



West Midlands Combined Authority

Transport Delivery Committee

Monday 14 November 2022 at 1.00 pm

Minutes

Present

Councillor Richard Worrall (Chair)	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Timothy Huxtable (Vice-Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Mary Locke (Vice-Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Linda Bigham	Coventry City Council
Councillor Bill Gavan	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Robert Grinsell	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Shabrana Hussain	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner OBE	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Saddak Miah	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Josh O'Nyons	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor David Stanley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Julie Webb	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Item Title

No.

33. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Zaker Choudhry (Birmingham), Councillor Carol Hyatt (Wolverhampton), Councillor Anne Millward (Dudley), Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal (Walsall) and Councillor Karen Simm (Wolverhampton).

34. Chair's Remarks

(a) Transport Governance Review

The on-going transport governance review was now expected to report in January/February 2023. There would be a consultation with the Chair and the committee's vice-chairs before final recommendations were proposed to the WMCA Board.

(b) Bus Service Petitions

A petition regarding bus service no. 600 had been submitted by Councillor Mary Locke and a petition regarding bus service no. 65 had been submitted by Councillor Bill Gavan. These were currently being considered by Transport for West Midlands.

(c) Administrative Arrangements for the Committee

A number of administrative concerns raised by members regarding ID passes, car parking, paperless agendas and power supplies within meeting rooms would be considered further.

35. Minutes - 10 October 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

36. Matters Arising

In respect of minute no. 22 ('Rail Programme Update'), Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner asked whether a ramp could be installed at Perry Barr station so as to facilitate disabled access on both sides of the station. The Director of Integrated Transport Services undertook to pass this request on to the rail team for further consideration.

In respect of minute no. 26 ('Tram Naming Update'), Councillor Timothy Huxtable reported that the briefing note had been agreed at a recent meeting of the Rail & Metro Member Engagement Group.

37. Forward Plan

The forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings of the committee was noted. In respect of the review of school bus services, Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner highlighted the importance of ensuring that members had an opportunity to consider the implications of this. Councillor Timothy Huxtable noted that the meeting of the Putting Passengers First Member Engagement Group in December may be best placed to consider the review before bus operators had made final decisions.

38. Capital Programme Delivery Monitoring

The committee considered a report from the Director of Strategic Partnerships & Delivery Integration on a progress monitoring update on the approved Transport for West Midlands-led 2022/23 programmes and projects.

The 2022/23 capital programme allocation was approved by WMCA Board as part of the capital and revenue budget in February 2022. The reporting considered by this committee had historically only focussed on schemes that had elements of funding allocated via the Integrated Transport Block. Further work was being undertaken by Transport for West Midlands on broadening the capital reporting for the committee to reflect the wider City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme, as well other capital funded schemes. This work would inform a proposed reporting framework which was to be shared with members. An update on this would be provided at the meeting of the committee on 9 January 2023.

Councillor Timothy Huxtable requested an update on the Dudley Interchange and Walsall Town Centre Interchange Feasibility Study projects. The Director of Strategic Partnerships & Delivery Integration indicated that a more detailed report on the Dudley Interchange scheme would be submitted to the next meeting of the committee. In respect of Walsall Town Centre Interchange, this project was dependent on the wider Walsall Masterplan and work was currently being undertaken to look at what could be achieved within available funds. In respect of the Dudley Interchange project, Councillor David Stanley requested a site visit be held with the Chair ahead of the meeting of this committee on 9 January 2023. The Chair agreed to undertake this visit and requested Transport for West Midlands to make appropriate arrangements.

Resolved:

- (1) The achievements since the October meeting of the Transport Delivery Committee be noted.
- (2) The progress of deliverables and outturn of the 2022/23 Capital Programme be noted.
- (3) The variations from the baseline programme be noted.

39. Bus Delivery Monitoring

The committee considered a report from the Director of Integrated Network Services on the monitoring and delivery of the high-level deliverables and wider performance monitoring of bus services in the West Midlands.

The high-level deliverables within the Transport for West Midlands business plan directly relating to the delivery of bus services were:

- Delivering the bus vision to support growth, inclusion and reduced car dependency.
- Enhancing infrastructure and improving customer experience at Transport for West Midlands' passenger waiting facilities, 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.

