



**West Midlands**  
Combined Authority

## Transport Delivery Committee

<b>Date</b>	7 February 2022
<b>Report title</b>	Bus Delivery Monitoring Report
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Putting Passengers First Member Engagement Group

**Recommendation(s) for action or decision:**

**The Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:**

- (1) To note the contents of the report.

## 1. Purpose

1.1 To report matters relating to the monitoring and delivery of the high-level deliverables and wider performance monitoring of bus services in the West Midlands.

1.2 The high-level deliverables within the Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) Business Plan directly relating to the delivery of bus are;

- Delivering our bus vision to support growth, inclusion and reduced car dependency.
- Enhance infrastructure and improve customer experience at TfWM passenger waiting facilities, our bus stations and major interchanges.
- Creating and maintaining a world class system for accurate and reliable public transport travel information including the requirements set out in the National Bus Strategy and regional Vision for Bus.

## 2. Background

***Delivering our bus vision to support growth, inclusion and reduced car dependency.***

### ***Covid-19 Response & Recovery***

#### 2.1 *Local Bus Services*

- Since restrictions have eased following the initial periods of lockdown the demand for travel has increased, bus patronage has shown a steady rate of growth. There are fluctuations by service however the network in total is currently carrying approximately 73% (14-01-2022) of expected patronage in comparison to the equivalent period pre-covid.
- Patronage recovery did reach approximately 80% in the Autumn as passengers returned to the network as school, colleges and universities returned after the summer break and more workers returned to their usual place of work following the removal of working from home guidance. Bus patronage recovery has dipped during December due to the increase in national covid cases and the resultant strengthening of national covid guidance in December which included the requirement of working from home where possible to do so.
- Part of the measures introduced by the government to restrict the spread of Covid included the reintroduction of mandatory use of face coverings on public transport. At the time of writing this measure remains in place and passengers are being asked to be mindful and respectful of their fellow passengers whilst travelling on the network. TfWM have supported all public transport operators with a wide-ranging communications and marketing strategy to encourage their use on the network.
- On most routes service levels are now at 100% of pre-covid levels with only minor variances on some corridors to reflect seasonal variations, changes in travel behaviour or to reflect current pressures due to driver shortages.

- The operational performance of the bus network has been impacted by industry wide bus driver shortages the impact of which was first realised in the autumn. The driver shortage has been caused by a number of factors. The high demand for drivers across all driving professions was seen as economic activity increased and changed rapidly in the autumn as the country recovered from the pandemic. This high demand for drivers resulted in the provision of enhanced terms and conditions across all industries. This general enhancement has resulted in the movement of drivers between companies and wider industries. Within the West Midlands bus market this resulted in some bus operators enhancing their own terms and conditions to retain and attract drivers. Additionally, operators reported that driver availability was impacted by a higher than usual retirement rate and a lower propensity for drivers to work overtime. It is understood both trends have developed following the pandemic as drivers are placing a greater value on their non-work time due to their personal experiences during the pandemic.
- The impact of driver shortages has resulted in a higher than usual level of scheduled mileage not being operated. A number of operators have had to make some permanent and temporary service reductions to reduce the resource requirements of their operation. Please see Network Changes section for further details.

## 2.2 *Supporting Bus Operators*

- The reduced number of passengers using local bus services means that fare revenue for operators is also reduced. To support bus operators through this period and ensure the bus network continues to operate to aid the recovery of the region, TfWM have worked with the Department for Transport (DfT) to develop and administer several measures.
- TfWM have continued to provide support in the form of maintaining contract payments for tendered services at pre-covid levels as well as maintaining payments for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) at the predicted rate assuming the pandemic hadn't occurred. Any payments to operators of ENCTS take into account the base line trend of reducing passengers and also reflect any % reduction in pre-covid mileage. Subject to agreement and managing other budgetary pressures, this support could continue to the end of March 2022, although TfWM has currently agreed to continue with this arrangement until the end of January 2022 whilst the funding commitments from the DfT are better understood.
- Commercial bus operators and TfWM have received funding from the DfT Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG), designed to ensure bus services could continue to operate to full-service levels during the pandemic. This grant was provided through to the end of August 2021 and ensured that operators costs were covered but didn't allow operators to make a profit.
- From September 2021 the DfT has continued to support operators and local authorities through the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG). This revised funding mechanism is based upon a grant formula rather than 'topping-up' operators to cover their costs. Under the revised conditions for this grant operators are required to maintain a minimum of 90% of pre-covid mileage, will be able to make a profit and also make commercial service changes. However, the conditions of the grant are such that any service changes must be undertaken in consultation with the Local Transport

Authority. If agreement cannot be reached locally an appeals process has been put in place by the DfT.

