



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Transport Delivery Committee

Date	9 January 2023
Report title	Member Engagement Groups Update
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Recommendation(s) for decision:

The 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 MEG (Councillor Linda Bigham)

The group met on January 4. It considered an update from WMCA Environment Team on the development of the WMCA Regional Air Quality Framework; monitoring of key UK events for air quality November/December 2022 and a progress update on TfWM actions to improve air quality. The Group has invited all members of TDC to its technical visit to University of Birmingham's WM-Air Project on Wednesday 25 January 11 – 12.30

Finance and Performance MEG (Councillor Pervez Akhtar)

The Finance and Performance MEG was given over to the annual transport budget scrutiny session in advance of the draft 2023/24 budget going to January WMCA Board. This session was open to all member of Transport Delivery Committee and was well attended. The Executive Director of the Finance and Business Hub, Linda Horne was also in attendance to present.

Members were taken through the external and internal context for budget setting, updated on the current MTFP position and then updated on the proposed transport budget for 2023/24. Finally an update was given on sustainable funding for 2024/25 onwards. Members then had the opportunity to ask questions.

Putting Passengers First MEG (Councillor Mary Locke)

The hybrid meeting took place on Wednesday 14 December 2022. Members received an update from Pete Bond on the request that TfWM has received from Cllr Ian Ward to carry out a review of supported travel policies, this will take place in 2023 and cover all discretionary expenditure which amounts to around £85m of the total £165m budget. Cllr Clare Simm asked if this was an opportunity to include some school services. It was understood that the purpose of the review was to look at where savings can potentially be made rather than looking at additional expenditure, therefore it will be necessary to ensure that across all areas funding is directed to benefit those most in need. Members then received an update on the whole area bus network review, were advised that after increasing the value for money threshold, approved by TDC, the number of subsidised bus services that were at risk had reduced and full details of the vast majority of service changes had now been updated on the TfWM website and via direct email to members. In addition to the changes to subsidised bus services members were also reminded that operators have had to make changes to almost all of their commercial services. Timetable changes are due to come into effect on 1st January 2023, at-stop information will be updated as close as possible to this date, however the large number will result in a number of stops not being updated until well into January. To mitigate this, information posters have been produced and installed at all bus shelters directing customers to the TfWM website. Information can also be obtained by calling the TfWM Customer Contact Centre and by asking TfWM bus station supervisors at the region's bus stations. Cllr Mary Locke asked about the breaking news story that engineers working for National Express had voted to strike. The full impact of this and timing of any action is not yet know, however members will be kept updated following discussions with the operator.

Updates were also given on the Ring and Ride service, including further information on the co-mingling trial of the Ring and Ride and West Midlands On Demand services in Coventry, which is due to start on 23rd January 2023. A further update was given on the work to improve Real Time Information for passengers, including ongoing work to update systems to show when services are cancelled, rather than simply reverting to the scheduled time if a vehicle is not being tracked. Cllr David Stanley asked if it would be beneficial to remove the scheduled timetable information so that only services that are physically being tracked will show. Members also received an update on the progress of the Sprint works and were given information on some very positive improvements to journey times along certain sections, with further improvements expected to be shown in 2023 when the cross-city routes start.

Finally an update was given on the progress of the three metro extensions that are currently being worked on. Cllr Carol Hyatt expressed frustration at the slow progress of the extension to the railway station in Wolverhampton. It was reported that there had been numerous delays as a result of discussions with Network Rail around various standards, it is hoped that these are now finally approaching a resolution and as a result it is expected that the extension to the railway station will open in the Spring of 2023. Members were advised of the progress of the works in Dudley, with phase 1 from Wednesbury to Dudley expected to be operational towards the end of 2024. All designs and plans are in place to start work on phase 2 from Dudley to Brierley Hill once funding is confirmed. An update was also given on the works in Digbeth for the Eastside extension. This was the last meeting of 2022 with the next meeting scheduled for 25th January 2023.

Rail and Metro MEG (Councillor Timothy Huxtable)

The Rail and Metro MEG met on 12th December and discussed a recent study on new station proposals, Midlands Rail Hub, the West Midlands Rail Programme, rail industrial action, and the progress of the various Metro extension schemes.

