

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM)

March 2021

Overview

1. Covid-19 update

TfWM and partners have continued to contribute to the response and ongoing recovery of the region by maintaining an integrated transport network, which has in turn supported the wider economic recovery of the region by ensuring key workers can get to work.

Following the initial period of lockdown, Bus and Metro returned to full service. Rail services were increased proportionally, and some services saw the introduction of additional carriages, however the rail network has yet to recover to a full pre-Covid timetable.

Following the last update in September, TfWM managed the safe return of passengers onto the network following the reopening of educational establishments. The Travel Choices team contacted key schools, colleges and universities to embed support officers into local authorities' education teams. TfWM's Communications team issued a public campaign to inform and educate as well as producing an informative toolkit for all 1500 schools in 6 different languages, to ensure the dissemination of that information and advice could reach parents and young people across our diverse communities. The safe return of these passengers was closely monitored and supported by the Regional Transport Control Centre (RTCC), managed by TfWM.

Many of the initial interventions implemented at the start of the pandemic have naturally integrated to form part of our 'business as usual' work and the response to the pandemic has served to improve some elements of how we work as a transport authority. Prime examples of this has been the strengthening of relationships with our partners, the improved sharing of intelligence and information, as well as the level of and quality of useful data we now gather daily from across the network. This has been paramount in supporting our decision making and response to the network and demand.

The CV19 Transport Recovery Cell was created to agree a common approach, share information, provide support and most importantly work as a group to ensure activities were streamlined across the region, considering interdependencies and interfaces between all parties and areas. The cell continues to work together to plan for key milestones in the pandemic such as the return to schools and reopening of the economy, as well as responding to the ever-changing situation and elements such as the introduction/easing of restrictions. The cell makes joint key decisions, collates

information and responds to government as one consolidated group to help make processes smoother and the sharing of intelligence and experience has been key to its success.

Operational elements such as enhanced cleaning regimes continue across all modes of transport and infrastructure. Social distancing measures and the requirement to wear face coverings remain in place with exceptions on some dedicated school buses. Although TfWM have generally observed a high compliance of the use of face coverings, we continue to work closely with partners in the Safer Travel Team to encourage and enforce the use of face coverings and offer further support with taskforces being implemented at 'hotspots'.

TfWM's teams have worked hard to support Covid testing and vaccination sites. These sites have been mapped against the public transport and gritting routes and have been fully prepared to respond to any issues in order to keep these facilities accessible. This was particularly important during the recent snow and inclement weather.

The WMCA Health and Safety Team have reviewed all previously produced Covid-19 Secure Risk Assessments and task/activity-based risk assessments following the Government announcement regarding the introduction of national lockdown on 5th January 2021.

Covid testing for frontline transport workers was implemented in the early stages of the pandemic and recently all WMCA staff unable to work from home, and all operational staff at West Midlands Metro have access to lateral flow testing. These additional measures are helping to maintain safety across the transport network.

Following the announcement of the Covid Roadmap by Central Government on 22nd February the response of the Transport Cell will be premised on the lessons learned from the previous re-opening of education in September, maximising the benefits of what worked. The key transport risks highlighted are demand exceeding capacity on public transport, making social distancing difficult, and increased car-based congestion, particularly around schools and notably at peak travel periods.

The only difference is that there is no further funding to provide dedicated Travel Demand Management Officers working directly with schools to encourage active travel (walking and cycling) and to assist with reserving capacity on public transport whilst social distancing requirements remain. The Department for Education are continuing to provide grant support to fund additional PT capacity for schools and colleges, to enable a safe return.

From the 8th March, it is planned for the school bus network to return to 100% pre-Covid capacity. West Midlands Trains will reintroduce their school's services to support the peak travel periods. With the data that has been collected over the last 12 months, TfWM's Data Insight Team have mapped expected hotspot locations across the region where high numbers of passengers are expected at peak times. These will be some of the key focus areas for interventions.

The intention is to deploy higher levels of staff at the expected pinch points during peak times to monitor for issues with social distancing and feeding information back into the Transport Cell when this is the case, so that services can be tweaked accordingly. Some of the tools available include adding further capacity at locations

and bus journeys and splitting bus drop off and pick up points (something that worked effectively in September 2020). In addition to this, there will be targeted messaging around 'Hands, Face, Space'.

From the 8th March there is an expectation that congestion and road use will increase. Although the 'stay at home' rule will remain in place until the 29th March, it is still likely that people will travel more from the 8th, and data suggests that this may already have begun happening. In the previous re-opening of education there was additional congestion around schools resulting in delays and high numbers of complaints from residents living near schools, where roads have been quieter than usual for some time and where parents may now be choosing to drive children to school who previously may have arrived in a different way.

Some of the mitigation measures being taken forward to alleviate this is a strong communications campaign to encourage active travel, direct and real time reporting into the RTCC and pro-active engagement with schools by key stakeholders.

29th March – Outdoor Gatherings

Stage 1b, will see the re-introduction of outdoor gatherings and people being able to meet other households, subject to the rule of 6.