- The period of BRG will be from September 2021 to the end of March 2022 and we will seek to maintain service stability and continuity from operators during this period. Discussions continue between the DfT and the Treasury on funding availability beyond March 2022. Without or with reduced funding it is highly likely that we will see significant services changes as operators adjust to a changed operating environment.
- TfWM are engaged in discussions with the DfT on the specific risks for the West Midlands on any reduction, or loss of, grant funding for the region and seeking to maintain a stable network for passengers in the coming months.

### 2.3 Ring & Ride

- Use of the West Midlands Ring & Ride remains very low with passenger trips currently at just 20% of pre-covid levels. This is expected given the demographic of the users and the number of regular destinations currently being closed but does significantly fall behind patronage recovery on other modes. We are hoping to see patronage increase as destinations continue to re-open and confidence to travel continues to grow.
- From December the service hours were expanded to operate Monday to Saturday 0800 to 1800 and Sunday 0800 to 1530. During peak times we have also agreed an increased number of vehicles to be available to provide additional capacity on the service and improve availability.
- Like other public transport operators National Express Accessible Transport (NEAT), the operators of Ring & Ride, have also been affected by driver shortages due to increased sickness levels and drivers moving to other driving jobs within the sector. We are continuing to work with NEAT to minimise any disruption for passengers. Where disruption is unavoidable, we are working with NEAT to ensure that passengers are kept informed of any revisions to their planned journeys. On-time performance is currently around 96%; 96% of passenger collections are within 10 mins of stated times which is the stated traffic commissioner window for flexibly routed services.
- TfWM are in the process of agreeing a revised contract with National Express Accessible Transport (NEAT) up to the end of March 2022. We continue to have discussions regarding contractual and service arrangements to ensure the service reflects any changes in travel demand and aligns with the ambitions of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which may include wider use of Demand Responsive Services in the region.

### **Bus Service Changes and Enhancements**

#### 2.4 *National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plans*

- The National Bus Strategy (NBS) published in March 2021 sets out the requirements for all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to access transformational funding from April 2022. TfWM is the LTA for the WMCA constituent area. This included publishing a

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) that sets out a roadmap to better services for passengers and communities.

- Our West Midlands BSIP was published on 5th November 2021. It sets out our ambitions for continued investment in our local bus services to level up the West Midlands through Better Buses, Better Journeys and Better Fares for all our residents and visitors.
- The Department for Transport continues to review and assess the BSIPs covering all 79 LTAs and expects to provide details of indicative funding by February 2022. This will recognise that the budget available for transformation, including Zero Emission Buses, is around £1.4 billion for the next 3 years and that prioritisation is inevitable, given the scale of ambition across the country greatly exceeds this amount.
- TfWM has already begun to seek alternative funding for BSIP delivery, including more bus priority and improvements to ticketing and emissions through the WMCA's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS).

## 2.5 Network Changes

- In this reporting period there has been the following network changes;

### **Partnership Routes – Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

- Service 31/32 – Walsall to Mossley via Bloxwich / Lower Farm via Bloxwich
- Service 40 – West Bromwich to Wednesbury via Stone Cross
- Service 42 – Dudley to West Bromwich via Tipton
- Service 43 – Bilston to West Bromwich
- The partnership route services are operated by both National Express and Diamond Bus. The timetables of both operators services were revised to improve the service co-ordination between the two operators journeys and therefore providing passengers with an improved service provision. National Express and Diamond Bus will continue to accept each other's tickets on these services meaning passengers can travel on the first bus that arrives regardless of the operator.

### **National Express changes due to driver shortages – Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

- Monday to Saturday daytime journeys on service 77 (Walsall to Sutton Coldfield) most journeys were revised to operate between Sutton Coldfield and Streetly only and therefore no longer serve Walsall Bus Station.
- Monday to Saturday daytime journeys on service 41 (Queen Elizabeth Hospital to Acocks Green), frequency reduced to every 60 minutes, previously every 30 minutes.
- Monday to Saturday daytime journeys on service 46 (Queen Elizabeth Hospital to Northfield via Kings Norton), frequency reduced to every 60 minutes between QE Hospital and Hawksley. Buses still run every 30 minutes between Hawksley and Northfield.
- Monday to Saturday daytime journeys on Service 54 (Perry Barr to Hamstead) and Service 96 (Erdington to Chelmsley Wood) were operated by National Express on a

commercial basis were withdrawn after operation on Saturday 1st January 2022. Both services were replaced with TfWM supported provision and following a competitive tendering exercise Diamond Bus began operating the Monday to Saturday daytime journeys with effect from Sunday 2nd January 2022. National Express will still operate a limited number of journeys on both services which are the journeys which were already subsidised by TfWM and these will continue to their current times on evenings and Sunday.

