

Transport for West Midlands Update

October 2021

Overview

1. Local Transport Plan (LTP) Review and Transport Green Paper

WMCA is the Local Transport Authority and has duties to produce and review the Local Transport Plan that covers the West Midlands' seven metropolitan districts. The LTP sets out policies and implementation proposals for tackling the regions transport challenges and opportunities. Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) advises WMCA on this responsibility.

The LTP is being reviewed and a [Green Paper](#) has been developed to frame early engagement on the issues a future LTP could aim to resolve and how it could go about doing that. TfWM are engaging across the region to understand how people and organisations want to change transport.

The public response rate to the online survey has been good (better than for consultation on previous actual draft LTPs).

Deliberative engagement has also been undertaken with TfWM's online (representative) community of citizens covering a broad spectrum of issues.

TfWM officers have presented to Sandwell members and supported Sandwell officers with engaging on the Green Paper. TfWM officers attended a session of Sandwell's Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board on 22nd July 2021.

A Transport Summit is planned for 24th September where members will discuss challenges, they face in the development of a coherent LTP where gaps between ambition for aims and appetite (and capacity) for action are resolved. Technical work is nearing completion that will support the Summit – alongside the outputs of engagement - and explores 3 policy scenarios with varying degrees of overall change in approach.

It is proposed to prepare a Transport policy statement/prospectus before COP26 to set out the regions understanding of how we can decarbonise transport and the scope of options that need to be considered through development of the LTP in order to do so.

TfWM is commissioning additional consultant support as it develops the LTP to completion. The scope of this work will include capacity to support the development of 4 area strategies which will evidence the case for and detail implementation proposals in Coventry, the Black Country, Birmingham and Solihull.

The current plan is to prepare a draft LTP (consisting of core strategy, area strategies, and implementation plan) by the end of 2021 to be consulted on and adopted in 2022.

2. Covid-19 update

TfWM and partners have continued to work on behalf of Sandwell to ensure the best possible 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 could get to work. All of the following activities of TfWM and its partners have generally taken place with updates and engagement being provided between TfWM and Sandwell throughout the Covid recovery period. These Covid recovery areas include, but are not limited to:

- Transport Cell and regional coordination response
- Education transport
- Infrastructure and bus stops
- Highways and Key Route Network
- Ring and Ride and SEND transport
- Travel Demand Management
- Bus, Metro, rail and Park and Ride services
- Maintaining the delivery of capital schemes

TfWM has continued to work closely with its constituent authorities on matters relating to transport. They have also cooperated with other metropolitan and major urban authorities to coordinate Government communication, responses and engagement on various fast-moving agenda changes linked to the recovery including funding, modal proposals and strategies, conditions, communications, and policy.

TfWM has also continued to work with the Department for Transport (DfT) to maintain funding to Metro and bus services across the region, working through the West Midlands Bus Alliance to communicate the requirements to Government.

During the early stages of the pandemic a CV19 Transport Recovery Cell was established. This multi-modal and multi-organisation Cell's purpose was to assess the ongoing threat of Covid-19 from a strategic perspective, within the Local Resilience Forum framework. This forum ensured that there was consistency in approach from a regional perspective, that risks were identified as early as possible and mitigated in the most appropriate and collaborative way.

Following the publication of the Governments Roadmap in Spring 2021, the Transport Cell continued to ensure that its response and recovery of the transport network was fully aligned to this stepped approach. Measures taken were shared in our last report.

The decision was recently taken that the Transport Cell will now stand down following services now being incorporated into 'business as usual' functions. It has been noted to all partners that should there be a requirement to initiate the Transport Cell once again, that can and will be actioned. Peer to peer support can continue through the established contacts and support mechanisms put in place via the Cell.

As previously reported, we observed a significant decrease in the usage of public transport in the first lockdown followed by a slow recovery of usage. However, in subsequent periods of lockdown, we never observed the same levels of decrease due to more sectors being able to remain open. Fluctuations in patronage did occur as expected.

As government guidance has relaxed in stages over time there has been a steady rise in patronage and return to the transport network. At the time of writing this report patronage levels were around 73% pre-Covid levels for bus, 44% train, 89% tram and 94% for roads. Congestion has returned to the key route network and is having an impact on bus services. More detail around this has been included in later sections of this report.

It is expected that the return to schools and offices will have an uplift impact on the use of public transport, road use and congestion. The Highways teams and the Regional Transport Coordination Centre will continue to monitor and make amendments where appropriate and possible.

Some service disruptions occurred as a result of the 'Ping-Demic' and the requirement of large numbers of people to self-isolate. Operators across all modes experienced some staffing issues which impacted on the delivery of some services, with some areas including Metro and rail seeing a resolution to some of the staffing challenges (as at mid-September), whilst bus continues to see a significant challenge in staffing levels due to a mixture of sickness, people leaving to take up alternative employment, and a backlog in training and tests for new drivers.

As in all other regions of the UK, local bus operators are reporting an increased risk of short notice service cancellations due to driver shortages. TfWM are working closely with operators to ensure passengers are kept informed and that measures are being put in place to try and identify timely mitigation. We anticipate that during October 2021 TfWM may need to support some further changes to registrations to allow for a reduced level of service on some high frequency bus services whilst the driver shortages and sickness levels are resolved.

From 19th July National Express West Midlands (NX) reduced many of their bus fares in several ways to encourage more people back to the bus network. Other operators have followed suit and reduced the all operator nBus tickets to attract passengers back to the bus network. NX also made wider network service changes from Sunday 29th August to reflect the changes in travel demand and impacts on expected journey times. There will be a period of settling in to understand the demand and the 'new normal' and TfWM will work with partners to monitor customer feedback during this period, further information can be found in the Bus Network section of this report.

Through the pandemic TfWM have worked in partnership with Sandwell Council officers and local colleges to ensure the transport network is safe and has sufficient capacity to enable pupils and students to get to school and college. This engagement has developed into new professional relationships which have been a positive legacy from the last few months and has already led to discussions around future developments and improvements.