The main risk associated with transport for this stage is the removal of the 'stay at home' rule. This will likely lead to an increase of people travelling, leading to additional congestion on the road network and increased demand on public transport. Detailed planning for the 29th March will take place week commencing 8th March.

12th April (at the earliest) – Outdoor Hospitality and Non-Essential Retail

Stage 2 of the roadmap will have a potentially significant impact on the transport network. The re-opening of non-essential retail is likely to lead to increased travel to and from city and town centre locations. There have been numerous lessons learned from previous opening of retail, which has informed some initial plans, however at this early stage some key actions have either commenced or are planned.

Retail Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are being engaged with to ensure that the re-opening of non-essential retail is managed safely and that any queuing relating to this is managed appropriately. As with previous opening of retail, work will be carried out to identify locations where queuing of retail directly conflicts with waiting areas for public transport.

Where demand increases, the network will be reviewed on a daily basis and working with transport operators it is envisaged, that as previously happened, the network and capacity will be flexible to meet that demand. For example, previous mitigation saw the re-allocation of 'additional bus resource', in Metro frequency, modular increase in rail capacity etc.

17th May (at the earliest) – Hospitality

Stage 3 of the roadmap will see the re-opening of indoor hospitality and the commencement of some large events. Although planning is yet to be carried out in this case, there are a few things that have been highlighted within the Cell. The re-opening of hospitality whilst retaining the rule of 6 did have an impact on people travelling, but

in 2020 this wasn't significant, and the impact of the Night Time Economy did not have a serious impact on travel demand. However closer to the time and with further intelligence, the Transport Cell will be working with partners to plan for this.

21st June (at the earliest) – Remove all Legal Covid Restrictions

At this stage, the Government aim is to remove all restrictions. It is important to note that it is likely that some level of distancing will be expected, and the requirement of face coverings may still continue in some close environments. From a transport perspective there are a number of considerations beyond that of operational Covid matters at this stage which includes gaining an understanding of what extent 'working from home' has become 'normalised' in some sectors, and how this impacts on transport demand.

TfWM will continue to work with partners to ensure a consistent message is communicated to customers via all appropriate channels. This will of course follow the most recent Government guidance.

The communications team will rerun the schools campaign messaging that was utilised last year, resend the toolkit and encourage schools to once again take advantage of the resources made available to them.

There has once again been a young person's targeted face covering campaign as the schools returned. As before, this is to encourage those age groups to increase face covering compliance levels across all transport modes and locations.

2. 2022 Commonwealth Games

The transport planning for the Commonwealth Games is proceeding well with the development of an Integrated Transport Programme reporting into a multi-agency Joint Transport Group (JTG). The JTG includes officers from Sandwell as part of its governance, and work is progressing in ensuring a fully integrated transport response to the Games.

Strategic planning has moved into detailed planning and development on Games Family and Regional and Spectator Transport Operations is progressing well. Games Transport Plan and supporting legislation are developing in line with the objectives for successful transport delivery in 2022.

Work on the development of several key areas is underway with delivery partners across the region; Traffic Management, Bus, Spectator Transport and Venue Transport operations are all progressing to more detail in this stage of planning for the Games.

3. Bus Network

TfWM have worked with operators to maintain and restart the network. TfWM, through the West Midlands Bus Alliance, are continuing to support bus operators using local funding through a variety of measures and as directed by the DfT and Central Government;

- Maintaining English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) at a rate should Covid-19 have not happened.

- Maintaining tender payments at pre-covid rates.
- Providing operators with a payment holiday for use of bus stations and the provision of roadside information.
- (Using money provided by the DfT) made up the revenue shortfall on tendered services and met the costs of restarting the network following the shutdown.

Prior to the second national lockdown in November the bus network had recovered to over 60% of pre-Covid passenger levels with a short spike in the days leading to the then new restrictions. Service levels had increased to around 103% of pre-Covid provision, reflecting the need for additional capacity to enable social distancing. During the second period of lockdown patronage dropped to around 50% Monday to Friday and 40% on Saturday and Sunday demonstrating the fact that only essential travel was being undertaken along with that of school and college students.

From the 2nd December 2020, with the reintroduction of the area based tiered system service levels were maintained at over 100% of pre-Covid provision. During this period patronage again recovered to over 60% and peaked at 65% on the busiest shopping days ahead of Christmas.

On Tuesday 5th January 2021, England entered a third period of lockdown which was to be reviewed after a seven-week period. This lockdown initially included the closure of non-essential retail, schools and colleges. Critically during this period, construction and manufacturing were considered as key industries and continued to function.

As a result, compared to the first period of lockdown patronage levels remained higher with bus passenger numbers at approximately 30% of pre-Covid levels. The retained level of employment also meant that there were larger numbers of school children (of essential workers) continuing to travel. Bus services were reduced accordingly to approximately 93% given the reduction in demand and the majority of school services were retained to support the children of critical workers travelling to school.

From the 8th March, it is planned for the school bus network to return to 100% pre-Covid capacity.

- Ring and Ride

The West Midlands Ring and Ride service, operated by National Express Accessible Transport (NEAT), has been seriously impacted by the pandemic. In response to a much-reduced demand from registered customers, they continue to run a very limited service and have done so since the lockdown restrictions began in March 2020.

