



**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**

## **Transport Delivery Committee**

<b>Date</b>	14 March 2022
<b>Report title</b>	Metro Operations Monitoring Report
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Councillor Richard Worrall – Lead member Rail and Metro

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

Transport Delivery Committee is recommended:

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

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide Transport Delivery Committee (TDC) with an update on the operational performance of Midland Metro Limited (MML), operator of West Midlands Metro (WMM).

## **2. Background**

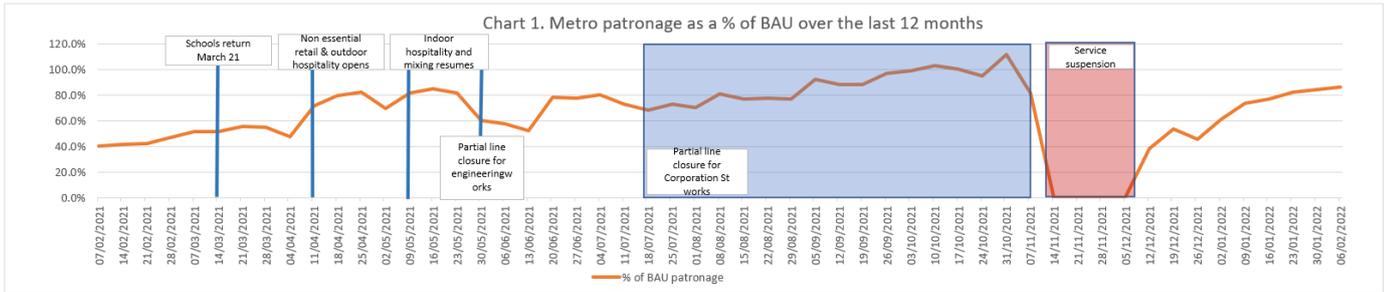
- 2.1 Since reporting on Metro Operations to TDC in November 2021, Metro Services were temporarily suspended for just over four weeks between the 13<sup>th</sup> November and 14<sup>th</sup> December. This was to enable essential repairs to be undertaken on the bogie boxes of the Urbos 3 trams which have experienced cracking. A repair programme has been underway since June 2021, but due to the rate of crack propagation on trams awaiting repair, it was no-longer possible to continue to operate. On safety grounds the decision was taken to remove all trams from operational service on the 13<sup>th</sup> November to enable the essential repairs.

Whilst service was suspended MML engineers worked with the tram manufacturer to both ensure the delivery of the repair programme and also support the testing and commissioning of the new Urbos 100 trams, in order that service could recommence as soon as safely possible. On the 15<sup>th</sup> December service was able to resume using a combination of both repaired Urbos 3 trams and a number of Urbos 100 trams accepted into operational service. This was a phased return, with trams initially operating between Wolverhampton St George's and Bull St and on the 12<sup>th</sup> February returning to Library. Trams are currently serving the full route on a reduced frequency of every 12 minutes during the day, which will increase as more trams become available. Where possible additional trams are being sent out at peaks times to increase capacity, however these are not listed within the public timetable as they may not operate; although when they are able to this is communicated to customers via social media.

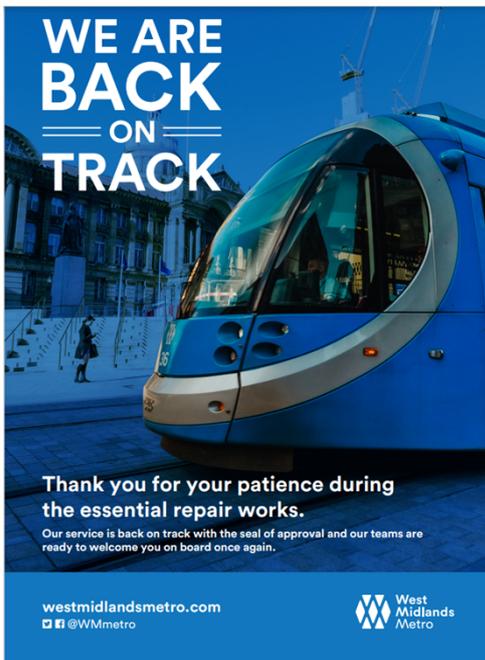
In the initial stages of the service suspension arrangements were put in place for Metro tickets and passes to be accepted on alternative modes of transport to keep customers moving. Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) worked to increase capacity on the routes adjacent to the Metro line to assist with the additional volumes. Alternative options for customers were communicated via TfWM's and MML's communication channels which kept customers informed of progress with the repairs and plans for service resumption. These included emailing Metro subscribers and direct debit customers, notifications to My Metro app users and use of social media. Communications were also sent to local education facilities who updated students.

