

**Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council****7 March 2017****Transport for West Midlands (TfWM)**

Report by Councillor Roger Horton

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**Overview of Transport for West Midlands Activities****1. Bus Network****The West Midlands Bus Alliance**

The West Midlands Bus Alliance has been in place since November 2015 and has delivered some significant improvements for passengers across the region. Using the experience of this initial 18 month period the Bus Alliance Board are now developing 50 key deliverables to be delivered by the partners over the next 2 years. These will be tangible tasks to meet the key objectives around increasing modal share and patronage, maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction for passengers, improving reliability and punctuality, investing in the local highway to improve journey speeds and improving Air Quality.

One of the key deliverables of the Bus Alliance is to deliver a series of Network Development Plans (NDP) across the region. The plans will describe how the network and associated infrastructure will change over a 10 year period in reaction to changes in land use and policy in a specified geographical area. The NDPs and associated actions plan will set deliverables for the partners to make this happen.

Work has commenced, in partnership with Sandwell and Dudley Councils, local operators and other key stakeholders, on establishing the NDP for Sandwell and Dudley. This work will build upon the public consultation that was undertaken in Spring 2015 and further intelligence gained since then on the network as it currently stands.

## **M5 Oldbury Viaduct works**

TfWM are engaging with Highways England and Sandwell Council on the planned work to Oldbury Viaduct on the M5. There is a concern that the scheme and associated traffic management will increase congestion in the area affecting bus service reliability and punctuality. Working with the operators we have put forward a number of highways measures to maintain service reliability and give bus a level of priority during the works. It is hoped that with these measures bus could be a more attractive option encouraging modal shift, reducing congestion in the area. Options for further mitigation through provision of temporary Park and Ride, marketing and promotional activities are also being considered by the stakeholders.

National Express have recently consulted upon a number of service changes which are looking to build resilience in to the bus network for the period of the Oldbury works. The consultation closed on the 20<sup>th</sup> February with a view to making any changes on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. TfWM and the local members have been engaged by National Express as part of this process and they were tasked with providing data to support their proposed changes. Changes have been made to the original proposals following this local scrutiny, specifically around the route of service 48A to ensure a service is retained on St Pauls Road and to improve service provision in the Warley area.

The challenges that Sandwell Council have had in influencing the Highways England traffic management are recognised and shared by TfWM and the local operators. Whilst the current proposals look to address the immediate concerns and maintain reliability and punctuality on key routes we are also preparing for the possibility of further changes being put forward by the operators. Some of these changes may be required at short notice which will stifle our ability to fully engage and consult on changes as much as we would like with passengers and service users.

## **Ticketing initiatives**

National Express are trialling significantly reduced fares across a large part of the Sandwell and Dudley area. This is specifically targeted at a part of the region that has seen a significant reduction in patronage. The promotion reduces their day ticket to just £3 and the weekly ticket to £11. This is in an attempt to encourage greater use of the local network using the slogan 'Stay local, pay local'. Should the trial be successful there may be an opportunity for this to be rolled out to other areas. Whilst any effort to increase patronage is welcomed this trial was not

done in strong consultation with the Bus Alliance or TfWM which we have taken up with National Express. We are working with National Express and local Stakeholders to assist in the promotion of the scheme.

TfWM are working with Diamond Bus and National Express to explore options for joint service provision on service 4 between Walsall and Halesowen. The proposals have the potential for shared operation and a ticket option which could allow passengers to catch any bus. These changes may require an alteration to the route and timetable of the service but overall will deliver benefits for passengers. Any changes are likely to be made during May once the impact of the Oldbury Viaduct works are better understood.

### **Service 126**

One of the key corridors in Sandwell and across the Black Country is service 126 which travels between Birmingham and Wolverhampton via Dudley. Working in partnership through the Alliance, National Express with TfWM have delivered £4 million of investment into the vehicle fleet on this service supported by investment in the passenger waiting facilities along the route. These Platinum vehicles deliver a higher level of passenger comfort with leather seats, air conditioning, Wi-Fi and electric charging points. The vehicles conform to Euro 6 vehicle emission standards contributing to an improvement in air-quality along the corridor.

### **Intu Merry Hill**

Discussions are ongoing with Intu, the owners of Merry Hill Shopping Centre, regarding their future development plans for the site. Improving public transport access is a key priority. With the extension of the Metro to Merry Hill and Brierley Hill now being delivered through the HS2 Connectivity Package, work is taking place to ensure benefits are maximised and that this is fully integrated with wider improvements to bus services and infrastructure, including a new bus station and improved connectivity to Brierley Hill and the Waterfront. In the short term, work is underway on some interim improvements to the Bus Station at Merry Hill to improve accessibility and pedestrian safety and these will be completed very shortly.