However, throughout the pandemic the service has been available to those who need it and has been playing an important part in helping keep key workers who have to travel, to do so safely. The NHS staff shuttle services have continued to run, and these have been very well used by NHS staff, carrying around 35,000 people since 1st April 2020. Whilst demand from registered customers remains at much lower levels than prior to the pandemic, NEAT continue to offer service between 8.30am and 3.30pm on Mondays to Saturdays. The evening and Sunday services remain suspended for the time being however this is under constant review.

On 15 January 2021, WMCA Board approved the transfer of Customer Contact activities associated with the delivery of Ring and Ride, from NEAT to TfWM. Subject

to completion of a full consultation process with staff, under the new operating arrangements, TfWM will be responsible, as now, for deciding the eligibility criteria for registering to use the Ring and Ride service. The service will be operated under a contractual arrangement. For the initial contract period the operation will be awarded to NEAT who will continue to fulfil all Ring and Ride journeys booked through the customer contact centre, which will be operated by TfWM.

Subject to consultation it is anticipated that the transfer will be completed during April 2021

- Vision for Bus

Following the approval of Sprint by the WMCA Board on the 14th February 2020, the Enhanced Partnership (EP) went to the WMCA Transport Delivery Committee (TDC) on 16th March 2020 for approval to consult. Public consultation ran for a 10-week period, closing on 13th September 2020.

The final EP Plan and Scheme received approval to be made by the WMCA TDC on 9th November 2020.

Approval to 'make' the EP Plan and Scheme has now been sought from all partners, including Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. It is expected that the EP Plan and associated Scheme can be made by May 2021, subject to securing the physical legal signatures to the documents which has proved difficult due to Covid-19 restrictions. This would be the first urban EP made in England using the new Bus Services Act 2017 powers.

4. Rail Network

- West Midlands Franchise

On 20th September 2020 government introduced Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs), to support the UK recovery and continue the fight against the pandemic.

These agreements, which for West Midlands Trains will last for one year, were designed to bring the rail franchising system to an end. These contain provisions and incentives to encourage an early start on key reforms, such as requiring operators to co-ordinate better with each other and driving down the railways' costs.

As part of these new incentives, the management fee that West Midlands Trains can earn has been reduced to 1.5% of the cost base of the franchise before the pandemic began. This is made up of a 0.5% fixed fee, and a 1% fee that can only be earned if certain KPIs are met. Prior to the ERMAs, the fixed fee element was the larger of the two, meaning operators did not have to work as hard to maintain a margin.

The ERMAs are designed to be replaced by new National Rail Contracts (NRCs). These will be an evolution of the ERMAs and - at least initially - cost and revenue risk will remain with the DfT. However, there will be mechanisms within the contracts that will allow for a degree of risk to be transferred back to the private sector at a later date if desired. West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) are part of the DfT team that is specifying and negotiating the NRC with West Midlands Trains.

The NRCs are expected to run for a term of up to five years. Their successor contracts will be based on the recommendations of the Williams Rail Review, which is due to be published on the spring. This review will form the basis of a government White Paper on the wider future of the railway.

- West Midlands Grand Railway Collaboration

One consequence of the dramatic fall in patronage and revenue has been a lessening in competition between train companies and a growing acknowledgement that they are more likely to succeed by working together. This has invigorated the West Midlands Grand Railway Collaboration (GRC). GRC is the rail's equivalent of the Bus Alliance and brings together all the companies responsible for the delivery of services to customers, uniting them around a set of common outcomes. It existed prior to the pandemic but has really come to the fore as the forum for the industry to re-imagine how it services the region post-Covid.

The GRC is developing ambitious plans to reform ticket retailing in the region, including the use of account-based ticketing, to offer customers confidence that they are always receiving the best value product for their journey. It is also working to improve the fragmented approach to customer service at the region's busiest station, Birmingham New Street. A third, and potentially transformational activity, is an operator-agnostic review of train timetables to see if there are better ways to use on track capacity to improve connectivity across the region.

- West Midlands Rail Programme

Enabling works have started at both University and Perry Barr, with good progress made on updating the construction schedules for both projects. The focus remains on ensuring that Perry Barr is fully complete for the Commonwealth Games, and that there is a fully functioning station at University in time for the Games.

New Stations Packages 1 and 2 have successfully passed a number of DfT/Network Rail governance steps to enable a drawdown of £59M of Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) funding from Government, following successfully gaining approval from DfT Infrastructure Board on 24 February. This funding approval was confirmed at the Budget 2021 on 3rd March 2021.

It is planned to divert the Birmingham to Crewe service via Tame Bridge Parkway from December 2021, in order to be ready to serve Willenhall and Darlaston stations from when they open. This will also give Tame Bridge Parkway a new direct service to Wolverhampton, Stafford, Stoke and Crewe.

WMRE is currently updating its Rail Investment Strategy which was published in January 2019 in order to reflect the significant changes that have occurred since then. The update process includes close dialogue with partner authorities, including Sandwell, and will seek to reflect how Covid has affected rail demand, how changes to HS2 plans have affected strategy and also how decarbonisation of the network should be brought forwards.