The group heard that consultants working for TfWM had recently produced a comprehensive final draft report exploring the case for 15 stations around the TfWM area. This included recommendations relating to which stations have the strongest case for undertaking further work. The stations were assessed against a number of different criteria, including strategic fit around government priorities, financial sustainability, stakeholder support, and deliverability.

An update was provided on the recently completed Outline Business Case (OBC) for the core “West” and “Central” elements of the Midlands Rail Hub scheme. This was launched on 5th December and has been formally submitted to the government for consideration. The group heard that there is a positive business case and strong strategic case for full delivery of the core “West and Central” elements of Midlands Rail Hub. In addition, they were advised that the most cost-effective way to deliver the full economic and social benefits of Midlands Rail Hub is to construct both the West and Central elements simultaneously under a single Transport and Works Act Order. This is also because constructing both the “South West” and “Central” elements simultaneously also delivers a higher Benefit Cost Ratio than delivering these separately.

The OBC can be accessed via the following link [Midlands Connect | Midlands Rail Hub: A summary of our Outline Business Case](#).

On the West Midlands Rail Programme, the group heard that delivery continues across the programme, despite ongoing challenges with resources and materials affecting the wider industry. On University, the focus of work is now on the internal spaces of the building, with floor tiling and cladding being installed. On Package 1 (Darlaston and Willenhall), significant work is continuing to develop and agree a design for mining remediation. Risk assessment has identified that grouting can only take place under the track when the line is closed. Accordingly, the project are seeking a blockade in Spring 2023 to enable grouting to take place as efficiently as possible and minimise programme impacts. On the Camp Hill Line (Package 2), design activities are well underway, and work sites are being set up. Engagement with the local community is also continuing positively, and the project plan to hold a number of drop-in events in the new year.

An update was provided on the upcoming industrial action affecting the railways. The group heard that the action short of a strike called by the RMT union and affecting members employed by the train companies, could be as disruptive as the strike action itself. This is because some of the operators do not have Sunday's as part of the working week in staff terms and conditions, meaning that they can only staff them using overtime or Rest Day Work. Chiltern Railways are one of the operators affected in this way, and they will be unable to run any services north of Banbury for the entire period of the action short of a strike.

The group received an update on the progress of the various Metro extension schemes. Westside to Edgbaston is nearly complete save for some snagging. This includes the installation of ANPR cameras to enable the enforcement of the TROs along the route. The Eastside extension towards Digbeth has seen work at both ends, with the demolition of the former McDonalds at Kings Parade having started, whilst in Digbeth itself two-way traffic has resumed after highways works have been completed. Design work for the sections in between is still to be completed. This is a complex piece of work due to the multiple interfaces along the route (e.g. HS2).

Finally, the group discussed the Wolverhampton extension. It was noted that the project had experienced some challenges, but that these were now understood and that there were plans in place to address them. The group heard that spring was the likely date for the commencement of services. The group agreed to undertake a visit to site in the New Year to observe progress for themselves.

Safe and Sustainable Travel MEG (Councillor Robert Grinsell)

The Safe and Sustainable Member Executive Group (MEG) covers two functional areas namely The Safer Travel Partnership & The Cycling & Walking Team. The teams report into Cllr Robert Grinsell as MEG lead.

An update meeting was held on 5th December 2022. A previous action involved an invitation for members of TDC to visit to the Safer Travel CCTV control room. This visit had been completed and those that attended found the visit to be beneficial to their understanding of how CCTV is used in helping to keep the travelling public safe.

An update was given regarding visits to Safer Travel Partnerships in Manchester and Liverpool in terms of sharing best practice. Reciprocal visits to Summer Lane will take place in early 2023. The drone team are all now fully trained and permission to fly has been received from the Civil Aviation Authority. The issue of graffiti on Network Rail bridges was raised and this will be actioned by Kerry Blakeman prior to the next MEG meeting.

Hannah Dayan gave updates regarding Active Travel Fund 3, cycle hire sponsorship, increased patronage on bike hire (up 36%) There were updates regarding visits by Chris Boardman to the region highlighting new cycle routes alongside Adam Tranter the Cycling Commissioner. Issues of debris across cycle routes were discussed. Date of next meeting on 16th January 2023.

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