### **National Express temporary changes due to driver shortages – Tuesday 4th January 2022**

- On Tuesday 4th January National Express made some temporary service changes to some services in Coventry due to the current impact of driver shortages. At the time of writing a date for the restoration of these services has not been confirmed and National Express have reported that this is dependant upon improved driver availability. The following services were amended;
  - Service 6/6A, 8/8A, 9/9A – service provision amended and frequency reduced
  - Service 31 – new service introduced to replace part of service 8 with a reduced frequency
  - Services 11, 12X, 13 – frequency reduced
  - Service 20B – frequency reduced
- Upcoming service changes are updated on a weekly basis on the TfWM website;  
[Upcoming Bus Changes | Transport for West Midlands \(tfwm.org.uk\)](https://www.tfwm.org.uk/upcoming-bus-changes)

### **Stagecoach temporary changes due to driver shortages – Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> January**

- Due to driver shortages Stagecoach have temporarily suspend service U12 from 22<sup>nd</sup> January, which operates between Coventry City Centre and the University of Warwick. Alternative services are available for all passengers on this corridor and refunds have been put in place for holders of Stagecoach season tickets.
- TfWM are currently working with Stagecoach to ascertain the likely period of these temporary alterations and more specifically what actions Stagecoach will be implementing to address their driver shortages as promptly as possible. Weekly meetings have been set up to track and ensure progress.

### **Birmingham Outer Circle**

- In the previous Bus Delivery Report, it was reported that National Express had made a change to bus services 11 A/C; the outer circle. The service was changed from a continuous orbital service to operate as two overlapping services. Section 1 operates between Acocks Green to Erdington and Section 2 operates between Acocks Green to Perry Barr. All sections of the existing route remained served. Prior to the change, reliability on the service had dropped to as low as 74.5%.
- National Express with TfWM committed to reviewing the decision at each fundamental change to the traffic management arrangements at Perry Barr. With effect from Friday 18th February (date TBC) the traffic management arrangements will change with a number of changes to the existing stopping arrangements to service 11A/11C. Service

11C will also return to using Wellington Road, the service has been temporarily operating via Churchill Road.

- Prior to this change the performance of the service was reviewed. In September 2021 service reliability improved to 94.5% of daytime buses and 90.3% of PM peak journeys. Operating conditions worsened in late autumn in the lead up to Christmas across the whole network and reliability dropped to 88.5% of daytime journeys and 82.6% of PM peak journeys. However, the first two weeks of January 2022 have seen improved operating conditions, in comparison to late autumn, and the service has recorded improved reliability of 96.4% for daytime journeys and 93.2% for PM peak journeys.
- It is difficult to accurately assess the impact on passenger numbers due to the many other factors currently affecting patronage, for example in the winter of 2021/22 there were numerous changes to guidance and restrictions on the population to help reduce the impact of the omicron variant. However, NX have reported the patronage recovery of service 11A/C is relatively high compared to the average recovery rate of the whole network. Passenger numbers are improving proportionally in correlation with the improved operational performance.
- As a result of this improved service performance and positive patronage trends the current arrangement of the two overlapping services is retained for the next phase of the Traffic Management. At the current time there is still additional resource required to operate the service to the current service frequencies, estimated as 17% higher than pre-Covid. It is hoped if the improved traffic conditions are maintained and upon the completion of the Perry Barr works both resource and journey times can be reduced.

