

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

20 October 2015

West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority

Report by Councillor Cllr Roger Horton

Overview of Centro Activities –September 2015

1. Bus Network

Centro are working with local bus companies, Sandwell Council and other stakeholders on a network development plan for the area. A first stage of consultation has been undertaken which closed in mid-July. The consultation included a number of local consultation events. The results of this are currently being considered by the partnership ahead of a further consultation during the Autumn. The consultation asked for views from existing and potential passengers on whether the bus network meets their demands.

2. Cradley Heath Interchange

The interchange opened as planned on 26 July. The improved facility includes;

- 6 bus stands with RTI
- Greatly improved passenger facilities
- Improved DDA compliant access
- Passenger Information Totems
- Improved security through monitored CCTV and help points.
- Separate car drop-off and pick-up

Further information available at

<http://www.networkwestmidlands.com/cradleyheath/cradleyheath.aspx>

3. Park and Ride (P & R)

Bescot Stadium Station which sits within Sandwell, although park and ride falls within Walsall: Centro have started work to improve access to Bescot Stadium station. This includes improving CCTV, lighting, walking and walking routes. Centro have facilitated talks between the rail company DB Schenker and Sandwell Council for improvements to be made on the public right of way path leading to the station.

Tame Bridge: The main car park is on a slope, in winter with a ground frost we have experienced cars sliding out of bays. To manage this in previous years we have had to close off large areas of the car park. To mitigate against this, this year we are laying anti skid surface which we hope will allow us to keep the car park completely open. This is a trial which we hope will work.

Demand for parking at stations continues to be high. Over the next few months we are pushing a marketing campaign to inform people about other travel options to their station by improving information about bus travel, cycling and walking.

Centro are about to commence an upgrade of CCTV and lighting at all car parks across the network. This we include a move to digital CCTV and LED lighting. Work on this will commence very shortly.

Following on from the recent Park and Ride Task and Finish Review, Centro are formulating a Park and Ride Development Plan which will document all activity taking place at existing facilities, as well as detailing investment plans, both funded and aspirational. This plan will be shared with partners and stakeholders, as well as the new West Midlands Franchise Team at the Dft and should enable more effective use of project development funding and those projects suitable for funding bids.

4. Rail Investment-

The Considerate Parking Scheme in operation at all Centro P & R sites is about to enter its second year of operation and has been a great success and Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issues have reduced from 98 per week one month into the scheme to 2 per week in month eleven. There have no reported entrapment of vehicles as a result of inconsiderate parking since September 2014, very few customer complaints and to Centro's knowledge there has been minimal impact on the residential areas around the P & R locations.

The Rowley Regis P & R extension and cycle hub have been successfully delivered creating a much needed additional 360 spaces and the provision of an additional ticket vending machine have all improved the customer experience at the station.

The confirmation of the London Midland Direct Award Contract expected in the Autumn will facilitate a review of the current Transforming Rail Partnership agreement to ensure that service and customer experience improvements achieved to date continue to be delivered during the final two years of the franchise.

5. Swift Smart ticketing-

The rollout of Swift smart ticketing continues at pace with now more than 3.5m journeys undertaken using a Swift card. This figure grows significantly month on month as we rollout further products and functions. In the past 12 months we have delivered the following:

- Enhanced Pay-as-you-go scheme valid on 23 bus operators' services including National Express in Coventry.
- Metro season tickets available on a Swift card
- nBus + Metro season tickets available on a Swift card
- National Express + Metro season tickets available on a Swift card
- National Express corporate customers scheme available on a Swift card
- Enhanced web-portal with retail options through remote fulfilment that allows top up through 100 readers located at key interchanges on the network and through an NFC enabled Android App.

