

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM)

March 2023

1. Local Transport Plan (LTP)

The new West Midlands LTP (WMCA's Statutory Transport Plan) Core Strategy sets out a vision for travel in which private vehicles will continue to play an important role, but the West Midlands should be a place where everyone can thrive without having to drive and own a car. A well-connected 45-minute region of 15-minute neighbourhoods where people can travel to access what they need through a mix of walk, wheel, and ride modes.

To deliver against our ambitions and deliver the behaviour change required, the Core Strategy sets out an approach for a dynamic plan and introduces a range of policies and actions that the region will need to consider and progress across **6 Big Moves**. Action across the Big Moves should not be taken in isolation and through developing programmes of activity we will need to consider how a range of complimentary policies can be used to deliver the most effective outcomes, as well as review and monitor the impact of our policies which will help with on-going discussions with elected members and the public on how and where progress can be made.

The Six Big Moves are:

- Behaviour Change
- Accessible & Inclusive Places
- Walk, Wheel, Cycle and Scoot
- Public Transport & Shared Mobility
- A Safe, Efficient and Reliable Network
- A Green Transport Revolution

The Core Strategy also sets out a commitment to develop 4 supporting **LTP Area Strategies** (covering Birmingham, the Black Country, Coventry and Solihull) in partnership with local authorities. The rationale for these area strategies is to help translate the Big Moves into local areas whilst recognising that the region is diverse. Through the Area Strategies we can collaboratively build a shared plan for what works best where, including how best to engage and communicate with local communities and stakeholders on the changes that could be made in different places.

To support the development of the Area Strategies and to enable a consistent approach across the region, TfWM has developed **Area Strategy guidance**. This guidance will form the basis for WMCA and local authorities to start development of the LTP Area Strategies. The development of Area Strategies as part of the region's statutory LTP is not intended to replace local authorities' own transport plans and strategies.

As noted, the Government will require LTPs to be able to demonstrate and quantify their impacts and is shortly due to publish updated LTP guidance which will also set out how they expect Local Transport Authorities to quantify the impact of LTPs on transport carbon emissions.

Consultation will be undertaken for 8 weeks on the draft Big Moves from 20th February 2023. The Area Based Strategy framework will also be available for comment for those who might wish to, but as a working technical document. It is also proposed that TfWM and local authority transport officers will begin initial discussions on the development of the Area Strategy documents.

An Implementation Plan will also be developed setting out priorities for action together with a proposed funding strategy. It is proposed that engagement on a set of 4 Area Strategies and draft Implementation Plan takes place before the end of 2023.

2. Bus Network

Background

As detailed in previous reports, local bus services across the country are suffering from reduced passengers and revenues, significantly increasing costs and driver shortages. Whilst services in the West Midlands have seen passenger levels recover better than most other parts of the country this has resulted in a number of bus services being no longer viable to operate without public sector support and also a significant increase in the costs of providing the subsidised network. Taken collectively this has resulted in a £6m pressure to maintain a network equivalent to 90% of mileage operated prior to the pandemic.

Network Review

As a result of these pressures and as was a requirement of the DfT, a comprehensive operator led network review was undertaken during the Autumn. The key outcome of the review was for operators to implement a network they believe is sustainable in the longer term and for TfWM to then assess the implications of those commercial changes and seek to mitigate the impact as far as possible within the policy framework and budget available to the Authority.

Following the review of the commercial networks and the impact on the subsidised services TfWM identified 39 services that were potentially 'at risk' against the access standards policy framework and the forecast outcome of the competitive tendering exercise.

The outcome is detailed below and the associated appendices.

Retained Services

Following the review of services of the 39 which were identified as being at risk, 8 have been retained with no changes.

Retained with Changes

The services have been retained with changes to the current provision. The reasons for the changes can be for a number of reasons including.

- Changes to the commercial viability, route or times of commercial services.
- Amendment to existing contracts to bring them within the value for money criteria of the access standards. Such changes could include reductions in frequency or overall hours of operation.
- Service enhancements due to transformation change aligned with the West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Further details on these service changes are available at the following web link.
<https://www.tfwm.org.uk/plan-your-journey/ways-to-travel/buses-in-the-west-midlands/upcoming-bus-changes/bus-service-changes-from-1-january-2023/>

Withdrawn Services

Following a competitive tendering exercise, several services did not meet the revised value for money criteria specified within the TfWM access standards framework. These services will be withdrawn from 1st January 2023.

TfWM have been working with passengers and stakeholders to inform them of their next nearest alternative service including Ring & Ride and Demand Responsive Services, where available. Further details including alternative services available for passengers is available at.

<https://www.tfwm.org.uk/plan-your-journey/ways-to-travel/buses-in-the-west-midlands/upcoming-bus-changes/bus-service-changes-from-1-january-2023/>

School Services

As part of the network review process National Express had proposed to deregister 21 dedicated school bus services. Transport for West Midlands and stakeholders were clear that they were not supportive of any change to dedicated school services and particularly at the mid-point of the academic year.

National Express have subsequently reviewed this proposal and are retaining services or proposing alternatives.

Where services have changed, TfWM have challenged National Express to ensure that sufficient and target engagement has been undertaken to ensure every parent, pupil and school knows what their revised arrangements are from January.

BSIP Transformational Service Enhancements

As part of the West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) several transformation objectives for the Bus Network were proposed. The network review provided an opportunity to meet some of these objectives whilst also seeking to mitigate the impact of the commercial changes on the network.

Partnership Services

As part of the Network Review, TfWM have worked with and facilitated discussions between commercial bus operators to improve the bus service provision on routes where there is commercial competition.

Work has been carried out on the services where existing partnership services are in place and also on routes where there is not an existing partnership operation. This has resulted in improved co-ordination or new co-ordination on some services.

