

# Transport for West Midlands Report

February 2021



Transport for  
West Midlands

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# Foreword

Back in January and February 2020, we were planning how we would build on our big achievements from 2019. Then throughout March, Covid-19 arrived and changed everything about the way we live, work and travel.

Over the last 9 months we have had to make changes to the transport network that I never could have imagined and what I have learned is that closing a transport system is quite easy, but getting it back up and running with a whole raft of new measures is no easy task and one I hope we never have to do again.

The resilience in our TfWM team has been a beacon of light for me throughout 2020, dealing with the scale and pace of change and seeing just how far they have gone to keep our network open for customers and safe for our staff.

It's been a year we will never forget and one we did not expect but I could not be prouder that we successfully maintained a safe, clean and functioning transport system for the residents of the West Midlands.

This year will be another year like no other, with unknown challenges as a post-Covid society emerges and the world redefines its relationships.

But I do know two things.

Firstly, we have a real opportunity to embed a change in people's travel habits that not only rebuilds confidence in public transport and supports active travel but delivers solutions to our region's congestion problem and air quality issues.

And secondly, I know I step into 2021 confident that I am surrounded by colleagues and an organisation that can face its biggest challenges and deliver and provide an integrated transport system the West Midlands can be proud of.



*Laura Shoaf*

**Laura Shoaf**  
Managing Director  
Transport for West Midlands

# Introduction

In this document, we will be highlighting what the Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) team has achieved in response to the Covid-19 pandemic which has had a huge impact on the transport network, our operators and our customers.

However, throughout the year, the team has continued to push forward many of the projects set out in our business plan and there has been some fantastic work completed.

This document will also inform you on what we will be working on in 2021 as we head towards a post-Covid world and seek opportunities to recover cleaner and greener than ever.



# Response to Covid-19

## March - April

In March 2020, the Local Resilience Forum was mobilised in the West Midlands and our teams were quickly embedded in regional strategic, tactical and communication groups alongside NHS trusts, emergency services and local authorities.

The focus of TfWM during this crisis was defined quickly by our leadership team with our main aim to **keep safe, clean and functioning transport available for those that need it**.

This was critical to ensuring that the region's key workers, and those who relied or chose to take public transport were still able to reach jobs as well as health, community and educational facilities.



Our five-point plan was introduced across the organisation with teams asked to deliver:

- 1. An Operational plan** – looked at how we would plan services with our providers to ensure that any reduced services were serving priority corridors and were integrated multi-modally, so that maximum coverage could be maintained, if at reduced frequency. This included our Ring and Ride service, and how it could support the community needs in the coming weeks;
- 2. A People plan** – ensured we could support our outward facing staff, including the West Midlands Metro staff, who were dealing with the public on a day by day basis (in addition to the core work of our office-based staff);
- 3. A Financial plan** – looked at implications for our transport providers (including Midland Metro Limited) on loss of revenue which needed to be addressed via Government;
- 4. A Capital Projects Plan** – reviewed all our schemes to consider the impact on delivery due to skills and supply chain shortages; and
- 5. A Recovery Plan** – looked at what the new normal would look like and what behaviour change we would like to see as we eventually move past this crisis.

### Our priority had to be our customers.

From very early on we knew, to make the most informed choices to protect staff and our customers, we needed to understand our network in detail. We knew the historical figures, models and averages were not going to be suffice. Daily or even real time data was key to ensure we understood what was happening on the network and our Data Insight team certainly stepped up to that challenge. We accelerated work that was planned for the Regional Transport Coordination Centre (RTCC), and the team within days had collected millions of points of data from local authorities, operators and the NHS. Over time this tool developed, evolved and grew and continues to be updated daily in a web portal format which is accessible to all our partners.

This data and intelligence has enabled us to make informed decisions that have supported the most vulnerable in our communities, supported our key workers, our staff, and brought the whole transport community and our local authorities together to coordinate a safe, clean and functioning transport network.

As operators reduced services and government advice was changing daily, our TfWM communications team maintained a high level of information to our stakeholders and kept our customers updated with the latest information through a variety of channels.

The Customer Service and Ticketing teams, with the support of Digital & Data, worked remotely for the first time ever, while experiencing some of the highest demand they had ever seen as customers cancelled tickets and needed support.