The rollout of these products compliments the work that we had previously undertaken to deliver the following products and functions:

- Initial Pay-as-you-go across 10 operators' services. (see above, this has now been enhanced).
- nBus and National Express adult direct debit season tickets (including regional variations for Coventry and the Black Country).
- nBus and National Express adult season tickets through 250 Payzone outlets and 8 Travel Information Centres (including regional variations for Coventry and the Black Country).
- National Express eDaysavers carnet tickets

These products and functions are providing significant benefits to customers and we are working to deliver even more with the following expected in the coming months:

- Rollout of the enhanced Pay-as-you-go to all of National Express services.
- Rollout of the enhanced Pay-as-you-go acceptance on the Midland Metro.
- Delivering Swift functionality to gate lines at New Street, Coventry, International, Moor Street, Snow Hill, Five Ways and University stations to initially allow acceptance of ENCTS passes, shortly followed by the rollout to nNetwork direct debit customers

The list above is not exhaustive and we have recently employed Euclid as new systems supplier which will help us develop and deploy new and innovative smart ticketing solutions through Swift going forward.

6. Smarter Network Smarter Choices

The Local Sustainable Transport Funded *Smart Network, Smarter Choices* (SNSC) programme is a wide ranging project that aims to tackle congestion, reduce carbon emissions and strengthen the economy by improving and promoting walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing options. The programme ran from 2012 to 2015 across 10 congested corridors in the West Midlands and then successfully secured funding to continue in 2015/16, focusing on key areas of regeneration.

WorkWise has now supported 2,205 unemployed jobseekers across the West Midlands (including 183 Sandwell residents) since 1.4.15 to find, start and stay in new employment with free journey planning and ticketing support to travel to interviews and new jobs.

Employers: There are 19 businesses (including nPower and the West Bromwich Building Society) signed up to the SNSC programme in Sandwell, covering over 11,200 employees. These employers and their staff benefit from a tailored Travel Support package to improve access to their workplaces, reduce congestion and encourage healthy active travel.

Education – in Sandwell, thirteen secondary schools and one College are now engaged with the SNSC programme and implementing Travel Action Plans, covering over 16,000 students and over 2,000 staff.

Community Engagement, Personalised Travel Planning Projects

As part of the 2012-1 SNSC programme, 1,500 Sandwell households benefitted from tailored sustainable travel advice on the A4123/A459 Black Country West corridor, while 1,500 Sandwell households participated along the A34 Walsall Road corridor and approximately 2,750 households participated in the Sandwell area of the Route 4 PTP project. In 2015/16, engagement with community groups in these areas continues, offering local residents sustainable travel support.

Cycling - from April to the end of August 2015, 1,112 participants had benefitted from SNSC Cycling support (including cycle training, maintenance training, route planning, journey accompaniment) in the Black Country, and of these 321 live in the Sandwell area. *Bostin Bikes* was also launched this Summer, offering Black Co residents the opportunity to loan a bike while undertaking cycle training, and then purchase the bike at a reduced price (only £50) upon successful completion of their Level 2 cycle training.

Station Travel Plans

A tailored marketing campaign commenced at Rowley Regis rail station during July 2015, promoting the benefits of walking and cycling to the station. These messages in particular highlighted the free cycle training and maintenance courses available to Black Country residents. The same campaign also took place at The Hawthorns and Wednesbury Parkway during August, and will be revisited at Rowley Regis during September, with a particular focus on encouraging people to sign up to use the cycle hub.

SNSC Infrastructure

Moor Street via Bromford Lane and Churchbridge and Birchley Island cycle routes were delivered since the last report.

In addition, the Galton Bridge to Soho Loop canal towpath improvement scheme is expected to be completed by summer 2016, as part of the Managing Short Trips Programme.

7. High Speed 2 Connectivity Package-

The HS2 Growth Strategy was submitted to Government in April. As part of this, the strategy makes the rationale for a local connectivity package. This provision of connectivity to both Curzon and Interchange stations is a fundamental part of realising the full economic benefits of HS2, ensuring that those needing to access the two stations, and the opportunities on offer by their associated developments, can do so within an acceptable journey time. Building on the above and informed by research undertaken to date in achieving excellent connectivity from across the Midlands to the proposed HS2 stations, the Connectivity programme aims to:

- improve access for appropriately qualified labour to the stations and associated development zones;
- improve access to HS2 for key business sectors;
- improve access to opportunity for key regeneration areas such as East Birmingham and North Solihull.