The existing partnerships routes continue to have joint ticketing acceptance and a co-ordinated timetable. The new partnership routes do not have a joint ticketing agreement in place, however journeys are logically co-ordinated and/or evenly spaced so passengers can easily determine which operator is operating a journey.

An overview of the changes to existing partnership routes operating in Sandwell and the new partnerships routes are listed below: -

Service 40 Wednesbury – West Bromwich (Diamond Bus and NXWM)

- *Existing Partnership Route.* Revised timetable introduced from 27 November 2022.

Service 42/43 – West Bromwich – Great Bridge – Tipton/Bilston (Diamond Bus and NXWM)

- *Existing Partnership Route.* Revised timetable and route. Service 42 journeys no longer serve Dudley with service 229 providing alternative journeys between Tipton and Dudley. Introduced from 01 January 2023.

Service 16/16W – Birmingham – Hampstead – West Bromwich/Great Barr (Diamond Bus and NXWM)

- *New Partnership Route.* Revised timetable and route. Timetables of service 16/16W journeys are co-ordinated with the new provision replacing existing service 46.

Service 45/401E – Walsall – Stone Cross – West Bromwich (Diamond Bus and NXWM)

- *Diamond Bus to operate all journeys.* A revised service 45 timetable is introduced replacing 401E journeys. Introduced from 01 January 2023.

Stakeholder Engagement

To manage the impact to customers and ensure residents are supplied with the relevant information regarding their travel options from January, a number of stakeholder letters were issued, and briefing sessions held with Councillors and MPs from across the region.

On 11th October, a letter was sent from Anne Shaw, Executive Director of TfWM, to every leader, councillor, and MP in the West Midlands, outlining the reasoning for the network review, the steps that were being taken to mitigate any loss of service and a list of the services that were ‘at risk’ following the commercial operator’s review. This was followed by an offer of briefing sessions, by met area, where the team talked through in detail what was being done and the potential impacts to each area.

Following the outcome of the first round of tenders, another letter was issued to the same recipient group on 5th December with an update of work that had been undertaken and the outcome these tenders.

In addition to the above, the team have been in communication with a number of councillors and have answered any queries that have been directly sent.

Passenger Information

The scale of the review has resulted in significant change to the majority of passenger information displays across the bus network. This will include over 9,000 printed timetable displays, 1,500 bus stop flags and 1,630 RTI electronic information displays. This is across the network at stops, interchanges, and bus stations.

Unfortunately, due to the scale of the review and the significantly condensed timescales, it has not been possible to update all of the information prior to the changes on the 1st January. However, we have displayed over 5,000 posters across the network informing passengers of the upcoming changes and providing links to digital up to date information. The same information has also been provided to local libraries and other community hubs, for whom we have contact information, requesting that the poster be displayed in a prominent area.

Passengers without access to digital information can access the same information and timetables by calling the TfWM customer contact centre and also by speaking to the passenger support team at TfWM Bus Stations.

We have worked with Bus Operators to provide information on buses and particularly where operators are changing, or services are no longer being operated.

Future Operator Support

The DfT have confirmed that further funding will be available for bus operators and local transport authorities for the period January to June 2023. This will enable operators to continue to commit to the 90% network implemented on 1st January 2023. However, National Express have indicated that without further support it is unlikely that this network will be sustainable. TfWM in conjunction with the other city regions continue to liaise with the DfT to communicate this significant risk and seek longer term funding for local bus services.

National Express have informed us that a further 10% of the network could be at risk from June 2023 without additional funding or revenue. Our ability to mitigate the impact of further commercial de-registrations is significantly diminished given we have fully committed the budget for subsidised bus service for 2023 / 2024 as part of this network review process.

Proposals within the West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan will also deliver passenger growth and therefore revenues for bus operators and efficiency savings for reinvestment back into the bus network. Operators have already committed to a fares freeze to 2025, reform of fares and ticketing will commence from early Spring 2023 followed by a £multi-million ticketing incentive programme and an unprecedented programme of bus priority measures. These initiatives will be subject to separate reports to TDC.

TfWM are working through the Trailblazing Devolution Deal including the devolution of Bus Service Operators Grant, which is currently paid to operators directly by the

DfT to reimburse for fuel duty and other initiatives. Devolving this locally will enable the funding to be targeted to delivering aspects of the network important for the region. DfT have been suggesting reform of BSOG, we don't yet know whether Government intend to maintain the existing level of funding and seek to do more with operators for the money or reduce the pot overall. TfWM believe that any reduction in funding will lead directly to a reduction in local services.

TfWM have committed to continue to pay operators for acceptance of travel under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) at pre-Covid patronage estimates until the end of December 2022. At the time of writing the rate for future payments of ENCTS is undecided.

Network Performance

At the time of writing the performance of the network remains challenging for passengers. In week commencing 10th December, 4% of all mileage was not operated largely due to driver shortages although an increase in congestion due to increased shopping and leisure traffic exasperated by the rail strikes has also contributed.

It is anticipated by National Express that the changes to the Network in January will have a positive impact on performance and positively the month of November saw the number of new drivers entering National Express exceed those leaving.

From January future funding for West Midlands bus operators will be directly linked to their performance in delivering the network. It is hoped this will further improve performance across the network.

3. Rail Network

WMT's performance is now measured against Time to 3 (T-3). Trains are measured throughout their journey and must reach their destination within 3 minutes of their booked time to be considered on time. WMT's most recent T-3 result (Period 11 – January to February) was 79.1%. This was a marked improvement on the performance during the preceding period.

For a train company with the size and complexity of WMT the normal range of a "good" T-3 measure would be between 80-90%, anything above 90% would be considered very good and anything below 80% considered poor.