Our front-line staff at bus stations and on the Metro kept our facilities and services running alongside the wider transport community of bus drivers, train drivers, metro drivers, conductors, cleaners and security teams to make sure even our heavily reduced network was available every single day.

Our Travel Choices team contacted every local NHS trust and sourced employee and postcode data that enabled us to map key worker journeys using the tools our Data Insight team created. This allowed us to plan a bare minimum network that would best serve our key workers and maintain access to hospitals. This was shared with operators and local authorities, creating simple but effective models in days that previously could have taken us months.

Ring & Ride vehicles were re-purposed from their usual role of carrying the elderly and vulnerable, and put to work providing a dedicated shuttle service for NHS key workers based on that intelligence. To date over 35,467 journeys have been made on the service.

Bus Operations followed by the Metro were the first to offer free travel to NHS key workers even when patronage was at its lowest ever levels and profit was non-existent.

With supermarkets opening early for OAPs, we supported them by removing the pre 9.30am concessionary travel restrictions so they could travel for free and not have to go later in the day at greater risk.

The Safety, Security and Emergency Planning team not only led our initial response and embedded us in the Local Resilience Forum but ensured that the Nightingale Hospital had an accessible transport plan. They coordinated the testing of transport frontline workers with our operators, the first region in the UK to bring this in.

# Response to Covid-19

## May – July

As the lifting of lockdown began to look like a reality, our attention turned back to our customers. We understood that our customer service and ticketing team would need to process thousands of people back onto direct debit. This was a huge challenge for our digital design team working on the West Midlands Network website to create a simple user-friendly online application that captured all of the right data in one form for the ticketing team to process in a matter of weeks.

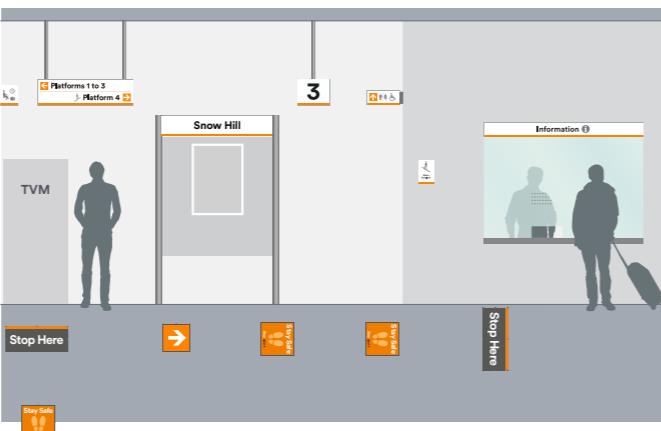
New government guidelines were issued, and social distancing rules were in place. Our operators had to plan how they could carry passengers with a 2m distance, and we had to look at how we would keep customers at stops and interchanges 2m apart; our Bus Stations team and Integrated Network teams alongside our Health and Safety team spent hours developing Covid risk assessments to keep our services open.

We set up a Transport Recovery Cell, which brought together transport leaders from TfWM, operators, local authorities, Highways England, Network Rail and others. This group has been able to work through problems, share knowledge and ideas and use our data sources to coordinate and agree our operational response.



Utilising the West Midlands Network brand family, we achieved one clear and easy to understand message across the whole public transport network including across our commercial operators. The West Midlands Combined Authority's Design team with TfWM's Communications team turned around hundreds of pieces of artwork and printed thousands of stickers and posters, updated websites and created simple animations in a matter of days to ensure the public knew what they had to do to stay safe and stay apart.

Following the announcement of the mandatory use of face masks on vehicles, TfWM worked with operators and partners to ensure a high level of compliance was adhered to across the network. While most do comply, we have mobilised a task force in conjunction with our Safer Travel Police team to patrol key interchanges and educate customers and enforce through directions to leave and fixed penalty notices for repeat offenders.