In order to set out a programme to deliver the package of transport interventions that would improve connectivity to HS2, the 20 identified schemes were prioritised following a robust prioritisation protocol. The protocol scored each scheme on 29 factors that were identified during the completion of Strategic Case documents, and are based on the following:

- The Strategic Case;
- The Deliverability and Need;
- The Economic Impacts;
- The Transport Appraisal (Social, Environmental and Economic); and
- The Financial Case.

In doing so, the schemes could be prioritised without bias, and based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. This extensive work has resulted in the following schemes within the connectivity package:

- East Birmingham / North Solihull Metro
- Camp Hill Chords
- Water Orton and Local Enhancements
- Brierley Hill Line 1 Metro Extension
- A45 SPRINT – Interchange to Coventry
- Longbridge to Hamstead SPRINT
- Sutton Coldfield Public Transport Package
- Snow Hill Line Improvements
- A34 SPRINT – Walsall to Birmingham
- Solihull to Interchange SPRINT
- Interchange to Coleshill Parkway SPRINT
- Bartley Green SPRINT
- Aldridge Station and Electrification

- A38 SPRINT – Halesowen Extension
- i54 SPRINT
- Lichfield to Interchange SPRINT
- Walsall – Rangeley Rail Line Speed Improvements
- Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton Rail Electrification
- Warwick to Interchange SPRINT

Hall Green to Solihull SPRINTA number of these schemes will support enhanced transport connectivity to Sandwell. These include Brierley Hill Line 1 Metro Extension, Camp Hill Chords and Snow Hill Line Improvements. Engagement with Government is ongoing regarding the funding for the connectivity package which is being progressed as part of the devolution deal for the West Midlands.

8. West Midlands Rail Franchise direct award, 2017 franchise and devolution

Currently West Midlands local services and some longer distances services including some along the West Coast Mainline down to London are operated by London Midland who are part of GoVia, a Go-Ahead Group and Keolis joint venture.

The current London Midland franchise is due to end at the end of March 2016, however due to a change in the wider refranchising timetables across England by the Department for Transport, London Midland and the DfT are negotiating a Direct Award contract to run from April 2016 to October 2017 (with an option to extend for up to 12 months).

London Midland submitted its bid to the DfT for the Direct Award during August and the two organisations are now negotiating the contract – current indications are that we should know the outcome by then end of the year although this has not been confirmed. The outcome will be published on the Department for Transport website.

Concurrently work is ongoing on the new West Midlands Franchise due to commence in October 2017 in line with the end of the London Midland Direct Award. This also ties in with work being done locally to look at the devolution of rail services for the West Midlands region. This is a process to bring control of the West Midlands rail franchise under local ownership instead of being specified, monitored and managed by Central Government.

Devolution will mean that that the local authorities that make up the wider West Midlands region, in collaboration as part of a new body called West Midlands Rail, will be able to shape and manage the local rail network using our knowledge and expertise. This will allow us to ensure resource is used in the best way to benefit the local area, the rail operator is held to account and that quality, satisfaction, performance and usage has the best opportunity to increase.

A considerable number of high level and detailed discussions have taken place over the past year on how we are going to achieve this, and there have been some significant steps forward.

West Midlands Rail submitted its proposal for rail devolution to the Department for Transport in October 2014. They considered this proposition and responded during February 2015 setting out how they believe the rail powers can be devolved in a managed and positive way. This has been followed up with a letter at the end of March from the Secretary of State for Transport confirming his support to work with WMR towards devolution-including the development and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two parties to formalise the arrangement.

West Midlands Rail is now working with the Department for Transport to specify the new West Midlands franchise from 2017. As mentioned above, London Midland's franchise currently consists of local rail services within the West Midlands but also some longer distance services that travel to Liverpool, Crewe, Northampton, Bedford and London. Therefore it is anticipated that one of the requirements will be that the successful bidder will be required to deliver will be to split the franchise into two separate parts, called business units, during the franchise period – one West Midlands Business Unit and one West Coast Business Unit. The West Midlands Business Unit will include West Midlands local rail services and is the element that is intended to be specified and managed locally going forward should WMR and DfT be happy with this approach, while the West Coast Business Unit will be retained by the Department for Transport but West Midlands Rail will still be able to provide an input. The map below shows the different operating units – and that the majority of the stations within the West Midlands will come under the West Midlands Business Unit even if they are on a West Coast Business Unit route.