## 2.6 *Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)*

- The first pilot mainstream Demand Response Transport (DRT) scheme in the West Midlands was launched successfully in April 2021 under the brand of West Midlands Bus On-Demand, with operating hours of Monday to Friday from 0700 until 2000.
- The service is centred on the University of Warwick campuses and links into the wider South and West of Coventry. The Service is being operated by CoachScanner supported by technology and service planning by Via, with customer support and passenger bookings by TfWM's Customer Relations team.
- The service is managed through Via's Operations Centre (VOC), which manages booking requests, pick-up and set-down locations, vehicle routings, driver breaks, gives real time locations of vehicles and works in conjunction with the West Midlands Bus on Demand App. It enables Transport for West Midlands to gather data around user demographics, repeat usage and trips being made.
- Whilst the majority of customers choose to use the app for bookings and managing their account, there is also the opportunity to contact the team by email and telephone, helping ensuring access to all user groups including those who don't have access to mobile technology. The TfWM Customer Relations team has been overseeing customer interactions and are feeding back on queries. The number of queries has been low and there have also been very few issues with the system and app and few reported issues regarding general user experience.

- The service was offered for free in the initial stages of the trial and saw a healthy growth in patronage through the early months. The service is no longer free and there was an initial and expected decline in patronage. Since then there has been steady passenger growth with seasonal variation linked to university semesters although concerns over Omicron have reduced the demand for travel more recently.
- A marketing plan is in place to entice users to use the service, and we have received support from the marketing teams at both TfWM and Warwick University. Based around their input, offers have been sent out to entice users to use the service, and a survey to understand those who have previously used the service are no longer doing so is also being undertaken. The current fare structure is based on distance travelled and ranges from £1 for the shortest trips to up to £6 for the longest trips. Additional passenger can travel for £1 up to a maximum of 3.
- A 'Multi-Pass' ticket has been available since October, and there is a concerted effort from all parties to ensure all students are aware of the service and see the benefit of DRT over use of a private car. This ticket product allows passengers to purchase a book of tickets at a reduced rate of the single fare. Books of tickets at different values are available with books of 10, 25 and 50 tickets being available. The tickets are limited to use on this specific service although we are exploring options to include WM ON-Demand in multi-modal products. These products will be extended to the wider zones when they come online.
- Agreement has been reached for the acceptance of concessionary passes for 50% of the standard fare, and this will enable tapping into a new market for the service, but without risking losing passengers from conventional bus services to the service, or running the risk of targeting the service wholly at that demographic.
- A second scheme being developed for another area of Coventry, in conjunction with Coventry City Council. Transport for West Midlands are almost in a position to be able to award the contract formally, and the operator of the service will be Coachscanner in the same way as the Warwick University scheme. The anticipated start date of this additional service is late January 2022
- The same operator operating both schemes affords the opportunity for both schemes to be integrated together, which we are working on currently through a zonal fares system.

## 2.7 *Scheme Development and Delivery*

### *Coventry Electric Bus City*

- In March 2021 TfWM were awarded £50m of grant funding for the Coventry Electric Bus City programme to replace all 291 diesel buses operating in Coventry with electric buses by the end of 2025. The total cost of the programme was estimated as £136m with the remaining £86m coming from Commercial Operators, WMCA and Local Authorities. The grant is to fund 75% of the cost difference between a diesel and an electric bus plus 75% of the cost of installing the necessary charging infrastructure.
- The grant has been made available to operators through an application process in two stages; one for commercial operators and the second to cover buses and charging infrastructure for Subsidised Services in the City.

- National Express and Stagecoach bid for funding to support their commercial operations. Following negotiations of Grant Terms and Conditions, National Express were awarded funding in December 2021 to enable the acquisition of the first 130 buses, which will be double decked and operational from early 2023 once infrastructure and power upgrades have been completed. Further orders will follow over the next couple of years. Discussions are underway with Stagecoach relating to their bid; however, this is likely to be impacted by the proposed merger with National Express and agreements won't be finalised until there is greater clarity relating to that.
- As well as vehicles, the scheme requires new and upgraded infrastructure to enable buses to be charged. Pivot Power have been commissioned to upgrade the electric supply to central Coventry which will enable buses to charge in National Express's Ford Street depot and enable opportunity charging within Pool Meadow Bus Station (such that buses can 'top up' their batteries whilst waiting at stands in the bus station.) This is likely to be particularly beneficial for subsidised routes.