We ensured:

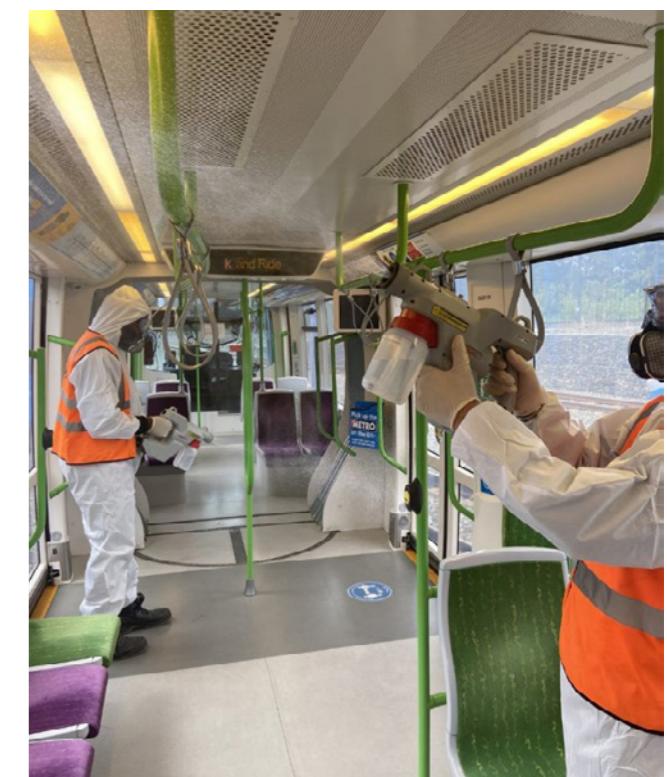
- Free masks were made available and handed out across bus stations, Travel & Information Centres, transport hubs as well as on the Metro;
- We were one of the first in the country to issue exemption cards and badges to support those people who feared being refused travel.



The holder of this card meets a specific exemption under the Government regulations on the wearing of face coverings on public transport and should be accepted as proof to travel without a face covering.



To ensure we had a safe, clean network, we introduced enhanced cleaning regimes across all modes and infrastructure, and our work through the West Midlands Bus Alliance and Transport Recovery Cell has ensured this is consistent across operators. New technologies such as Thermo fogging and e-sprayers were also used.



# Response to Covid-19

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Our Human Intelligence team have undertaken three major public sentiment surveys to gather valuable feedback from our customers to help understand how they feel, what they want to see going forward, how we can help to make them feel safe and to understand current and future travel patterns. This information has directly shaped our response to Covid19 in so many ways and across so many teams.

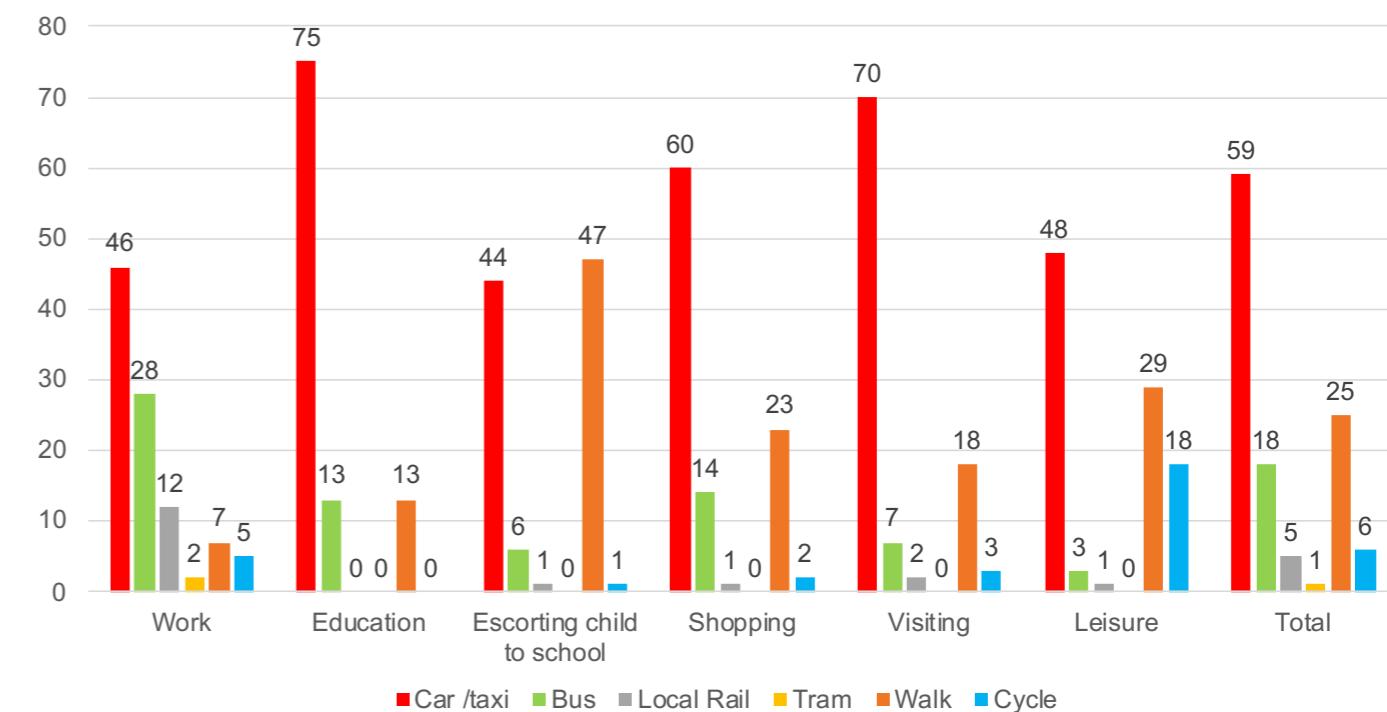
“Less traffic, more cycling. I love hearing birdsongs & quiet. Better mental health for me.”