From the next franchise it will be investigated whether West Midlands Rail will have full control over a new West Midlands Rail Contract covering those services within the West Midlands Business Unit.

To help inform the 2017 franchise process from a West Midlands perspective and support devolution, two officers from the West Midlands have been seconded into the DfT to work on the new franchise specification and tender process.

Current timescales being worked to by the DfT are for the prospectus, which is a bidder document telling potential operators some high level information about the new 2017 franchise, to be published in December 2015 with the consultation due to start in mid December for a period of 14 weeks. Following the analysis of the consultation and short listing of bidders, the Invitation To Tender is anticipated to be issued during Summer 2016. Following bid analysis and contract award, the new franchise due to start in October 2017.

9. Metro

New trams have continued to be introduced into service on Line 1 and the last T69 tram ran in public service on 14th August, attracting considerable good publicity from local media and much interest from the public.

The construction of the Birmingham Centre Extension has continued apace, with the last length of street track in the city centre having been placed. Works have been reduced considerably for the “Super September” opening of New Street Station/Grand Central, but will resume in October with final surfacing work and installation of overhead line equipment. Plans are being finalised for the construction of the crossover into Line 1, during which period trams will terminate at St Pauls, with replacement bus services for the final length of the route into the city centre.

Design and preparatory works continue on the next extension projects, including Wolverhampton City Centre Extension, Centenary Square, Edgbaston and Eastside extensions.

Procurement is underway for designers and contractors to deliver the next ten years of work on Midland Metro.

Measuring Success

The summary table below sets out the latest performance for the West Midlands (performance as of August 15 with exception of bus patronage which is July 15) unless otherwise stated), along with the target. Progress in achieving these targets and other supporting measures are monitored and reported on a regular basis. This means that planning arrangements are informed by a clear evidence base of factors which are important to our customers.

More detail and a breakdown for Sandwell is presented further on in the report (where available).

Indicator	Performance		
	Bus	Rail	Metro
Patronage	273m	52.3m	4.2m
Patronage - Target	NA	51m	4.5m
Reliability	97.3%	98.5%	99.8%
Reliability - Target	97%	98%	98%
Punctuality	83%	85.2%	-
Punctuality - Target	81.7%	80%	-
Customer Satisfaction	87%	83%	90%

Patronage

Rail

Analysis of long-term patronage trends shows that demand for rail travel continues to increase, with latest figures showing 52.3 million trips were made as of August 2015, compared with 49.3 million during the previous year and only 27.4 million a decade ago. This trend is reflected across the UK, with rail patronage having increased by a quarter in the last five years.

The current rail patronage of 52.3 million is the highest rail patronage the West Midlands has seen. Centro continues to work with London Midland and other industry partners in developing local rail services to improve rail infrastructure and services and meet growing demand.

Bus

Bus Patronage over the past 12 months has remained steady with very small variances month on month. The latest annual bus patronage is 273 million (as of July 2015), compared with the previous 12 months there has been a 1.5% decline in patronage.

The introduction of initiatives within Transforming Bus Travel (TBT) has helped slow the decline in bus patronage within the TBT area with the focus on modifying the network to help better meet current travel demands. In the Network Review areas the general patronage trend has also been a decline, however comparing the results with the West Midlands total patronage over the same period generally shows a lower decline than the network as a whole. For the Sandwell Review area during year 1 we saw an increase of 0.8%, this was against a 2% decline in the West Midlands during the same period. In Year 2 bus patronage in Sandwell fell by 0.4% compared to Year 1 which was very slightly less than the overall West Midlands figure of -0.1% for the same time period. Year 3 results are not yet available as monitoring will include data up to October 2015.

As we have seen where there are Voluntary Multi-lateral Agreements (VMAs) in place, these agreements are successful in delivering better patronage outcomes than in areas where these agreements currently do not exist. We therefore remain committed to work towards the introduction of VMAs where they currently are not in place and continue to monitor bus patronage demand as part of the agreement.

