



**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**

## **Transport Delivery Committee**

<b>Date</b>	14 November 2022
<b>Report title</b>	Member Engagement Groups Update
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**Recommendation(s) for decision:**

**Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:**

(1) To note the recent activities of the committee's Member Engagement Groups.

## 1. Purpose

1.1 To note recent developments and meetings the six Member Engagement Groups.

## 2. Background

2.1 The introduction of Lead Member Reference Groups occurred in 2017 when it was felt that the formal meetings of this committee did not allow members to get further into detail of a number of transport-related items. Following a subsequent review of the role and remit of the Lead Member Reference Groups, they have been renamed as Member Engagement Groups (MEGs) to give the rest of the WMCA a clearer sense of their purpose, allowing members the opportunity to focus on specific aspects of the work of Transport for West Midlands in the delivery of policies.

2.2 In total there are currently six MEGs:

- Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact
- Finance & Performance
- Putting Passengers First
- Rail & Metro
- Safe & Sustainable Travel
- Sprint

2.3 Each of the MEGs normally meet ahead of each meeting of this committee and are open to all Transport Delivery Committee members to attend.

## 3. Member Engagement Group Updates

3.1 An update from Member Engagement Groups is provided below for those groups that met after the last committee.

### *Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact (Councillor Linda Bigham)*

The Air Quality, Congestion and Environmental Sustainability MEG met on 2 November and considered:

Monitoring of key events for air quality September/October

The Government's delay in announcing new, national, legal environment targets, including new targets for PM2.5's, was highlighted. This is due to DEFRA still considering over 180,000 responses made to the public consultation.

Link to DEFRA news release:

[Update on progress on Environmental Targets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Greater Manchester still establishing its air quality plan, with Government, to achieve compliance of NO2 legal limits.

Presentation on work on the new West Midlands Local Transport Plan

David Harris, TfWM, gave a presentation on the Local Transport Plan work in progress. Points made included:

- Need to clarify more details on the “avoid” aspect of the “Avoid, Shift, Improve” strategy
- Very important points in the LTP. These need to be clearly presented and easily understood by the public and stakeholders
- Golden thread of the LTP is tackling climate change
- The Area Strategies for the Black Country, Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry will be very important to help deliver the overall strategy
- The LTP will consider centres, corridors and neighbourhoods and Key Route Network corridors are an important aspect of this
- Needs more emphasis and details on Heavy Goods Vehicles and freight

#### Possible technical visits

The Group agreed to pursue a technical visit to the TfWM Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre (RTCC) at 16 Summer Lane, and a visit to University of Birmingham, to see the air quality monitoring station, and hear presentations on the WM-Air project. All TDC members will be invited to these once confirmed and dates arranged.

#### Finance & Performance (Councillor Pervez Akhtar)

The Group last met on 2nd August with full attendance from MEG members.

As this was the first meeting of the new financial year members were given an update on the 22/23 budget and year to date financial performance which included the latest position on transport recovery funding particularly in relation to bus. An update was also provided on the latest Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for transport including some of the challenges and the process for updating the MTFP and reporting to WMCA Board. Finally the forward plan for MEG topics was discussed.

#### Putting Passengers First (Councillor Mary Locke)

The Putting Passengers First Member Engagement Group (MEG) met Monday 31st October 2022. Members present were Councillor Mary Locke (Chair), Councillor Shabrana Hussain and Councillor David Stanley with Councillor Bill Gavan, Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner, Councillor Clare Simm and Councillor Carol Hyatt joining remotely. The briefing with National Express referred to at the previous meeting was to be rearranged and it was agreed that separate briefings also be arranged with other operators.

Members received an update on BSIP funding and were advised that bus operators had formally approved the Enhanced Partnership (EP) variation. Approval was still pending from Walsall and Sandwell council members, Councillor Bill Gavan offered to help ensure this matter was discussed at the next meeting of Sandwell council and that the urgency was fully understood, as the BSIP funding from the DfT was conditional on all operators and local authorities approving the EP variation.

The group also received an update on the bus network review, which is being worked on with bus operators, Councillors expressed concerns at the current poor performance of the bus network and were advised that due to large numbers of driver shortages, affecting all operators, which is also an international problem, the situation at the present time was unprecedented and unacceptable. An update was also provided on Real Time Information (RTI), as a result of last minute cancellations by operators and the current limitations of existing systems to update information at the last minute it is appreciated that the information is not as accurate as it should be.

TfWM are working with the system suppliers on the possibility of being able to send live updates when services are cancelled at the last minute, however this is not something that can be developed quickly. An update was also provided on the project to co-mingle the Ring and Ride and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service in the Coventry area and the group was advised that since the last update sessions have been held with Coventry members and Ring and Ride users with generally positive feedback on the proposals. Further updates will be brought back and also taken to TDC.

Since the last meeting there have been 2 bus shelter appeal hearings, with 1 of them being deferred pending further investigations into the location, there is also another bus shelter appeal pending. It was suggested that the shelter appeals policy be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose. An update was given on Metro performance and there was a discussion regarding the latest position on industrial action and service levels on strike days. Due to a lack of time the update on Sprint was deferred to the next meeting, which is scheduled for 14th December 2022.

#### *Rail & Metro (Councillor Timothy Huxtable)*

The Rail and Metro MEG met on 29 September. The main subjects of discussion were the Rail Programme projects and Park & Ride. Other topics discussed included rail performance and industrial relations.