Network Rail are currently poised to commence work on developing a Strategic Outline Business Case for electrifying the Snow Hill lines between Kidderminster and

Leamington/Stratford. It is hoped this work can get underway shortly once final DfT funding approval is obtained.

Feasibility and business case work has been undertaken to create an improved integrated transport hub at Dudley Port, tying together rail, metro, bus, car, cycling and pedestrian access. This work was part-funded by Sandwell MBC. The work identified various interventions to improve the interchange and passenger experience. An option to rebuild Dudley Port station to provide longer platforms, step-free access and more capacity has been identified by Network Rail. The high cost of this proposal means that further work is underway to understand whether more affordable ways of delivering step-free access are possible. The position and design of the station makes it very difficult to provide step-free access, especially given the need to comply with industry design standards.

Network Rail are actively progressing the project to provide step-free access to Smethwick Rolfe Street through the provision of lifts.

Plans to construct stabling sidings at Bescot to support the introduction of new train fleets is currently under review as part of a wider review of rolling stock strategy in the West Midlands Franchise that is currently underway.

WMRE is actively engaging with Midlands Connect, DfT and Network Rail about accelerating the delivery of certain elements of the Midlands Rail Hub project, such as Snow Hill Platform 4 as part of "Project Speed".

5. HS2 Connectivity Package

The HS2 Growth Strategy sets out how the positive effect of HS2 will be felt across the region. The approach uses HS2 to create an outstanding legacy in terms of regeneration, jobs, skills, economic development and connectivity for the Midlands. The strategy has been refreshed, with 'The Defining Decade – The Midlands high speed path to recovery' approved by WMCA Board in February 2021.

Work on the Connectivity Package has been progressing in line with the Implementation Plan, with updates being provided through regular dashboard reports to the HS2 Growth Delivery Board. A headline summary of activity is set out below:

Sprint: Work has continued as the Walsall to Birmingham via Sandwell (A34) and Birmingham to Birmingham Airport and Solihull (A45) routes move into delivery. There has been significant work undertaken by TfWM and Local Authorities. During this period, the following activity has been undertaken:

- All Local Authority Cabinet approvals gained for Section 8 and 278 agreements.
- Enhanced Partnership Scheme approved by Local Authority Cabinets.
- Confirmation of zero emission vehicles on Sprint routes.
- Notice to Proceed issued on A45 corridor with main works underway.
- A34 contractor procurement underway.

Rail projects are listed within section 4 of this report.

6. Metro Delivery Programme

The Metro programme has been redefined into two main phases based on funding position and current project status.

Project	Planned Opening
Phase 1	
Centenary Square Extension	Opened December 2019
Wolverhampton City Centre Extension	Autumn 2021
Edgbaston Extension	December 2021
Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Extension	December 2023
Phase 2	
Birmingham Eastside Extension	2025
East Birmingham Solihull	2026

Work continues to progress all extension projects being undertaken by the Midland Metro Alliance (MMA). During this period, the following activity has been undertaken:

- Wolverhampton City Centre Extension – Works for Phases 1-3 are now complete. Phase 4 which will take the tram through to the newly built station is dependent on access to the site. According to the current construction programme MMA will not have access until March 2021 when the old station has been demolished, so delivery of the extension will be in the Autumn 2021.
- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension – Detailed design of this extension started in December 2019 and construction phasing of the project is currently being reviewed. Procurement of the rail corridor took longer than anticipated and the TWAO was not approved until October 2020. Utility works started in Spring in Dudley Town Centre to clear the route for the construction. Corridor clearance and removal of old bridges has moved on, with replacement bridges being delivered in Spring 2021. Work on Castle Hill will start in spring 2021.
- Edgbaston Extension – Work is now progressing at full pace. Despite Covid-19 track and road surfacing is complete along Broad Street with one final weld of track at the Hagley Road end to be completed this month. Urban realm work has made good progress and systems (overhead line, substation, comms and signalling etc) will be completed in Autumn 2021. Opening remains on schedule for end 2021.
- Birmingham Eastside Extension (BEE) – The intention is to construct the two ends of the scheme first; the delta junction at Bull Street where construction will start in the Summer of 2021, and the Digbeth Town Centre, (to be completed before Commonwealth Games). The central section is subject to agreements with HS2, and this will define the opening date of the extension. It is anticipated that construction and commissioning would be planned by the end of 2024. There is the possibility this may have to wait until 2026 before operations can start safely due to HS2 building works.
- East Birmingham to North Solihull Extension - TfWM is working with Government to gain further funding to develop a Full Business Case.

- Procurement contract for the new fleet from CAF was completed in October with a first phase of 21 trams, and options to extend the fleet for the East side extensions. These new trams are now in the final design approval stage and manufacturing of components has commenced. The first tram will arrive in May 2021 with 8 being delivered in time for the opening of the Edgbaston extension, end 2021.