West Midlands Railway services outperformed those of London Northwestern. The former recorded a T-3 of 81.3%, 7.3% better than the latter (74%). The most significant incident of Period 11 in the West Midlands occurred on 16 January when half a mile of overhead electric power wiring was damaged. The damage closed the railway between Birmingham New Street and Wolverhampton via Winson Green for around a day. Services were still able to run between the two cities using the diversionary route via Aston and Handsworth. However, only a limited frequency was possible due to needing to fit these trains around those that were already operating via Aston and Perry Barr (CrossCity and Chase Line services).

WMT's traincrew recovery programme continues to progress well. As of 11th January they had 769 drivers on their books (98% of headcount). Of these, 672 were available to work, the highest this figure has been since the start of pandemic. WMT also have 107 trainee drivers in the business. The progress made by the recovery programme

means WMT have experienced considerably fewer cancellations due to traincrew availability. However, the risk has not been eliminated entirely. WMT's terms and conditions are some of the most restrictive in the industry, meaning that they cannot always translate driver numbers into staff working trains. Any changes to terms and conditions will require negotiation with the trade unions.

Industrial Action

The rail industry is currently experiencing its most widespread and sustained period of industrial action since the 1980s. Since June 2022, members of the ASLEF, RMT and TSSA trades unions employed by Network Rail and the DfT contracted train companies have taken more than 20 days of strike action, not including an extensive period over Christmas where RMT staff would not volunteer for Rest Day Work and overtime.

The strikes have led to extensive disruption on the local and national rail network. On 28th and 29th December WMT were unable to run any services at all due to action by the TSSA union. Similarly, the RMT's Rest Day Work and overtime ban prevented Chiltern Railways from operating any services north of Banbury for nearly an entire month.

Talks between the unions and the employers have been ongoing for some time. There is evidence that they can bring about positive results. For example, TSSA members employed by the train companies have recently voted to accept a two-year 9% pay deal. The deal will mean a 5% increase in 2022/2023 or a minimum of £1,750, whichever is the greater, and a further 4% the following year. The agreement also means there will be no compulsory redundancies among certain grades of staff, including station-based workers and all on board staff, until the end of 2024.

However, ASLEF have recently rejected an offer from the train companies. This was for a 4% pay rise back-dated to 1 April 2022, and a further 4% for the 2023/24 financial year. This was accompanied by a commitment to no compulsory redundancies until at least 31 March 2024. The rejection was followed by the announcement of two days of strike action.

An offer from the train companies has also been rejected by the RMT. This was a 'best and final offer' that the train companies said would improve how the industry delivers services to passengers, in exchange for a pay increase of 5% and 4% that respectively covered the 2022 and 2023 pay awards. However, the RMT rejected the offer and called more strikes dates across March and April, as well as an overtime ban for members employed by Network Rail.

Rail Industry Reform

On 7 February the Secretary of State for Transport announced that the Great British Railways (GBR) organisation proposed in May 2021's William's-Shapps Plan for Rail would be going ahead. This ends months of speculation and brings some welcome clarity to the industry. According to the Secretary of State, the new GBR – an arms-length body of government – will act as 'a guiding mind to coordinate the entire network'. The exact role of the private sector in this new model was not described in detail, but the Secretary of State did say that private companies would be involved "not just in running services but in maximising competition, innovation and revenue growth right across the industry".

Now that the central recommendation of the Plan for Rail has been confirmed, WMRE and the GBR Transition Team (GBRTT) should be able to accelerate talks on what a future partnership between WMRE and GBR might look like. These discussions have been ongoing for some time and are linked to the Trailblazer Devolution Deal (TDD) being agreed by WMCA with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). They aim to build on the existing partnership between WMRE and DfT and ensure that a truly locally accountable railway is created as part of the GBR reforms.

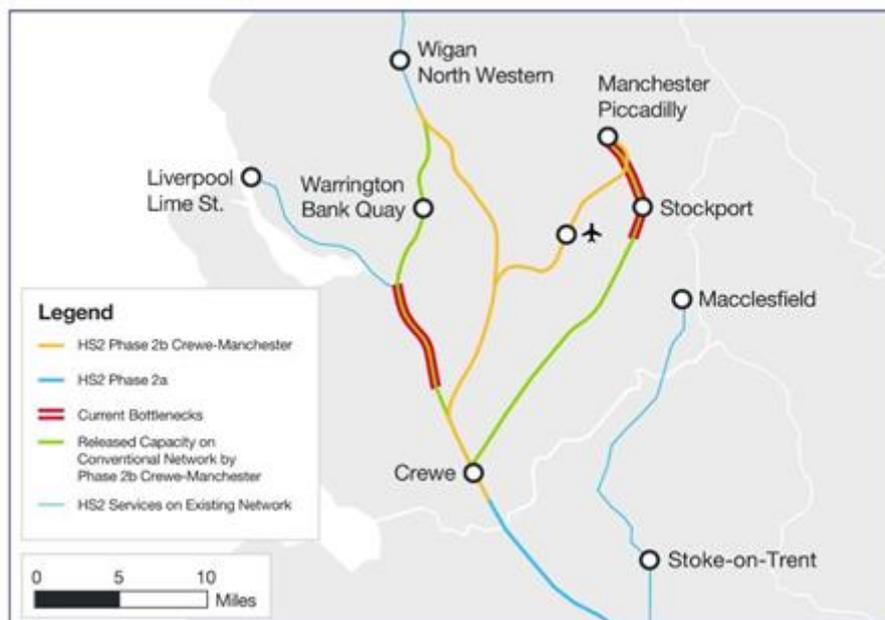
The Secretary of State for Transport has announced that a decision on the future location for the GBR HQ will be made before Easter.