SANDWELL Review Date: 28/10/2012	Year 1 Nov 12 to Oct 13	Year 2 Nov 13 to Oct 14	Year 3 Nov 14 to Oct 15
Bus Patronage (Network Review)	0.8%	-0.4%	-
West Midlands Bus Patronage over same period	-2.0%	-0.1%	-
DIFFERENCE	2.8%	-0.3%	-

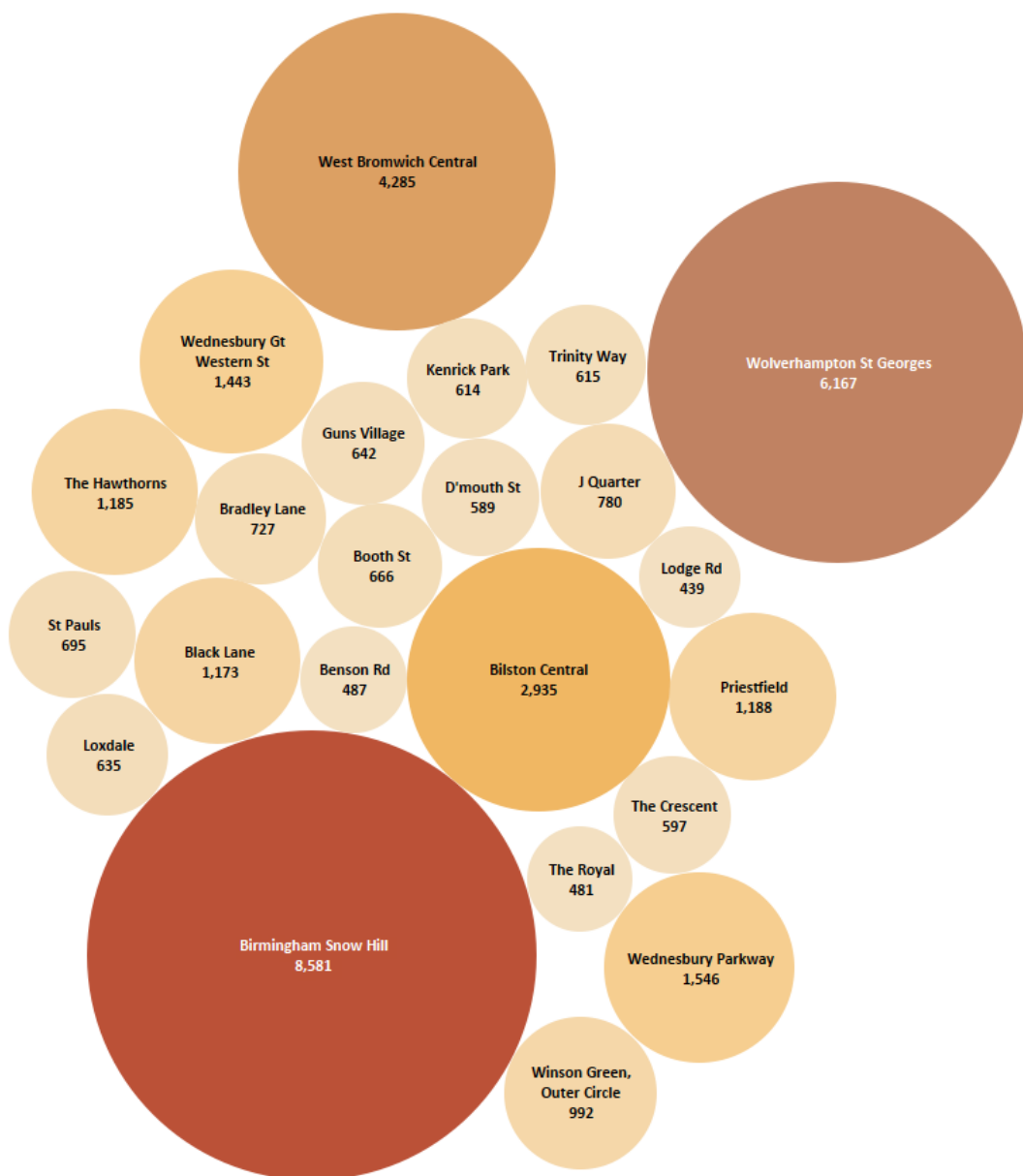
Metro

Metro trips has seen little change over the last several months, a major barrier to patronage growth has been the lack of capacity on trams during peak periods. The Birmingham City Centre Extension and fleet replacement project will increase the available passenger capacity by approximately 40%.