## **3. Patronage**

Prior to suspending service patronage on Metro was c90% pre-covid levels. Since service resumed there has been a slower recovery, with patronage initially at c75% as shown on Chart 1 below. Government guidance to work from home where possible may have contributed to lower numbers of people travelling and remained in place until late January. Data for the first half of February is more positive, with a particular spike in patronage since service returned to Library. Patronage is now at c80% pre-covid levels.

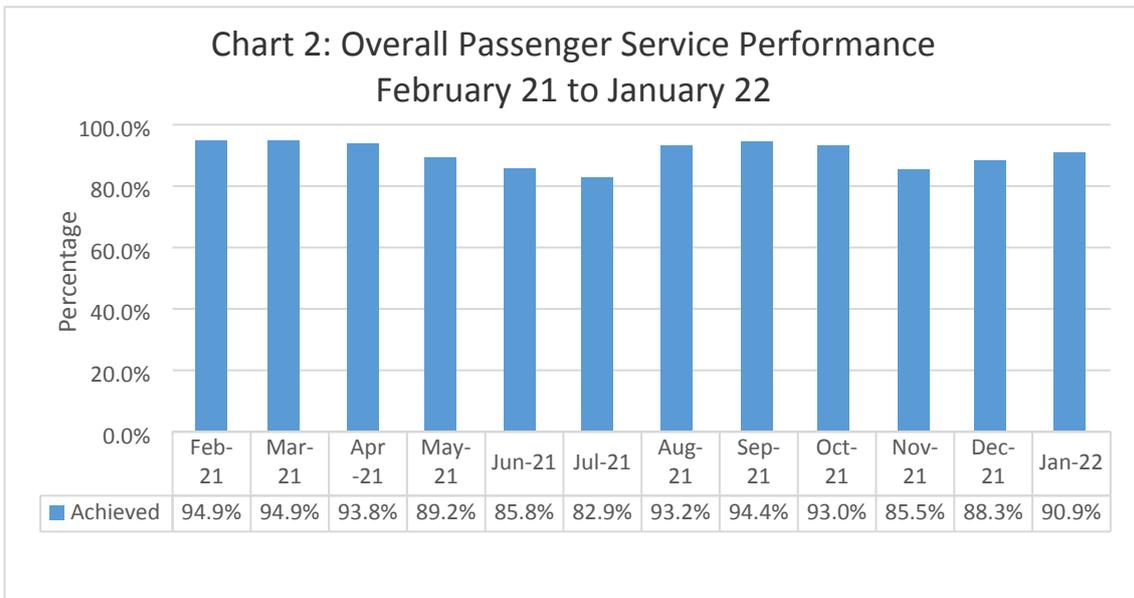


A 'Back on Track' marketing campaign, reassuring customers and welcoming them back to the network has been launched, alongside a promotional campaign which includes drink/snack vouchers for customers as a gesture. Examples of collateral are shown below.

