



West Midlands Combined Authority

Transport Delivery Committee

Monday 6 February 2023 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 Zaker Choudhry	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Carol Hyatt	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Saddack Miah	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Josh O'Nyons	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor David Stanley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance via Microsoft Teams

Councillor Linda Bigham	Coventry City Council
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65. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence received from Councillor Bill Gavan (Sandwell), Councillor Shabrana Hussain (Birmingham), Councillor Anne Millward (Dudley), Councillor Clare Simm (Wolverhampton) and Councillor Julie Webb (Sandwell).

66. Chair's Remarks

(a) William Whiting - Stourbridge Line Users Group

The Chair noted the recent death of William Whiting, Chair of the Stourbridge Line Users Group and former Chair of West Midlands Railfuture. The committee observed a minute's silence in memory of Mr Whiting.

67. Minutes - 9 January 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

68. Matters Arising

(a) **Swift Delivery Monitoring Report** (minute no. 56)

The Chair expressed concern at the suggestion that photographs might be removed from the Swift travel card as this could potentially make it more susceptible to fraudulent use. The Director of Integrated Transport Services indicated that no decision had yet been made in this regard. Members of this committee would be involved in any assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of removing the photograph from the card before any final decision was taken.

(b) **Update on the West Midlands Bus Network** (minute no. 58)

Councillor Robert Grinsell noted that there continued to be reliability problems with bus service no. 8/9. The Head of Bus acknowledged that there remained some bus services that did not operate with the reliability Transport for West Midlands expected, and he was working closely with Stagecoach in respect of this particular service to seek improvements in its reliability.

(c) **Notice of Motion** (minute no. 59)

The Chair sought an update on the motion agreed at the last meeting of the committee regarding the Government's £2 maximum single bus fare initiative. The Head of Bus explained that Diamond Bus had been approached to establish why it was choosing not to participate in the scheme. It had responded to say that the reimbursement provided by the Government to meet the costs of participating in the scheme would not adequately cover its costs. The Head of Bus undertook to circulate the full response to members of the committee.

The Director of Integrated Transport Services reported that the Department for Transport was currently monitoring the uptake of the initiative. There was also an evaluation being undertaken as to the scope for extending the scheme to continue after the publicly announced end date of 31 March.

(c) **Member Engagement Groups Update** (minute no. 60)

Councillor David Stanley reported that there continued to be problems with real-time information displays showing incorrect information. The Head of Bus reported that Transport for West Midlands was currently working with National Express West Midlands to improve the accuracy of the information being displayed and had recently contracted with two suppliers to improve the use of data within the system. The Director of Integrated Transport Services undertook to provide a briefing note to the committee setting out the specific improvements to the service that were planned, along with the timescales for their delivery.

69. Action Tracker

The Chair suggested a further site visit be undertaken to the Dudley Interchange site to view the progress being made with construction works.

70. Forward Plan

The plan of items to be reported to future meetings of the committee was noted.

71. 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 report set out those elements within the 2022/23 capital programme that had been completed between November and January in respect of projects at Dudley Interchange, the digital panel rollout, and the Cross City Package 3 Dudley - Druids Heath.

Councillor Carol Hyatt enquired whether it was possible for future monitoring reports to include a specific 'red-amber-green' evaluation in respect of the project's budget. The Director of Strategic Partnerships & Delivery Integration indicated that whilst the currently reported 'red-amber-green' rating included an assessment of the project's financial position, he was looking to improve the usefulness of the information presented to the committee.

Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner sought further information on plans to install ramps at Perry Barr rail station. The Director of Strategic Partnerships & Delivery Integration explained that the provision of ramps was not included within the scope of the station works programme. He understood that whilst work had been undertaken to assess the possibility of installing ramps, there were concerns that the gradient that would be required was greater than current regulations permitted. He undertook to ask the Rail team to provide a fuller briefing note on this issue.

Resolved:

- (1) The achievements since the January meeting of the committee be noted.
- (2) The progress of deliverables and outturn of the 2022/23 capital programme be noted.
- (3) Variations from the baseline programme be noted.

72. Safer Travel Partnership Update

The committee considered a report from the Director of Network Resilience providing an update against delivery towards the Safer Travel Plan 2021-24 objectives.