HS2 Update

Design and construction of the new high speed line continues with some noticeable milestones reached in recent months notably:

- First “triangular” viaduct piers cast for Curzon St Station approach lines
- One of the two tunnels under Long Itchington Wood in Warwickshire completed
- Boring of two 10 mile tunnels under the Chilterns has passed the halfway mark
- Planning permission granted for Washwood Heath Train Maintenance Depot
- Piling work finished for Colne Viaduct - UK’s longest bridge (3.4km) - and over 500m of viaduct’s piers and deck structure completed
- 300 additional apprentices announced in February 2023 - 200 of which are in West Midlands where circa 9,000 people are now working on the project
- Over 400 West Midlands business have now won work on HS2

There is as yet no update from government on an alternative option to the now scrapped Golborne Link section of HS2 Phase 2b which would have by-passed and relieved capacity on a congested section of the West Coast Main Line north of Crewe towards Wigan and would also have further reduced HS2 journey times from the West Midlands to Scotland by circa 15 minutes.



Map: HS2 Phase 2b Strategic Outline Business Case Update January 2022

The Transport Select Committee (TSC) had challenged the government to set out “alternative plans which add similar capacity as a minimum, by March 2023” (and the then Chair of the TSC, Huw Merriman, is now the Minister responsible for HS2). However, the government requirement that such an alternative must “fit within the existing budget envelope for the Integrated Rail Plan” would appear increasingly to be challenging to achieve.

WMRE, TfWM and WMCA continue to support calls for early delivery of HS2 services from the West Midlands to the north west and Scotland once HS2 Phase 2a to Crewe has been completed in the early 2030s.

In March 2023 the government announced it will prioritise delivering the first high-speed rail services running between new stations at Old Oak Common in west London and Curzon Street in Birmingham by the early 2030s.

Whilst the government remains fully committed to delivering HS2 from Euston to Manchester, the next 2 years will be used to rephase construction and optimise future delivery of Phase 2a between Birmingham and Crewe and to ensure an “affordable and deliverable design at Euston” with a view to delivering the station alongside high-speed infrastructure to Manchester by the early 2040s. This would mean that Old Oak would remain as the temporary London terminus for HS2 services for a decade, which will limit the number of services which can operate. However, this station will have good links via the new Elizabeth line to Heathrow Airport, the West End, the City and Canary Wharf.

The announcement also confirmed that work is continuing to develop HS2 East, the proposed route for HS2 services between the West and East Midlands, and to consider the most effective way to take HS2 trains to Leeds.

Midlands Rail Hub

The new Outline Business Case for Midlands Rail Hub was formally launched in December 2022 and has been submitted to government. Midlands Connect, Network Rail and West Midlands Rail Executive have all stressed the cost-effectiveness of delivering MRH in full into central Birmingham and that there is a strong case for continuing to develop the core elements of entire scheme (including both east and west chords at Bordesley) to the Full Business Case stage of development.

WMCA Mayor Andy Street underlined the case for delivering Midlands Rail Hub in full at his meeting with the Rail Minister on 9 February 2023 and it is hoped that the Secretary of State will issue formal “Decision to Design” the £137m Full Business Case for MRH in Spring/early Summer 2023.

New Timetables

The December 2022 timetable change was successfully implemented and early indications are that it is performing well. The timetable has delivered more regular service patterns on a number of routes. For example, the Birmingham to Wolverhampton service now operates at exactly 30-minute intervals, and departures from New Street to Tame Bridge Parkway are exactly 15 minutes apart.

Sandwell and Dudley station is now served by the Transport for Wales service to Mid/North Wales alongside the Avanti services to London and Scotland. Journey times to London on the Avanti services are currently longer than planned as Avanti isn't

operating at its full three trains per hour frequency between New Street and Euston. This means that for many journeys there is an extended layover at New Street and then a slower journey to London. This will be improved when Avanti is able to operate more services between Birmingham and London.

There is a significant timetable change planned on the Snow Hill lines for May 2023 with services moving to a regular 30-minute pattern, with 15-minute intervals between Snow Hill and Kidderminster. The timetable will particularly improve the service spacing to Dorridge and Whitlocks End but will also deliver significantly better performance as many short turnround times are increased.

In May 2023 CrossCountry are also improving their services with the restoration of half-hourly services between Birmingham and Manchester and Bristol.

Timetable changes for December 2023 are currently under discussion. These are linked to government decisions about reducing subsidy and may result in some service reductions.

West Midlands Grand Railway Collaboration (GRC)

The GRC continues to demonstrate the value of collaborative working with the board continuing to meet regularly. The board last met on 2nd March and continues to meet on a 6-weekly basis.

The GRC has a Customer and Commercial Directors forum which continues to be productive with the 3 workstreams (Closer Working, Information during disruption and Revenue Protection) all progressing well and demonstrating the value of collaborative working. We are holding another Customer Service Away Day on 28th April where colleagues from across the industry will be invited to come and discuss how we can make improvements for customers by working together and sharing ideas.

A trial to offer free sanitary products at stations has been launched across the 3 stations in Birmingham city centre in conjunction with International Women's Day. The initiative is aimed at making railway stations comfortable and welcoming environments for all passengers.

Industrial Action continues to be challenging for the industry with further strike days being called causing disruption to customers. The GRC is supporting the operators and Network Rail to ensure joined up communications to customers.

4. Project Delivery Programme

A headline summary of activity is set out below:

Sprint: Phase 2 - Sprint design development is currently underway. Aecom have been appointed to deliver the preliminary design. The internal Sprint delivery team are undertaking a review for constructability. On site we are undertaking GPR, (ground penetrating radar), surveys together with trial holes to ascertain the position and depth of utility services. On completion of this work, the design solutions will be passed to Sandwell officers for review and approval. It is anticipated that the scheme will be on site late Summer 2023.