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Light rail use in England continued to increase in 2013/14, with both passenger journeys and vehicle miles reaching the highest levels recorded: 222 million passenger journeys were made in total on the eight systems, 18 million (9%) more than during the previous year.

The following diagram illustrates stop usage on a typical weekday, showing the number of boarders and alighters at each metro stop, with the larger circles being the most utilised and the smaller the less utilised. This highlights the fact that the stops that are utilised the most are either centres or have a park and ride facility available

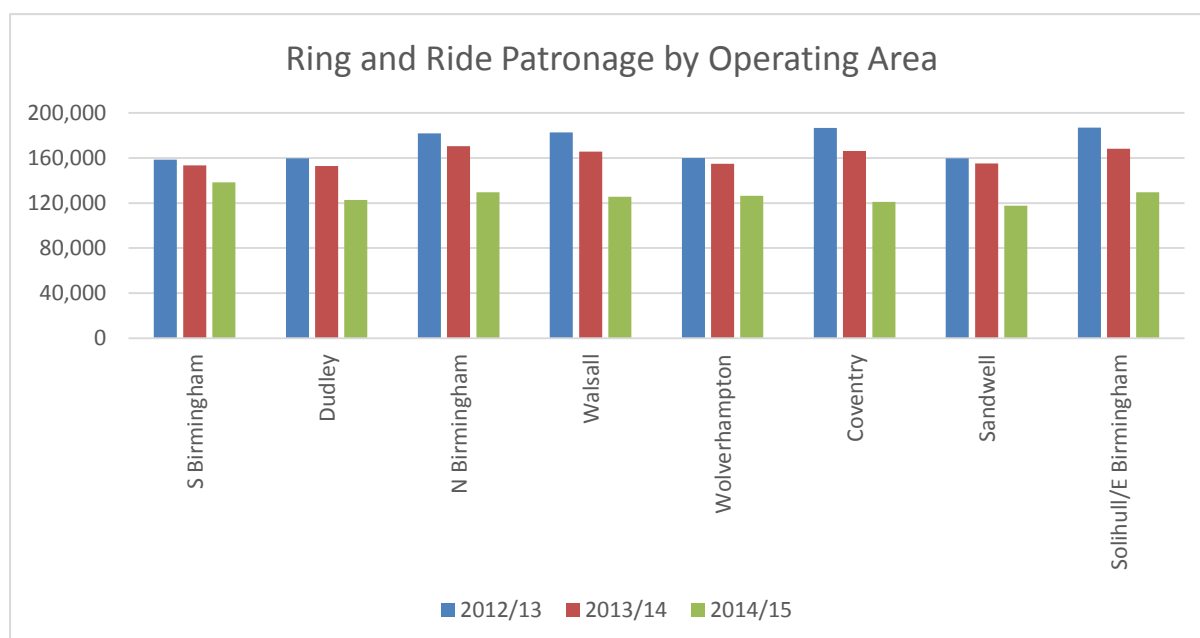


Ring and Ride

Trips made by Ring and Ride continue to decline with patronage at 1 million during the year to July 2015, compared with 1.2 million the previous year.

Analysis has found that the decline in trips is particularly marked in the evenings. Part of the reason for the decline is the economic climate, meaning that people are travelling less frequently and clubs and groups that cater for older and disabled people are continuing to close, in addition Ring and Ride West Midlands undertook changes to the service from April 2014 by increasing the adult single trip fare for registered users from 60p to £1.00 with half fare for children, reducing resource levels on the Monday to Saturday service, withdrawing the Sunday service and introducing a next day booking system.

The following graph shows the number of trips within each operating area over a two year period.



Park and Ride

Cars parked at Centro's Park & Ride sites are counted every other month with the current average occupancy (April 2015 to August 2015, 3 months of counts) of all sites (41) being 87.2%. The following table shows average occupancy for the 12 park and ride sites within the Sandwell district.