## **Highways Improvements**

The Highways Partnership Manager is continuing to work with in Partnership with Sandwell Council looking at a series of highways improvements on a number of key corridors in the area. This work has been reflected in the recent bid to the Black Country LEP in order to fund corridor improvements across the area.

## **Tendered bus services**

For the spring tender round for contracted local bus services TfWM requested the provision of Euro 5 or better emission standards on vehicles providing these services. This will not only help to improve air quality across the region, but should also help to drive up standards across the wider fleet. A significant proportion of these contracted services are wholly or partially within the Sandwell area

## **2. Rail Investment**

One of TfWM's main vehicles for securing investment and support for rail investment is the Partnership Agreements we have with Train Operators. The Directly Award Contract to London Midland which started in April 2016 enabled TfWM to refresh the partnership agreement that we have with London Midland.

This was launched and on 26 July 2016 and a joint action plan has been developed with London Midland to ensure the commitments can be delivered by the end of their franchise which runs until 15 October 2017.

A partnership agreement is also in place with Chiltern Railways and one is due to be launched with Virgin Trains this spring.

Through the London Midland Partnership Agreement and its obligations under its Direct Award franchise it is rolling out a number of improvements including:

- Installation of new and upgraded ticket vending machines
- On train CCTV on Class 323s by May 2017
- Free Wi-Fi on Class 350s and 323s

London Midland introduced an enhanced service to Bescot Stadium station from the December timetable change which has seen the frequency to the station increase to approximately three trains per hour from a previous half-hourly frequency.

This is complemented by the project to improve the station environment and the link to the car park detailed in Section 3 of this report. The higher frequency service and station improvements, combined with the spare capacity that exists in the car park at the station will hopefully deliver an uplift in usage at the station.

The new station at Bromsgrove was opened in July 2016 and following a major blockade in October/November, Network Rail has upgraded the track and signalling which will allow the improved service to the station to be delivered once the line is electrified. The physical electrification is expected to be completed in autumn 2017 which will be followed by a period of driver training before services are introduced in 2018.

The new operator of the West Midlands franchise is expected to be announced in the summer, at which point the improvements to be delivered by the new franchise will be known. As part of the base specification a minimum number of service improvements are required to be delivered in the new franchise, including a significant uplift in Sunday services. Further detail on these is provided in the West Midlands Rail update below.

The Department for Transport has also announced that the next West Coast franchise will now start in April 2019 (to be known as the West Coast Partnership) and will cover initial operations on HS2 as well the services currently provided by Virgin Trains West Coast.

### **3. Park and Ride**

#### **Park and Ride operation**

On 1 July 2016, new contracts were introduced to provide grounds maintenance and cleaning at park and ride locations, with improvements seen by both customers and TfWM. Systems are also in place to manage any winter weather conditions. Planned maintenance work continues to be delivered with further upgrades of CCTV, LED lighting and resurfacing work throughout the region.

From 1 November 2016 a new three year 'Considerate Parking' contract was put in place, providing parking enforcement at all TfWM Park and Ride locations. We hope to continue to build on the success of our existing arrangements by further lowering the amount of inconsiderate parking.

The project to improve the perception of safety and security at Bescot Stadium Park & Ride and pedestrian routes leading to the station has been delivered in partnership work between Centro/TfWM, Sandwell Council and Highways England. Measures introduced to make this site more welcoming to customers include:

- Refurbished brighter furniture
- Wider walking routes from the car park to the station
- LED lighting including on the walkway underneath the M6
- Pest control measures
- Upgrading and increasing the amount of CCTV
- Installing Real Time Information screens in the car park which provide live train and bus information
- Installing rail timetable information in the car park entrance
- Relining the car park
- Resurfacing the public right of way
- Installing improved pedestrian fencing
- An Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) trial

The ANPR trial at Bescot Stadium has been a success and is being rolled out as part of a further trial at four new locations, including Rowley Regis.

This ANPR trial will allow customers using the free Save-a-Space phone number to see if parking at Rowley Regis train station has spaces available or is full. Another part of this 3 month trial will allow some customers to reserve parking in advance of travelling to the car park. Five standard bays and five car share bays will be reserved for customers using Save-a-Space.

### **Park and Ride Expansion**

TfWM is currently reviewing its programme for expanding park and ride provision and is seeking to identify the best approach for securing funding to support the programme. This needs to recognise the role that Park and Ride can play in supporting rail, bus and tram expansion plans and wider network resilience plans.

Options for expanding capacity at Sandwell & Dudley station are being specifically considered alongside other locations.

The TfWM approach to the delivery and operation of Park and Ride is being fed into the development of a rail industry best practice guide in recognition of the strong experience we have in this area.

#### **4. HS2 Connectivity Package**

The HS2 Growth Strategy sets out how the positive effect of HS2 will be felt across the region. The approach we have taken uses HS2 to create an outstanding legacy in terms of regeneration, jobs, skills, economic development and connectivity for the Midlands.

