

PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION IN BIRMINGHAM - *TRANSPORT FOR WEST MIDLANDS*

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR PHILIP DAVIS, LEAD MEMBER WMCA TRANSPORT DELIVERY COMMITTEE, TfWM

January 2017

Introduction

1. Members of the City Council will be aware of the creation of the West Midlands Combined Authority in mid 2016. The former Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) and its delivery arm, Centro, were absorbed into the new Combined Authority under the new title of *Transport for West Midlands*. While the 7 Met Authority Leaders now set the wider strategy, the 19 councillors on the Transport Delivery Committee (TDC) oversee the delivery of a quality service for transport users across bus, rail and Metro services across the West Midlands metropolitan area.
2. Birmingham has 7 members on the TDC. The other 6 councils have 2 members each. The Committee Chair is Cllr Richard Worrall (Walsall). I became Vice Chair in July, succeeding Cllr Kath Hartley, who continues to lead on passenger matters. Full Lead responsibilities are:
 - Cllr Richard Worrall: Chair (Lead Member, SPRINT Bus Policy)
 - Cllr Philip Davis: Vice Chair & Finance & Performance Monitoring/Birmingham Lead Member
 - Cllr Kath Hartley: Putting Passengers First
 - Cllr Judith Rowley (Wolverhampton): Safe & Sustainable Transport
 - Cllr Roger Horton (Sandwell): Rail & Metro

The full list of Birmingham members is: Cllrs Fazal, Lal, Linnecor, Davis, Hartley, Huxtable and R.Alden. Cllr Huxtable leads the Conservative members.

Finance/ Transport Levy

3. Members will be aware that, while Government funds are usually required to support major capital schemes (such as tram extensions), each of the 7 Metropolitan Councils in the West Midlands conurbation contributes towards a Transport Levy. In 2016/17 this will be almost £125 millions and is contributed to according to local authority populations. Birmingham contributes 40% of the current £125m (£50m at the time of writing). Since 2011/12, due to austerity policies, the Levy has declined by £25 million (17%).

For 2016/17 the policy agreed by the 7 Council Leaders and WMCA Board was a 3 year programme of cuts to the Levy, equalling a cut of 7.5% by 2019. Five per cent of this has already been delivered by TfWM in 2016/17. Given continuing austerity policies and withdrawal of Government support from large urban areas, there is further pressure on TfWM to further reduce the Levy from the City and other 6 Councils for the coming financial year.

4. The Levy chiefly pays for support older bus passengers via the English National Concessions Travel Scheme, plus Child Travel Concessions. It also supports the Ring & Ride service, subsidised bus services (where commercial operators will not provide) and tram and rail concessions.

Major areas of Levy expenditure in the 2016/17 Revenue Budget include :

National Policy

National Concessions Travel Scheme - £55m (44.2%)

Finance Related

Debt, Capital, Pension matters - £22m (18%)

TfWM Local Policies

Child Concessions - £12m (9.59%)

Subsidised Services - £8.5. (6.8%)

Accessible Transport - £7.6m (6.1%)

5. Large cuts to the Levy contribution potentially impact upon passenger concessions. For example:

a) Child Travel Concessions (age 5-15 plus 16-18 in full time education), cost around 56 pence per journey in subsidy (totalling £11.4m) in 2016/17. The only way to deliver savings would be to remove the concession or charge a fixed fee journey.

b) The subsidised bus network costs £7.6m. TfWM supports around 9% of the West Midlands bus network at a subsidy of £1.26 per passenger mile. This is the lowest bus subsidy of the 6 equivalent transport bodies outside London.

Capital & Other Programmes

6. TfWM is also the vehicle for more obvious transport spend in the West Midlands, notably on the Metro extensions and to a lesser extent, supporting improved rail facilities including station improvements/car parking. Strategic rail and transport capital spend is largely dependent on Government support for Network Rail and Highways Agency projects. The Government has also supported research projects such as *Midlands Connect*. MC aims to promote better rail and road connectivity between the wider West Midlands and East Midlands regions and to the east coast ports/East Anglia. It received £5m in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement to assist scoping and business case work.

7. Under the new West Midlands Region rail franchise (expected in the next few years), there will be scope to develop improved rail access to Birmingham by reconnecting under-used rail routes, but only subject to Department for Transport funding. Currently Government funding for rail (and all regional transport modes) lags disproportionately behind spending in the London Region.

Responding to Local Transport Needs - Key Challenges

8. While policy decisions rest with the Combined Authority Board, the Transport Delivery Committee exists to support informed decision making on transport challenges for the Region. These include ensuring the Combined Authority is fully informed on the impact for passengers and citizens generally, of policy developments and transport trends. These include:

- a) Bus usage decreased 2.9% in 2015/16 from the previous year, down to 267 million users from 275 million across the conurbation. This reconfirmed a long-term decline, though bus continues to be the most used local transport mode by far, at 82% of all public transport trips. In Birmingham bus trips increased marginally (0.5%) and improved bus priority routes will assist this trend,
- b). Rail journeys continue to grow and are now 74% higher than 10 years ago at 53.7 million journeys on the WM rail network in 2015/16. This is 5.7% up compared to 2014/15, with more commutes (36%) into Birmingham City Centre in morning peak by train than by bus.
- c). Metro is enjoying new growth since on street running began in the City Centre in 2016. Metro

patronage was 5 million in 2015/16. Monthly patronage has grown 10% from on street running in December 2015. Saturday/Sunday usage is up c. 30% each day suggesting increased use of the tram for leisure journeys. All this speaks to the attractiveness of our City Centre as a great place for shopping, entertainment and culture.

9. Environmental quality is a growing concern, with travel by private car far and away the biggest contributor to pollution caused by transport. Given the continuing breach of international air quality standards by the Government and the damaging health impacts of diesel particulates and NO2 emissions in parts of the City, TDC members will continue to support initiatives that promote a shift from car usage to public transport. Again, better bus priorities and the Metro extension will help a trend towards more environmentally- friendly travel in our City.
10. TfWM is also engaged the Government supported *Smart Choices/Smarter Networks* programme. Aiming to tackle congestion, cut carbon emissions and assist the local economy, the scheme aims to promote sustainable travel (cycling and walking included) along key routes in the conurbation. These routes include the A45 to the Airport and NEC, plus the A38, A459 South Birmingham 'Technology Corridor'.
11. Transport Delivery Committee also has a role as a voice for transport users and particularly for those least able to access transport or with particular transport needs. In advising and informing the WMCA Board on transport issues, the affordability of transport for young people continues to be a concern. Equally access to assisted transport (such as *Ring & Ride*) for older people and for the disabled, is an important issue given the continuing impact of austerity driven cuts.

Further Information

12. More data and information on the transport trends and activities in this report is available from *Transport for West Midlands*. Ask for *West Midland Travel Trends 2016* (Report to TDC, Nov. 2016) or go to WMCA website (Transport Delivery Committee)

Please see **Appendices 1 and 2** to this report for more details of the specific capital investment and operational activities by Transport for West Midlands in Birmingham.

COUNCILLOR PHILIP DAVIS

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