TfWM have worked in partnership with Sandwell to ensure this has been targeted towards providing additional capacity on SEND transport led by the Authority and also additional capacity on the college and public transport networks led by TfWM. This has culminated in ensuring that the return to school in September 2021 was fully coordinated and safe for returning students and pupils.

The Travel Demand Management Team also worked with partners and supported the education restart from September 2020 up to end of March 2021 with a package of

travel planning support embedded in the council. Proactive contact was made with 30 schools and Sandwell College to assist with school travel and Covid-19 toolkits and congestion bulletins were issued.

For the duration of the pandemic the Ring & Ride vehicles had been repurposed as a free NHS shuttle bus for NHS staff to help support these keyworkers to get to work in some of the main hospitals across the region. However, as we progressed through the governments' roadmap and further restrictions lifted, Ring and Ride users were feeling more able to get out and about and the fixed bus network had returned to previous capacity. As a result, the decision was taken to cease the operation of the shuttle service to allow the minibuses to return to their original duties from 12 April 2021. The NHS shuttles provided a much-needed service for hospital staff during the darkest days of this pandemic, and we were delighted to have been able to provide this support for the last year. In total the service provided more than 39,700 trips and at its peak was providing nearly 1,150 trips each day.

In addition to the further relaxation of restrictions, the relaxation of the pre-9.30am concessionary travel was withdrawn from Monday 19 April 2021 and the use of concessionary passes returned to normal. The relaxation was initially re-introduced to assist pass holders to travel to vaccination appointments before 9.30am. However, with the roll out of the vaccination programme and vulnerable groups vaccinated, combined with the reopening of non-essential retail and return of schools, the peak time capacity would be needed by students and workers, and removing the relaxation of the pre-9.30am enabled us to ensure social distancing was maintained on the network in order to keep passengers safe.

On Monday 19th April 2021, TfWM became the provider of the Ring and Ride Customer Services. TfWM has historically supported Ring and Ride services through funding however this move has seen TfWM assume direct responsibility for the relationship with our Ring and Ride customers, bringing Ring and Ride customer service activities in-house. National Express Accessible Transport (NEAT) continue to operate the Ring and Ride fleet with TfWM registering new customers and managing journey bookings over the phone in our new Ring and Ride contact centre. This also saw the transfer of some NEAT employees to WMCA. TfWM continue to keep the service under review and are increasing the available capacity and hours of operation based upon demand from customers. This also aligns with the various milestones in the recovery process and guidance on social distancing etc. Further information can be found in the Bus Network section of this report.

Throughout the duration of the pandemic TfWM has supported and enforced the use of face coverings in a variety of ways across all modes of transport, stations, and transport hubs in line with the government guidance. On 19th July the legal requirements relating to social distancing and face coverings were removed. Transport for West Midlands continues to relay the message from Government, in that the public are recommended and expected to continue to use face coverings in crowded places such as public transport (and socially distance where possible). However, we are unable to enforce the use of face coverings and all modes have noted a significant reduction in passengers wearing face coverings which is further supported by CCTV evidence.

Transport for London have amended their conditions of carriage to make the use of face coverings a requirement of travel, but this is not an option available within the West Midlands as the transport network is operated and resourced in a very different way.

As well as the creation of the CV19 Transport Cell, a CV19 Communications group was created at the beginning of the pandemic to ensure a consistent messaging was being shared across the region. The group consisted of members from the Transport Authority, Local Authorities, Operators, and other agencies. At present Covid messaging is being actively removed from the network in light of the recent changes in guidance, and TfWM will continue to work with our 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 long-term core messaging will continue to be one focused on planning ahead, hand sanitising, open windows (where appropriate), distancing (where possible) as well as the use of face coverings.

Enhanced cleaning regimes have remained in place across the transport network throughout the pandemic. As a result of stronger evidence-based understanding of transmission risks, and the latest Government guidance, TfWM will continue with enhanced cleaning of high touch/contact point areas at bus stations, and for the remainder will revert to the pre-pandemic levels of cleaning which were already deemed to be effective. This has been fully risk assessed and will be monitored to ensure effectiveness.

Following delays from Covid we opened our brand new first pay to use car park in Longbridge in August 2021. We are seeing a recovery of Park & Ride usage which is currently around 30% pre-Covid levels.

TfWM are currently reviewing options to fully integrate with Metro at Dudley Port, along with heavy rail, bus and other sustainable modes of transport.

The Travel Demand Management Team is gearing up to provide support for the Birchley Island scheme. Initial introductions have been made to gain a solid understanding of the scheme and project timescales. Work is underway to plan ahead for this and any significant impacts on the wider highway network.

TfWM has worked in partnership with Sandwell throughout the pandemic to ensure that bus passenger stops, and shelters remained safe and available for passengers. This has included an enhanced level of cleaning, which has continued, and also the identification and introduction of additional stops to give bus passengers more space and allow for social distancing.

TfWM teams have worked to support Covid testing and vaccination sites. These sites were mapped against the public transport and gritting routes in the colder months and TfWM have been fully prepared to respond to any issues to keep these facilities accessible. As the vaccination programme continues, TfWM continue to support wherever required.

Implementation of the National Workplace Testing Scheme is being led by the Health and Safety Team. The organisation has been registered with the Department of Health and Social Care and the required on-boarding information provided to allow for the

workplace provision of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests for collection from the workplace to take at home prior to leaving for work.

Test kits have been available for collection from 16 Summer Lane from week commencing 14th June 2021 and colleagues working on the transport network continue to utilise the home ordering service available from the GOV.UK website or pharmacy collection.

In addition to the operational aspects, TfWM teams have managed to work with our partners to maintain the delivery of the capital programme schemes. This required new Covid processes to be created, additional risk assessments and health and safety protocol and processes to be implemented to enable the delivery teams to continue delivering in a safe way adhering to all government guidance.