A key component of the £4.4bn HS2 Growth Strategy is the Connectivity Package. The Connectivity Package supports the Growth Strategy's vision to harness the unrivalled connectivity and investment of HS2 to unlock significant new sustainable growth and radically improve local connectivity for the whole region. This improved access will accelerate growth, improve access to jobs and promote the competitiveness of the region.

#### **Enhancing Connectivity**

Following the submission of the HS2 Growth Strategy to government in April 2015, an agreement was reached within the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Devolution Deal to fund the key proposals contained within the strategy.

Strategic partners across the region have worked together to identify a robust set of schemes aimed at delivering excellent local and sub-regional connectivity to HS2 stations.

Evidence based methodology was used to identify the HS2 Connectivity Package in order to maximise the benefits flowing from HS2 to the wider region by focusing on:

- Improving access to the Station Masterplan sites for appropriately qualified labour markets;
- Improving access to HS2 for key business sectors; and
- Improving access to a wider range of opportunities for disadvantaged areas.

The HS2 Connectivity Package currently comprises of Metro, Sprint and Rail transport infrastructure schemes to seamlessly connect Curzon Street and Interchange stations to the Black Country and wider area. As part of the Devolution Deal discussions, an Implementation Plan for the HS2 Growth Strategy was submitted to government in May 2016, which included the HS2 Connectivity Package element. The Implementation Plan is fundamental to ensuring central government is confident that the final package is underpinned by a robust evidence base, will assist in optimising the economic potential of the region and is affordable and deliverable within the broader HS2 delivery timeframes.

It was made clear within the Implementation Plan that assessments of scheme deliverability and associated milestones would be subject to change as further feasibility and development work was undertaken. It was necessary to caveat the HS2 Connectivity Package within the Implementation Plan in this way as the original work was based on initial scheme identification and desk top feasibility information generated during 2014. Alongside this, it is recognised that other changes have happened since the original work. This includes new opportunities to enhance connectivity, assumptions regarding schemes likely to be in place and delivery of schemes through other funding sources.

## **Key Work Areas**

Work on the Connectivity Package has broadly been progressing in line with the Implementation Plan, with updates being provided through regular dashboard reports. The work is split into three distinct areas and a headline summary of activity is set out below:

**Sprint** – Feasibility studies completed for 12 Sprint routes to provide:

- An overview of relevant policy, which will consider previous studies and background data;
- A corridor description, including characteristics, demographics, key constraints, and intended developments in each area;
- Potential interventions considered, including estimated journey time savings and high level costs, along with the suggested location of Sprint stops;
- Initial demand forecasts;
- A high level business case, that calculates the initial cost and benefits of the scheme to calculate the benefit cost ratio (BCR); and
- The basis for Strategic Outline Business Cases within WMCA Assurance Framework.



Transparent assessment criteria is being used including; suitability, viability, deliverability, strategic factors and value for money.

**Rail** – Scoping and commissioning of feasibility work, guided by the following:

- Consolidation of programmes (HS2 Connectivity, Midlands Rail Hub and Network Rail) to provide clarity on funding and delivery models;
- Network Rail’s West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study notes Midlands Rail Hub as an “Option for Funders” as a solution for central Birmingham rail network capacity problems which is essential for the delivery of:
  - Key parts of our HS2 Growth Strategy Connectivity Programme (i.e. Bordesley Chords, Water Orton Corridor and Snow Hill Lines);
  - Midlands Connect aspirations for improved East – West regional connectivity; and
  - Meeting continuing growth in demand in both the passenger and intermodal freight sectors.
- £5m awarded in Autumn Statement for development of Midlands Rail Hub schemes to enable Guide to Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) 2 studies to be undertaken; and
- Briefs prepared for commissioning feasibility work for the local enhancement schemes (i.e. Camp Hill Line).

**Metro** – Development of business cases to support the following:

- East Birmingham to North Solihull Metro - Initial Outline Business Case (IOBC) submitted to government in October 2016. Further scheme development aiming towards Transport & Works Act (TWA) Order submission in 2018;
- Eastside Extension - design and development being undertaken alongside HS2 Curzon St Station. TWA application submitted in October 2016; and
- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension - work on outline business case underway for submission to government in March 2017.

Alongside this, work is being undertaken to review the HS2 Connectivity Package based on the outcome of feasibility studies undertaken. Officers from the Strategic Transport Officers group (STOG) have been tasked with developing key principles for reallocation of funding (where schemes are no longer viable) and to work up the detail of an assessment and prioritisation process. This would allow for an evidence led consideration of potential changes to the HS2 Connectivity Package including additional schemes. This will be presented to WMCA Board in February for approval.

## **5. West Midlands Rail (WMR) Update**

WMR influence has continued to grow over the past year. The organisation has continued to work collaboratively and fruitfully with the Department for Transport (DfT) on the specification of the new West Midlands franchise, which replaces the existing London Midland franchise in October 2017.

### **Invitation to Tender**

The culmination of the specification process was reached in August 2016 with the publication of the Invitation to Tender (ITT) to the two bidders, Govia (incumbent) and Abellio. The base specification outlined in the ITT includes a number of significant enhancements to existing service levels which must be delivered as a minimum. These include:

- The creation of two 'separable' business units, one for West Midlands local services, and another for the long distance and London Commuter markets. WMR will lead the franchise management of the West Midlands Separable Business Unit (WMSBU) in partnership with the DfT;
- At least a 30% uplift in capacity in the peaks on routes into Birmingham;
- A local brand and identity, to be known as 'West Midlands Railway' for the region's local rail services, specified by WMR;
- Substantial improvements to Sunday services, with a Saturday frequency operating on most routes from December 2021;
- Improvements to evening service frequencies from December 2018;
- An additional off-peak service from Birmingham to Shrewsbury each hour;
- A new service from Birmingham to Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe;
- Improvements to the standard of trains including refurbishment;

- A service quality regime for stations, trains and customer service in the West Midlands ensuring a consistently high level of presentation, maintenance and passenger experience;
- The transfer of Wolverhampton station from in the InterCity West Coast franchise to the West Midlands franchise to facilitate the creation of a world class interchange; and
- A requirement on the franchisee to enhance bus rail interchange at six named stations including Cradley Heath, and to work with the West Midlands Bus Alliance to improve bus and rail connections.



**Figure 1** Example of how the new West Midlands Railway brand and identity may look on a train

The base specification brings about welcome enhancements to the status quo. However, bidders are incentivised through the procurement scoring mechanism to exceed the base requirements, so it is reasonable to anticipate that further benefits will be contractualised and delivered.

The creation of a business unit dedicated to the West Midlands is very welcome and allows a distinct focus by WMR and the operator on this market. WMR interest in the West Midlands franchise extends beyond the West Midlands Business Unit, however. The West Coast Separable Business Unit operates key local services on the Birmingham – Coventry – Northampton and Birmingham – Wolverhampton – Stafford corridors which are of fundamental importance to the West Midlands travel to work area. As such through our relationship with the DfT, WMR will be seeking to ensure that the delivery specification for these services meets our franchise objectives.

## **Evaluation and Franchise Award**

Following the issuing of the ITT to shortlisted bidders at end of August 2016, a three month period commenced for bidders to prepare their bids, which were subsequently submitted at the end of November.

The evaluation period commenced immediately following receipt of bids, and WMR supported this activity by providing several expert evaluators. Evaluation and detailed contractualisation will continue during spring 2017 with WMR observation and involvement, in advance of contract award which is expected in June.

## **Collaboration Agreement**

The Collaboration Agreement is the primary contractual relationship between WMR and DfT. It will govern WMR involvement in the management of the West Midlands franchise and how other franchises competitions can be influenced. The new Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, indicated a change of approach to the relationship with WMR, not favouring the principle of working towards longer-term full devolution that the Collaboration Agreement had been founded on. He did, however, fully support the partnership between WMR and DfT. As such, the Collaboration Agreement has been redrafted, and subject to WMR Partner Authority approval, is expected to be signed in spring 2017.

The Collaboration Agreement sets out how WMR and DfT will work together to oversee the management of West Midlands local services, and in particular includes:

- The role for WMR during the period until the creation of the WMSBU;
- The role for WMR following the creation of the WMSBU and how the franchise will be jointly managed;
- Arrangements for how WMR will be funded; and
- The creation of a joint Strategic Board.

It is important to recognise that passenger rail services in the West Midlands are operated by a number of franchises (not just the West Midlands franchise), together forming a network of services.

As such, it is important to WMR that the Collaboration Agreement should reflect WMR aspirations to be able to meaningfully influence other franchises that operate in the region to ensure that a coherent and integrated approach can be taken, thus maximising the benefits of local involvement for the West Midlands economy and for passengers.

The West Midlands franchise is being procured by the DfT, and as such the financial and contractual risk, where not passed to the operator, is held by government. Any change to this risk profile will require approval by the Members of WMR Limited by Special Resolution.

### **Rail Investment Strategy**

WMR are currently undertaking a full review and revision of the rail strategy for the West Midlands, currently known as 'A Rail Vision for the West Midlands' (created in 2014). The new version will be a substantial re-write, taking account of changes to rail franchises, Midlands Connect and HS2. Following thorough stakeholder engagement, a draft is expected in summer 2017.

### **Stations Alliance**

Working together with Network Rail, WMR are developing an innovative 'Stations Alliance' which, together with the West Midlands franchise operator, is hoped to bring about substantial improvements to rail stations in the West Midlands.

The proposals take account of the current structure for managing stations in the UK, which has responsibilities for operation, maintenance and renewal split between the operator and Network Rail, and brings in WMR, as a local body, to drive forward a long-term vision. It is this 'vision' that is missing from the current structure. Funded by Black Country and Stoke & Staffordshire LEPs and WMR, work is already underway to develop some indicative Master Plans for two trial routes – the Stour Valley Line from Birmingham to Wolverhampton (exclusive), and Chase Line stations north of Walsall. Options for funding the works will also be considered as part of the commission, which is due to be completed in late spring 2017.

## **6. Metro**

### **Birmingham City Centre Extension**

Following the successful launch of the service to Bull Street in December 2015 the Metro service to Corporation Street and Grand Central opened on 30th May 2016. Snagging and finishing works have continued over the rest of the year and good progress has been made with Birmingham City Council and Amey ahead of planned handover of the street works to Birmingham in 2017.

The extension has proved popular with passengers with strong monthly year on year growth between June and December and with particularly strong increases in demand on Saturday's and Sundays. Coupled with the introduction of automatic passenger counting in June, overall growth of approx. 40% has been seen this year based on preliminary results that indicate ridership exceeded 6m passengers.

During 2016 the £1 short hop fare was introduced between Birmingham city centre and the Jewellery Quarter and the ability to pay by debit / credit card was rolled out on all Metro services. Since their introduction short hop trips have grown to make up 4.1% of trips.

### **Midland Metro Alliance**

In 2015 TfWM set out to establish a new model for the delivery of the substantial expansion of the Metro Network set out in Movement for Growth. The model chosen was a "Pure Alliance" that brings together the Owner, Design and Construction teams with shared objectives to deliver the programme in a manner where risk and opportunities are shared between the parties. After an extensive and innovative procurement exercise the Programme Alliance Agreement was signed in June 2016 between the WMCA, a design consortium of Egis, Pell Frischmann and Tony Gee and Colas Rail who are supported by Colas Ltd, Thomas Vale, Barhale and Auctus.

The Alliance moved in to temporary accommodation in July and has since been mobilising people, resources and processes to commence works on site in 2017.

## **Wolverhampton City Centre Extension**

Forming an integral part of the Wolverhampton Interchange Programme, the Wolverhampton City Centre Extension gained powers under the Transport and Works Act in the summer of 2016. Following consultation with local stakeholders the Midland Metro Alliance commenced utility diversion and enabling works in the latter part of the year and will be finalising the budget and implementation plans for the extension ready for the main construction works to commence in the summer of 2017, on programme for a 2019 opening.

## **Centenary Square Extension**

Although powers were originally granted in 2005, additional powers were sought to take account of changes to the alignment to reflect changes in the plans for the surrounding area. The additional Transport and Works Order was granted in the late spring of 2016 and work has progressed to finalise the design and to ensure that the Metro is aligned with the aspirations of Birmingham City Council for the management of traffic in the Paradise Circus / Broad Street area. Utility diversions for the extension were approximately 90% complete by the end of the year and on target to be complete ahead of the planned start of the main works in the summer of 2017 with opening to the public in 2019/20.

## **Edgbaston Extension**

The Midland Metro Alliance is now firming up the design and working with TfWM and stakeholders to finalise the design principles sufficient to permit the Final Business Case to be submitted to the WMCA and DfT in spring 2017. Negotiations have progressed with landowners whilst a draft Transport and Works Order has been prepared for submission in 2017 if the commercial land acquisition negotiations fail. Opportunities to reduce the overall cost of utility works by combining these with the works for Centenary Square were identified and progressed during the year and the project remains on target to open in 2021/2.

## **Birmingham Eastside Extension**

Following extensive consultation with stakeholders the project achieved a significant milestone in 2016 with the approval by the WMCA Board of the plans for acquiring powers to construct the line and subsequent submission of a draft Transport and Works Order application to government in October.

Consultation and negotiation has continued with stakeholders and objectors to the scheme ahead of a public inquiry which is expected to be called in September 2017. The extension remains on target to open in 2022/3

### **Wednesbury to Brierley Hill**

Originally planned and with powers to construct the line obtained in 2005 this extension is now included within the devo deal allowing work to resume in 2016. An update on the business case was submitted to DfT in the autumn and a refresh of the business case is nearing completion whilst the Midland Metro Alliance has drawn up its plans to commence site clearance and survey works in January 2017. The Alliance is now developing its plans for implementation of the scheme on or before the target date of 2023.

### **East Birmingham & Solihull**

Good progress has been made on this, the second of the Devolution Deal schemes. An initial outline business case has been prepared and submitted to DfT in accordance with the Devolution Deal commitments. The Alliance is continuing to develop the proposals for the scheme with a view to opening the line in 2026.

### **Catenary Free Trams**

In February 2016, an option was exercised under the Tram Supply Agreement with CAF to fit out the Urbos 3 trams with traction batteries that will allow the trams to be operated wirelessly, initially on the Centenary Square and Wolverhampton Extension and subsequently across the network. Design work has progressed well with the first tram shipped to Spain for prototype fit out and testing in January 2017 and the rest of the fleet being fitted out at Wednesbury from January 2018.

### **Tram Performance**

The last of the new Urbos 3 trams has been accepted from CAF and the fleet reliability tests are progressing well and are expected to be completed in 2017.



## **Operations**

The operation by National Express has generally been good with improvements being seen over the course of the year in tram performance, maintenance and driver availability. Nevertheless challenges have persisted and improvement plans are being developed with National Express to address tram and tram driver availability and to action issues arising from tram stop security and customer satisfaction surveys.

The existing concession with Altram will expire in 2018 and work started in the summer of 2016 to develop the strategy for future operation of the network with strong interest being received from the market in the future operation and maintenance of Metro. Work has progressed throughout the year with the aim of being ready to prequalify potential bidders in the summer of 2017.

### **7. Smart Network, Smarter Choices**

The Local Sustainable Transport Fund 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.

A 'legacy' programme has continued during 2016/17, providing support to key education and employment sites engaged during the 2012-16 period, along with travel support for the unemployed and a range of cycling offers to increase active travel.

### **WorkWise**

Between 1st April 2016 and 31st January 2017, over 4,000 unemployed jobseekers (409 in Sandwell) have been supported with finding, starting and staying in work with free ticketing for interviews and job starts. The new WorkWise online application form continues to be successful, enabling customers to apply for job start tickets via the Network West Midlands website, without the need to attend Jobcentre Plus or a provider.

The new WorkWise Travel Training Curriculum resource (for use by training providers teaching basic literacy, ICT and numeracy skills to unemployed adults) is currently being updated following positive feedback. The final version will be launched shortly and made freely available online to providers supporting unemployed adults into jobs.

## **Employers**

This year we have continued to support 91 businesses and staff at eight universities who signed up to the SNSC programme during 2012-16. Of these, 12 sites are in Sandwell including nPower, the West Bromwich Building Society, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust (Sandwell General Hospital), Doosan Babcock, Trident Reach, The Children's Charity and Warburtons.

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. Support delivered to employees includes cycle training, Dr Bike maintenance courses, Top Cycle Location accreditation, Try Before You Buy ticketing offers, journey planning and promotional events.

End of year staff travel surveys have now commenced, with a survey event held at Sandwell General Hospital in January 2017.

## **Education**

This year we have continued to support 66 education sites who signed up to the SNSC programme during 2012-16. Of these, 13 sites are in Sandwell, including Wood Green Academy, RSA Academy, The Phoenix Collegiate, Sandwell Academy, Health Futures UTC, Sandwell College and Stuart Bathurst.

Students and staff at these sites benefit from the same tailored Travel Support package as employers. Support delivered to students and staff also includes participation in the Travel Academy, Class Pass for school trips and a range of tailored workshops and events to promote all modes of sustainable travel, safer travel, journey planning support and ticketing information.

Schools are also encouraged to sign up to Modeshift STARS, a national schools awards scheme to recognise schools that have demonstrated excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable travel. The scheme encourages schools across the country to increase levels of sustainable and active travel in order to improve the health and well-being of children and young people.

In 2016 two of the SNSC engaged Sandwell schools, RSA Academy and Phoenix Collegiate, achieved their Bronze Modeshift STARS accreditation.

## **Cycling**

From April 2016 to 31 December 2016, 3070 participants had benefitted from SNSC cycling support (including cycle training, maintenance training, route planning, and journey accompaniment) across the West Midlands, including 312 Sandwell residents

### **Love Your Bike sessions**

Since April 2016 a total of five Love your Bike sessions have taken place in Sandwell including two at Cradley Heath Interchange, one at Wednesbury Parkway Metro stop and two at Rowley Regis railway station. These award winning sessions enable commuters to benefit from a free bike safety check, the opportunity to buy a discounted D-lock (cycle lock) to help reduce cycle crime, plus advice on free cycle training and cycle maintenance sessions in their local area.

### **Top Cycling and Walking Locations**

SNSC Top Locations are organisations that have proven their ongoing commitment to sustainable travel. As part of the Travel Support Package, the Active Travel Team carry out assessments against a range of walking and cycling criteria and award either bronze, silver or gold Top Location status. In 2016 a further tier was introduced, awarding those organisations who have shown an exceptional commitment towards both cycling and walking with a Platinum Award. In Sandwell 9 organisations hold Top Location status including Sandwell Council who were awarded Bronze Top Walking Location in July 2016 and City Hospital who are now a Platinum Top Active Travel Location.

### **Managing Short Trips Infrastructure improvements**

Managing Short Trips (MST) is a £6.44m programme of infrastructure schemes that is delivering 36km of cycleway improvements to canal towpaths in the Black Country together with associated physical highway improvements, such as footway widening, improved crossing facilities and tactile paving. These improvements are all designed to create cycle friendly corridors between existing cycle routes, residential areas and local centres.

MST delivered c.12km of improved cycle ways in 2015/16 and is on schedule to deliver the remaining 24km in 2016/17.

When the works are complete in spring 2017, the Birmingham Canal route from Galton Bridge into central Birmingham will be complete, along with an improved all weather surface on the Tame Valley and Rushall canals between Old Walsall Road (B4124) and Hill Farm Bridge.

The LSTF funded Smart Network, Smarter Choices programme ends on 31.3.17. Transition and legacy plans are now being implemented for sustainable travel activities beyond April 2017.

## **8. Safety and Security**

The Safer Travel Partnership is responsible for delivering the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioners Local Transport Policing Plan. The key objectives of this plan for 2016/17 continue to be to reduce crime and improve passenger perception of personal safety. To this end, crime on the region's bus network has continued to reduce. The year to date figure for April 2016 to January 2017 shows a further overall reduction of 2%. Similarly the trend over the last eight years has been one of reducing crime on the Sandwell's buses. Over this period the Borough's network has accounted for only 9% of the total recorded crime across the region.

Whilst figures specific to Sandwell are not available, regionally passenger perception with personal safety has shown a collective improvement of 27% at bus stop and on-board services over the last five years.

Notwithstanding this positive picture it is known the key areas where crimes occur are the arterial corridors out of Birmingham City Centre, with services that are heavily populated. One such route is the Soho road going through Sandwell and covering West Bromwich bus station

Key tactics used within Sandwell include the following:

- Safer Travel Police Team – The team continue to provide regular patrols and targeted operations within the borough. West Bromwich Bus Station has been a key location of focus in the last 12 months, with both overt and covert patrols targeting alcohol related incidents and smoking. In addition to this the 74, 79 and number 4 bus routes have received close attention.
- CCTV – CCTV has been upgraded at West Bromwich Bus Station to a state of the art HD IP system. This has also been carried out

along the whole of Metro Route 1. A similar upgrade has been planned for Wednesbury Bus Station.

- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Unit – This financial year, the Safer Travel Restorative Justice (RJ) Programme has been rolled out across the region, with sessions carried out at Wednesbury Bus Station. The RJ programme has now engaged with over 50 young people, leading to a re-offending rate of just 2% versus a national average for young people of around 30%.

Wednesbury Bus Station has also joined Cradley Heath as two of the region's Bus Stations to have been awarded Safer Bus Station Accreditation status (the first awards of their kind in the country). The accreditation looks at a number of areas of safety including CCTV, lighting, help points, operational management, cleanliness, crime and passenger perception.

## **9. Swift Smart ticketing**

Swift is now the largest Smart ticketing scheme outside of London with over 130,000 card holders making more than c.3m journeys per month.

Swift Pay-as-you-go is becoming increasingly popular with over 35,000 customers now benefiting from discounts of 10p off single tickets and 20p off day tickets. These customers no longer need to find the right change before they travel and any money they have on their Swift card is protected should they lose it.

The Metro is the most popular mode for Swift with 21% of all journeys undertaken using a Swift card.

Swift is also now available on the train with smart ticket gates at Birmingham New Street, Moor Street and Snow Hill, University, Five Ways, Birmingham International and Coventry.

We have now issued a Swift card to c.4,000 customers who purchase the nNetwork direct debit ticket and will shortly be issuing Swift cards to c.12,000 nTrain direct debit customers.

We have recently launched a whole range of new tickets including nBus off-peak and nBus student which are proving popular with customers.

Having delivered the majority of the adult ticket product range onto the Swift platform, we are now focusing on the delivery of the child range of tickets which we plan to introduce in time for the 2017/18 Academic Year. To support this, we have worked in partnership with Green Bus to move their child season ticket range onto Swift, with cards already issued to over 1,000 of their child customers.

We are also exploring opportunities to deliver contactless payment and “best value” capping, and are currently developing a technology roadmap, business case and delivery plan. Bus operators, through the Bus Alliance, have committed to work with us to deliver contactless payment and “best value” capping and as part of this. National Express and Diamond have awarded contracts to INIT and Ticketer respectively to deliver new ticket machines with the capability to support this objective. Midland Metro have already deployed contactless payment handheld devices to collect fares on the tram – this has proven really popular with c.19% of all tickets issued on the tram now paid for using a contactless bank card.

## **10. Customer Services**

### **Concessionary Passes**

Further work has been undertaken to make the renewal arrangements for Older Persons Concessionary Pass holders in Sandwell and the wider West Midlands area more efficient. Customers are initially being invited to renew through an email communication and via an online portal. The trial arrangements are in the early stages of being tested and represent a more cost effective way of renewing a Concessionary Pass.

### **Bus Stations**

At Cradley Heath Interchange we have been working with Intu – the owner of the nearby Merry Hill Shopping Centre to promote services in the area. We have also been working with Sandwell MBC to investigate highway measures on Forge Lane, outside the Interchange, to prevent motorists parking on the highway preventing safe access and egress to the site.

Work has begun at Merry Hill bus station to improve this facility and bring the standard up to a similar standard as Cradley Heath. This will improve the customer offer in the area and support the promotion of multi modal transport and interchange at Cradley Heath.

We are currently investigating carrying out a refurbishment project of the public toilets at West Bromwich to improve the customer experience for all users. This is currently planned to be delivered in 2017/18.

In November 2016 we worked with Sandwell MBC to introduce traffic enforcement procedures in New Street, West Bromwich adjacent to the bus station. This was introduced due to the amount of traffic that built up in the area which had major negative impacts on the operation of the bus station causing substantial delays to passengers' journeys. This introduction has seen positive results, significantly reducing traffic build up in the area.

### **Customer engagement**

The 'Your Public Transport Matters' events aimed at actively engaging with members of the public regarding their transport queries and suggestions have been ongoing over the last six months across the region.

Bus Passenger Champion events across the West Midlands network have also continued throughout the year. Quarterly meetings take place with Champions (volunteers who share their feedback and audit public transport services and facilities), transport operators and Councillors. A number of meetings have been held including locations in the Black Country – notably Sandwell Council House.

The TfWM rail team has also been attending regular Meet the Manager events with London Midland at railway stations and meeting with rail user groups across the area.

## Appendix 1 - Measuring Success

To measure success, understanding how many people are accessing the network and modal share along with measures of customer satisfaction are good indicators of if we are getting it right. In addition ensuring the services are reliable and punctual is an important factor in retaining and growing patronage.

The summary table below sets out the latest performance for the West Midlands (performance as of January 2017), along with the targets. 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).

	Performance		
	Bus	Rail	Metro
Patronage	261.5m	54.7m	5.8m
Reliability	95%	99%	97%
Reliability Target	97%	98%	99.7%
Punctuality	85%	81%	N/A
Punctuality Target	81.7%	80%	N/A
Customer Satisfaction	85%	90%	81%

### Patronage

#### Rail

Analysis of long-term patronage trends shows that demand for rail travel continues to increase, with latest figures (rolling patronage to December '16) showing 54.7 million trips were made compared with 53.3 million at the same stage in 2016 and only 30.9 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 annual (April '15 to March '16) rail patronage of 53.7 million is the highest rail patronage the West Midlands has seen. TfWM 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 as outlined in the rail development and West Midlands Rail sections of this report.

## **Bus**

Bus Patronage over the past 12 months has declined each month. The latest annual bus patronage is 261.5 million (as of December '16). Compared with the previous 12 months there has been a 2.9% decline in patronage.

The introduction of initiatives within Transforming Bus Travel (TBT) has helped slow the decline in bus patronage with the focus on modifying the network to help better meet current travel demands. In the areas where Network Reviews were conducted, 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 for the same time period. Year 3 results showed a decline in Sandwell slightly less to that of the whole West Midlands with the most recent patronage data in Sandwell showing a 1.5% decline compared to a 3% decrease in West Midlands patronage overall.

Work is ongoing through the Bus Alliance detailed in section 1 of this report with a focus on investing in and delivering an improving, sustainable and growing bus network.

## **Metro**

Metro patronage currently stands at 5.8 million to January '18 in comparison to 4.5 million the previous year. A major barrier to patronage growth was the lack of capacity during periods of peak demand. The Birmingham City Centre Extension and fleet replacement project has seen patronage jump to unprecedented levels on a consistent basis with weekly patronage over the 100,000 mark.

## **Ring & Ride**

Trips made by Ring & Ride decreased significantly across the Metropolitan area - by 15.7% from 2014/2015 to 2015/16. This follows on from a fall of 21.4% in the previous year. The current annual patronage figure (as of November '16) stands at 0.85 million.

Trips made by registered users in Sandwell fell by 14.6% annually from 2014/15 to 2015/16 with a decrease of 92.4% from 2008/09 to 2015/16. The number of registered users in the borough has also fallen, by 10% from 2014/15 to 2015/16 and by 75% from 2008/09 to 2015/16.