

The partner authorities of the West Midlands share a vision for:

- a thriving, sustainable and vibrant community where people want to live and where business can develop and grow
- town, city and local centres that are attractive and vibrant, where high-quality public transport is the norm and walking and cycling are common-place
- cleaner air and less congested traffic conditions
- a safer community with fewer road accidents and with environments in which people feel secure
- equal opportunities for everyone to gain access to services and facilities and enjoy a better quality of life, with travel choices that are attractive, viable and sustainable.

The Authorities aim to achieve this vision through our shared priorities of tackling congestion, improving accessibility, reducing pollution and making transport safer for all. This vision is reflected in our long-term Transportation Strategy, whose principal aims are to:

- make the best use of the existing transport network
- enhance the quality of the public transport on offer
- target investment in infrastructure to support regeneration

Delivering our Transportation Strategy requires a new five year plan - this LTP document - which analyses problems, proposes solutions, sets targets and contains annual programmes of work and funding for the period from 2006/07 to 2010/11. This LTP builds on our last submission in 2003 and follows agreement between the Metropolitan Authorities, and consultation with stakeholders whose interests range from trade and logistics, through health and social exclusion, to road safety and environmental protection.

Current work to develop growth proposals for the Birmingham City Region, together with the sub-regional growth studies for the Black Country and Coventry / Solihull / Warwickshire areas will further influence patterns of development and regeneration for the Area.

The Problems

Transport and travel matter to almost everyone, for work, school, shopping and social activities. However, as each of us travels, we can create problems for ourselves and others of congestion, pollution and over-crowding.

The expected growth in travel demand is huge, with forecasts of an extra 242 million trips between 2001 and 2011. It is also forecast that another 32,500 homes will need to be built between 2006/07 and 2010/11. An ever-increasing proportion of homes will be developed in the city centres of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton. These are indicators of excellent economic vitality, but growth must be accommodated. In summary, the our Area faces:

- increasing use of cars, with precious little extra road space available to meet growing demand
- declining use of buses, even though they have most potential to offer a choice of how people get around
- inadequate heavy and light rail networks, which need large investment to maximise their potential

In addition, the Government's West Midlands Area Multi-Modal Study (WMAMMS) has identified a series of problems including inadequate cycling facilities, unreliable and often overcrowded public transport, lack of rail capacity, traffic congestion, inefficient use of road space and high freight costs. It is estimated that congestion costs businesses £2.3 billion per year in delays.

The Solutions

Our LTP takes into account the strategies of each authority and individual priorities such as urban regeneration, new housing, job opportunities and leisure facilities. The Authorities have identified opportunities and begun to introduce measures to ease transport problems. Our LTP will provide limited new highway capacity to improve access and movement for goods and to serve new development.

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Introduction

The Transport Act 2000 requires all local transport authorities in England, outside London, to prepare Local Transport Plans. The authorities are also required to take account of the Department for Transport's Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans: Second Edition. This Guidance should be read in conjunction with the Government's overall transport strategy, set out in the Transport White Paper 'The Future of Transport: a network for 2030', published in 2004.

The White Paper recognises that, over the next 30 years, demand for travel via road, rail and air will continue to grow. However, it also recognises that we cannot simply build our way out of the problems we face. The Government's strategy is built around three key themes: sustained investment, improvements in transport management and planning ahead.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for the West Midlands both recognise the Metropolitan Area as the driver for economic success for the wider region. These Strategies establish a basis for building the capacity we need to support economic viability and environmental sustainability. The synergy between economic development, regeneration, housing and transport, and the links with health and education, are reinforced. The priorities are to regenerate communities, identify new opportunities for economic development and employment and support the vitality of town and city centres.

The Regional Spatial Strategy, published as Regional Planning Guidance 11, sets out the Government's vision for the Metropolitan Area and neighbouring shire counties. It is for:

'an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable region which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life of future generations.'

Against this background, the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the West Midlands Metropolitan Area has been prepared in partnership by the seven local authorities - Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton - and the West Midlands Public Transport Authority.

In the process, members and officers from the West Midlands partner authorities have strengthened their engagement with the wider region, to ensure that regional Strategies and this LTP are closely aligned. The engagement has produced a framework for prioritising major transport investment in the region and has led to recognition that regional structures are a key stakeholder in our Transportation Strategy.

We have also developed good relationships with other stakeholders, including the West Midlands Business Transport Group and environmental groups. We continue our joint working with transport providers such as the Highways Agency, rail industry and bus operators. We have consulted widely with the general public. Dialogue with all these parties will continue until we submit our final LTP in March 2006. It is vital that everyone, from government to resident, has an opportunity to influence our LTP if we are to make the Metropolitan Area a more prosperous, more enjoyable place in which to live and work.