TfWM have continued to provide Covid recovery updates to Transport Delivery Committee during this time also.

3. 2022 Commonwealth Games

Games Transport Plan

The Games Transport Plan is currently out for consultation with a closing date of 24 September. Sandwell MBC is a statutory consultee on the Plan; review and response of the document is encouraged. Further information can be found at <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/who-we-are/our-strategy/commonwealth-games-2022/>

Network Management / Games Route Network/Local Area Traffic Management

For any Games' related Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) within Sandwell, the agreed approach for delivery is that TfWM develop TTROs plans and orders and Sandwell assume responsibility for delivery.

In addition to the above point, Sandwell MBC has provided TfWM with a signed letter agreeing to the use of Concurrent Powers under the Games Act 2020. This enables TfWM to create and implement Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders for Games purposes within the boundaries of the Council, should this be required at Games time

Discussions are also ongoing with Wolverhampton's Urban Traffic Control team about management of Games Route Network (GRN) across the Black Country. This will lead to a GRN operations plan to be prepared and published early 2022.

Spectator Transport

The area around Hawthorns rail station will be used as the primary transport hub to access Sandwell Aquatics Centre by spectators. It will provide:

- Rail (from Birmingham Moor Street/Snow Hill) and tram access via Hawthorne station and tram stop
- Taxi & Accessible Shuttlebus via existing rail station park and ride.
- Several potential additional park and ride stops have been identified around the Hawthorns with capacity for up to 500 spaces. Negotiations are continuing with landowners.

- Spectators accessing the Hawthorns will then use a shuttle buses on Halfords Drive to be taken to the venue with shuttle load zones on Manor Road
- Smethwick Galton Bridge will provide an alternative rail station option. This has direct services to Birmingham New Street (up to 4 trains per hour, not evenly spread across the hour), as well as being served by all trains that also serve The Hawthorns.
- Smethwick Rolfe Street is a third station option, although not promoted it is a less frequent service than SGB with a similar walking distance to the venue.

4. Bus Network

Local Bus Services

As lockdown restrictions have continued to ease and the demand for travel has increased bus patronage has shown a steady rate of growth. There are fluctuations by service but the network in total is currently carrying approximately 73% of expected patronage in comparison to what would be expected for the equivalent period pre-Covid (week ending 10th September). Patronage is expected to increase further from September onwards as the holiday period comes to an end, schools and colleges return and workers are encouraged back into their places of work following the removal of the national working from home guidance. A further boost will be realised later in September when the university academic year begins with a greater focus on site learning generating increased travel by bus.

On most routes service levels are now at 100% of pre-Covid levels with only minor variances on some corridors to reflect seasonal variations or changes in travel behaviour.

Buses are now able to operate at near full capacity following the most recent changes in social distancing although many operators are still taking some measures to protect drivers such as preventing passengers from sitting in seats closest to the cab and also encouraging passengers to be mindful of when buses are less busy.

The use of face coverings is no longer mandatory on public transport including bus but is expected. This message is being portrayed to passengers along with passengers being asked to be respectful and mindful of other users when travelling. These messages are being conveyed through various means including digital channels, social media, posters & notices and announcements.

TfWM and bus operators are maintaining enhanced cleaning processes in place. This is inclusive of vehicles and passenger waiting infrastructure including bus shelters and bus stations. National Express are currently maintaining in service cleaning of the high touch points on bus although this is currently under review.

Supporting Bus Operators

The reduced number of passengers using local bus services means that fare revenue for operators is also reduced. To support bus operators through this period and ensure the bus network continues to operate to aid the recovery of the region, TfWM have worked with DfT to develop and administer a number of measures.

TfWM have continued to provide support in the form of maintaining contract payments for tendered services at pre-covid levels as well as maintaining payments for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) at the predicted rate assuming the pandemic hadn't occurred. Subject to agreement and managing other budgetary pressures, this support could continue to the end of March 2022.

Commercial bus operators and TfWM are receiving funding from the DfT Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) which is designed to ensure bus services can continue to operate to full-service levels during the pandemic. This grant will continue to be provided through to the end of August 2021.

From September the DfT will continue to support operators and local authorities but this will be based upon a grant formula rather than 'topping-up' operators to cover their costs. Under the revised conditions for this grant operators will need to maintain a minimum of 90% of mileage of pre-covid levels, will be able to make a profit and also make commercial service changes. However, the conditions of the grant are such that any service changes must be undertaken in consultation with the Local Transport Authority. If agreement cannot be reached locally an appeals process has been put in place by the DfT.

The period of this new Bus Recovery Grant will be from September 2021 to the end of March 2022 and we will seek to maintain service stability and continuity from operators during this period. Beyond March 2022, TfWM with operators will be seeking to secure funding through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) process to maintain the current baseline network.

Ring & Ride

Use of the West Midlands Ring & Ride service continues to grow with customer levels currently at approximately 18% of pre-Covid levels. This is expected given the demographic of the users and the number of regular destinations currently being closed. We are forecasting an increase from September as destinations start to reopen and confidence to travel continues to grow.

The service is currently operating reduced hours and is operating Monday to Friday 0800 to 1730 and Saturday 0830 to 1530. From October the service level will be increased to operate Monday to Saturday 0800 to 2300 and Sunday 0800 to 1530. During peak times we have also agreed an increased number of vehicles to be available to provide additional capacity on the service.

We are in the process of agreeing a revised contract with National Express Accessible Transport (NEAT) up to the end of March 2022. We continue to have discussions regarding contractual and service arrangements to ensure the service reflects any changes in travel demand and aligns with the ambitions of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which may include wider use of Demand Responsive Services in the region.

Vision for Bus – National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plans

The National Bus Strategy (NBS) published in March 2021 sets out the requirements for all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to access transformational funding from April 2022. TfWM is the LTA for the WMCA constituent area. The first step was to publish a notice of intent to pursue an Enhanced Partnership (EP) and/or franchising by the

end of June 2021. By 31st October 2021, TfWM must publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan. By 31st March 2022 the LTA should have either an EP in place or be following the statutory processes for a franchising assessment.