Raising awareness and reporting of Violence Against Women and Girls continued to be a priority for the partnership, including through the Transport for West Midlands Education Officer promoting the 'See Something Say Something' campaign, reporting details through numerous events held recently at educational establishments and Business Improvement Districts meetings. The Safer Travel team had been involved in activity on the network to help minimise congestion and improve safety, including through the use of its newly established drone team who deployed prior to Christmas in the Digbeth area to give a situational overview of traffic and congestion issues, as well as at the recent Aston Villa v Wolverhampton football match, which took place during a rail strike.

Resolved:

The report, and the progress being made across a number of key areas within the Safer Travel Partnership, be noted.

73. Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre Monthly Performance - December 2022

The committee received a presentation from the Director of Network Resilience on the performance of the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre during December 2022.

The presentation provided updates on recent activity related to rail, metro, bus and highways, including the impacts arising out of rail disruption caused by strikes. The centre provided significant 'value adds' in helping to mitigate the effects of congestion caused by roadworks, as well as liaising closely with West Midlands Police and British Transport Police.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar welcomed the presentation and the work of the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre. He enquired as to whether it had been possible to quantify the monetary value of the work it undertook in mitigating congestion. The Head of RTCC Events & Emergency Planning reported that he was currently looking at how best to assess this as part of improving the monitoring and evaluation framework being used.

Resolved:

The presentation be noted.

74. Transport Funding Update

The committee received an update from the Director of Integrated Transport Services on the latest information regarding the funding being provided by the Department for Transport to the bus industry to support its recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There was still no commitment from the Department for Transport for continuing the funding to bus operators after 31 March. Following the motion passed by this committee at its last meeting (minute no. 59), the Mayor had met with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Roads & Local Transport to make clear the risks to the West Midlands bus network should this funding be withdrawn as planned. Transport for West Midlands was meeting with bus operators to understand their plans in circumstances where funding was withdrawn. He did stress though that the region had been able to retain 90% of the bus network that existed prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

Councillor David Stanley stressed the importance of bus reliability in building public confidence in using the bus network. The Director of Integrated Transport Services undertook to update members of the committee as soon as he was aware for certain what the funding arrangement was to be post-31 March.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

75. Member Engagement Groups Update

The committee considered a report of the Governance Services Officer noting recent developments and meetings of the six Member Engagement Groups. The report highlighted the discussions held at the following meetings:

- Sprint MEG - 23 January
- Finance MEG - 24 January
- Putting Passengers First MEG - 25 January
- Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Sustainability MEG - 25 January

Councillor Carol Hyatt welcomed the visit that the Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Sustainability MEG had undertaken to the University of Birmingham's WM-Air Project. Members had considered that Birmingham's Clean Air Zone was not located in those areas of the city suffering most with poor air quality, but that its location had been overly influenced by the Government.

The Chair enquired as to the progress being made with the replacement of timetable at bus stops. The Head of Bus reported that he expected all bus stop information to be updated by the end of February, and he would send round an update to members on this issue as it progressed.

Councillor Josh O'Nyons handed over a petition he had been signed by residents seeking the removal of a bus stop in Lode Lane, Solihull due to the overcrowding of the footpath caused by people waiting for bus services.

Resolved:

The recent activities of the committee's Member Engagement Groups were noted.

76. WMCA Board - 10 February 2023 - Transport Reports

The committee considered those transport-related reports that were due to be considered by the WMCA Board at its meeting on 10 February. These reports related to:

- HS2 Growth Delivery Programme
- West Midlands Local Transport Plan 'Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands' - Final Core Strategy and draft Big Moves and draft Area Strategy Guidance

In respect of the HS2 Growth Delivery Programme, Councillor Timothy Huxtable requested further information on the environmental measures being implemented to mitigate the impact of construction. He also noted that a number of the infrastructure projects being built did not appear visually appealing to the public, and he urged HS2 Ltd to engage with local communities better to ensure their support for the proposed works. Councillor Carol Hyatt also reported that she understood large areas of the woodland planted by Hs2 Ltd during the Summer of 2022 had died due to the young trees not being nurtured during the very warm weather than had been experienced.

The Chair proposed that a member briefing session on the HS2 programme be arranged for a future date.

Resolved:

The comments of the committee on the transport-related reports be shared with the WMCA Board when it considered these items on 10 February.

77. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 13 March 2023 at 1.00pm.

[The meeting ended at 2.55pm.]