Phase 1 Construction works have been completed, within budget and prior to the Commonwealth Games.

Dudley Port Integrated Transport Hub

Work is ongoing in partnership with Sandwell Council to transform Dudley Port Railway Station into an Integrated Transport Hub.

The programme is split into a series of phases which seeks to provide enhanced interchange, a significantly improved environment and better access from surrounding areas in the short to medium term, followed by proposals to redevelop the railway station in the longer term.

£2.4m from the City Region Sustainable Transport Fund has been allocated to support the delivery of short-term measures ready for when Metro arrives in late 2024 and to align with wider schemes being delivered within the area by the end of March 2027. The focus of “Phase 1” is to create a lighter, brighter and safer feeling interchange which provides more accessible routes to and through the interchange with enhanced customer facilities and information.

Phase 1 is being designed to complement adjacent projects including the Active Travel Fund 3 proposals along the A461 and the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Measures being led by the Black Country Transport Group and Sandwell & Dudley Councils as well as the Metro delivery which will include a new lift and stairs between Metro and the railway station ticket office area.

TfWM is currently finalising a Programme Business Case for submission next month. This will then allow progression and funding allocation for the Business Justification Case where further optioneering and detailed design for the funded short-term measures will be undertaken in consultation with Sandwell Council officers.

The Programme Business Case also considers a vision to deliver medium- and longer-term measures to transform the railway station providing an additional platform, lengthened island platform, step free access and new passenger facilities. While this is currently unfunded, including it in the Programme Business Case allows us to undertake further development to understand what a scheme could look like and costs which can then be used to identify funding opportunities. It also supports Network Rail’s Access for All bid where Dudley Port is identified as the regional top priority for step free access. We expect to hear the outcome of that bid in the next year.

West Midlands Rail Programme

The West Midlands Rail Programme is delivering new stations which will improve connectivity across the region and beyond, helping people to enjoy the wealth of jobs, educational opportunities and leisure pursuits available across the region.

Last year we delivered a new station at Perry Barr and improvements at University Station, to help ensure that our rail network was fit for Birmingham’s once-in-a-lifetime Commonwealth Games. That was only the start of our programme, and we are continuing to work hard to:

- Deliver a new, world-class University Station in support of the West Midlands’ world-class institutions.
- Build new stations at Willenhall and Darlaston, slashing travel times by public transport to Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Walsall by more than half.
- Build new stations on the Camp Hill Line in Birmingham, which will see services resume for the first time in more than eighty years.

As well as benefits to rail users, these stations will benefit travellers across the region by helping to reduce congestion on our roads.

University station

The new station will provide fifteen times more capacity than the current station and include facilities such as accessible toilets, retail and a purpose-built NHS facility in the station, the first of its kind in the UK.

This station is a long-term investment in the future of the West Midlands, and as a first step, we were delighted to open the widened platforms and canopies to support the Commonwealth Games.

Construction work has continued on the new buildings, bridges and public realm to deliver the full benefits of the scheme. Although work to the exterior of the new station buildings is largely complete, there is still much to do to complete the internal fit out and commissioning of the station. In particular we have experienced ongoing issues with the supply and installation of the internal wall cladding, putting further pressures on our completion schedule. Unfortunately, this has led to a revised opening date of autumn 2023. We remain committed to delivering the full benefits of this new state-of-the-art station as soon as possible and will continue to ensure the old station building and new extended platforms remain in use throughout the build.

New Stations

The Walsall stations (Willenhall and Darlaston) have seen on site progress with enabling works ongoing including ground remediation, de-vegetation, and demolition of buildings ready in preparation for the new stations. The next phase of the project will be grouting for mine remediation.

Enabling works are also underway at all three Camp Hill Line stations (Moseley Village, Kings Heath, and Pineapple Road) in advance of disruptive railway access in March to undertake platform construction works. A site presence has been established at all three stations and with demolition, de-vegetation, and intrusive surveys undertaken ahead of the main construction works.

Metro Programme

The Metro programme is based on the latest funding position and current project status. 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:

Edgbaston Extension – The route to Edgbaston Village was completed in June 2022, and opened to passenger service in July, just before CWG. There is some small snagging work to be completed, and some works on the side streets as a result of the Metro scheme that BCC and TfWM are implementing. The service has already proven very popular with more journeys starting in Edgbaston than anticipated with around 8% of all Metro journeys starting on the new extension.

Wolverhampton City Centre Extension – We have faced some great difficulties getting agreement with the many stakeholders on some of the key design points for this extension. However, we are confident to get it opened in the Spring. We will open first to the station and then shortly afterwards offer a two terminus service alternating between the station and St George’s.

Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension – Work has proceeded as planned on many sections of this extension, and in particular in Dudley Centre and at the Wednesbury connection into the existing line. After a lot of discussion across the WMCA and reviewing of finances, the commitment to deliver the full line was re-confirmed, but that the project will be delivered in two phases: top Dudley and then beyond to Brierley Hill, when finances permit. The TfWM team is working hard on resolving that financial issue. MMA has been instructed to proceed with works to Dudley and there is an increased level of activity along the route with many new structures now installed and track installation progressing in Dudley centre. Service is expected to start to Dudley in Autumn 2024.

Birmingham Eastside Extension (BEE) – Work has progressed well on Section 1 on Lower Bull St with tracks installed. This section will be completed next period. Demolition of King’s Parade will be completed in March 2023 and we will then be looking to start work on Section 2, through to the Clayton Hotel. Section 5 works in Digbeth High Street have completed on the North side with the planting under way along the urban realm. Works on the south side have now started in earnest.

Due to delays from HS2 project, Metro will not be able to start work on the middle section of the extension until January 2026, and so open the line in Spring 2027. In view of this we are looking at the possibility of adjusting the design to allow a partial opening as far as the Clayton Hotel earlier than the rest of the route.

