



## Transport Delivery Committee

<b>Date</b>	6 February 2023
<b>Report title</b>	Member Engagement Groups Update
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority email: <a href="mailto:laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk">laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk</a>
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Dan Essex, Governance Services Manager email: <a href="mailto:tanya.patel@wmca.org.uk">tanya.patel@wmca.org.uk</a>

### Recommendation(s) for decision:

#### Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:

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

#### 1. Purpose

1.1 To note recent developments and meetings of 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 At the last meeting of the committee on 9 January it was agreed to establish a seventh MEG to focus on the important area of the Swift travel card. Councillor Clare Simm was appointed the Lead Member for Swift, and arrangements are now being made for this MEG to become established and start meeting.

2.4 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.

#### **3.2 Sprint MEG - 23 January (Lead Member: Councillor Richard Worrall)**

3.2.1 The meeting was attended by Councillor Richard Worrall, Councillor Saddak Miah, Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal and Councillor Josh O'Nyons.

3.2.2 Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal asked about timescales after May. Transport for West Midlands will be working closer with Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council regarding cabinet dates and the process leading to a decision. Comms & engagement will communicate it once a decision has been made, with the lead time likely to be June. The local elections in May were likely to affect cabinet approval and decision.

3.2.3 Councillor Richard Worrall suggested board members take a site visit to Solihull bus stops. Transport for West Midlands suggested it would be premature at this stage and advised carrying this out after the scheme had gone through agreement and cabinet approval.

3.2.4 It was intended for the residents meeting to take place 25 January only if a venue could be secured, due to larger than normal numbers wanting to attend. This would be clarified once known.

#### **3.3 Finance MEG - 24 January (Lead Member: Councillor Pervez Akhtar)**

3.3.1 The MEG meeting was attended by Councillor Pervez Akhtar, Councillor Anne Millward and Councillor Robert Grinsell. This meeting focussed on the draft 2023/24 transport budget and high level deliverables that were approved by WMCA Board in January with the final budget due to be received by February WMCA Board.

3.3.2 Members were taken through the key funding and expenditure streams, including the transport levy calculation by constituent authority. It was noted that Bus Service Improvement Plan revenue monies would be in their second year (of three) supporting transformational activity related to bus. City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement capital funds would also be entering their second year of the five year programme supporting transport infrastructure across all modes. It was noted that the capital programme for 2023/24 was currently indicative and would be updated post-2022/23 outturn with an update brought to Transport Delivery Committee and WMCA Board in the summer.

3.3.3 High level deliverables relating to transport were highlighted and noted to demonstrate the breadth of activity being planned for delivery in 2023/24.

3.3.4 The next MEG will focus on capital.

### **3.4 Putting Passengers First MEG - 25 January (Councillor Mary Locke)**

- 3.4.1 Councillor Mary Locke, Councillor Bill Gavan, Councillor Shabrana Hussain, Councillor Carol Hyatt, Councillor Clare Simm and Councillor David Stanley joined the meeting remotely with apologies received from Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner.
- 3.4.2 Following discussions at the previous meeting, Councillor Carol Hyatt was able to update the group that Wolverhampton had given permission for white transport ambulances to use bus lanes in the city without penalty. Members then received an update on the bus network review, with a large number of bus service changes coming into effect from 1 January 2023. A number of issues and lessons learnt were highlighted and details of ongoing monitoring and next steps were provided.
- 3.4.3 Councillor David Stanley raised a number of operational issues and asked for a direct conversation with Jon Hayes to go into the detail. Members were updated on the possibility of industrial action affecting National Express bus services. Whilst engineers have voted for action and have a mandate, no dates have yet been set. Bus drivers are currently being balloted and if they also vote for action the earliest date for drivers to go on strike is towards the end of February.
- 3.4.4 Members were also briefed on the ongoing dialogue with central Government regarding bus recovery funding post April 2023, there does now seem to be less positive signals that the funding will continue in any form and if this is the case we should prepare for further significant bus service reductions from this date. The final decision lies with the Minister and members will be kept updated.
- 3.4.5 Members then received an update on the roll-out of passenger information and were advised that the January changes resulted in 2,451 bus stop flags and 9,568 timetable posters requiring to be updated and positioned, all are due to be completed by the middle of February. As there were a number of challenges around getting accurate information ahead of the deadline we are aware that there are errors and welcome feedback to put these right. Cllr Stanley advised of a couple of issues, and all were reminded to forward any such issues found to the Member Enquiries email address [memberenquiries@tfwm.org.uk](mailto:memberenquiries@tfwm.org.uk).
- 3.4.6 Members then received a verbal update on how Transport for West Midlands was looking to reduce costs surrounding assets (bus stops, shelters, bus stations and park and ride sites) whilst maintaining a satisfactory level of service. Members were then advised of Transport for West Midlands' intention to close the Wolverhampton Travel Information centre at the bus station. Since National Express closed their travel shops, this has been the sole remaining such travel centre and the decision has now been taken to close this and redeploy the staff to provide information and assistance to passengers on the network in a more agile way.
- 3.4.7 Following concerns raised previously, an update was given on the response to member enquiries submitted to the member enquiries email address. Upon receipt of an email the team identify the relevant service specialist and a requirement to liaise with relevant officer with aim of responding within 10 working days. Between October and December - October average case closure 10 working days, 12 days in November and 11 for December. The team will look to implement better ways of communicating delays to a full response in order to keep members better informed.

3.4.8 Members were then given an update on Metro, Sprint and the recently started trial to co-mingle Ring & Ride with the West Midlands On Demand service in Coventry, further updates on these are standing agenda items.

3.4.9 The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 22 February.

### **3.5 Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Sustainability MEG - 25 January (Lead Member: Councillor Linda Bigham)**

3.5.1 The MEG had a successful technical visit to University of Birmingham's WM-Air Project on 25 January. This visit was open to all Transport Delivery Committee councillors, so a wider group attended. There were presentations by Professor William Bloss and Dr Suzanne Bartington on air quality issues, public health impacts of poor air quality, and the work of the WM-Air project. There was also an opportunity to visit the university's air quality monitoring station.

## **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.