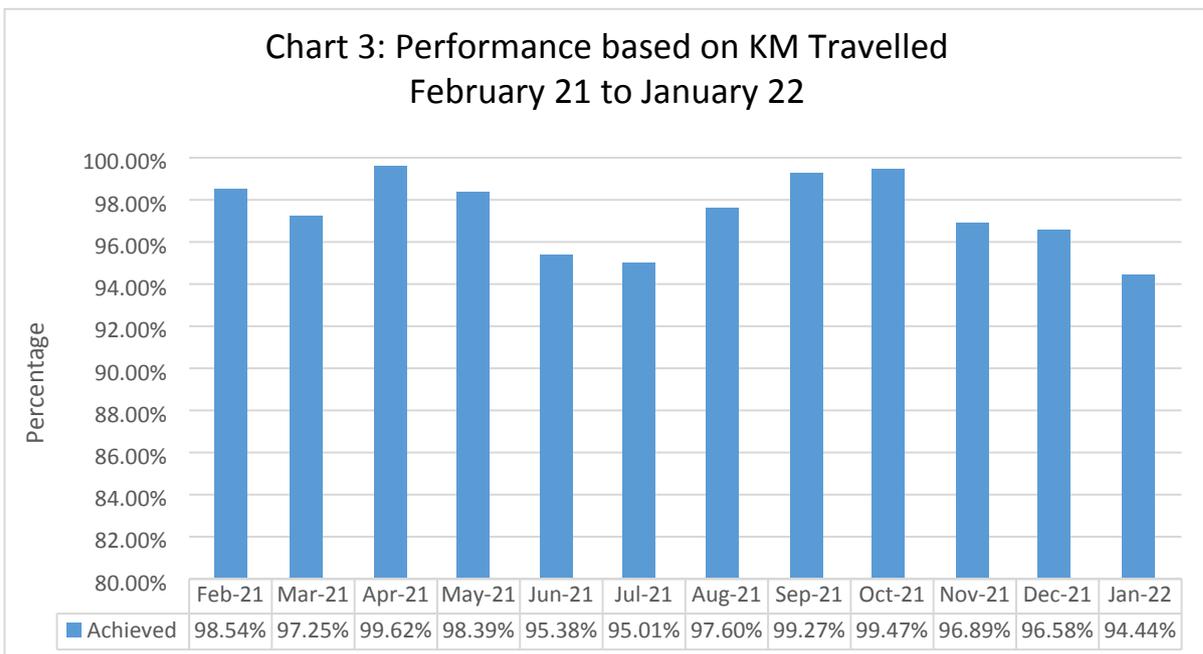


#### 4. Reliability

Whilst the repair programme continues with the Urbos 3 trams, vehicle availability remains limited. Service resumption in December was dependent upon successful testing and commissioning of the new Urbos 100 trams and although a number are now accepted into operational service, there has been some infancy issues. This has impacted service reliability as shown in Chart 2. As the new trams are embedded reliability is expected to improve.



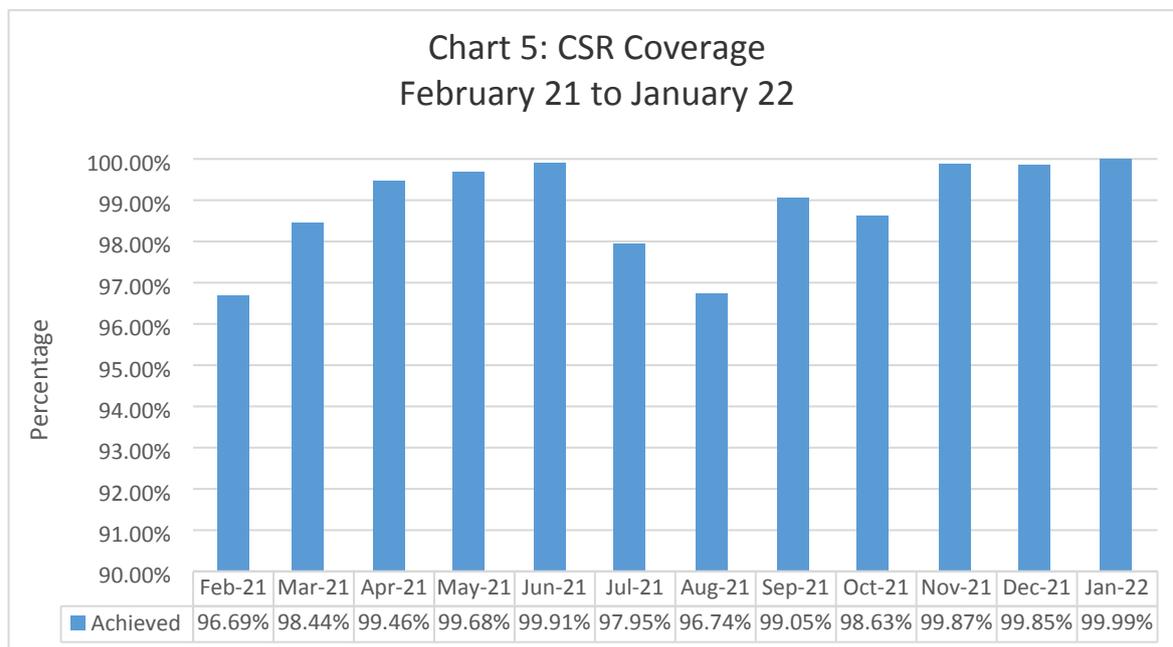
The issues with availability and reliability have also led to a slight decrease in operated KM's against those scheduled as shown in Chart 3. The most recent data for January shows that 94.44% of scheduled KM's were operated. It should however be noted that the operated figures shown exclude any KM's operated by the additional trams placed into service where availability permits. Once these are considered, this does increase the overall figure.



Whilst some transport operators have experienced high levels of Covid-19 related absence which has impacted service levels, MML have not been significantly affected by this with the highest recorded level of Covid related absence in the previous 3 months being 7%.

#### 4. Customer Service Representative (CSR) Coverage

The number of trams with a CSR onboard has been strong with the latest figure for January at 99.99%. As there has been a reduced frequency many trams have had two CSR's on board.



#### 5. Other operational activities

##### 5.1 Infrastructure Enhancements

During the period where services were suspended the opportunity was taken to bring forward some asset renewal projects. This included rail replacement in Hill Top tunnel, Priestfield, Bradley Lane, Bilston Central and the Crescent. Overhead line equipment (OLE) enhancements were also completed at Jewellery Quarter to bolster resilience in this section which is historically prone to OLE failures. In addition, the landscaping team undertook vegetation work between Black Lake and Dudley St trams stops. This reduces the risk of service disruption in the future from falling trees/branches. Tram stop shelters also received a deep clean in readiness for reopening.

