed by the level of reductions which are evidenced.

5 Developing the new West Midlands LTP

- 5.1 Following engagement on the Green Paper, a discussion with local authority Leaders took place on how the West Midlands should develop its new LTP. There was consensus that investment in transport remains critical to support the region's growth outcomes, enable modal shift, and improve accessibility – especially in traditionally under-served and deprived areas of the region. The pandemic has exacerbated some of our longstanding economic challenges around inequality, poverty, and poor health. The new LTP will help continue to make a strong case for transport investment, such as the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement, that will play a critical role in opening-up opportunities for communities across the region. There will be a focus on allowing the region to quickly regain growth momentum and avoid long-term post-pandemic economic scarring, whilst helping us to make good progress towards developing a carbon neutral transport system.
- 5.2 However, despite the positive progress being made, the need for more fundamental change was acknowledged and accepted. Our current approach is largely focussed on improving alternatives and informing travellers so they understand the benefits of using those alternatives. Whilst continuing to invest in the alternatives to the car is going to continue to be important, this alone won't be sufficient to generate the kinds of behaviour change needed to meet our aims.
- 5.3 We know from reviewing the impact of the current approach and modelling different scenarios that with the policies and programmes we have in place now we won't deliver the scale and pace of change that we need – even if we had significantly higher levels of funding to improve the public transport network or build more cycle infrastructure. Based on current actions we would not meet our WM2041 target for carbon reduction (or even the UK 2050 climate change emissions targets), and we would continue to make marginal progress against the other issues raised in our Motives for Change. Ultimately, without a change in direction, transport risks becoming a handbrake on the greener, fairer inclusive growth the region wants to deliver.
- 5.4 In discussion Leaders identified that being risk averse (carrying on with the same policy approach) would in itself be a risky strategy that fails to deliver the kind of transport system needed to meet the aims the region has agreed to try and achieve. The importance of demand management to achieving behaviour change was understood and it was acknowledged that Government policy is channelling local government towards such measures.
- 5.5 However, across the public and stakeholders there remains a significant lack of consensus around the best way to engender the behaviour change required. There are also significant concerns about the impacts of change at such an unprecedented scale and pace. To further complicate the matter, as a result of COVID-19 impacts, there has also never been so much uncertainty about how travel behaviours will change further into the medium to long term.

- 5.6 A challenge for the new LTP will be honesty about the need to manage demand to help deliver the scale of behaviour change required and about the consequences of not taking appropriate action. The plan is being developed to account for this challenging position. It is being honest about the need for a demand management approach to help the transport system deliver against the region's wider objectives and vision. However, it is positioning the choice to manage demand as something that needs to be worked through with local people, communities and stakeholders with an understanding of the issues that will need to be managed if we carry-on as is. Engagement with the public and stakeholders will need to be on-going and more extensive than ever before. It will be important for the LTP to be understandable and relatable for the public and using TfWM's traveller segmentation tools we have started to articulate the vision through images of the places people experience and how transport underpins their day-to-day activities.
- 5.7 This approach will also enable the West Midlands to be realistic and clear over what is and is not within the gift of local leadership – understanding that appropriate local action on local streets can help give us a quieter and healthier urban environment, but that more transformational behaviour change (for example to significantly reduced carbon emissions) requires broader consensus across the country and national leadership (and sharing of the burden). Ultimately one regional area will struggle to be radically transformational without risking unintended and disadvantageous consequences for its economy. Conversely, change adopted at a similar pace and more uniformly across the country means concerns over economic displacement effects can be managed and companies operating across these geographies can plan and deliver national operating protocols with more confidence. This latter point is particularly relevant to the freight, logistics and automotive industries which the West Midlands is a national leader in.
- 5.8 Given the above context the approach to developing and implementing change will need to be different. To respond to this, the new LTP will have a dynamic and flexible approach to transport policy and delivery. A dynamic plan, which is regularly reviewed, will enable an on-going discussion with members and the public on how and where progress can be made on more or less difficult pathways. The draft Core Strategy sets out a policy tool kit framed within 6 Big Moves, from which WMCA, TfWM and local authorities will need to develop their area strategies and delivery plans. The Big Moves are all intended to improve the transport system to encourage a change in travel behaviours and deliver against our motives for change. The need to consider accessibility more holistically, i.e. not just through mobility but also through better spatial planning and digital connectivity ('the triple access system') is also reflected. This is illustrated in the figure below showing connection from the 'big moves' the motives for change.

Through Action against the 6 big moves...	...changes citizens' experience of transport options...	...which changes their behaviour...	...which divorces accessibility from the impacts of transport...	... and delivers our motives for change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour change for the better • Growth that helps everyone • Safer streets to be more active • Public transport that connects people and places • A resilient and safe transport network • Delivering a green revolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable • Efficient • Flexible and convenient • Personalised • Well-connected • Comfortable • Accessible and easy to use • Affordable • Safe and secure • Cleaner and greener • Healthy • Modern 	<p>Avoid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce travel <p>Shift</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change destination or route • Change mode <p>Improve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice to drive more efficiently • Choice to use more energy efficient vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic reduction • Electrified transport • Improved accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining economic success • Creating a fairer society • Supporting local communities and places • Becoming more active • Tackling the climate emergency

5.9 The big moves policies will be detailed in a series of additional LTP documents to be developed and consulted on during 2022. Subject to WMCA Board approval, engagement on the draft Core Strategy will start in early February and run for a minimum of 8 weeks. Subject to feedback and updates to the LTP it is intended that a final Core Strategy and draft Area and Themes strategies will be presented to WMCA Board in summer 2022.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial commitments as a result of approving the approach and Core Strategy for the LTP. As a statutory duty, the development of the LTP is funded by transport levy and expenditure is within with the approved financial budget for 2021/22 and draft 2022/23 budget.