The BSIP will drive forward productive partnerships delivered through an EP or a franchising assessment to make a step change in bus services required to achieve the objectives of the NBS. Having an adopted BSIP in place will be critical when Government decides how the new £3 billion of discretionary funding is allocated – covering both revenue and capital. Overall, the BSIP should:

- Be developed by LTAs in collaboration with local authorities and bus operators, community transport bodies and local businesses, services and people.
- Focus on delivering the bus network that LTAs (in consultation with operators) want to see, including how to address the under provision and overprovision of bus services and buses integrate with other modes.
- Set out how it will grow bus use.
- Set out how it will be delivered.
- Be updated annually and reflected in the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

TfWM has an existing EP in place for the region and is also undertaking an assessment of the wider bus service reform options available through the Bus Services Act 2017. This ongoing assessment includes bus franchising options, and a report outlining the outcomes of this will be considered by WMCA Board in November 2021. Therefore, the BSIP will set out the vision and provide an updated EP including delivery details (by 31st March 2022); with a separate franchising assessment detailing how, the vision could be delivered and pursued. If principles, objectives and outcomes cannot be agreed between TfWM and bus operators, franchising is identified as a mechanism which authorities can still turn to if the operators cannot deliver the objectives within an Enhanced Partnership to deliver the BSIP.

The BSIP guidance encourages, LTAs, local authorities and bus operators to work at pace with communities to plan and deliver a fully integrated bus service with simple, cheaper, multi-modal tickets, more bus priority measures, maintaining high-quality information for all passengers in more locations and more zero emission buses and better turn-up-and-go frequencies including during evenings and weekends.

The BSIP is currently under development and TfWM are facilitating discussions with all stakeholders including bus operators and Local Highway Authorities.

Network Changes

From Sunday 29th August National Express made a number of changes to Bus Services across the region. Full details can be viewed at; <https://nxbus.co.uk/west-midlands/service-updates/timetable-and-route-changes-from-29th-august-2021>

The rationale for changes included;

- Uncertainty over the level and speed of patronage recovery and changes to passenger travel habits observed for different demographics and communities during the Covid period.
- Changes in journey speeds and the typical daily traffic profile. For example, changes in the traffic volumes in the morning peak, the inter-peak period

including school pick up and the evening peak have all been observed requiring variations in pre-Covid running times.

TfWM have been involved in reviewing the details of these service changes and have provided feedback to ensure that the rationale and supporting data of service changes was provided, analysed and understood and therefore changes are not detrimental for passengers. Additionally, as TfWM have ensured the changes meet the service requirements for continued public subsidy.

Bus Recovery Funding replaced Covid Bus Service Subsidy Grant with effect from 1st September. Due to the uncertainty around the mechanism and the quantum of Bus Recovery Funding the date the service changes were confirmed meant there was not sufficient time for a comprehensive passenger and key stakeholder engagement exercise. However, National Express did provide direct communications to Councillors and MP's and subsequently direct passenger communications were made using on-bus posters, at-stop posters (on routes where there was a more significant change), website and using social media channels.

A limited number of other service changes by other operators have taken place to either co-ordinate with the National Express network changes as a result of National Express's network changes or alternatively timetable changes to accommodate departure headways at bus stations. In both cases there was not a material impact upon service provision or coverage.

West Midlands Bus Alliance

The West Midlands Bus Alliance has continued to oversee and influence the bus network response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic and has sought to ensure that operators and wider stakeholders are fully aligned on issues affecting passengers. This has included developing a consistent approach to passenger communication at the various stages to the release from Covid measures, including changes to social distancing on-bus and continuing to encourage and expect passengers to continue to wear a face covering.

The Alliance has continued to hold fortnightly bus operator sessions to discuss operational issues relating to the current operating environment. This has evolved from the practical considerations of operating buses during the pandemic and the various funding mechanisms and related Terms and Conditions to developing a network to meet the changing requirements of passengers and establishing a forum for developing the ambition for the BSIP.

The Alliance continues to receive updates on the development and delivery of initiatives to deliver the overall outcomes as stated under the bolder bus alliance. This includes the continued delivery of bus priority measures to facilitate the implementation of the Cross-City Bus Network, measures to improve bus emission standards at the decarbonisation of the fleet, initiatives to improve the fares and ticketing structure and RTI passenger information as part of an integrated network.

The Bus Alliance board is currently considering the governance structure and the part it will play in developing the BSIP and the resulting enhanced partnership agreement. This will need to reflect that current and future initiatives being delivered by partners will move from a voluntary partnership arrangement to a legal / statutory requirement.

Enhanced Partnership

On the 28th June 2021, the WMCA area became the first city region and only the second local transport authority to make an EP. The scheme aims to support the development of improved bus service on two corridors; A34 (N) Walsall to Birmingham City Centre and A45 Birmingham Airport / B425 Solihull to Birmingham City Centre. This includes the introduction of bus priority measures to support the delivery of Sprint and improvements to services on these corridors and improvements to emission standards.

The first operator requirements will be effective from Monday 6th September from which date all buses serving stops on these corridors will need to meet a minimum of a Euro VI emission standard.

It is a requirement of the BSIP that LTAs deliver any enhancements through an Enhanced Partnership or through Franchising. TfWM will initially seek to amend this existing enhanced partnership to deliver the aspirations of the BSIP. This will involve public consultation on a revised EP Plan to reflect the BSIP proposals.

The further development of the EP and coverage of a greater geographical area will have an impact on the existing AQPS areas. Under the Bus Services Act 2017 legislation, it is not possible to have two statutory partnerships covering requirements in the same geographical area. TfWM are currently exploring the removal of the AQPS as the EP scheme is expanded in the region under the BSIP proposals.