### *Birmingham Cross City Network*

- As part of the Better deal for Bus Users funding package, TfWM received over £20 million to fund the first phases of prioritised bus priority measures. These measures are the beginning of a journey to unlock and free buses from delays in Birmingham city centre and support the wider delivery of cross-city bus routes. The measures include; providing new bus only roads, junction upgrades and enhanced waiting facilities whilst complementing projects such as Sprint (Bus Rapid Transit in the West Midlands), Metro and rail networks.
- The Cross-City works are currently delivered in packages;

### *Package 1 - Birmingham city*

- Margaret Street. Road alignment, reducing car parking bays and creation of two new bus stops.
- Newhall Street. Bus, Hackney and Cycles only right turn from Great Charles Street Queensway to Newhall Street with traffic signal improvements.
- Bristol Street. Southbound bus lane on Bristol Street from junction of Wrentham Street to A4540 Belgrave Middleway.
- Snow Hill Queensway. New 24-hour Bus, Hackney cabs, motorcycles and cycles lane and bus gate\* through the junction with A4400 (inner ring road Queensway)
- Summer Hill Road / Sandpits / Paradise. Eastbound bus lane.
- Snow Hill, Newhall and Margaret Street are currently awaiting Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) Consultation. It is important to note that Birmingham City Council resource for undertaking TRO Consultation is currently limited due to priority works centred around projects such as Metro/Commonwealth Games. Construction is anticipated to commence for all of these projects immediately after the Commonwealth Games.

### *Package 3 – South;*

- The southern segment of Package 3 operates along the Alcester Road corridor, serving Moseley, Kings Heath and Druids Heath. Service number 50 operates along this route. Projects being developed are;

- Northbound bus lane Alcester Road South Appian Close – Featherstone Rd.
  - Right turn on Alcester Rd South (Broad Lane / Cocks Moors Leisure)
  - Northbound Southbound bus lane Alcester Rd South (Idminton Croft – Millpool Gdns).
- Extensive traffic modelling of this area has been undertaken and preliminary discussions with Ward Members has commenced. The ambition is to begin construction Autumn 2022 (subject to approvals including land purchase agreements).

### *Package 3 – West*

- The western arm of Package 3 is served by the 82 and 87 routes. The 82 runs to Bearwood, which is a spur off Package 3, and the 87 runs to Dudley. This package extends beyond the Birmingham boundary, into the Sandwell and Dudley, serving Dudley Bus Station. Schemes proposed are;
  - Cape Hill Junction Improvements – Cape Hill / Shireland Road / High Street / Windmill Lane junction and convert streets to one-way.
  - Oldbury Ring Road Bus Lane
  - Waterloo Road Crossing Improvements – Upgrade Zebra Crossing to signal controlled to increase pedestrian safety and junction capacity. (now complete)
  - Burnt tree island junction improvements – Junction upgrade (New Birmingham Road/Birmingham Road/Burnt Tree and New Birmingham Road/Tividale Rd/ Bunn’s Lane)
- Extensive traffic modelling has been undertaken on Cape Hill and Oldbury with a preferred option shared with Sandwell Officers for consultation with an ambition to begin construction in Autumn 2022 (subject to approvals including land purchase agreements).
- Burnt Tree Island pre-liminary design has been approved for public consultation with this scheduled for February 2022.

## 2.8 *Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme*

- On the 30th March 2021, the Department for Transport (DfT) invited Local Transport Authorities to submit expressions of interest in receiving funding to become a Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA); a placed based scheme that will allow areas to bring forward zero emission bus proposals. The scheme is designed to support the wider government commitments to Net Zero and plans to decarbonise the transport system.
- The WMCA was successful through the first phase of the fast-track process and submitted a full business case to DfT on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and are currently awaiting the outcome of the decision. The project is not without significant risk and we are continuing to seek mitigation in order that WMCA would be able to accept a funding offer from Government should it be forthcoming.

## 2.9 *Tendered Bus Services*

- Due to the continued unusual and difficult market conditions, including the on-going public sector financial support and a level of uncertainty in estimating future patronage, there has not been a significant tender round in this period. The exception to this has been where there has been a requirement to replace a withdrawal of a service which has happened on three occasions. Service 93 (replacing a new service combining the common the routes of service 28A and 53), service 54 and service 96 were all issued for general tender.
- The Bus Delivery Team have worked with the existing operators to agree an extension of applicable contracts for suitable periods in adherence to procurement rules. A number of contracts are currently due to expire in April 2022 and it is intended to continue the provision of these contracts by both tendering and seeking extensions to existing contractual arrangements.
- At the time of writing it is not known if there will be a continuation of Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding for subsidised services beyond April 2022. This funding is currently being used to help support operators of subsidised services by providing a level of revenue support to offset the reduction in fare revenue. A reduction or loss of BRG would place significant pressures on the budget for the provision of subsidised bus services at a time when further commercial services will be deemed by operators to not be commercially viable adding further to the list of services which will need to be considered for support by TfWM. This pressure on the subsidised bus budget will come from two factors; each tendered service will get more expensive when re-let because cost's have increased and fare box / ENCTS revenue has reduced; secondly, more commercial services will be deemed uncommercial.
- As with the commercial network the average patronage on tendered bus services is lower than the equivalent pre-Covid usage. The recovery level of concessionary passengers is lower than fare paying passengers which has impacted some tendered services which have a high proportion of concessionary passengers.
- The level of usage is an important factor in the rationale for the provision of subsidised bus services so TfWM Officers continue to closely monitor use which is assisting with our understanding of recovery rates of services and changes in demand in comparison to pre-Covid. Given this current and projected position TfWM are seeking to revise the access standards to inform what are likely to be difficult decisions in April 2022.