East Birmingham to North Solihull Extension - TfWM is working with Government to gain further funding to develop a Full Business Case. There is a package in the current CRSTS funding to investigate the different options going forward.

Procurement contract for the new fleet from CAF was completed in October 2021 with a first phase of 21 trams. We have accelerated the delivery of these trams, and they will all be delivered in 2023.

Road Programme

Hagley Road – Hagley Road Corridor formed part of the CRSTS funding and option appraisal work is underway to develop the Strategic Outline Business Case for bus priority measures and cycling improvements, with further work planned to consider further option appraisal for rapid transit along the corridor including Metro.

5. Metro Operations - Midland Metro Limited (MML)

Work continues to repair the bodyside and bogie box cracking identified on the 2G fleet. This work is taking place at the Very Light Rail (VLR) centre in Dudley. A total of 6 trams are either in the process of repair at VLR or have had repairs undertaken. A further 5 trams require repair work undertaking and TfWM are working with the supplier CAF to facilitate these.

Due to these issues and other failures, there are still a significant number of 2G vehicles unavailable for service. TfWM are however working with the supplier CAF to bring the new 3G fleet into the UK ahead of schedule, and we already have 11 in Wednesbury. These vehicles were procured to operate on the extensions however are now in use to provide service in place of the defective 2G vehicles. As a result of this 3G availability in December 2022 Midland Metro Limited were able to improve headways on the system and are now in a position to provide a service every 10 minutes between Edgbaston Village and Wolverhampton.

Metro patronage has been volatile over recent months, with the industrial action through October and November leading to a degraded level of service being provided. Agreement was reached with Unite the Union on pay levels. This is a longer-term deal until April 2024 providing stability.

Patronage over the Christmas period was softer than anticipated, with the wider performance of the transport network also suppressing demand for Public Transport across the region with significant industrial action on the heavy rail network. Whilst Metro patronage initially increased during the earlier heavy rail industrial action in 2022, this trend has not continued as people avoid public transport on rail strike days if possible. Metro is however now seeing patronage levels over 100% of pre-Covid on most days, some of this growth as a result of the opening of 3 new stops on the Edgbaston extension.

Midland Metro Limited took the decision to freeze fares in January 2023. Looking ahead, the opening of the Wolverhampton Station extension is due in the spring and it is anticipated that the improved reliability of the Metro fleet will also encourage patronage to return to the network.

6. Active Travel

Active Travel Fund (ATF)

The following schemes are being delivered as part of the Sandwell's ATF 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 - 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 and Sandwell Councils. The scheme involves the provision of a dedicated permanent 2-way cycle route along this 1.2km section of the A4123 corridor running between Tipton Road (A4037) and Burnt tree (A461). This scheme is now completed.

Local Authority Capability Fund (LACF)

TfWM and the local authorities have successfully secured DfT revenue funding from the Local Authority Capability Fund. £1.9m will deliver West Midlands wide regional behavioural change activities and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) development. The fund is delivering adult cycle training, cycle maintenance training, plus led cycle rides in Sandwell. LACF is also funding the development of the Black Country Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, to which Sandwell has been an active contributor. This project concludes 31st March 2023.

Cycling for Everyone

The Commonwealth Games cycling legacy programme Cycling for Everyone is in delivery with a suite of cycling activities to encourage deprived communities to enjoy cycling as an everyday way to travel and stay active. The project includes a bike giveaway, inclusive of adapted cycles, and an intensive community engagement approach to reach new audiences. The project was delivered in Langley, St Paul's, Soho and Victoria wards.

Living Streets Walk to School Programme

In May 2022, 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 Sandwell. Living Streets will continue to work with us in the West Midlands until 31 March 2023.

Sandwell has 27 schools currently involved in the Living Streets 'Walk Once a Week' Programme.

West Midlands Cycle Hire (WMCH)

West Midlands Cycle Hire consists of 1,500 bikes across the seven Local Authorities, with 10% of the fleet being e-Bikes. Pedal bikes were launched within Sandwell in June 2021, with e-Bikes added to the fleet in December 2021.

Bikes are available to hire across 8 docking stations in Sandwell, focused around West Bromwich. Sites include close to the West Bromwich Metro stop, Sandwell College, High Street and Sandwell and Dudley Rail station. Key statistics/observations from Sandwell have been detailed below for reference:

- Total rides within Sandwell to-date: Pedal bikes, 5,341 journeys; e-Bikes, 569 journeys
- Average ride time per journey – 30 minutes
- Average distance travelled per journey – 3.38km
- Journeys within Sandwell are roughly a 50/50 split between A-A journeys, whereby the user returns the bike to the same dock that they hired it from, and

A-B journeys, whereby the bike is returned to a different location. This indicates a good scheme mix between leisure and utility journeys.

- 90% of bikes within Sandwell are returned to docking stations, representing positive customer behaviours. This compares favourably to other regions, where additional staff resourcing is required to return informally parked bikes to docking stations.

Walking and Cycling Programme

Development Work Stream

Sandwell will be using TCF funding to complete a study on the route A457 Corridor, Oldbury Town Centre to Smethwick High Street and Smethwick Galton Bridge Station.

The Outline Business Case for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Corridor Access Improvements was submitted by Sandwell and Dudley to WMCA Corporate Assurance and is now approved.

The area under the bridge at the WBHE and A4123 is being widened to accommodate a cycle route and pedestrian access. This has been funded through TCF (£2m) and is being delivered by Midland Metro Alliance.

A third tranche of ATF3 was awarded to WMCA which included additional funding for Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Corridor Access Improvements at stops for cycling. There is also funding for a regional School Streets programme. Ferndale Primary School and Glebefields Primary School will have school street delivered as part of this programme.