Under the Enhanced Partnership Scheme, TfWM are exploring adopting bus service registration powers from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner to give a greater level of oversight and local management. We have engaged with senior officers and the West Midlands Traffic Commissioner directly to seek to adopt those powers under the Enhanced Partnership during 2022.

Cross City Region Bus Priority

As part of the Better Deal for Bus Users funding package TfWM received over £20 million to fund the first phases of prioritised bus priority measures to complement Sprint and deliver a Cross City Region bus network, also influencing the wider region. The overall package will benefit almost 90 million passengers per year, providing 5km of new bus-only roads, 8 junction upgrades, 5km of new bus lanes and enhanced waiting facilities.

The proposals for Burnet Tree Island Improvements Cape Hill and are currently at the feasibility stages that include traffic studies and surveys in the individual areas. These studies and survey work will provide us with the basis to draft the best design to consult on. Once the survey data is reported, the ambition is to progress the draft designs for public consultation in October 2021.

Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme

On the 30th March 2021, the Department for Transport (DfT) invites Local Transport Authorities to submit expressions of interest in receiving funding to become a Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA); a place based scheme that will allow areas to bring forward zero emission bus proposals. The scheme is designed to support the

wider government commitments to Net Zero and plans to decarbonise the transport system.

The West Midlands Bid includes the most ambitious hydrogen bus project ever seen and if approved by Government and WMCA Board, over the next two years the project will see 200 new hydrogen double decker buses and 24 articulated hydrogen buses come into operation in all parts of the region with the exception of Coventry (that was successful to be the UK's first all-electric bus city in March 2021); seven electric single deck buses on subsidised bus services in Wolverhampton, as well as a new pantograph at Bilston bus station and hydrogen refuelling at two bus depots in the West Midlands.

The full business case was submitted to DfT on 20th August 2021 and we are currently awaiting the outcome of the decision which is due in mid-September. The project is not without significant risk and we are continuing to seek mitigation in order that WMCA would be able to accept a funding offer from Government should it be forthcoming.

Tendered Bus Services

Due to the continued unusual and difficult market conditions, including the on-going public sector financial support and a level of uncertainty in estimating future patronage, it has been deemed not an appropriate time to issue tenders as part of a competitive tender process. The exception to this has been where it is felt appropriate to test costs in the market or where there is a new requirement.

The Bus Delivery Team have worked with the existing operators to agree an extension of applicable contracts for suitable periods in adherence to procurement rules. In most cases contracts will be extended to the end of March 2022 in line with Bus Recovery funding for the sector from the DfT. We are currently awaiting guidance from the DfT to confirm the level of funding to maintain funding for the contracts prior to confirming this extension.

As with the commercial network the average patronage on tendered bus services is lower than the equivalent pre-Covid usage and in some cases is relatively lower. It has been seen the recovery level of concessionary passengers is lower than fare paying passengers, which has impacted some tendered services which have a high proportion of concessionary passengers.

The level of usage is an important factor in the rationale for the provision of subsidised bus services and TfWM Officers are closely monitoring usage, especially over the coming months.

5. Rail Network

West Midlands Franchise

WMT's impressive improvement in performance has been arrested over the summer. Punctuality and reliability has fallen from a PPM of 93.2% in Period 1 (April) to 88.6% in Period 5 (August). Over the same period the PPM MAA has dropped from 92.1% to 90.3%.

Other performance metrics show a similar trend. Right Time (percentage of trains on time or early at destination) has slipped from 79.6% in period 1 to 73.8% in Period 5,

whilst T-3 (trains arriving at all stations within three minutes of advertised time) has gone from 91.8% to 87.3%. However, the Period 5 results were noticeably better than for Period 4, suggesting that the decline over the summer may have been arrested.

TOC on Self cancellations rose by 3.8% to 5.2% in Period 4, mainly as a result of a decline in the number of available traincrew. This is also reflected in the split of PPM failures between WMT and Network Rail/Other Operators. In Period 1 Network Rail/Other Operators were responsible for 55% of all of WMT's PPM failures. In Period 4 this had fallen to 37%.

Delivery to customers in the West Midlands has also been affected by a shortage of DMU vehicles. This has occurred at the same time as customers are returning to services and when traincrew shortages have hit a peak. The shortfall has been particularly acute as many services have been significantly short-formed. The cause of the problem remains mostly down to exam bunching and an accumulation of deferred work. Work has commenced to extend exam cycles to ease the maintenance burden on Tyseley Depot. A taskforce has also been established to tackle legacy and cultural issues about the way Tyseley operates.

This issue has also affected Cross Country, whose 29 Class 170 units are maintained by WMT at Tyseley under contract. These units work services between Nottingham-Cardiff and Birmingham-Leicester/Derby.

The phased reopening of the economy in June has resulted in a welcome uplift in patronage across the region, with Thursday 2nd September 2021 being the busiest day on WMR since Tuesday 17th March 2020.

Positively, the growth in both passengers and revenue exceeds the government's forecasts. Indeed, in Period 5 WMT recorded their highest grossing week since March 2020. This was largely as a result of strong leisure travel, with season ticket earnings remaining very low.

The rail industry welcomed the changes to test and trace rules that took effect on 16th August. These removed the mandatory requirement for someone who is double jabbed to self-isolate for 10 days if they are contacted by test and trace. However, it is not a panacea, as staff are not obliged to share their vaccination history with their employer. This means that people can falsely claim to not have been vaccinated in order to take 10 days of paid time off work.

West Midlands Rail Programme

Across the programme, work continues to lay the groundwork for successful Entry into Service processes, with further site visits undertaken with members of Network Rail's System Review Panel and the Office of Rail and Road. We have made progress in agreeing how nonconformances will be treated and this is currently being formalised in advance of a series of project reviews planned for October. Building these relationships will also assist in future with the Entry into Service of the Package 1 and 2 stations.