Councillor Robert Alden enquired as to potential variances in patronage numbers across the region. The Head of Network Transformation reported that senior citizen concessionary travel was seeing a slower return than commercial patronage. There was also a slower return in Birmingham city centre patronage, and evening and weekend levels were recovering at a faster pace than daytime journeys.

In respect of the Birmingham Cross City Network, Package 3 - South bus priority works, the Head of Network Transformation undertook to provide Councillor Timothy Huxtable with a fuller response as to the measures to be taken to mitigate against the required removal of shrubs and trees.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

[NB. Councillor Timothy Huxtable declared a personal interest in this item as a result of him representing the Mayor at meetings of the West Midlands Bus Alliance Board.]

40. Network Resilience Update

The committee considered a report from the Director Network Resilience providing an update on crime and anti-social behaviour, the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre and wider network management and road safety.

The year-to-date crime figures for 2022/23 were: bus - 2,738, rail - 1,152 and metro - 44, making a total crime figure of 3,934. This figure represented a 25.1% increase from the 2021/22 total of 2,945. The crime types that were rising at the highest rate on the transport network were arson/criminal damage, theft, possession of weapons and violence against the person.

Councillor Robert Grinsell enquired as to whether reporting data was produced in a more granular level to better identify hotspots. The Head of Security & Policing reported that a monthly joint partnership tasking meeting was held to interrogate the data in more detail. He would see if it was possible to provide council level data to this committee. Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner enquired as to whether the number of prosecutions undertaken was publicised in order to act as a deterrent to future criminality. The Head of Security & Policing undertook to look into whether this information was available.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

41. Ring & Ride and West Midlands On Demand Co-Mingling Pilot

The committee considered a report from the Director of Integrated Transport Services providing an overview of current operations of West Midlands On Demand and Ring & Ride and on a proposed merging the operations of these services on a trial basis in Coventry from January 2023.

Demand responsive transport, as being trialled through West Midlands on Demand in Coventry, was intended to address some of the deficiencies in the fixed route bus network, making a wider range of destinations more easily accessible, providing an attractive, affordable service for those who may be adverse or unable to use the buses. The region's long-established Ring & Ride service also addressed accessibility challenges, but was targeted at those who were unable to access public transport primarily due to physical or mental disability or other mobility impairments.

Both services were subject to different rules and operating criteria and it was considered that by merging the services together ('co-mingling'), the customer service could be improved, the current customer base expanded and a more efficient and economical fleet operation enabled.

Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner reported that she was aware that many former customers of Ring & Ride had stopped using the service due them thinking it had been terminated. It was vital that the service continued to be promoted, including amongst groups that had not previously used it. The Head of Network Transformation indicated that work was being undertaken to see if improvements could be made to the way in which the service could be booked, but these improvements would always ensure that a telephone booking service was provided. Councillor Linda Bigham sought assurances that the payment system being used in the trial was robust enough to handle different payment methods. The Head of Network Transformation confirmed that cash and card payments would be accepted, and he would check to see how long personal payment information was retained by the software.

The Chair enquired as to when a report on the outcome of the trial could be expected. The Head of Network Transformation indicated that he expected an initial evaluation report to be prepared in Spring 2023, with a final report expected in July 2023.

Resolved:

- (1) The challenges faced by the bus market and the impact on/potential of Demand Responsive Transport in this context be recognised.
- (2) The likely opportunities of merging ('co-mingling') of West Midlands On-Demand and Ring & Ride services in Coventry be recognised.
- (3) The proposal to conduct a co-mingling trial in Coventry from January 2023 be approved.
- (4) Given that much longer journeys would be possible, the proposed modification from a flat-fare to a distance-based charging regime for West Midlands On-Demand and Ring & Ride in Coventry be approved.
- (5) For the purposes of the trial, the setting of fares be delegated to the Director of Integrated Transport Services, on the understanding these would take into account affordability for passengers and the cost of providing the service and on the basis that single journeys up to 10 miles would be capped at £2 for those eligible for concessions on account of age or disability.

42. West Midlands Cycle Hire Update

The committee received an update from the Director of Strategic Partnerships & Delivery Integration on the last developments regarding the West Midlands cycle hire scheme.