“A chance to get some exercise, on quieter/safer roads.”

“Less cars on the road makes it feel safer to cycle. I would cycle more if the roads were like this.”

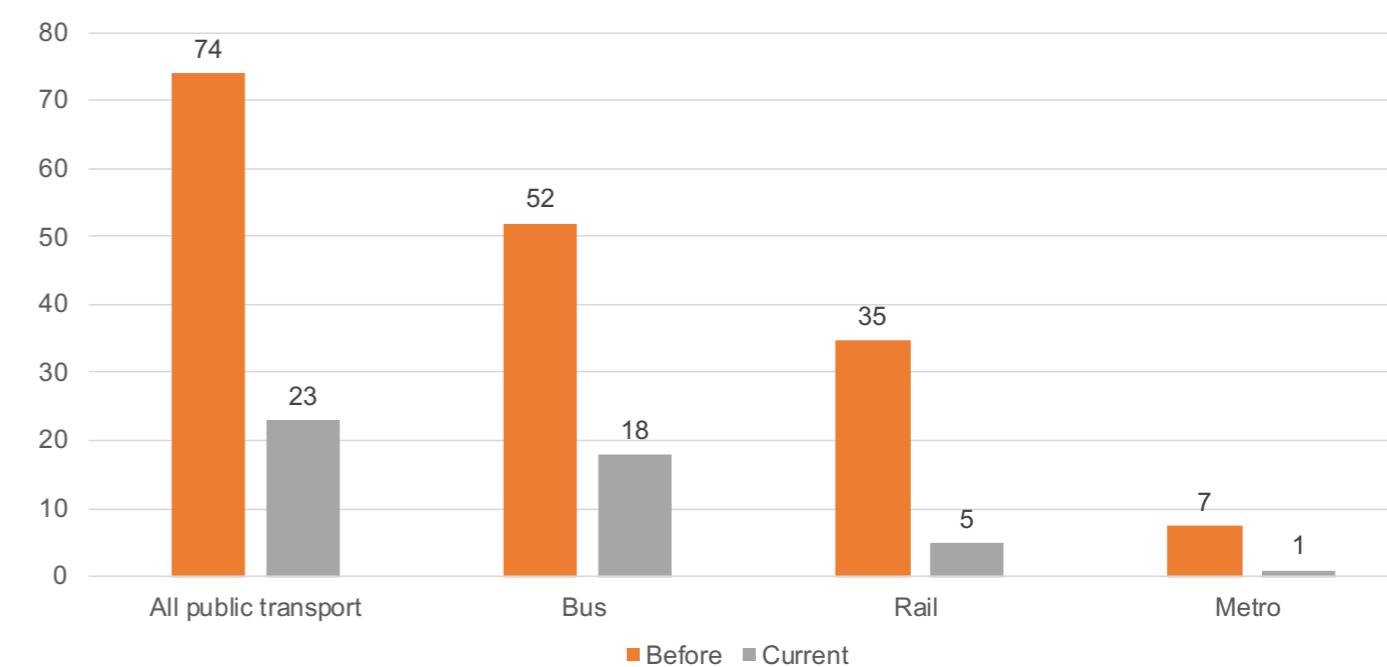
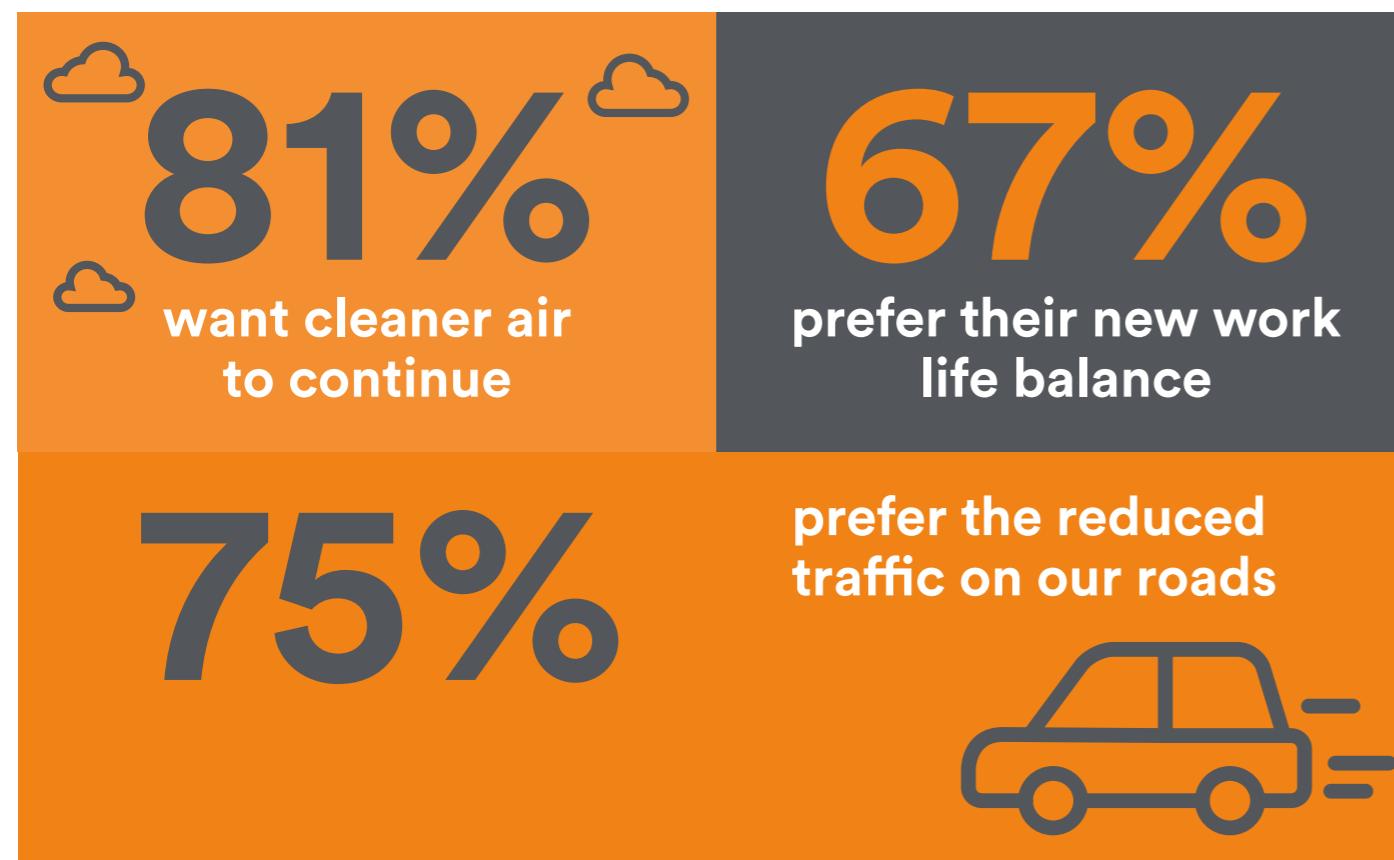
“Fewer larger shopping trips. Walked and cycled to shops more due to quiet streets.”

## Mode of travel by journey purpose



Results taken from first lockdown survey.

## Current level of public transport use compared to levels before lockdown



Results taken from first lockdown survey.

# Response to Covid-19

## July - September

Our Information team and Customer Intelligence Team updated and put up over 2000 posters across key bus routes as the network started its recovery.

The teams undertook the task of refreshing roadside information on 9,807 posters and 1,345 flags. This represented the biggest update to information since the scheme began in 2005.

### Stay Safe Stay Apart

We're working hard to keep everyone safe.