Construction at both University and Perry Barr is proceeding well. Installation of the steel frame for the station building has started at Perry Barr, whilst at University installation of the pre-cast concrete segments that make up the frame is now near

completion. In both cases the work has been undertaken quickly and safely. There has been a strong focus on safety, supported by regular safety leadership tours, and this has been seen in a good rate of near miss reporting and low level of incidents.

We have also undertaken cost and schedule assurance for these projects in the period. Internal assurance of Perry Barr was completed at the end of July and then subject to review by Turner and Townsend; their feedback was very positive. Turner and Townsend will now turn their attention to assurance of the University project.

University Station

The successful installation of the concrete frame for University station means that we remain on track for the installation of the footbridges at the end of September / early October. There remain a series of complex legal agreements to resolve between partners including UoB and NR before the bridge can be installed and resolving these challenges is critical to keeping open the option for delivery in time for the Commonwealth Games. We are working with partners to ensure that all parties understand the criticality of this point.

As we have previously reported, we expect to see some cost pressures emerge at University as part of the programme re-baseline. Working with our contractor we have already identified opportunities for potential cost efficiencies. In parallel with this, we are also engaging with partners to identify possible funding approaches, including potential matched funding opportunities.

Perry Barr Station and Bus Interchange

At Perry Barr, alongside work on the rail station we have also seen good progress on the Bus Interchange project which is being delivered by BCC and Tarmac. Planning permission for the bus interchange was secured on 22 July. The project faced some challenges due to cost escalation which was driven by increases in the cost of key materials. This is a well-acknowledged problem across the industry, which the team have sought to mitigate through early procurement. Thanks to good joint working across the teams, we have reached a position where the scheme can be delivered within funding and schedule constraints and we hope to be in a position shortly where the work can be instructed.

Package 1 – Walsall to Wolverhampton Connectivity

Mobilisation in advance of contract award continues. At the Eurofoods site in Darlaston we are pressing ahead with making a CPO and seeking legal advice from counsel. Our preference remains to reach a negotiated settlement here and with that in mind colleagues from the CA undertook a site visit with Eurofoods representatives. Following this we have arranged for a ground-penetrating radar survey to identify potential buried assets which may have an impact on valuation.

Progress continues on the other sites, although in the bulk of cases we are now awaiting responses from vendors which we continue to chase. We are in negotiation with the owners of the Triple R site to agree a backstop date for vacant possession which would give us sufficient confidence to develop a contract. In this case, however, the owners have indicated that it would be possible for the CA to secure early access for enabling works. We understand that the owners have, in addition, now secured a key licence for their new site which is an important step towards their relocation.

Package 2 – Camp Hill Line Connectivity

On Package 2, we agreed the procurement strategy which enabled the release of the Selection Questionnaire to move the procurement process forward. Our current aim is to start ITT of Package 2 in September, dependent on resolving land acquisition issues as a lesson learned from Package 1. Of the three parcels of land we need to acquire permanently, one is subject to negotiation with Network Rail, one is ready to exchange contracts, and one is currently at Heads of Terms stage.

Works to relocate the badgers living in Moseley cutting were completed two weeks ahead of schedule and the site is currently being demobilised. These works were undertaken with no safety incidents. Finally, on Package 2, we are close to resolving the objection from Network Rail, which was preventing progress with Network Change, thanks to engagement with DfT.

West Midlands Grand Railway Collaboration

The GRC continues to be a primary focus of activity within the West Midlands, driving industry collaboration. This is demonstrated by the engagement from all its partners and the effectiveness of the Strategic Board which last met on 17th August. The Board is currently meeting bi-Monthly however it was agreed at the Board to amend this to 6-weekly to ensure the momentum is maintained on all workstreams.

The work on the One Team Proposal for Birmingham city centre stations is progressing well with some good actions being taken by the team. Communication between the three Stations in Birmingham was an area that was identified as requiring improvement and we now have installed new radios at each of the locations meaning that they are able to communicate with each other much more effectively. This has been well received by the staff on the ground.

To support with the visibility of the GRC, a short video is currently being produced to make the case for the GRC to those unaware of what the GRC is and to demonstrate to railway staff, customers and suppliers how the GRC is going to benefit them. All partners of the GRC have agreed to feature in this short video and it is hoped that it will be completed later this year.

The Collaborative timetable development work which is being led by the GRC continues to progress well. It has been agreed that the consultation process will be ran collaboratively with the GRC producing an umbrella document which will be released alongside the TOC consultations and would provide an overall narrative of changes in the West Midlands area signposting customers to the relevant TOC consultations for further detail on proposals.

6. 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: Significant progress has been made with the Walsall to Birmingham via Sandwell (A34) and Birmingham to Birmingham Airport and Solihull (A45) in construction. Joint work undertaken by TfWM and Local Authorities during this period includes:

- A45 main works underway with completion expected in line with programme
- A34 procured as four separate packages of work which are all on site with completion expected in line with the programme
- Sprint A34 and A45 Phase 2 is included within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement proposals which has been approved by WMCA Board

Rail projects are listed within section 4 of this report.

7. Metro Delivery Programme

The Metro programme is defined 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	Early 2022
Edgbaston Extension	December 2021
Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Extension	November 2024
Phase 2	
Birmingham Eastside Extension	2026/7
East Birmingham Solihull	No schedule yet defined.

Work continues to progress with 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 Phase 4 to take the tram into the station plaza have commenced, since MMA took possession of the site in June 2021. Design is being closed out with all stakeholders. Assuming there are no major issues concerning design approval, the construction should be completed in December 2021, with operations commencing January/February 2022. There are some small additional works to complete on Phases 1-3 which will occur in the same period.
- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension – Detailed design of this extension started in December 2019 and is almost complete. This will enable MMA to provide full costs for the complete delivery. As procurement of the rail corridor took longer than anticipated and the TWAO was not approved until October 2020, construction works started later than planned but are now under way in Dudley town centre and along the old railway corridor. A number of bridges have been replaced along the route and main track works have commenced on

Castle Hill. Together with the issuing of the full MMA cost we will also receive an updated schedule.