##### 5.2 Safer Tram Stop Accreditation

In December West Midlands Metro was also accredited with the Safer Tram Stop Award. It remains the only network in the UK to have achieved the award for all stops, having held this previously. Complex criteria had to be met which includes being able to demonstrate a high standard of safety awareness and taking practical steps to reduce opportunities for criminal and anti-social behaviour at tram stops. The process of assessment includes providing evidence that crime patterns and the environment

of stops are monitored, as well as gaining customer feedback to understand their perceptions of the safety and security measures that are in place.

Ultimately the accreditation aims to:

- Reduce crime and the fear of crime at stops.
- Provide guidance to tram operators on how to create safe environments, and maintain that environment.
- Raise awareness with designers and architects and provide them with a design framework for new and redeveloped stops.

### 5.3 Metro Ticket Zones

During January MML commenced its customer communications for the introduction of Metro Ticket Zones. This replaces the current point to point pricing structure on Metro and is based on zones which are simpler and more transparent for customers to understand. The new structure will come into effect in Spring and will significantly reduce the number of different fares currently available, making it easier for customers to navigate. Customers will also be able to purchase season tickets for the specific zone in which they are travelling, providing better value as they will only be paying for the zone they are using. Currently season tickets are only available for the entire route.

The move to Metro Ticket Zones follows a user consultation exercise where respondents were asked to feedback on structure options such as flat fares, metro ticket zones, number of stops travelled. The responses helped to inform the final chosen option. Other factors considered include, being simple for customers to understand, affordable, responsive for the operator, scalable across the growing network and to deliver a financially sustainable Metro into the future. The changes were approved by MML Board in accordance with the Public Service Contract and followed extensive work with TfWM officers to agree the final model. It should be noted that aligning metro zones to rail zones was considered however, this would create an oversized Birmingham zone which was impractical. It would also introduce a fifth zone which did not naturally align. In addition, there is currently a review of rail zones as they are not considered optimised and due to the complexities of rail the outcome of this review is not expected until the medium to longer term. These timescales did not align with the requirements of Metro where there is a need to implement changes sooner.

### 5.4 New simulators in readiness for extension openings

With two new extensions opening soon, to both Edgbaston Village and Wolverhampton Rail Station, MML are making preparations to operate on the extended line. As the network grows so must the team and a number of new people have been recruited into the business to support this journey.

Last year the West Midlands Metro Training Academy took receipt of the first new driver simulator and recently a further two were delivered. With three simulators available MML are now able to train drivers simultaneously making training more efficient. The simulators enable drivers to get the best start to their driving journey, building their route knowledge and gaining valuable experience before they enter the mainline. During the service suspension MML took the opportunity to train all drivers on the new route for Edgbaston Village. This prepares them for driving in the real environment when the extension is handed over for operation.



## 5.5 Colleague Engagement

With so much happening MML has reviewed ways in which it can keep colleagues informed and up to date, particularly as many work out based on the network. As part of this, MML has launched a new version of its colleague app MyA. The app helps keep colleagues up to date, with features such as a newsfeed where the latest posts and announcements are shared, a colleague recognition function where colleagues can nominate and vote for a colleague of the month and a simple but pleasant Thank you! card feature where colleagues can thank one another, which is a small gesture but makes a big difference. The app has been well received by colleagues with the majority now having downloaded the app and many interacting.



## **6. Financial Implications**

TfWM are in discussions with the Department for Transport in terms of Light Rail Recovery Grant funding post the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 when the current funding arrangement is due to end.

## **7. Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications to this report, although Legal Services are supporting as appropriate in regards to items covered.

## **8. Equalities Implications**

There is no equality impact in relation to this report.

## **9. Inclusive Growth Implications**

The updates relating to Metro substantially pertain to the Connected Communities 'fundamental' of the Inclusive Growth Framework. Specifically:

- The repair programme significantly impacted on the connectivity that underpins the working and social lives of our citizens, which is reflected in the patronage figures. The learning from this issue should be embedded to ensure this does not happen again.
- It is positive that the repair time was used as a way to accelerate other asset renewal projects, as this made the best possible use of the disruption, to the benefit of citizens.
- Metro Ticket Zones are a positive development for creating a more intuitive pricing structure which enables better value with customers only paying for what they use. However, it is important to ensure that those customers continue to get good value and are not priced out of connectivity. As part of this the impact of the changes should be monitored through future research and reviewed as necessary. This would also have positive implications for the Power, Influence and Participation fundamental of the Inclusive Growth Framework.

## **10. Geographical Area or Report's Implications**

West Midlands

## **11. Media**

There are no Media concerns in relation to this report.

## **15. Other Implications**

n/a