7. Metro Operations - Midland Metro Limited

During the period Midland Metro Limited (MML) has continued to focus its efforts on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and planning for recovery. In doing so, it has maintained 4 key principals:

1. Keeping MML colleagues safe
2. Keeping MML customers safe
3. Letting MML customers know we are keeping them safe
4. Protecting MML revenue

Following the first national lockdown, patronage fell by 86% and revenue 94%. However, before the second national lockdown in November patronage had returned to 80% of pre-covid levels. Although we are now in a third national lockdown, MML is confident it can make a strong recovery having maintained comparatively high patronage levels throughout the pandemic, compared with other Light Rail systems in the UK and other modes of transport regionally. Taking a data lead approach MML has used its onboard Automatic Passenger Counting system to monitor demand and plan services to ensure safe capacity is being maintained.

Building on measures reported previously, MML has continued to work to keep everyone safe, including:

- **Deploying a dedicated Covid Advise Team (CAT) targeting watch spots on the network.** The team, which were introduced as schools re-opened in September, assist and offer guidance to customers on choosing quieter times to travel, encouraging the use of face coverings and signposting customers to useful information such as the Heat Map available on the My Metro app.
- **Deploying a state-of-the-art cleaning product on trams and at the depot.** The product uses an anti-static application, which treats all surfaces with a fine mist of a water-based disinfectant. It is being used on all touch points including handrails, push buttons and seating to create an invisible coating that delivers continued protection against 99.9% of bacteria and viruses, including Covid-19, and lasts for up to 30 days.
- **Providing lateral flow testing for all Metro staff.** Working with Sandwell MBC, MML are offering members of the team priority access to test appointments at West Bromwich Town Hall. Since launching the initiative late January, over 300 tests have been taken by staff and it is another step in helping to prevent the spread of the virus.

With a fall in patronage and revenue due to the pandemic, MML has been financially supported by the DfT and Central Government. With a roadmap for recovery now outlined MML continues to work with the DfT, to ensure continued financial support as patronage recovers.

8. Active Travel

- Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF)

On 9th May 2020 the Government announced that an 'Emergency Active Travel Fund' will fund local authorities across the country to help make it easier for people to use bikes to get around. The West Midlands were successful in their application to the Emergency Active Travel Fund, Tranche 1, with an allocation of £3.85m being granted from DfT for our ambitious Emergency Active Travel programme. The amount is more than our indicative allocation, with DfT noting our proposal as being "particularly strong."

A programme of schemes that included cycle pop-up lanes, increased room for pedestrians on footways, modal filters and cycle parking was included in the application to DfT. The programme also included supporting measures to deliver interventions that support long term behaviour change. A communications and marketing package were included in the programme.

On 10 July 2020, an invitation to bid for Tranche 2 funding (now called Active Travel Fund, ATF) was received from DfT via a proforma which was to be submitted online. The detailed proforma was submitted as required on 7 August 2020.

In November 2020, the allocations for Active Travel Fund (ATF, Emergency dropped from the name) Tranche 2 was announced with WMCA awarded £13.1m (80% Capital, 20% Revenue) to deliver a programme of schemes including new cycling infrastructure, making some the current pop-up cycle lanes more permanent, developing Places for People and a supporting measures package (see below for the full list).

The allocation received was 95% of the original £13.78m application. Following discussions and key priorities, it was agreed at STOG Active Travel Group (4 December 2020) to approve that the 5% reduction would be met by WMCA, and therefore not affect the Local Authority planned allocations to deliver respective priorities.

The 5% reduction would be met by WMCA through uncommitted TCF funding (£269K) and release of ATF scheme contingency (£420k) to cover the remaining balance.

It is also worth noting that the 5% reduction impact (£0.69m) in Tranche 2 is offset by the £0.4m additional funding that was received in Tranche 1 over and above the bid. Thus, the overall allocations in comparison to the application for both Tranche 1 and 2 is a £0.29m reduction.

The EATF Tranche 1 programme in Sandwell has an indicative cost of £0.296m and includes the following schemes:

- Scheme 1: Oldbury Town Centre to NCRN81 (in progress)
- Scheme 2: Smethwick Town Centre to Spon Lane (in progress)

The following schemes have been proposed as part of the Sandwell's Tranche 2 programme (indicative cost of £1.4m):

- Blackheath Town Centre Active Travel Interventions – Reallocation of road space and widening of footway to create a new permanent off-road segregated two-way cycleway along the Blackheath bypass from the Oldbury Rd/Henderson Way junction, along the bypass on A4100 Henderson Way to the High St/John St junction.
 - Wednesbury Town Centre Active Travel Interventions - Reallocation of road space to provide a new segregated contraflow cycle lane with NCLD Cycle Lane Defenders within the town centre, new permanent footway sections, temporary widening of footways using barriers, new TTRO's and new signage and road marking scheme and decluttering of footways along various roads within the town centre to ensure wider footway space. New cycle parking at selected locations will also be provided.
 - Bearwood High Street Active Travel Interventions - High Street - adjoining Bearwood Road is Waterloo Road and on the northern side of the High Street is Hadley Stadium sports centre which hosts inclusive cycling projects. On this side of the High Street there will be a reallocation of road space (along Bearwood Rd/Waterloo Rd) to provide a new two-way segregated cycle route from Beaks Road to Hadley Stadium with a Tiger Crossing for cyclists.
 - A4123 Corridor (Dudley/Sandwell section) – this is a jointly promoted scheme by Dudley (DMBC) and Sandwell (SMBC) Councils.
- Community Cycle Clubs

In partnership with Cycling UK, 5 Community Cycle Clubs have been set up in Sandwell. All club activities are currently suspended due to Covid-19 following government guidance.