On the Rail Programme, Members heard that at University station, significant challenges were faced by contractors due to the focus on Stage 1 and the Commonwealth Games, however, the successful installation of the new canopies and widening of the platforms, which was deemed imperative due to the passenger numbers at the station, were completed as part of the Stage 1 opening.

At Darlaston and Willenhall, significant challenges have been faced by the team with the ongoing coal mining investigations and the land access issue at Darlaston. The WMCA granted a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in July 2022 in relation to the purchase of land at Darlaston, which is a first for WMCA and has been an overall success. Negotiations are ongoing with the landowner with the aim to agree a deal. On Package 2 (Camp Hill Line), the team have instructed the principle contractors, who have now commenced work.

The Park & Ride team have been awarded the City Regional Sustainable Transport funding and are working on various initiatives at stations.

On the industrial relations, the Unions have announced strike action on Saturday 1st October (RMT, ASLEF, TSSA), Wednesday 5th October (ASLEF) and Saturday 8th October (RMT). Negotiations are ongoing to help resolve the dispute.

The Rail and Metro MEG met on 31 October. The main subjects of discussion were Metro extensions, community rail, Great British Railways, industrial action, and the Grand Railway Collaboration.

On the Metro, Members discussed a paper regarding tram naming that had been deferred from the most recent TDC meeting. A paper was also shared pertaining to the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill project, and the proposal to develop this in two phases. Discussion took place with regards to the need to ensure that the rail and metro stations at Dudley Port offer a seamless interchange despite the challenges of the topography of the site. An update was provided on the opening of the Metro extension to Wolverhampton station, and it was agreed

that this would be considered at greater length at the next meeting. Finally, Members debated how to reduce ticketless travel on the Metro, with a preference for a 'buy before you travel' model being expressed.

A presentation on community rail was made by Fay Easton of West Midlands Trains (WMT). She drew Members' attention to the tenfold growth in station adoptions since 2017, as well as the establishment of two community rail partnerships. However, she acknowledged that community rail was at times a 'best kept secret', and that it needed to do more to raise awareness of its impact. To this end WMT have developed a refreshed community rail strategy. This was shared with Members post meeting.

Members heard that talks between WMRE and the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) remained ongoing, but had slowed in recent months as a result of changes to the ministerial team at the DfT. Now that a new set of ministers has been appointed, WMRE and GBRTT and keen to re-energise discussions, and meetings are scheduled for later this year.

Members were advised that the next wave of Industrial action on rail was set to start on 4th November with TSSA members employed by WMT walking out. This will be followed by action by RMT members on Network Rail and the train companies on 5th November, and action by RMT members on Network Rail on 7th and 9th November. On all four days reduced timetables will be in operation, and some routes will not see a service at all. Negotiations remain ongoing to help resolve the dispute.

Finally, Members heard from Lucy Wootton, Head of the West Midlands Grand Railway Collaboration (GRC). This is the rail industry's version of the Bus Alliance, and seeks to improve outcomes to customers by getting the various parts of the industry to work better together. The GRC was instrumental in coordinating rail's planning for the Commonwealth Games, and it has been the group responsible for the development of the upcoming December 2022 West Midlands rail timetable.

#### *Safe & Sustainable Travel (Councillor Robert Grinsell)*

This month's Safe and Sustainable Travel MEG received updates on the Cycling and Walking Programme. ATF2 schemes are now in delivery. ATF3 schemes currently in development with business cases being drafted. West Midlands Cycle Hire, usage up from last year at the same time, caveat e-bikes have since been launched with good uptake. Cycling and Walking Team – roles in post, with two still remaining to be filled. Annual business planning for 2023-24 currently taking place, with most activities from this year continuing into next year. Key will be relationship with Active Travel England. E-mopeds was also discussed as a viable option for those who can't use a pedal cycle or for shorter journeys. Cllr Grinsell tested one in Solihull.

#### *Sprint (Councillor Richard Worrall)*

The last Sprint MEG meeting took place on Monday 31 October 2022, a site visit was undertaken before the meeting which was attended by Thomas Skidmore and Councillor Richard Worrall. The managed to see the work undertaken on the A45 Sprint Scheme to which Councillor Worrall feedback to the group that the visit was interesting, a quick journey and encouraged other members to see the services.

Visits to Perry Barr, Walsall and Solihull would be undertaken in the future and timed appropriately so that they are after (or during) local engagement, Ward Councillors would also be invited to attend.

Councillor Josh O’Nyons requested an update on engagement from Ashley Jackson.

Sprint Phase 1 was noted as practically complete, journey time improvements will be published later this week. There is 20%+ improvement on the A45 and 30%+ improvement in variability on the A34.

Sprint Phase 2 is in development. Trial holes are being undertaken at the moment and residents are being informed when these are happening. Councillor Sohal said Phase 2 development should consider future traffic. Councillor O’Nyons asked for traffic impacts of Wheatsheaf scheme – Thomas Skidmore agreed to set up separate meeting. Biggest Phase 2 risk is still the Cabinet Approval process as local approvals are required for each. Members were given an update on ZEBRA, and that a bid for this had been received from an operator

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

#### **5. Legal Implications**

5.1 There are no legal implications arising out of recommendations contained within the report.

#### **6. Equalities Implications**

6.1 There are no equalities implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

#### **7. Inclusive Growth Implications**

7.1 There are no inclusive growth implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

#### **8. Geographical Area of Report’s Implications**

8.1 There are no geographical implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

#### **9. Other Implications**

9.1 There are no further specific implications arising out of the recommendations contained within the report.

#### **10. Schedule of Background Papers**

10.1 None.