Councillor Robert Grinsell enquired as to whether the cycle hire scheme had experienced any incidents of 'road rage' directed at cyclists. He was also interested as to whether any training was provided to bus drivers in respect of vulnerable road users such as cyclists. The Director of Strategic Partnerships & Delivery Integration undertook to check whether there had been any reports of anti-social behaviour directed at cycle hire users. He was also aware that bus drivers did receive specific training to ensure that they were able to share road space safely with cyclists. Where there were particularly difficult road layouts, highway authorities would seek to provide segregated road space to provide an additional layer of safety for cyclists.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

43. Transport for West Midlands Drone Team

The committee considered a report from the Head of Security & Policing on the formation of a drone team within Transport for West Midlands.

A PricewaterhouseCoopers study 'Skies without Limits 2.0' predicted that drones could contribute £45bn to the UK's economy by 2030, saving businesses £22bn, reducing carbon emissions and creating 650,000 jobs. The Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre had established itself as the one true source of transport information utilising the existing fixed CCTV network supported by local authorities across the West Midlands. The technology now existed to stream live drone images into the centre, and this would give excellent real time CCTV coverage across the West Midlands.

Local authorities and partner agencies would be able to take advantage of the drone team's services for still aerial imagery, video footage and thermal imagery via an online tasking request form.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar enquired as to the funding available to support the use of drones across the region. The Head of Security & Policing reported that a drone typically cost a third of that of a fixed CCTV camera, and therefore this relative cheapness enabled their potential use in significantly more roadside locations to provide situational awareness to the network duty manager. The 12 month trial would enable their usefulness to be assessed in a number of different situations and whether a wider business case could be established.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

44. Park & Ride Update

The committee considered a report of the Director of Integrated Network Services on Park & Ride matters within the region, as well as the continued impacts COVID-19 was having on car park operations and development.

Transport for West Midlands currently operated 9,186 Park & Ride spaces on the region's public transport network. These were located in 65 car parks, serving 39 railway stations and five metro stops. As a result of the previous high demand there was a focus by Transport for West Midlands, in conjunction with local authorities, on expanding Park & Ride at the locations that were most beneficial to the region strategically, economically and, fundamentally, for customers and communities.

The aftermath of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns had a significant impacts on demand for Park & Ride. This had provided uncertainty on whether the sites previously prioritised for expansion were still the correct ones to take forward, or whether the pandemic had changed people's travel habits in such a way that other locations or initiatives were more appropriate for focus in the future. With this in mind, alongside other changes impacting rail and car park use such as reduced frequencies, strike action etc., a review was to be undertaken into the existing Park & Ride strategy to understand how best to approach future Park & Ride development and, fundamentally, improve access to sites by other modes.

Councillor Timothy Huxtable noted that there was no plan to provide Park & Ride along the Camp Hill line. The Head of Park & Ride explained that the policy of Transport for West Midlands was not to provide Park & Ride sites within three miles of Birmingham city centre. In addition, other nearby stations already had Park & Ride facilities available.

Councillor David Stanley noted problems with car parking at Coseley station. The Head of Park & Ride indicated that she had met with officers from Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to discuss this issue, and had undertaken monitoring to assess the impact of station-related parking on local residents.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

45. Transport Services Recovery Update

The committee received an update from the Director of Integrated Transport Services on the latest activity related to the recovery of the transport network and services from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bus patronage was currently around 86% - 88% of pre-pandemic levels, showing a slow but steady recovery. Costs of operation were now around 120% of pre-pandemic levels (including fuel and driver pay etc) and set to increase further. Government funding for January to March 2023 had now been clarified and would be devolved to Transport for West Midlands. In respect of the Government's £2 fare cap for January to March 2023, further clarification was being awaited, but it was expected that this would be paid directly to bus operators and was being agreed with them.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

46. Notice of Motion

The committee considered a Motion submitted by Councillor Richard Worrall.

Resolved:

The motion, as set out below, be adopted:

“The Transport Delivery Committee wished to express its urgent concerns to the WMCA Board about the prospect nationally and regionally of large-scale:

- closures of railway booking offices and de-staffing of stations; and
- losses of main bus services and network coverage, should pandemic-related support cease in the coming weeks and months.

We urgently recommended to West Midlands Combined Authority to make urgent representations to the Department for Transport, for example through the Mayor and the Portfolio Lead for Transport, to take early steps to avoid the foregoing.”

47. Member Engagement Groups Update

The committee considered a report of the Governance Services Officer setting out the recent developments and meetings of its six Member Engagement Groups.

Resolved:

The recent activities of the committee’s Member Engagement Groups be noted.

48. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 9 January 2023 at 1.00pm.

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm.