

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

17 October 2017

Transport for West Midlands

Report by Councillor Roger Horton

Overview of Transport for West Midlands Activities

1. Strategic Update

2026 Delivery for Transport

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) approved the 2026 Delivery Plan for Transport on 08 September 2017. The plan sets out a high level programme of capital schemes is the first delivery plan of our long term strategy.

TfWM, working with the constituent authorities, has set out a transport investment plans based on two overarching principles

- Ensuring all parts of the West Midlands are “plugged-in” to the two High Speed Rail Stations in the West Midlands, and the significant growth and development that is already happening at their locations.
- Steering transport investment into priority corridors for new jobs and homes, providing a joined up land use/transport planning approach to support the aims of the Combined Authority’s Strategic Economic Plan.

Alongside the larger schemes in this programme there will be network wide improvements across the West Midlands. These will be made up of smaller scale minor works and maintenance measures.

The plan reflects the Mayor’s manifesto commitments and TfWM will work to identify additional funding to bring forward longer term schemes in its programme.

- West Midlands Key Route Network

The KRN is a 592km network of key highways across the West Midlands region, this represents approximately 7% of the non-trunk road network in the West Midlands and carries approximately 50% of all car, public transport and freight journeys.

The network serves the main strategic demand flows of people, goods and services across the metropolitan area, whilst also serving large local traffic flows and providing connections to the national Strategic Road Network.

The day to day operations of the network remain under the control of the West Midlands constituent authorities. Strategic oversight and co-ordination is managed by TfWM on behalf of the Mayor of the West Midlands. In order to ensure local needs and issues are reflected the Network has been split into 23 routes to aide management and future investment decisions.

The WMCA Functions and Amendment Order 2017 sets out four areas of concurrent powers. Through the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding for each area, roles and responsibilities will be defined in respect of the following:

- Permit Schemes for street works on the KRN
- Enforcement of bus lane contraventions
- Road safety
- Air quality

M5 Oldbury Viaduct works

TfWM are working with Highways England and Sandwell MBC regarding the M5 Oldbury Viaduct maintenance works.

Highway's England main repair works on the M5 between junctions 1 and 2 and the associated traffic management measures have been ongoing since July 2017. On this stretch of motorway the usual three lanes in each direction is reduced to two lanes in each direction and there is a 30mph speed limit in place. As a result of this traffic management the capacity on this stretch of motorway is considerably reduced.

With schools re-opening in early September, after the summer break, it is anticipated the volume of traffic will be at its highest level since the full traffic management was implemented. This is anticipated to cause delays on the motorway and the surrounding local road network as users seek alternative routes, especially at peak times.

The early impact of the traffic management is currently been collated and analysed.

A co-ordinated approach to communications between stakeholders has taken place to make the public aware of the works and advise them to plan ahead, allow extra time for travel and where possible use public transport to carry out local journeys.

2. Bus Network

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 NDP and associated actions plan will set deliverables for the partners to make this happen.

TfWM officers have recently liaised with Sandwell MBC officers to propose a timeline of delivery for the NDP's. It is anticipated that the work to develop the Sandwell NDP will commence in September 2018. This will be an area based review which will identify characteristics and improvements but also include a review of cross-boundary services and growth.

3. Rail Investment & Partnerships

TfWM has been actively developing new partnership agreements with both Chiltern Railways and Virgin Trains – these will be considered at the November Transport Delivery Committee meeting.

West Midlands Franchise Competition

On 10 August it was announced that West Midlands Trains (a consortium of Abellio with JR East and Mitsui) has been successful in their bid to operate the new West Midlands Rail Franchise. This will commence on 10 December 2017 and operate to March 2026. Within the West Midlands area, rail services will be branded as “West Midlands Railway”.

The new rail franchise will deliver significant benefits for Sandwell including:

- New timetable from December 2018 featuring new cross-Birmingham services and new links to London (e.g. from Tame Bridge Parkway);
- Significant capacity uplift from May 2021 including new diesel and electric trains being introduced on the network; and
- Significant improvement in Sunday services from May 2021 bring normal weekday frequencies to most stations.

TfWM and WMR are working closely with WMT over the mobilisation of the franchise and full details of the planned improvements will be advised when known.

Stations Alliance

In conjunction with West Midlands Trains and Network Rail, WMR and TfWM are involved in an innovative Stations Alliance which is designed to support the delivery of station improvements across the network. The Birmingham to Wolverhampton line has been selected as a pilot line (alongside the Chase Line) and consultants are currently working on options to improve stations on the route.

Park and Ride

TfWM continues to develop schemes to expand Park and Ride and is reviewing its approach to delivering Park and Ride across the network. All Park and Ride sites for stations in Sandwell are currently full (with the exception of Bescot Stadium) – the priority will be to deliver improvements at Sandwell & Dudley and Tame Bridge Parkway stations, although options for other stations in the borough will be kept under review.

Christmas Engineering Work

Major engineering work is occurring over the Christmas and New Year period as the next phases of the Birmingham New Street resignalling project are delivered. This project see the replacement of

50-year old equipment with new equipment controlled by the West Midlands Signalling Control Centre at Saltley, alongside the remodelling of junctions at Soho.

This work will mean that the Birmingham to Wolverhampton line is closed from Christmas Eve through to Tuesday 2 January with local passengers using a replacement bus service. A very limited train service using the diversionary route via Bescot will continue to operate between Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

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.

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: Work has been progressing the seven Sprint Routes across the Metropolitan Area with the work being undertaken by TfWM and Local Authorities. During the period, the following activity has been undertaken:

- Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnerships approval of the Sprint Hagley Road Phase 1 route business case;
- Completion of initial feasibility studies for a number of routes to enable an assessment of scheme viability;
- Development of Strategic Outline Business Cases (SOBC's) in line with the WMCA's Assurance Framework for viable schemes;
- Progression of A45 to preliminary design; and
- Setting of route specific project teams to take forward development of schemes to Outline Business Case (OBC).

Rail: Work has been progressing on taking forward the rail elements with HS2 Connectivity Package with the work being undertaken by TfWM, Local Authorities, Network Rail and West Midlands Rail. During the period, the following activity has been undertaken:

- Commencement of SOBC work for the Midlands Rail Hub following the award of £5m development funding announced in the 2016 Autumn Statement;

- Feasibility studies undertaken for potential new stations on Camp Hill Line, Walsall to Wolverhampton Line and Stourbridge to Round Oak; and
- Strategic Outline Business Cases being developed for potential new stations in line with the WMCA's Assurance Framework.

Metro: Work is progressing on all six extension projects being undertaken by the Midland Metro Alliance (MMA). During the period, the following activity has been undertaken:

- East Birmingham to North Solihull Metro - Further scheme development is ongoing towards Transport & Works Act (TWA) Order submission in 2018;
- Eastside Extension - TWA application submitted in October 2016 and public enquiry for project is scheduled for Autumn 2017, a funding agreement for the scheme was confirmed in September 2017;
- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension - Business case was submitted to government in June 2017; and
- Edgbaston Extension – in August 2017, the government announced almost £60m of funding for the extension.

Alongside this, work continues on all projects and major milestones were achieved as two projects moved from planning and into construction phases in summer 2017.

5. Metro Operations

Midland Metro Alliance

The MMA moved into permanent offices in summer 2017 and continue to work on six extension projects. An update on relevant projects follows below:

Bilston Road Track Replacement Programme

In June 2017, the MMA commenced its maintenance project along the Bilston Road in Wolverhampton which sees the MMA replacing tram track along the A41 between The Royal and Priestfield tram stops. Work over the past three months has been progressing excellently and the project is on schedule to be finished on time by Christmas 2017.

During the project the MMA has been working in partnership with Transport for West Midlands and National Express Midland Metro to ensure that customers are informed of the alternative journeys they will have to take to complete their trips in and out of Wolverhampton. In addition, the MMA continues to provide frequent updates on its website for road users on traffic diversion routes in and out of the city.

The MMA has also been supporting the retailers along this particular stretch of the A41 to help advertise that their businesses are open as usual. The MMA provides marketing support (including additional signage, magazine advertisements and bespoke digital and social media marketing training to affected retailers). This will continue throughout the remainder of the project and after completion.

Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension

The Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension scheme is of critical importance to the Black Country and to the wider WMCA area.

The line presents a tremendous economic opportunity for the Black Country, which is demonstrated in the strength of the attached business case and the benefit to cost ratio of 2.5:1. The scheme unlocks employment, education, health and tourism opportunities along the 11km corridor.

The submission of the outline business case to extend Midland Metro from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill is the first phase of delivering a new golden era for trains and the metro in the West Midlands.

Whilst the MMA has the powers to design and build this route, powers to acquire land have lapsed from the previous Transport and Works Act order in 2005. As such, a company named TerraQuest have been appointed by the MMA to write to landowners in the area whose land there is an interest in.

The MMA has also written to the leaders and ward councillors of Sandwell and Dudley Authorities regarding the next steps in the delivery of the project for any enquires that they may receive from their constituents.

As the autumn progresses, members of the public may start to see more preparatory works too, including vegetation clearance (which initially commenced in the summer) and structural surveys of key bridges along the route. Due to this activity, an updated leaflet has

been created by the MMA, in partnership with the communications teams at Sandwell and Dudley Councils, which has been sent to 11,000 residents and businesses along the proposed route.

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.

On 01 October 2018 the Private Finance Initiative Concession for the construction, operation and maintenance of Midland Metro Line 1 will expire. This provides TfWM with an opportunity to radically adjust the way in which services are delivered and the needs of passengers and the wider community served by Metro are met.

At its meeting on 17 March 2017, the WMCA Board determined that the rights and obligations to operate and maintain Metro, granted under the 1989 Midland Metro Act will be transferred into a subsidiary company, Midland Metro Limited with existing Metro staff transferring into the subsidiary company under the TUPE Regulations. This change is to ensure its continued growth and success.

6. Sustainable Travel

WorkWise

Between 1st April 2017 and 30th June 2017, over 700 unemployed jobseekers have been supported with finding, starting and staying in work with free ticketing for job starts. An enhanced offer that provides discounted travel support for the first three months of new employment is launching in October 2017.

Smarter Choices

This year we have continued to support businesses and staff at universities. 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.

The end of year staff travel surveys have been completed and new Travel Action Plans produced.

This year we have continued to support education sites. 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. RSA Academy have achieved Bronze and Phoenix Collegiate have achieved silver Modeshift STARS accreditation.

Smarter Choices activities are now focused within areas facing disruption as part of large developments. We are currently working with sites in the Oldbury area who are effected by the M5 viaduct works.

Cycling

From April 2016 to March 2017, 3401 participants had benefitted from cycling provision including cycle training, maintenance training, route planning, and journey accompaniment, across the West Midlands, including 335 Sandwell residents.

Managing Short Trips Infrastructure improvements

Managing Short Trips is a £6.44m programme of infrastructure schemes that is delivering 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.

The first tranche of works are now complete and include the Birmingham Canal route from Galton Bridge into central Birmingham, along with an improved all weather surface on the Tame Valley and Rushall canals between Old Walsall Road (B4124) and Hill Farm Bridge.

A second tranche of work along the canal tow path has been funded and there will be further investment of £4.2m to improve the towpath between Wolverhampton and Birmingham. The work will begin in Sandwell between Smethwick Galton Bridge and Sandwell and Dudley Stations.

Bikeshare

TfWM, on behalf of the 7 constituent Local Authorities are in the process of delivering a bikeshare scheme for the region, which would enable customers to benefit from a consistent bikeshare scheme across the region. The scheme will look to deliver around 3000-5000 docked bikes for the region including the Black Country at key interchanges, trip attractors and other such locations. It is proposed access will be by Swift card. Delivery is expected from spring 2018 with an operator procured by January 2018.

Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)

TfWM's YEI Team are working closely with Black Country Impact the ESF/YEI funded project to support young people with their travel support. Contracts are being signed and the YEI online system is ready to be used by Sandwell MBC in due course.

7. 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 2017/18 continue to be to reduce crime and improve passenger perception of personal safety.

Crime on the bus network continued its downward trend, reducing by a further 2%, meaning that bus crime has fallen by nearly 70% in the last decade. Reductions in crime were seen across the whole region and across most crime types. This and other interventions has also led to a significant improvement in passenger perception, with Transport Focus showing passengers feel 16% and 11% safer at stop and on bus respectively. The directed and dedicated work of the Anti-Social Behaviour team also helped reduce concerns with ASB from 18% to just 8%.

CCTV has been upgraded to state of the art High Definition at West Bromwich and Wednesbury stations. These join Cradley Heath, and Bearwood which have already been upgraded. At Park and Ride Sites, TfWM has also upgraded Rowley Regis, with a programme to upgrade many more. A programme of works has also been put in place which will see the upgrade of a number of rail station platform systems too.

Wednesbury, Cradley Heath and Bearwood have all been independently assessed and achieved the National Safer Bus Station Award. Cradley Heath and Coventry were the first in the country. The remaining bus stations are planned later in 2017.

The TfWM Control Centre received its annual external and independent audit in December 2016.

Appendix 1 – Measuring Success

Success is measured through the continual monitoring and evaluation of schemes and programmes to ensure they are delivering against the overall strategic objectives. Monitoring ensures we understand changes of the performance of the transport system arising from schemes, for example the reliability of public transport, modal usage and customer satisfaction.

- Headline Measures

	Performance		
	Patronage	Punctuality	Satisfaction
Bus	258m	85%	87%
Rail	55m	88%	85%
Metro	8m	100%	92%

- Rail

Rail Patronage continues to see growth, with patronage at 55m compared to 54m the same period last year. This trend is reflected across the UK with some periods of decline followed by continued growth. Growth continues to be central to TfWM/WMR vision in developing local rail services to improve rail infrastructure and services and meeting the growing demand.

Rail Punctuality (trains arriving not more than 5 minutes late) has been improving since 2013/14. The latest punctuality is 88%.

Satisfaction with rail services has fluctuated between 81% to 87% since Spring 2012. Most recent surveys shows satisfaction at 85% (Autumn 16 survey) and 87% (Spring 16 survey).

- Metro

Metro continues to grow with 7.8m passengers during the period August 2016 to July 2017. The Birmingham City Centre Extension and fleet replacement work has seen patronage significantly increase this year when patronage was 5.8m. Patronage on light rail/trams in England rose by 6.2% from 2015/16 to 2016/17 and rose on all systems outside London (bar Tyne & Wear Metro). Midlands Metro increased by 29% over this period.

Metro punctuality is consistently high between 99 to 100%.

Metro satisfaction remains consistent around 90 to 92%. 2015 saw decline to 81% influenced by network improvement works which started in October 2015 during survey fieldwork. In 2016, overall satisfaction stood at 92% in comparison to 93% for all light rail systems in both England and Scotland.

- Bus

Bus Patronage overall is seeing a decline, with Bus patronage at 257m during the period August 2016 to July 2017 compared with 262m the previous year. Bus has been declining 2% per annum for many years. However, there has been some peak growth on journeys to cities (especially with new buses). This is a similar trend in England.

Bus Punctuality has seen improvement, with an increase to 85% of surveyed buses departing one minute early and five minutes late up from 74% in 2012/13, and a steady increase since. The Bus Alliance targets major improvement in Punctuality.

Bus Satisfaction has seen a slight long-term increase in the last five years. Recent survey showed satisfaction at 87%.

- Ring and Ride

Patronage for Ring and Ride from May 2017 to July 2017 has continued to be steady overall, although with a very slight rise of 0.82% compared to the period May 2016 to July 2016. This equates to approximately 1750 more passenger journeys in the 3 month period and averages to approximately 580 additional passengers per month.

Patronage each month has fluctuated, with May 2017 seeing a rise of 1.82% over May 2016, June 2017 seeing a slight decrease of 0.19% over June 2016, and July 2017 seeing an increase of 0.87% over July 2016.