Ordinarily, Smethwick Beat the Street Community Cycle Club meet every Monday at Smethwick Fire Station for Adult Learn to Ride Sessions where bikes and helmets can be borrowed. Lightwoods CCC meet every Wednesday for adult “Get back into cycling” sessions and led rides where bikes and helmets can also be borrowed. Hadley Stadium CCC (supported by Bensons Community Project) meet every Wednesday allowing off-road cycling on the track, with families participating in Learn to Ride, Get back into cycling sessions and safe off-road cycling for children of all ages where once again, bikes and helmets can be borrowed. Bangladeshi Women’s Association CCC run learn to ride and Get back into cycling sessions on Tuesdays and again, bikes and helmets can be borrowed

Sandwell Public Health proudly delivered the Big Bike Revival for keyworkers offer during the lockdown period in partnership with Cycling UK – offering long term bike loans and equipment to keyworkers. Two Love Your Bike Sessions were also held at Sandwell & Dudley Station with rail passengers and the community turning up for a free bike safety check, D-lock and bike security marking.

The Malthouse in Tipton (Public Health) delivered Big Bike Revival Dr Bikes in Sandwell Parks during Summer 2020 and are planning to continue a BBR delivery programme at schools in the borough when they reopen. Hadley Stadium CCC delivered Dr Bikes in Lightwoods Park and are currently offering DR Bikes directly to the community. They are also currently loaning bikes to families to help with home schooling and will be offering led rides from the Brasshouse & Lightwoods when lockdown lifts. The Brasshouse, Smethwick offered Dr Bikes to the community and will recommence when lockdown is lifted. Friar Park Millennium Centre offered Dr Bikes throughout Winter to the local Community.

- Living Streets Walk to School Programme

In Sandwell 18 out of 24 recruited Sandwell schools are continuing to record journeys and remain in the Walk to School Programme. Living Streets will re-engage with the four temporarily lapsed schools in the spring term as Covid restrictions ease.

Sandwell Council staff have been very helpful in driving forward new school contacts but the recruitment of new schools in Sandwell has been slower with schools severely affected by covid-19 related disruptions.

Brandhall Primary were the highest placing Sandwell school in the National Autumn Walk of Fame challenge achieving a top 10 position in the region.

Living Streets launched a new WOW Activity Tracker to help children stay active while schools remain closed to most pupils. The Tracker allows children to log their daily physical activity, whether that's a walk with family or skipping at home. Children who meet the level of activity set by their school will be given a monthly badge award.

- West Midlands Cycle Hire (WMCH)

£5 million of Transforming Cities Fund was committed to the capital development of the WMCH scheme. Ongoing management costs will be covered by income of the scheme and commercial sponsorship.

Following a competitive tender process Serco were identified as the successful operator of the WMCH scheme in December 2020. Serco already operates two successful cycle hire schemes in the United Kingdom - Edinburgh and London's Santander bikes. Serco is working with two suppliers to deliver the scheme, including Stratford-upon-Avon's bike manufacturer Pashley, and Beryl, a micromobility operator.

Serco will provide 1500 bikes, through a combination of 150 E-bikes and 1350 pedal bikes, within the West Midlands, including Sandwell. The service contract with Serco is for an initial term of five years. Serco will provide the infrastructure and a high-quality maintenance regime for cycles and docking stations over the contract period.

- WMCH Infrastructure

WMCH infrastructure is comprised of modular docking stations, which can be configured to any length, and the latest generation of Pashley pedal cycles. Totems are also installed as 'information points', providing the users with usage instructions. Users can easily access the scheme by downloading the Beryl app. Swift Pay As You Go will be available later in the year.

The cycles have several beneficial features including:

- Three gears to enable cycling through a range of topographies.
- A comfortable and adjustable seat for a range of heights.
- A front basket.
- Cushioned saddles for comfort.
- Laser lights, a forward projection technology that enables cyclists to be seen in advance.
- Mud and chain guards.

The cycles and docking stations are branded in the recognisable West Midlands Cycle brand (grey and green) which is utilised on the wheel, basket and frame.

- WMCH Roll out

25 bicycles and 5 docking stations have been installed in the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield for the trial (open to set volunteers). It is live between 8 February - 8 March 2021.

Between March-July 2021, WMCH will be rolled out across the region including Coventry, Birmingham, Solihull, Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Stourbridge. Work is underway with the local authorities to plan sites for the 170 docking stations across the region, including with Sandwell MBC.

- WMCH Pricing

Pricing will be consistent across the region and users will pay only for the time they ride (5p per minute), including a £1 unlock fee.