- Edgbaston Extension – Work is almost complete for the delivery of the Westside extension to Edgbaston, including the overhead line equipment. We need to install the substation in October and complete road signage and marking once the TRO is published and approved by BCC. A Road Safety Audit is planned for November and then we will complete testing and commissioning. Unless the TROs are delayed, we should still be able to deliver for the end of 2021.
- Birmingham Eastside Extension (BEE) – Construction has commenced on the two sections to be delivered before Commonwealth Games: The Delta junction at Bull Street, and the Digbeth High Street section, the remaining sections will start after CWG. They are also dependent on agreements with HS2 on collaborative construction. These agreements are not yet in place. This will determine the delivery date and start of operations.
- East Birmingham to North Solihull Extension - TfWM is working with Government to gain further funding to develop a Full Business Case. A first request is included in the current CRSTS submission.
- 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. The first 8 trams needed for Edge and WCCE extensions have been delivered and are being commissioned. They will enter service as soon as approved.

8. Metro Operations - Midland Metro Limited

Midland Metro Limited (MML) continues to maintain the 4 key principals adopted at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic as it enters recovery:

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

Since the lifting of almost all legal restrictions on the 19th July including the requirement to social distance, Metro patronage has continued to grow, and it is currently at circa 75-80% compared with pre-Covid passenger numbers. Weekends have seen an even stronger recovery with patronage at 90%+. Taking a data lead approach MML has used its onboard Automatic Passenger Counting system and data from Swift to monitor demand and plan services, deploying queue buster trams at busy times as required.

Although recovery is strong, MML remains dependent upon support from Central Government and is receiving funding via the Light Rail Recovery Revenue Grant. This covers the period up to the 5th April 2022 after which financial support is planned to end.

As well as focusing on recovery MML has, and continues to, prepare for the opening of the new extensions to Edgbaston and Wolverhampton Rail Station. These and the extension to Brierley Hill will see the Metro team grow by 70% in the next few years. To help prepare for this a new West Midlands Metro Training Academy opened in July

at the Metro Centre, Wednesbury. New recruits and existing colleagues will be trained at the Academy which has a new state of the art driver simulator and another two simulators on order. Recruiting new team members will be a key focus for MML in the coming months and a new recruitment campaign has already launched with a short video showcasing colleagues sharing their experience of working at West Midlands Metro. The video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/9Pjb1ETtTn8>.

Other activity in recent months and which will continue over coming months, includes the testing and commissioning of the new Urbos 100 trams; procured to serve the expanding network. Each must deliver 1500km's without a service affecting failure before it can be accepted into operation.

9. 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.

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 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 (Completed)
- Scheme 2: Smethwick Town Centre to Spon Lane (Completed)

The following schemes have been delivered 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 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, Community Cycle Clubs have been set up in Sandwell. Community Cycle Clubs in Sandwell include Lightwoods Community Club, Smethwick Beat Streets Community Club, Hadley Stadium, Friar Park Community Centre and Bangladeshi Women's Association.

Living Streets Walk to School Programme

On Friday 21 May, the Department for Transport announced the National allocation of £2.1m towards the continuation of Living Street's Walk to School Outreach Programme. This funding will help more pupils enjoy the fresh air, freedom and fun that walking to school brings in Walsall. Living Streets will continue to work with us in the West Midlands until 31 March 2022.

Sandwell has 19 schools currently involved in the WOW Programme.

West Midlands Cycle Hire (WMCH)

West Midlands Cycle Hire will consist of a minimum of 1,500 bikes across the seven Local Authorities, with at least 10% of the fleet being e-bikes.

Since the 21st June to 31st July 2021 68 pedal bikes and 10 docking stations have been launched across Sandwell, focused around West Bromwich. Sites include close to the West Bromwich Metro stop, College, High Street and Sandwell and Dudley Rail stations.

Users can hire a bike on a Pay as You Ride (PAYR) paying £1 unlock fee and 5p per minute. The offer of the first 30 minutes of first ride ends in November 2021. From September there will be an introduction of two new tariffs to encourage users to hire a bike regularly as part of their commute, leisure or utility journeys, supporting mode-shift. On September 6th the Early Morning Bird went live, reducing the cost of hire between 6-11am (5p per minute and the £1 unlock fee is waived). This means between these times a 10-minute ride is 50p instead of £1.50.

E-bikes will be available from late Autumn 2021, subject to confirmation. Seven E-bikes have been allocated to Sandwell (exact numbers are subject to confirmation).

Since the launch of the WMCH bikes in Sandwell there has been a cumulative total of £1,297 journeys (June -July 2021).

Walking and Cycling Programme

£23.5m of Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) has been allocated to develop and deliver an improved Walking and Cycling programme. The programme is coordinated by TfWM.

As part of the TCF programme, funding has been allocated towards the development of the Year 1 priority 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 Funding Contribution (Capital, £m)
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	
A34 Perry Barr Extension through to Walsall	£200,000	

The A34 strategic feasibility study from Birmingham to Walsall was completed in February 2021 and it was determined that a segregated cycle route is not feasible and the alternatives to match the ambition for the region or the local authorities. A change request is currently pending for the remaining funding.

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 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 contributed 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 in 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 in 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 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.

A popular discounted travel scheme is Workwise which offers 50% off selected tickets in the first three months of employment. Eighteen applicants in the Sandwell area were helped with travel to work through Workwise in the last quarter. ¹

TfWM has teamed up with local transport operators to extend the Workwise offer. It was launched on 10th September 2021 and will provide ground-breaking support for newly employed people.

The new offer includes the first two 4-week tickets FREE then a third 4-week ticket at a 50% discount from the standard price on selected bus, tram and nNetwork passes.

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

¹ Statistics are from May to July 2021 to be in line with quarterly reports for August and September

10. 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.

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.