Our Vision

Our Area is the largest conurbation outside Greater London and home to 2.6 million people. The Area is vital to the national economy and includes Birmingham as a 'World City' at the heart of the wider West Midlands region. The local transport networks of the Area are intertwined with the hub of the national rail network and the crossroads of major motorways.

Over the next 20 years, we expect to see significant changes in patterns of development and employment and we want to ensure sustainable economic growth and urban regeneration. It will be vital to ensure that infrastructure in the Area is geared to support our ambitions. Transport infrastructure will be particularly important and the outcomes of growth studies which are currently underway will require us to roll forward our strategy between the submission of our provisional LTP in July 2005 and our final LTP in March 2006.

However, it will concentrate on better managing the existing highway network, in order to increase the capacity of what we already have. The LTP also seeks to accommodate future extra trips on better public transport and through walking and cycling which, together with more efficient highways, will mean congestion becomes no worse.

Making best use of existing transport networks

There are six key strands in our plan. They include::

- Smarter Choices – better information for citizens about travel choices
- Red Routes – after successful trials on the A34 in Solihull, introducing a 261-mile network with strict controls on stopping, parking and loading
- Urban Traffic Management & Control – upgrading signals at key junctions
- expanding existing Park & Ride sites, and developing new ones
- enhanced transport information – such as real-time travel information through Help2Travel, and more display equipment on bus and rail networks
- demand management using existing and new approaches.

We will deliver our strategy through a combination of better infrastructure and 'soft' behavioural measures. There will be a sustained communications with the public throughout the LTP2 period, to inform and to encourage debate on key transport issues. We will also promote public transport improvements and TravelWise schemes, to reduce car commuting. We will encourage Safe Routes to Schools, to reduce the 'school run' and promote child health. Overall, we expect to have a significant impact on travel behaviour over the five year period, persuading travellers to switch to walking, cycling and public transport and thus mitigating traffic congestion.

Enhancing the quality of public transport

Public transport must play a large part in accommodating future extra trips, if congestion is not to get worse. The current capacity and quality of bus and rail services bears comparison with other metropolitan areas, but is insufficient to persuade enough people to switch from cars in order for the highway network to cope with the expected growth in travel demand. So we plan to increase capacity, improve quality and introduce new technology. Our strategy requires:

- partnership with bus and rail operators to improve the quality of services
- improvements in bus infrastructure, such as bus lanes
- expansion of the Bus Quality Network and introduction of Bus Rapid Transit
- extension of the Metro network
- enhancement of the rail network including Birmingham New Street, Coventry and Wolverhampton stations

Targeting investment to support regeneration

Regeneration and housing renewal requires supporting investment in the transport infrastructure. Our relevant Major Schemes include:

- Darlaston Strategic Development Access – which supports brownfield development to create job opportunities
- Wobaston Road in Wolverhampton – which will enhance access to a site being redeveloped by Advantage West Midlands
- Chester Road in Birmingham – with improvements which will support Jaguar's manufacturing facilities
- a Quality Bus Network in east Birmingham – which will assist regeneration

Congestion

It is estimated that the regeneration of our Area will lead to a growth in trips of 13% between 2001 and 2011. We need to ensure that our success in creating more jobs and homes avoids any worsening of

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congestion or environmental conditions. We have a balanced approach which seeks to encourage more use of public transport and more walking and cycling. We also want to improve the quality and capacity of non-car modes, improve network efficiency, and manage the demand for travel.

Details of the forecast increase and the impact of a 5% modal transfer from the car are shown in Table 1 below. We would have to accommodate more than 100 million extra car trips, even with 5% modal shift. So our planned programme of Major Schemes and current projects will not on their own prevent congestion getting worse. We will need demand management measures, such as greater controls on parking. We will also need to investigate the contribution that other measures could make beyond 2011.