- Walking and Cycling Programme

£23.5m of Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) has been allocated to develop and deliver a cycling and walking infrastructure programme. The programme is coordinated by TfWM as part of the Walking and Cycling Programme.

As part of the TCF programme, funding has been allocated towards the development of the Phase 1 routes within the LCWIP. The local authorities are currently working on developing business cases and preliminary designs as part of this project. Part of this investment has been allocated as capital contributions as follows:

Allocation	TCF Contribution (Capital, £m)	Funding
Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Corridor Access Improvements at stops for cycling and walking	3.0	

Additionally, a development funding contribution has been allocated as follows:

Scheme	Development Contribution	Funding
Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Corridor Access Improvements	£200,000	

- Better Streets Community Fund

TfWM launched the Better Streets Community Fund in May 2019. The scheme enabled anyone in the West Midlands to submit their ideas for projects to improve their local area for cycling and walking. TfWM and Sandwell Council assessed the applications and 5 projects were selected to receive funding. These applications are:

Name of Project	Description of project	Progress to date
Friar Park Public Realm Improvements	Two applications for the Better Streets Community Fund were submitted within close proximity of each other asking for improvements near the Millennium Community Centre and Friar Park Primary School. This project will provide improvements at and between these two locations providing a safe and enjoyable space for local people to walk and cycle.	Consultation with applicants has taken place and designs for improvements have been developed. Contractors are being procured with construction to begin shortly.
Friar Park Public Realm Improvements		
Smethwick Old Church and Dorothy Parkes Community Centre Community Centre Public Realm Improvements	This project will aim to improve the public space outside of Smethwick Old Church and Dorothy Parkes Community Centre by reducing traffic speed and making it easier for people to walk and cycle in their local community.	Consultation with applicants has taken place and designs for improvements have been developed. Contractors are being procured with construction to begin shortly.
Access improvements to existing crossings	The Better Street Community Fund will contribute to improving the accessibility of an existing crossing for cyclists and those with mobility issues by providing small amount of dropped kerb. The crossing in Blackheath forms a part of an existing cycle route between Blackheath and Rowley Regis Train Station and this small improvement will help improve this route.	Completed January 2021. Working on promotion and launch.
YMCA Cycle Parking	This project will provide public cycle parking outside of the YMCA in West Bromwich Town Centre allowing people attending the YMCA and the wider town centre to be able to park their bikes securely.	Completed April 2020. A launch event was cancelled due to lockdown, as soon as there is an opportunity to promote and formally launch the project this will be done however parking is available to the public now.

- Workwise

TfWM's Employment Outreach Lead works with Job Centres across Sandwell to promote discounted travel to those gaining new employment. This approach has been successful and was extended to include libraries, local employers and training providers including Sandwell College. A popular discounted travel scheme is Workwise which offers 50% off selected tickets in the first three months of employment.

In line with recent engagement restrictions related to Covid-19, the Employment Outreach Lead has expanded promotion to include a portfolio of virtual advertising and engagement activity alongside non-virtual activity. This includes online recruitment events, online jobs fairs, social media engagement tools and recently webinar talks alongside digital newsletters and information packs.

9. Safety and Security

The Safer Travel Partnership is a collaboration of organisations including TfWM, West Midlands and British Transport Police forces, Transport Operators and the 7 regional local authorities. They work together with the purpose of making the public transport network safer.

The Partnership is responsible for delivering the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's 'Local Transport Policing Plan'. The key objectives of this plan for 2020/21 continue to be to reduce crime and improve passenger perception of personal safety.

Whilst these reductions are relative in terms of the pandemic and reflect reduced levels of services and patronage over the preceding months, the Safer Travel Partnership has planned and focused its attention on maintaining Government restrictions in the public's use of transport for the safe use of all users. The Safer Travel Police team have fully adopted the 4 E's approach advocated by the Police Chief Council to passengers adhering to social distancing and use of face masks;

1. Engage
2. Explain
3. Educate
4. Enforcement

Since Government legislation came into force in June 2020, over 10,000 face covering interventions have been made by the Safer Travel Police Team these include directions to leave and low-level compliance interventions

One of the Safer Travel Police teams' recent focuses in terms of Covid-19 compliance has been the return to school at peak morning and afternoon periods. Proactive work with Sandwell College working closely with their new 'meeters and greeters' has started to address increased issues of anti-social behaviour within the bus station at metro stops and within the Town Centre itself.

Traffic Monitoring Developments – The Head of Network Resilience for TfWM has overall operational and developmental responsibility for the Regional Transport Control Centre (RTCC) based at Summer Lane. Through TCF and a contribution from Midlands Connect, around £220k has recently been invested in 24 new urban traffic cameras for Sandwell Borough at key junction locations. These key junctions are now being viewed in the RTCC by traffic managers to help mitigate against congestion and road disruptions.

Appendix 1 – Network Monitoring

Monitoring ensures TfWM understands changes of the performance of the transport system arising from schemes, for example the reliability of public transport, modal usage and customer satisfaction. Covid-19 has had a major impact on the public transport network.