The Transport Safety Officers have provided a highly visible presence around the transport interchanges in the area, the bus station and train stations and they have travelled on all modes of public transport dealing with issues identified in the Safer Travel Tasking process or by partners. Following patrols along the Midland Metro in West Bromwich and them sharing information with Neighbourhood Policing Team an arrest was made for a serious offence.




The notices have been issued with regards to Bus Byelaws, which will cover Sandwell, this allows for a 30-day period ending September 2021 to receive replies from the travelling public for the WMCA to consider

RTCC continue to liaise with Sandwell for incidents on Highways England's Strategic Road Network, allowing them to set VMS where available/appropriate, and mitigate on signals to any local approaches, a recent example being the RTC causing 60+ minute delays on the M5 southbound at J4 (Friday 31st July), with VMS set on Hagley Road advising traffic heading towards M5 J3, which could use the traffic advice to use local routes down to J4, rather than sit in M5 delays.

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, but patronage is now starting to increase across all modes.

- Headline Measures

Performance (June 2021 – unless otherwise stated)		
	Annualised Patronage	Punctuality
Bus	123.2m  (116m – Jan 2021)	89.3% (April 2020 – March 2021)
Rail	20m  (Approx 12m – Jan 2021)	93.2% (Period 1 2021/22)
Metro	4.1m  (4.1m – Jan 2021)	91.6% (98.5% - Jan 2021)

Bus

Overall bus patronage in the West Midlands has been falling each month since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, with decreases during the 1st lockdown and increases seen on the previous month in August, September and October 2020 as lockdown restrictions eased. A further decline in bus patronage was seen in the winter months of November, December and January as the 2nd lockdown was in place. Since January 2021 bus patronage has started to recover each month with current annualised bus patronage (July 2020 – June 2021) standing at 123.2 million a decrease of –37.2% compared to the previous year (June 2020) of 196.2 million, but an increase of +6.2% since January 2021 (last Sandwell report). Monthly bus patronage is now at 66.5% of pre-COVID-19 levels.

Bus Punctuality stands at 89.3% of non-frequent bus services operated ‘on time’ (between 1 minute early and 05.59 minutes late).

Rail

Rail patronage has also been impacted by Covid-19. Current rail patronage is approximately -65% of pre Covid-19 patronage and stands at approximately 20 million per year. Data collection has been suspended due to the pandemic.

Rail punctuality (trains arriving not more than 5 minutes late) has fallen slightly to 93.4% for Period 1 2021/22 compared to 94% for Period 10 2020/21.

Metro

Metro patronage has also decreased from 8m passengers during the year period April 2019 to March 2020 and remains at 4.1m (July 2020 – June 2021).

Fleet availability (i.e. proportion of rolling stock available as a percentage of the target number needed to run to timetable) stood at 91.6% in June 2021 a decrease from 98.5% 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>

Modal Share West Bromwich

The latest West Bromwich cordon survey was undertaken in March 2020 - 2 weeks ahead of the first national lockdown due to COVID-19.

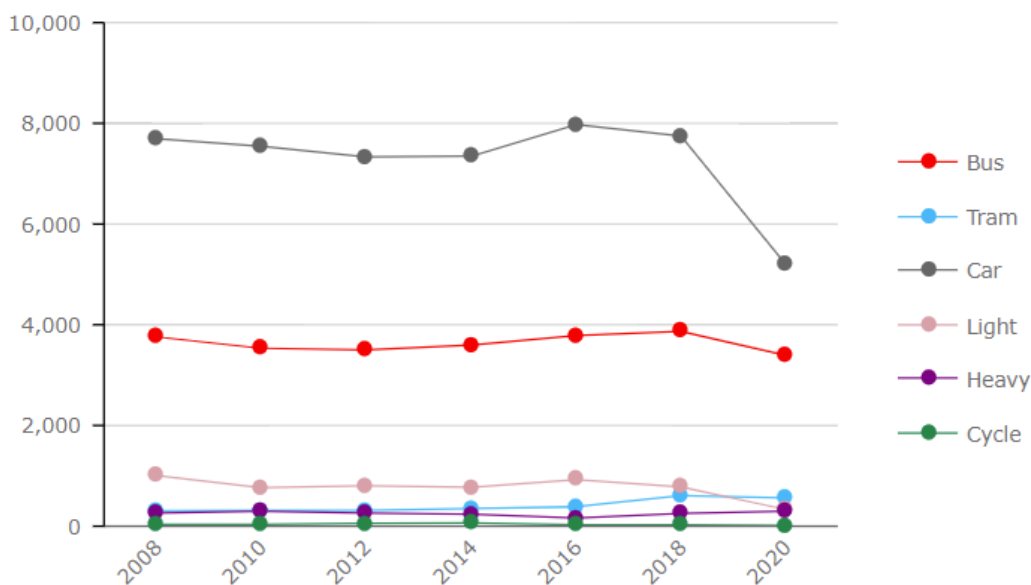
Despite this the AM Peak Public transport mode share has increased in 2020 to 40.4% (bus 34.6%, tram 5.8%) from 33.7% in 2018, where the decrease in trips using private vehicle modes was greater than trips undertaken using public transport.

Bus trips have decreased by -12.2% and tram trips by -7.2%. Tram trips undertaken in 2018 increased by +57.9% and despite the threat of COVID-19 there was only a reduction of -44 trips in 2020.

Car trips have decreased by -32.9%. Light vehicle trips decreased by -57.6% and cycle trips by -62.5% (17 trips). Heavy vehicle trips increased by +17.6% but by a small number of +45 trips.

Overall trips into West Bromwich (March 2020) have decreased by -26.2%.

Total Trips into West Bromwich Town Centre AM Peak (7:30-09:30)



The next West Bromwich Cordon Survey will be undertaken in March 2022. Further details on modal share for all strategic centres can be found here: <https://community-engagement-tfwm.hub.arcgis.com/pages/modal-split>.