Park & Ride Site	Average % Occupancy
Black Lake (Metro)	93.3
Cradley Heath	95.2
Dudley Port	82.1
Langley Green	85.1
Old Hill	91.0
Rowley Regis	75.6

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Sandwell & Dudley	94.2
Smethwick Galton Bridge	91.3
Tame Bridge	94.0
The Hawthorns	93.3
Tipton	94.4
Wednesbury Parkway (Metro)	95.4
ALL SANDWELL	87.7

Modal Share

Public transport growth as a whole is a crucial indicator to identify if people are happy with the public transport offer, rather than being too concerned that one mode decreases as one increases, as there are many external factors that can affect modal choice, including the economy, as well as the national travel and lifestyle trends highlighted above.

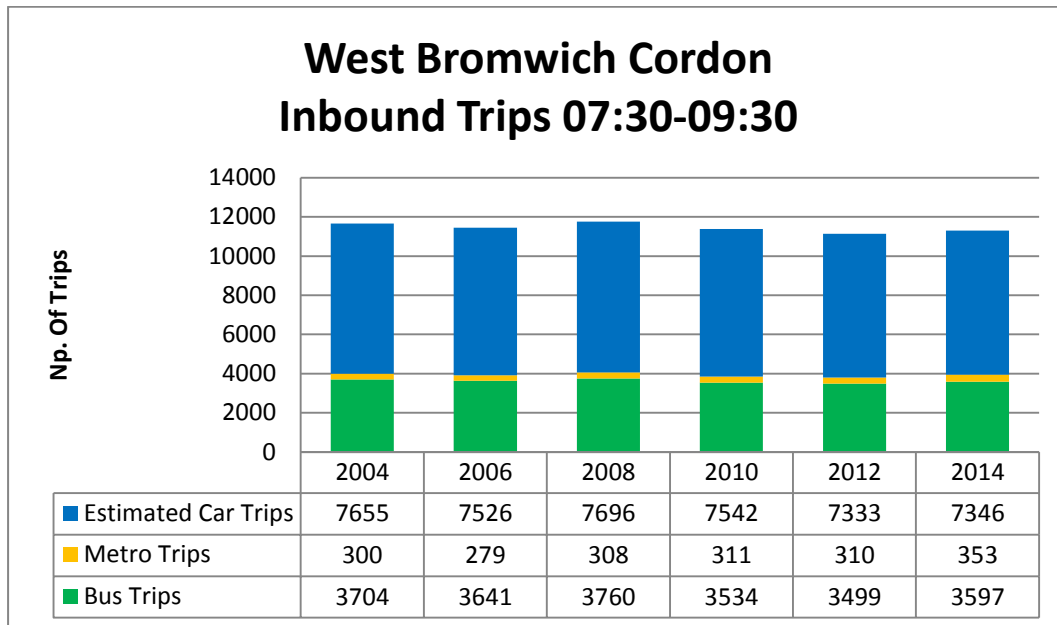
Modal Share is measured by comparing trips into centres in the am peak (7.30 to 9.30) by bus, rail, metro and by car. The centres include Birmingham, Brierley Hill, Coventry, Dudley, Solihull, Sutton Coldfield, Walsall, West Bromwich, and Wolverhampton.

The target is to increase the AM peak proportion of trips by public transport into the nine LTP centres as a whole to 37% by 2015/16.

Despite car still being the dominant mode into most centres, the public transport modal share continues to increase, with 36% of inbound AM peak journeys made by public transport. This varies by centre with Birmingham seeing 58% of trips made by public transport. The lowest was Brierley Hill with only 13% being made by public transport.