TfWM have recently completed a self-assessment for Active Travel England (ATE), which was a requirement ahead of the Capability and Ambition Fund (CAF, formerly Local Authority Capability Fund) and the fourth tranche of ATF. WMCA was awarded a score of 3 overall (out of a maximum of 4) following a submission of evidence. We are one of the few authorities in the country who have received this higher score.

ATE have awarded WMCA £3.4m of CAF following an application process which was submitted on 30 September. The following schemes are planned to be progressed through the development project cycle (e.g. feasibility studies, concept design) with this funding: Blackheath to Oldbury WM LCWIP route, A457 Oldbury to Smethick Black Country LCWIP route and WM LCWIP Route – Tipton to West Bromwich.

We are currently preparing a bid for ATF4 funding round which closes on 24 February 2023. This is a single year settlement with a focus on delivery projects, however development projects can be included within the bid. ATE have given indication that the outcome will be communicated before the end of the 22-23 financial year.

Delivery Work Stream

Friar Park Public Realm Improvements (completed)

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 provided improvements at and between these two locations providing a safe and enjoyable space for local people to walk and cycle.

Smethwick Old Church and Dorothy Parkes Community Centre Public Realm Improvements

This project improved 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.

Access improvements to existing crossings (completed)

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 formed part of an existing cycle route between Blackheath and Rowley Regis Train Station and this small improvement helped to improve this route.

YMCA Cycle Parking (completed)

This project provided 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.

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 discounted tickets in the first three months of employment.

The offer includes 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.

59 applicants in the Sandwell area were helped with travel to work through Workwise in the last quarter¹.

The Employment Outreach Lead continues to expand promotion to 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.

Non-virtual activity includes attendance at jobs fairs, careers fairs and meetings throughout Sandwell. Partnerships with job centres in the Sandwell area have been established to help provide support for their clients in the transition from benefits to their first pay days in employment.

¹ Figures are from September 2022 to November 2022 to be in line with quarterly report dates

7. Safety, Security and Emergency Planning including Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre

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 Safer Travel Partnership's 'Safer Travel Plan' the latest version was agreed with West Midlands Police Crime Commissioner, The West Midlands Mayor and the British Transport Police Authority in March 2022.

Since 2021 Safer Travel have employed 3 Transport Safety Officers (TSOs) whose primary role is to provide a visible presence on the Public Transport Network in the West Midlands, providing good Customer Service to Staff and Passengers to tackle low level Anti-Social Behaviour and improve the perception of safety for users of the transport network. The approach to be followed by the TSO's can be summarized as Engagement, Education, Encouragement and where necessary Enforcement. Following a successful bid to the Department of Transport last year, there are now 11 active TSOs in post. 8 additional TSOs joined us on 14th November and went operational on 5th December. All of the 11 TSOs are trained in all Civil Interventions (including Byelaws) as well as their Traffic Power to stop and direct traffic.

In the calendar year 2022 the 3 Transport Safety Officers have spent **6088** hours on patrol, had **79581** interactions with passengers and staff, engaged with **8790** passengers and issued **1081** verbal warnings.

In January 2023 they were on patrol for 994 hours which equates to 72% of their total duty time, 736 of which were directly linked to our Tasking priorities. A milestone figure of 1033 Verbal warnings were given out, 18779 interactions with travellers and staff were made and 5627 engagements with travellers and staff were carried out.

The Transport Safety Officers have provided a highly visible presence around the transport interchanges in Sandwell, the three bus stations at Cradley Heath, Wednesbury and West Bromwich, Metro stations and bus shelters and they have travelled on all modes of public transport dealing with issues identified in the Safer Travel Tasking process or by partners. They visited West Bromwich Bus garage to meet with drivers to inform them of their role and to encourage reporting of incidents by drivers. They assisted with an arrest of a male who for assault of a pregnant female at West Bromwich Bus Station. They have also continued to work closely with West Bromwich Neighbourhood Policing Team to deal with the long-term issue of Street Drinkers at West Bromwich Bus Station with members of the group receiving ASB warning letters and being dealt with for breaches of a criminal behaviour order.

RTCC continue to liaise with Sandwell Council Highways team for incidents that also impact National Highways' Strategic Road Network, allowing them to set VMS where available/appropriate, and mitigate on signals to any local approaches. This is most commonly at M5 Junction 1 with the teams in regular communication to ensure any issues that arise at this junction are swiftly responded to. CCTV that was part of the Highways Investment Scheme supports this response.

With the recent extensive roadworks at Dudley Port the RTCC have been giving this part of the network increased focus to ensure any network issues are appropriately supported. The team regularly liaise with the senior permit officer to help mitigate the works and have a strong collaborative and communicative partnership.

The Emergency Planning Team worked closely with Sandwell's Emergency Planning Team in response to the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. Ensuring a coordinated approach to messaging, available transport services, required transport mitigations and sharing of information and intelligence that would assist the response. Both teams liaising closely with the regions Local Resilience Forum to ensure communication and regional awareness is maintained.

Appendix 1 – Network Monitoring

Monitoring ensures TfWM understands changes in the performance of the transport system arising from schemes, for example the punctuality of public transport, modal usage, patronage 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

The table below shows performance change in January 2023 compared to the previous report (August 2022). Annual data (2020/21 and 2021/22) is also provided where available. Data is annualised (unless stated otherwise) and for the whole of the West Midlands Combined Authority area.