Table 1 Forecast Number of Trips (millions per year)

Scenario	Base (Surveys)	Forecast Growth	Committed Schemes Only		Committed Schemes with 5% Transfer		
	Trips	%	Trips	Difference	Transfer	Trips	Difference
Mode / Year	2001	2001-11	2011	2001-2011	2011	2011	2001-2011
Car	1,108.0	15%	1,274.2	166.2	-63.7	1,210.5	102.5
Bus	336.0	6%	356.2	20.2	29.0	385.2	49.2
Rail	24.8	33%	33.0	8.2	2.7	35.7	10.9
Metro	4.8	40%	6.7	1.9	0.5	7.3	2.5
Total Mech. Mode	1,473.6	13%	1,670.1	196.5	-31.5	1,638.6	165.0
Walk & Cycle	341.2	13%	386.7	45.5	31.5	418.1	77.0
Grand Total	1,814.8	13%	2,056.7	242.0	0.0	2,056.7	242.0

Tackling congestion

Congestion is a recognised problem in the West Midlands conurbation, particularly at peak times. Traffic jams and delays affect businesses and local communities, and threaten the competitiveness of the area and our quality of life. Vehicle use in the region is increasing all the time, adding to congestion and to air quality challenges. If we don't address this issue, the future prosperity and much-needed regeneration of the conurbation will be affected, and the city region growth agenda may be threatened.

It is forecast that there will be an extra 165m car trips a year by 2011 but there won't be enough extra road space in the region to accommodate these. Climate change and other environmental concerns make dealing with congestion all the more imperative.

Congestion in the West Midlands doesn't only affect local people and local businesses. The region is at the heart of the national road and rail networks and holds the key to an effective national transport system, fit for the 21st century.

Government nationally has recognised that congestion is one of the top challenges facing the UK economy. It has set out plans, subject to the development of appropriate technologies and to further dialogue, to introduce a system of national road pricing for the UK, although this could not come into force until 2014 at the earliest. Clarification from Government of national plans would be welcome.

We can't wait to address congestion, either at local, regional or national level. The problem won't go away, it will get worse. The West Midlands conurbation is determined to face up to managing the issue by optimising the use of all forms of transport.

Forging consensus

Tackling congestion is a controversial topic. Cars are an important part of modern life, and many of us rely on our cars to get around to school, work and to leisure activities. Business has to move vital goods around, both across our region and through it.

But most people are agreed that we must act urgently to come up with solutions to the problem. Solutions to the problem of congestion will work only if they are integrated properly with other transport plans and with growth and spatial strategies in the West Midlands. This LTP sets out the overall vision and plans for transport across the region over the next five years. Tackling congestion requires a long-term strategy, which will run well beyond the current LTP period.

Moving the debate on

The conurbation is determined to deal with congestion. Debate is needed about whether current transport measures are sufficient to address the anticipated growth in congestion. The provisional LTP marks the start of a process of research, debate and consultation that is designed to lead to effective solutions to congestion. Solutions will be for the medium-term but strategic decisions need to be taken in the short-term.

In November 2004 the conurbation committed to working out with DfT ways in which innovative approaches to demand management in the West Midlands could be progressed. In parallel with debates in the city region, we wish to work in partnership with the Department for Transport on new approaches to tackling congestion, the conditions under which such approaches might be tried out and, correspondingly, the investment that will be required in public transport and our road network. We are determined to find solutions that enable the West Midlands to meet its aspirations for future growth and regeneration.

There are many approaches to dealing with congestion, and the solutions must be right for the West Midlands. The cordon scheme of congestion charging that was introduced in central London in 2003 is just one way of approaching the problem, and there are many alternatives including for example:

- Targeting of peak time travel behaviours e.g. school run
- Electronic road pricing by locality and time of day
- Home-working and variable workplace hours
- Parking standards

Key conditions

The conurbation is clear that no form of road pricing could be introduced unless certain conditions are in place. In particular

- Any schemes must improve and not detract from the region's competitiveness
- Appropriate transport alternatives must be significantly funded and coming on stream to provide choice
- The factors affecting the conurbation's ability to deliver quality bus services must be addressed
- There must be discussions about possible ways of hypothecating of revenues for reinvestment in transport in the WM
- The innovation and knowledge base of the West Midlands should be fully utilised in taking any initiatives forward.

Any solutions must also

- Take account of any national road pricing scheme(s), given the West Midlands' proximity to key motorways and its place at the heart of the country's road network
- Be responsive to specific local conditions in the conurbation both in terms of location and time of day

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- Be integrated with the overall transport strategy for the conurbation
- Be consistent with the conurbation's economic growth, regeneration and social inclusion strategies and align with regional transport strategies

Conclusion

The West Midlands deserves a world-class transport system that meets the needs of local people and that reflects the significance of our position at the heart of the country. Ignoring congestion is not an option if the West Midlands is to stay competitive and see jobs and housing grow. It is time to start looking longer term at all the potential solutions to our traffic problems.

Targets – road traffic

Our key target is to limit the increase in road traffic mileage to no more than 7% between 2004 and 2010. This is ambitious, given the 3.3% rise between 2001 and 2003. It will require modal shift from car travel, more bus showcase routes, more bus capacity and the commitment of local employers to TravelWise initiatives.