### **Partnerships**

#### 2.10 *West Midlands Bus Alliance*

- The West Midlands Bus Alliance has continued to oversee and influence the bus network response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic and has sought to ensure that operators and wider stakeholders are fully aligned on issues affecting passengers and future aspirations through the BSIP. This has included developing a consistent approach to passenger communication at the various stages to the release from covid measures including changes to social distancing on-bus and continuing to encourage and expect passengers to continue to wear a face covering.

- The Alliance has continued to hold fortnightly bus operator sessions to discuss operational issues relating to the current operating environment, recovery and longer-term ambitions in the BSIP.
- The Alliance played an integral role in the development of the West Midlands BSIP, with active operator engagement to achieve bold ambitions for Better Buses, Better Journeys and Better Fares. This includes more bus priority measures, improvements to bus emission standards to decarbonise the fleet, initiatives to improve the fares and ticketing structure and RTI passenger information as part of an integrated network.
- The Bus Alliance board agreed a new governance structure in November 2021, that oversees the BSIP and delivery through the Enhanced Partnership. This will allow current and future BSIP initiatives being delivered by partners to be captured through the Enhanced Partnership.

### 2.11 *Advanced Quality Partnership Schemes*

- TfWM continues to monitor adherence to the Advanced Quality Partnership Schemes (AQPS) in Birmingham City Centre, Solihull Town Centre and Wolverhampton City Centre. Current elements receiving closer scrutiny include operator adherence to Euro VI emission standards in Solihull and Wolverhampton, and dwell times and vehicle idling in Birmingham City Centre. Where individual issues are identified TfWM are engaging with operators to understand any barriers and seeking better adherence.

### 2.12 *Enhanced Partnership*

- On the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021 WMCA became the first city region and only the second local transport authority to make an Enhanced Partnership. The scheme aims to support the development of improved bus service on two corridors; A34 (N) Walsall to Birmingham City Centre and A45 Birmingham Airport / B425 Solihull to Birmingham City Centre. This includes the introduction of bus priority measures to support the delivery of Sprint and improvements to services on these corridors and improvements to emission standards.
- It is a requirement of the BSIP that LTAs deliver any enhancements through an Enhanced Partnership or through Franchising. TfWM will initially seek to amend this existing enhanced partnership to deliver the aspirations of the BSIP.
- The further development of the EP and coverage of a greater geographical area will have an impact on the existing AQPS areas. TfWM are currently exploring the transition of the AQPS standards to the EP scheme under the BSIP proposals, with the Birmingham AQPS being reviewed first as it expires on 9 July 2022.
- Under the Enhanced Partnership Scheme TfWM are exploring adopting bus service registration powers from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner to give a greater level of oversight and local management. We have engaged with senior officers and the West Midlands Traffic Commissioner directly to seek to adopt those powers under the Enhanced Partnership during 2022.

## **Enhance infrastructure and improve customer experience at TfWM passenger waiting facilities, our bus stations and major interchanges.**

### **2.13 *Bus Stop Infrastructure***

- In accordance with a key West Midlands Bus Alliance deliverable TfWM continues to invest in improving the safety, security and appearance of our bus stop infrastructure estate.
- Digital advertising is continuing to be introduced as part of a committed programme that also seeks to provide further capital upgrades, and re-branding of existing infrastructure as part of the West Midlands Bus brand update.
- Between 20th August 2021 and 14th January 2022, a further 47 new shelters have been installed across the network with 21 of these being the new style Sprint shelter. 101 were installed in 2021.
- To date, 1558 shelters have been rebranded with the new West Midlands Bus brand, 1110 have been repainted and 448 replaced through the TfWM capital programme or other various schemes/projects, out of a total of 5,100. All stop flags have now been changed to the new brand.
- TfWM have in partnership with supplier Bus Shelters Limited installed 2 ENV Bus Shelters as part of a pilot in Halesowen. The shelters are made from recycled materials, have a full sedum roof, are equipped with solar panels for lighting and to power mobile phone charging units. 4 additional ENV shelters have been installed in Coventry as part of the new rail and bus interchange.