West Bromwich Modal Split

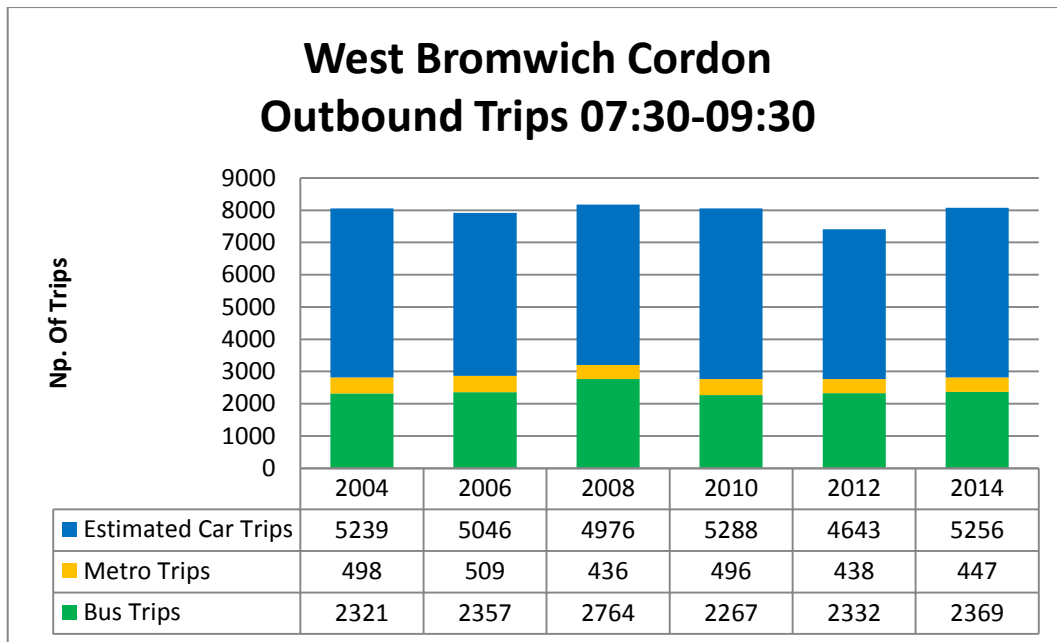
The graphs below present the morning peak (07:30 – 09:30) inbound and outbound results of the West Bromwich Cordon Survey conducted in March 2014 compared to previous surveys. The numbers represent people travelling by that mode of transport.



Inbound AM Peak bus, metro and car trips have seen increases of 2.8%, 13.9% and 0.2% respectively in 2014, compared to 2012. The increase in car trips was smaller than the public transport trips, meaning that public transport modal share has increased from 34.2% to 35% in 2014.

Over the last 10 years the number of trips being made into West Bromwich town centre have not fluctuated greatly with a difference of just 622 trips with 2008 having the highest number of trips and 2012 having the lowest number.

Metro trips are at their highest level in 2014.



All modes also saw increases in the number of trips travelling out of West Bromwich. Bus trips increased by 1.6% in 2014 and are now at their 2nd highest level in 10 years. Metro trips increased by 2.1% (9 trips). Car trips increased by 13.2%, leading to a decrease in public transport modal share to 34.9% from 37.4%.

Sandwell Bus Network Review Monitoring

Customer Satisfaction

As part of the TBT initiatives, when Network Reviews take place we also monitor the satisfaction of passengers, in addition to patronage and bus reliability and punctuality within the area.

Customer Satisfaction is monitored over a number of variables, including the experience when waiting for a bus, the journey, information provision, value for money and the overall experience.

Overall satisfaction with the bus service has increased since the start of the review by 3 percentage points to 87%. Other significant improvements were noted with the safety while on the bus, reliability and punctuality, and the availability of information.

The Sandwell Network Review results are presented in the table below;

SANDWELL Review Date: 28/10/2012	Baseline Year Nov 11 to Oct 12	Year 1 Nov 12 to Oct 13	Year 2 Nov 13 to Oct 14	Year 3 Nov 14 to Oct 15
Overall Customer Satisfaction	84%	87%	87%	-
Overall comfort while waiting for the bus	83%	88%	85%	-
Overall comfort while travelling on bus	92%	93%	93%	-
Overall driving and drivers behaviour	88%	93%	91%	-
Value for money	62%	65%	65%	-

Reliability and punctuality

Reliability (% of buses that operated)

Bus reliability in Sandwell currently stands at 97.8% which is above the West Midlands average of 97.2%. This was helped by the introduction of new buses in the area.

Punctuality (% of buses operating within the Traffic Commissioner's standard of 1 minute early and 5 minutes late)

Bus punctuality in Sandwell currently stands at 88.1% which is greater than the West Midlands average of 81.9%. This was helped by the introduction of new buses and service improvements in the last Network Review.