- You must wear a face covering when travelling on public transport
- Keep space between yourself and others
- Carry hand sanitiser and wash your hands before and after travelling
- Allow others to get off the bus before getting on
- Pay for your ticket in advance or use contactless where possible

Thank you for supporting our efforts.  
Enjoy your journey.



Once we had implemented government guidelines on the public transport network, our next challenge was getting 100,000 school children to school safely.

The Network Resilience team created a Travel Demand Management programme which brought together various teams across TfWM and our external partners into the planning and operational stages of our response. We ensured our planning was data driven with the Data Insight team identifying demand hotspots using historical road and bus data to help target schools nearby to work with and manage the impact on the public realm as businesses reopened at the same time.

Bus, train and tram teams and operators developed plans to support the increase in demand and manage social distancing, with daily calls and buses on standby in hot spot locations ready to react.

The Travel Choices team contacted key schools, colleges and universities. We embedded support officers in local authorities' education teams. Our Communications team issued a public campaign to inform and educate those across the network and produced an informative toolkit for all 1,500 schools to push information and advice to parents and young people. We also produced this in six different languages to ensure our information was accessible to all members of the diverse communities we have across the region.

Stay Safe Stay Apart

### Important Information

## Back to School Travel



Valid from August 2020



# Response to Covid-19

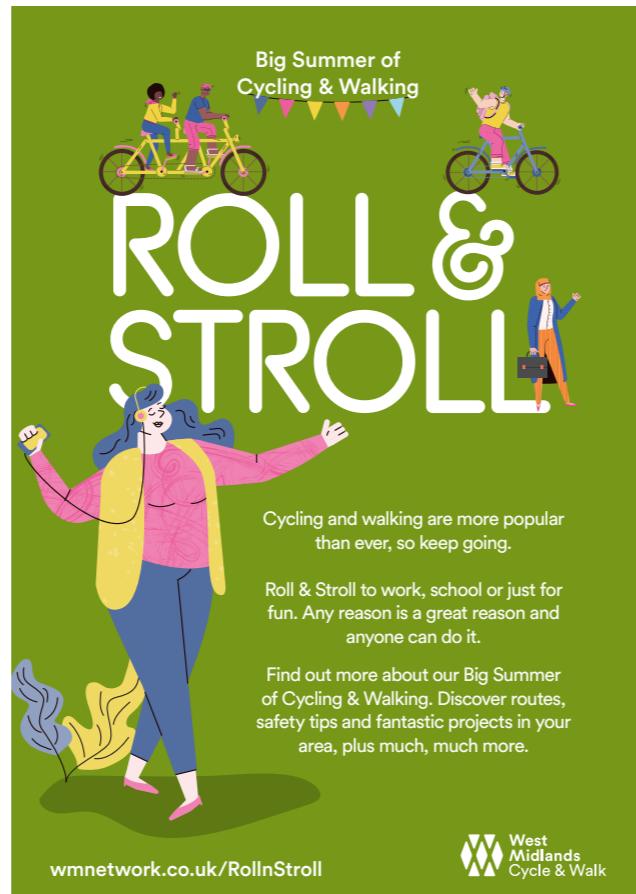
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As schools opened, daily monitoring through the RTCC to our partners and our staff allowed us to analyse how things were working and ensured we were reacting to developing issues which enabled us to implement solutions efficiently and effectively.

Just before the schools returned, the bus team lost one of its long-established operators, DeCourcy Travel in Coventry, who sadly went into administration. Supporting Coventry City Council, the bus team re-tendered the school contract within days to ensure school buses were ready for the start of term.

With such a huge shift in travel behaviour and more local journeys being made, seizing the opportunity to embed more active travel solutions has been a huge priority for us and will help towards our greener future.

The Active Travel team has successfully delivered over 50 infrastructure schemes costing £3.8m across the region with all seven local authorities getting more people rolling and strolling over the summer. To build on this, the West Midlands will benefit from a £13 million government active travel grant that will go towards the delivery of the 500 mile Starley Network.