### **2.14 *Putting Passengers First on the Network***

#### ***Birmingham – City Centre***

- In June 2021, Bull Street and part of Corporation Street were closed to all traffic in order to facilitate the construction of Section 1 of the Metro Birmingham Eastside Extension. TfWM Bus, Resilience and Metro have all worked with Birmingham City Council and Bus Operators to provide suitable alternative locations for bus stops and stands for the duration of this phase of work.
- Two new shelters and four new stopping locations have been added into the city centre area to facilitate the closure, with other stopping locations being amended to make best use of the space available.
- At the point of the change-over there was a major communications exercise undertaken, which included a revised city centre map, social media updates and customer support staff in the area to assist with queries and to direct customers.
- These changes are expected to be in place until Spring 2022 and we are currently working to ensure that when the highway and new arrangements are reinstated that the bus network is remapped to the revised layout and availability of bus stops in the area. As with the original change we will seek to ensure passengers are informed of any changes in advance of them happening.

### *Birmingham – Eastside*

- Construction of Section 5 of the Metro Birmingham Eastside Extension commenced in July 2021 and this has seen changes to bus services and their stopping arrangements through the Digbeth area whilst it is prepared for the introduction of the Metro. Temporary stops have been provided along the route, although these will alter as the different phases of the delivery programme are reached.

### *Birmingham – Westside*

- Phase 2 of the Birmingham Westside extension continues to be ongoing, as the metro is extended from Centenary Square along Broad Street to Hagley Road in Edgbaston (just west of Five Ways). There is currently no planned opening date for the extension which is resulting in Broad Street not being available to passengers and therefore leading to continued disruption to passengers and increased cost and resource for bus operators.
- The bus mitigation measures that were previously implemented, in order to facilitate and maintain bus services in the area and provide suitable passenger facilities, are still in place and are benefiting bus services operating on the diversion routes. Journey times remain longer than using Broad Street directly.
- It had been previously anticipated and reported that services would be able to return to Broad Street from late Spring 2021, however this was subject to Metro work progress and a date in the Spring 2022 is now more likely. The current delay is due to objections from senior stakeholders in the area to the Traffic Regulation Orders which BCC are currently consulting upon which would limit access to Broad Street to public transport modes only.
- Discussions are on-going with National Express regarding which services will operate on Broad Street once it reopens to provide integration with the tram and which services will continue to provide services along the current route. The long-term diversion has created new travel patterns for passengers and local residents, and we are keen to maintain a service for these passengers.

### *Birmingham – Perry Barr*

- TfWM has been working closely with bus operators and the Birmingham City Council team regarding the disruption to operations caused by the change in highways in the area coupled with the closure of the Perry Barr bus Interchange due to the reconstruction ahead of the Commonwealth Games. TfWM, National Express and other operators are working to ensure that passengers are kept informed on service changes and also seeking to manage service reliability and performance.

### *Coventry Station Masterplan*

- Work is continuing with the Coventry Station Masterplan (CSMP) project team regarding the construction of the new bus interchange, which is located the other side of the Warwick Road from the existing facility. This new facility, which is expected to open shortly, will provide space for scheduled and rail replacement services bus services, Ring and Ride and West Midlands on Demand.

- When the bus interchange opens there will be changes to bus service in the area to ensure the facility is served and that passengers are able to conveniently change between modes. The interchange will also include access to other modes including a cycle hub. We are currently working with the CCC project team and bus operators to ensure that passengers are aware of the change prior to implementation.