6.2 As the LTP is developed, the financial implications will be considered within the context of the current medium term financial plan (MTFP) to assess whether proposed activity is within the agreed MTFP funding envelope.

6.3 It is noted that some areas of the LTP may be supported by both existing and new grant funding streams. The LTP will align to the core priorities of WMCA ensuring that all future funding bids are optimised to meet the Corporate Aims and Objectives signed off by WMCA Board in November 2021.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 In exercising its duties under the Transport Act 2000, amended by the Transport Act 2008 WMCA must have regard to national policy in line with the statutory guidance issued by Department for Transport on LTPs as well as a number of other key pieces of legislation which have been passed subsequently including Equalities Act 2010 and the National Planning Policy Framework. To ensure that WMCA meet the various legislative requirements associated with developing a new Local Transport Plan TfWM have commissioned an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) which incorporates;
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/ 1633, “2004 Regulations” as amended)
 - Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) (required under Regulation 105 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2017 (SI No. 2017/1012, as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/579)).
 - Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), as required by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as amended.
 - Community Safety Assessment (CSA) as required by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Police and Justice Act 2006, as amended.
 - Health Impact Assessment – while there is no statutory requirement, it is considered good practice and in keeping with promoting healthy and safe communities as per the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 7.2 The ISA is aimed at ensuring the early integration of sustainability considerations into the development of LTP. As such it will be an ongoing iterative assessment process informing the LTP as it develops, to ensure that potential significant effects arising from LTP are identified, assessed, mitigation and communicated to plan-makers. The draft initial ISA will also be published for consultation alongside the LTP Core Strategy document.
- 7.3 A core objective of the LTP is to address the issue of transport decarbonisation. LTPs must have regard to national policy objectives and although there are currently no legally binding requirements on combined or local authorities the adoption of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 as a legally binding target under the Climate Change Act 2008 is government policy to which the Plan must have regard. There is also a statutory duty on the Authority to have regard to government guidance issued with respect to mitigation of or adaptation to climate change.
- 7.4 It will be critical to demonstrate that in preparing the LTP WMCA is considering the issue of climate change and decarbonisation and taking reasonable measures to address this. Full and early public consultation on the plan and ongoing engagement will enhance the Plan and will also make legal challenge at a later date less likely.
- 7.5 The government has also recently enacted the Environment Act 2021 under which it intends to set legally binding national targets for particulate matter and the LTP will need to address air quality issues in relation transport related particulates

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 Transport is an essential part of our lives and plays a critical role in creating a fairer society. The aims of the LTP motives for change have been informed by the needs of people in the West Midlands and the role of the transport system in helping to meet those needs. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), as required by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 as amended, is being undertaken as part of the ISA to challenge and support the development of the LTP.
- 8.2 The statutory engagement required on the draft LTP Core Strategy will require an inclusive approach and TfWM will seek to reach a broad range of people and groups.

9. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 9.1 Equity is at the heart of our motives for change and has been informed by the WMCA Inclusive Growth Framework. The LTP is of most positive relevance to the Connected Communities fundamental of this framework, but pertains to several others:
- Climate resilience: achieving the objectives laid out in WM2041 is also at the heart of the motives for change, and is embedded across the six 'big moves' that frame the next 20 years of activity.
 - Affordable and safe places: the LTP connects safety and perceived safety to uptake of active travel and mass transit options.
 - Health and wellbeing: this is at the heart of the vision for the LTP, which connects the way places are shaped to positive health outcomes – notably, how easy and safe they are to walk, ride and cycle through. Achieving this will realise other health benefits, including those associated with clean air.
 - Equality: the inequalities experienced by people in the West Midlands have been reflected in the motives for change.
 - Inclusive economy: affordable mobility is key to an inclusive economy, and this too is at the heart of the LTP vision.
- 9.2 Through the development of policy and strategy against the objectives set in the LTP the harmful impacts of transport and places can be reduced, people who have no or limited access to a car today will be better able to participate in society and our economy, and a better legacy will be secured for future generations. It will be important to ensure that these objectives hold firm, as there are many competing drivers for mobility investment that often supersede inclusive growth considerations.
- 9.3 There are better ways of being more mobile and having better access without the harmful effects we experience today. It is possible to shift to a system that can work for everyone and everywhere.

10. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 10.1 The WMCA exercises transport powers overwhelmingly in respect of the area covered by its constituent authority members, however, there is significant interaction with the wider area. The health and performance of the transport system in the metropolitan area has a profound impact on the wider area and vice-versa. Deep engagement with surrounding Local Transport Authorities and with Midlands Connect will be essential. Additionally, opportunities to align policies and timescales with surrounding Local Transport Authorities will be explored, especially noting that transport does not stop or start at administrative boundaries.

11. Other Implications

N/A

12. Schedule of Background Papers

WM2041 Five Year Plan, WMCA, 2021

Reimaging Transport in the West Midlands: A Conversation About Change. LTP Green Paper, TfWM, 2021

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan, DfT, 2021

Gear Change, DfT, 2020

National Bus Strategy, DfT, 2021

City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement, WMCA Board Report, 17th September 2021

13. Appendices

Appendix 1 - LTP Draft Core Strategy

Appendix 2 - LTP Green Paper Engagement Summary