- Headline Measures

Performance (January 2021)		
	Patronage	Punctuality
Bus	116m ↓	No Update
Rail	Approx 12m ↓	94% (P10)
Metro	Approx 3.5m ↓	98%

- Bus

Overall bus patronage in the West Midlands has fallen in the last 12 months (February 2020 to January 2021) due to Covid-19 and national restrictions. Current annualised bus patronage (Feb 2020 – Jan 2021) stands at 116m; a decrease of –55% compared to the previous year (January 2021) of 257.6m. There have been decreases in both commercial patronage and concessionary travel. Bus patronage will be closely monitored as lockdown restrictions start to ease.

- Rail

Rail patronage has also been impacted by Covid-19. Current rail patronage is approximately -80% of pre Covid-19 patronage. Data collection has been suspended due to the pandemic.

Rail punctuality (trains arriving not more than 5 minutes late) remains at 94% for Period 10 2020/21.

- Metro

Metro patronage has also decreased from 8m passengers during the year period April 2019 to March 2020 to approximately 4.1m (February 2020 – January 2021) a slightly smaller decrease to bus patronage (-49%).

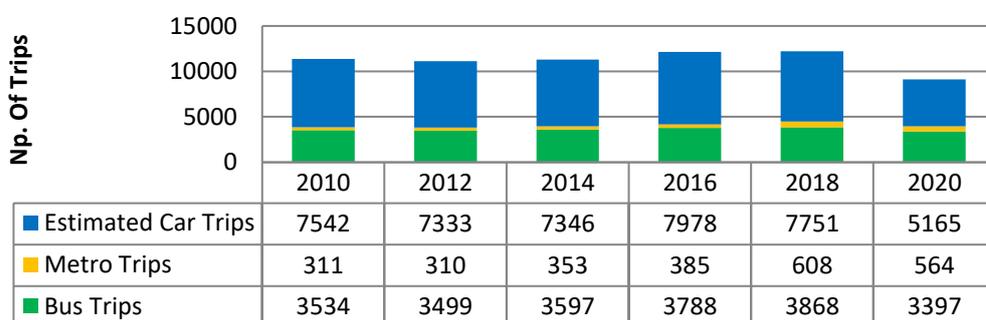
Fleet availability (i.e. proportion of rolling stock available as a percentage of the target number needed to run to timetable) stood at 98% in January 2021.

The most recent public transport satisfaction survey can be found here - <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publication/travel-during-covid-19-key-lessons-for-2021-and-beyond/>

Modal Share

A cordon survey around West Bromwich was undertaken in March 2020 – 2 weeks before lockdown. The results are summarised below.

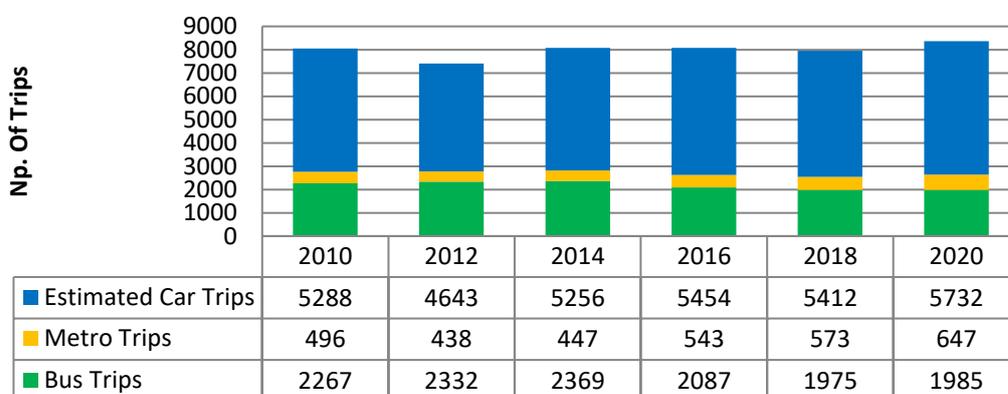
West Bromwich Cordon Inbound Trips 07:30-09:30



Inbound AM Peak bus and metro trips have seen decreases of -12.2% and -7.2% respectively in 2020, compared to 2018. Car trips have decreased by -33.4% resulting in the public transport modal share being the highest ever at 43.4%. The total number of trips being made into West Bromwich town centre has decreased by -25.4% in 2020 at under 10,000 with Covid-19 having a clear impact on travel in March 2020.

When comparing 2020 data to forecasted data, bus trips are -14% lower than expected, metro trips are -5% less than expected, car trips are -35% lower and all trips are -27% less than what we would expect without Covid-19 being present.

West Bromwich Cordon Outbound Trips 07:30-09:30



The number of outbound trips made by bus and metro in the AM Peak has increased slightly by +0.5% and +12.9% respectively. Car trips have also increased (by +5.9%) suggesting that people travelled to West Bromwich town centre and spent less time there than they normally would, travelling entirely within the AM Peak, potentially due to the onset of lockdown due to Covid-19. Public transport modal share has decreased slightly from 32% to 31.5%.

The next West Bromwich Cordon Survey will be undertaken in March 2022.