Our other targets are to reduce morning peak traffic flows into the nine LTP centres by 2% between 2005/06 and 2010/11, and to prevent any increase in average vehicle delays in the morning peak between 2003 and 2010.

Targets – buses

Bus use in the Metropolitan Area continues to suffer long-term decline. However, buses remain the dominant form of public transport and plans to tackle congestion and reduce traffic depend on an upswing in their fortunes. Our targets are to:

- increase bus use from the 2003/04 base of 325 million trips per year to 355 million by 2010/11
- increase bus satisfaction from 57% in 2004 to more than 60% by 2009/10 - improving personal security will be an important contributor
- operate 83% of bus services between 'one minute early and five minutes late' by 2010/11

The Metropolitan Authorities will further develop showcase routes, introduce bus priority measures in conjunction with Red Routes, greatly expand TravelWise and seek cooperation with bus operators. If local consultation fails to deliver agreements on physical measures, decline will continue.

Targets – light rail

Passenger numbers on the Midland Metro are stable. Our target is to increase light rail use from 5.1 million trips per year in 2003/04 to 5.8 million in 2010/11. Increased frequency at peak times and new commercial and residential developments in Bilston and West Bromwich should boost ridership. Centro also needs to implement enhanced park and ride facilities.

Accessibility

Social inclusion improves access to work, education, health care and fresh food shops. It is a priority for all the Metropolitan Authorities. Our accessibility strategy is based on:

- strategic-level analysis produced by the Accession software (the new tool developed for the DfT)
- discussion and agreement with stakeholders such as Local Strategic Partnerships, Primary Care Trusts, Local Education Authorities and transport providers
- previous work in disadvantaged areas, such as Regeneration Zones and around New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton

Air Quality

Air quality is an important issue across our Area and all the Authorities have completed air quality assessments. Seven pollutants were considered and NO₂ and PM₁₀ particles give most cause for concern. In response, around thirty Air Quality Management Areas have been declared, a number in the M6 corridor. Our air quality strategy involves:

- working with the Highways Agency to deal with the substantial emissions from motorway traffic
- detailed initiatives to tackle local hotspots through engineering and traffic management
- broader policies to encourage forms of transport that have less impact on air quality, such as alternative-fuel vehicles

Targets - air quality

Our target is to reduce average NO₂ levels by 1% between 2004/05 and 2010/11 in areas where NO₂ exceeds the national objective. This is ambitious, given rising traffic levels, but can be achieved if congestion and traffic growth targets are met.

Road Safety

The Metropolitan Authorities have a good track record of reducing accidents and the Area is designated by the Department for Transport as a Centre of Excellence for road safety. In 2004, total KSI (killed and seriously injured) casualties fell by more than 6%, to a level more than 45% below the 1994-98 baseline.

We are on course to achieve the national targets of a 40% reduction in all KSIs and 50% reduction in child KSIs by 2010. Our road safety strategy is to:

- educate and train road users to travel as safely as possible
- ensure all who live, work and travel in the West Midlands have access to road safety advice
- target safety training at vulnerable users such as cyclists and pedestrians
- subject new infrastructure to safety audits
- implement a programme of safety schemes aimed at accident cluster sites
- use safety cameras to enforce speed limits and traffic signals, backed by educational campaigns

Much of our strategy is aimed at deprived areas, where casualty rates both for all and for children are double those of the least deprived areas.

Targets - road safety

Our targets are to achieve:

- a 40% reduction in all KSIs from the 1994-98 average to 2010, and a 30% reduction from 2004 to 2010
- a 50% reduction in child KSIs from the 1994-98 average to 2010, and a 35% reduction between the 2002-4 average and the 2008-10 average
- a 10% reduction in slight casualties from 2004 to 2010

These are regarded as ambitious but realistic and assume similar levels of spending to the last five years.

Monitoring delivery

Finally, the authorities are introducing a range of performance management measures in order to monitor the delivery of infrastructure programmes against targets and value for money. Measures include:

- reviewing arrangements for joint governance by Authority Members
- checking officer support and capacity

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- introducing a programme and financial monitoring for Major Schemes and the Integrated Transport Pot
- establishing a Member-led, monthly scrutiny of progress, with recommendations for action where appropriate

Huge challenges lie ahead. We must make sure we deliver our LTP efficiently and effectively, so that we maximise progress towards the vision for our Area which is shared by the Government, the Metropolitan Authorities and citizens alike.

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