**Creating and maintaining a world class system for accurate and reliable public transport travel information including the requirements set out in the National Bus Strategy and regional Vision for Bus.**

2.15 *Passenger Information*

- Digital information, through journey planners and apps, is being kept up to date on a minimum of a weekly basis and information on real-time information screens is being updated as service changes occur. This included the festive period which, due to the number of bank holidays and the bus operators needing to balance resource availability and passenger demand for each different day resulted this year in the creation of 11 different “special days” covering 24th December to 3rd January. The team ensured “early finishes” were reflected in the data for all operators and process 862 TransXChange files for National Express, resulting in the delivery of 2,670 digital timetables for the festive period.
- The Integrated Information team continue to be agile in approach to updating printed roadside information, due to the continued frequent bus service changes that are a result of changes to guidelines as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and operational issues. Many of these were not synchronised to our recommended production dates and there were substantial changes registered across 6 different dates between October 21 and early January 22. As part of these changes, 1,325 flags and 5,808 timetable posters were generated, printed and positioned. In order to limit passenger confusion, the focus has been on prioritising significant and high impact changes including route changes, service renumbering and withdrawals. Bus Stations and key interchange hubs were also prioritised and include “Where to board your bus” interchange posters and advice regarding new stopping locations
- The TfWM Integrated Information Team also continue to support specific service changes a result of infrastructure works such as Snow Hill Public Realm and Metro work on Digbeth High Street, with the provision of enhanced disruption information at stop.
- The team is also supporting the rollout of Sprint shelters, ensuring information is present and up-to-date for the stop opening, as well as finishing the work on the naming of stops following the public engagement exercise.

**3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Covid 19 has had a considerable impact on Bus service and infrastructure provision and resulted in significant financial pressures. Bus operators have lost ticketing revenue on both commercial and tendered bus routes and TfWM has lost a significant amount of income, for example through lost ticket commission and rental income. Additional costs have been incurred by both operators and TfWM on Covid19 related activity such as enhanced cleaning, infrastructure modifications and additional information provision on social-distancing. This has been reflected in the 2021/22 Revenue Forecast and the

2022/23 proposed budget reflects an assumed continued impact of Covid on income next Financial Year.

- 3.2 The DfT has provided financial support to compensate operators for lost income on commercial and tendered routes, the latter passported through the WMCA as CBSSG and BRG funding. CBSSG has also helped to fund additional enhanced cleaning and information provision as a result of the pandemic. The MHCLG has also provided funding up to August 2021 which has compensated Authorities for some of the lost sales, fees and charges income experienced during Covid.
- 3.3 Funding from the DfE, for the period September 2020 to July 2021 has also been passported to Authorities to fund additional services and measures required for the safe transportation of children to and from home and schools / colleges. TfWM has also used some of the £10m funding to provide additional services on the network to facilitate social distancing.
- 3.4 Throughout the pandemic, the WMCA has provided financial support to operators through its Concessionary and Subsidised Services payments. Subsidised services returned to pre-Covid levels partway through 2020. However, the WMCA continues to support operators through Concessions by paying at pre-Covid levels. This arrangement is currently in place to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 and will continue to be reviewed in the light of available DfT funding and associated terms and conditions.
- 3.5 The BSIP has outlined proposed measures to improve the bus network and customer experience, including infrastructure and service improvements, fares and ticketing changes and information and accessibility enhancements. The level of work undertaken will be determined by the level of funding made available to the WMCA and will be reflected in associated Enhanced Partnerships. The BSIP proposals will work alongside other proposed measures which will be funded from other income streams such as CRSTS and ZEBRA.
- 3.6 The WMCA was successful in obtaining funding of £50m for the Coventry All Electric City project which will see Coventry's Bus fleet transition to electric by 2025. The WMCA still awaits notification from the DfT of whether the ZEBRA bid for hydrogen buses and associated support infrastructure has been successful.

#### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the contents of this report. The legal team will continue to support specific work streams including development of the BSIP, the resulting Enhanced Partnership and the adoption of powers.

#### **5. Equalities Implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific equality implications from this update report. However, individual schemes and initiatives (e.g. zebra, BSIP) are/have been equality impact assessed to ensure key equality and inclusion considerations have been embedded

#### **6. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 6.1 There are no specific inclusive growth implications arising from noting this update however, buses are the most important part of the public transport system to the majority

of people in the West Midlands, and it is therefore crucial that people can access bus services in a way which is safe, convenient and affordable. Buses will also be an important component of the region's transition to net zero. As such, bus patronage will be a key indicator of how clean and inclusive the region's economy is and should be watched closely.

## **7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

- 7.1 This report covers the constituent area of the Combined Authority but due to the importance of cross boundary services – into and out of the constituent area – partnership working with non-constituent and shire authorities is crucial in undertaking activities referred to in this report.