	Aug-22	Jan-23	% Change	2020/21	2021/22	% Change
Bus Punctuality				89.3%	81.4%	-8.9%
Bus Patronage	191.8m (July 2022)	206.5m (Dec 2022)	+7.7%	97.6m	174.7m	+79.1%
Rail Patronage	50.1m	56.4m	+12.5%	16.7m	39.8m	+137.8%
Tram Patronage	4.1m	4.1m	+16.8%	3.4m	4.8m	+41.0%
Tram Fleet Availability (by month)	99.2%	99.3%	+0.1%	98.8%	93.9%	-5.0%

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 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 (January 2022 – December 2022) standing at 206.5 million an increase of +7.7% compared to 191.8 million in July 2022 (annualised). Bus patronage in 2021/22 increased by +79.1% compared to 2020/21. Monthly bus patronage (December 2022) is now at 80.2% of pre-covid levels (December 2019).

Bus Punctuality stands at 81.4% of non-frequent bus services operated 'on time' (between 1 minute early and 05.59 minutes late) in 2021/22 compared to 89.3% in 2020/21.

During 2021/22 78% of those surveyed (sample size 926 users) were satisfied with the overall journey experience (Source: Travel Trends and Behaviours Survey 2021/22 Final Year Report, Human Insight, TfWM).

Rail

Rail patronage has also been impacted by Covid-19. Current annualised rail patronage is approximately -23.1% of pre-covid patronage and stands at approximately 56.4 million per year (an increase of +12.5%). Rail patronage in 2021/22 was 39.8 million (+137.8%) compared to 16.7 million in 2020/21.

During 2021/22 85% of those surveyed (sample size 250 users) were satisfied with the overall journey experience (Source: Travel Trends and Behaviours Survey 2021/22 Final Year Report, Human Insight, TfWM)

Tram

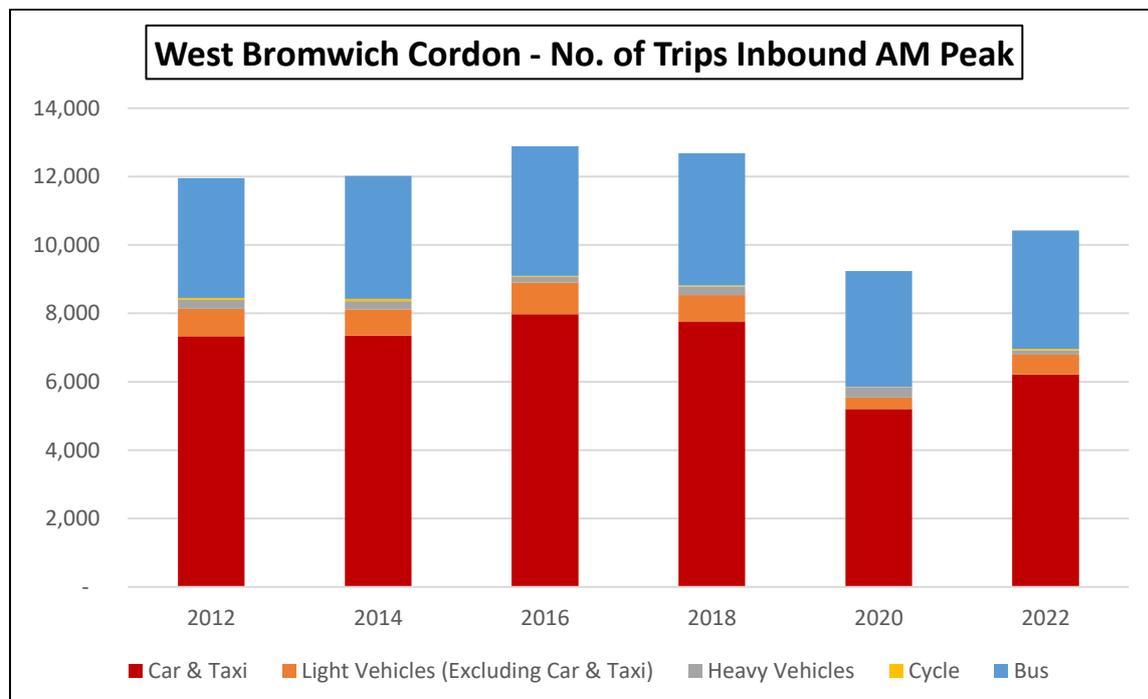
Tram patronage decreased from 8m passengers during the year period April 2019 to March 2020 (pre-covid) and is now 4.8m annually (January 2022 to December 2022), an increase of +16.8% compared to August 2022. The most recent annual tram patronage (2021/22) is 4.8m, an increase of +41.0% on 2020/21.

Fleet availability (i.e., proportion of rolling stock available as a percentage of the target number needed to run to timetable) stood at 99.3% in January 2023, an increase from 99.2% in August 2022. The average tram fleet availability in 2021/22 decreased by -5.0% compared to 2020/21.

During 2021/22 95% of those surveyed (sample size 139 users) were satisfied with the overall journey experience (Source: Travel Trends and Behaviours Survey 2021/22 Final Year Report, Human Insight, TfWM).

Modal Share West Bromwich

The latest West Bromwich cordon survey was undertaken in March 2022 and will be undertaken again in March 2024.



The AM Peak (07.30-09.30) public transport mode share has decreased slightly in 2022 to 40.0% (bus 35.3%, tram 4.7%) from 40.4% in 2020, mainly due to an

increased in trips using private vehicle modes (except heavy vehicles) and a decrease in tram trips.

Bus trips have increased by +2.0%, cycle trips by +370% (37 extra cycles), car and taxi by 19.4% and light vehicles by +73.2%.

Heavy vehicle trips decreased by -58.4% and tram trips by -18.6%. Overall public transport trips decreased by -0.9%.

Overall, all trips into West Bromwich (March 2022) have increased by +11.0%. The previous survey in West Bromwich was in March 2020, 2 weeks before the national lockdown.

Further details on modal share for all strategic centres can be found here: <https://community-engagement-tfwm.hub.arcgis.com/pages/modal-split>