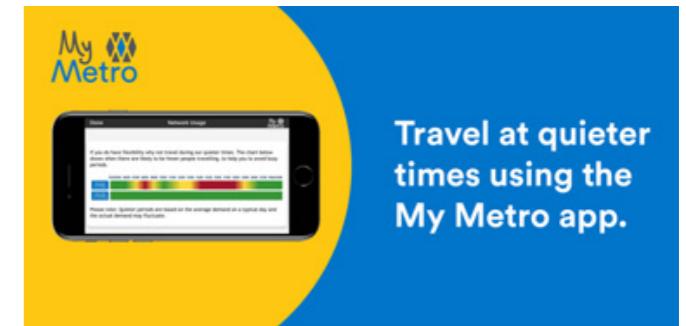


Active travel is no longer just cycling and walking, our Transport Innovation team created the e-scooter trial in just 3 months. Uptake has been impressive with the scooters totalling enough kilometres to go twice around the world since being introduced. This scheme has also been expanded to other areas now.



Over the year, our operators have all created additional functionality on their websites that passengers can use to see the busiest times allowing them to make informed decisions on the times they choose to travel.

In response to the changing working patterns of commuters, Metro introduced a three-day and four-day season ticket which were fulfilled through the My Metro app to improve choice for customer.



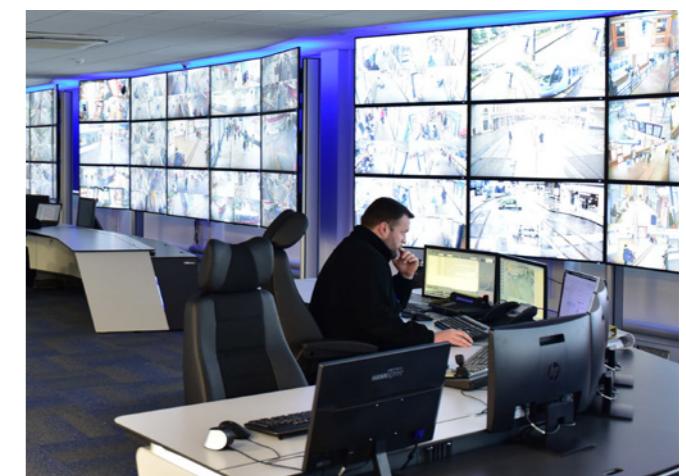
Travel at quieter times using the My Metro app.

West Midlands Bus Alliance has been working hard to manage the national message through the pandemic back to government and worked to ensure bus operators can be supported through these times as a critical community service.

## October - December

Throughout the second lockdown, we continued monitoring the network with operators and our Communications team has kept people updated. We continued to monitor Christmas shopping, looking for increases in demand, and through the RTCC were ready to respond should any social distancing or congestion issues develop.

The insight and analysis continued, especially with the introduction of the tier system, working with data that the DfT analysed to help try to understand the change in the movement around the region.



# Delivering our priorities

Despite Covid-19 shifting and changing things, we have still managed to complete and achieve so much this year.

## Integrated Services Team

have kept buses moving through major works and navigated various enhancements of bus services across the network.

The Bus Infrastructure team has generated best practice relationships with local authority partners to navigate the needs of bus operators, town centre managers, pedestrians and many other stakeholders. The completion of the Longbridge Park & Ride site will provide a huge boost in capacity in the area.

West Midlands Bus Alliance has sought ways to continue to tackle climate change and improve air quality in our region and has launched the first large scale electric bus rollout in Birmingham and Coventry with National Express West Midlands. They continue to lobby government for devolved funding to continue to support services and get the Alliance firmly recognised as national best practice.

Customer Service and Ticketing teams introduced Net Promoter Score in July which is an industry standard for measuring customer satisfaction. The team's score is 'Great' which I think you will agree is an incredible start to measuring how our customers rated the service they received from TfWM.

## West Midlands Rail Executive



We continued to push forward the delivery of Perry Barr rail station and outlined planning permission for the bus interchange.

University Station business case was completed and approved by Department for Transport (DfT) and construction is due to begin shortly.

The wider West Midlands rail programme has moved forward by building relationships with the DfT and partners, which is crucial to securing funding, pushing regional devolution and embedding Grand Rail Collaboration across the industry.

Collaboratively with the rail industry, the team has developed an initial view of timetable possibilities for the Commonwealth Games and developed a rail service timetable for the new Camp Hill stations.

West Midlands Stations Alliance governance has been improved to provide better outputs for passengers and communities and excellent progress is being made on Stations as Places. Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership accreditation has been secured and will bring exciting new things to the area.

The Rail team are the proud owner of two new CAF built Class 196 trains for West Midlands Railway services. 80 trains are being built in Spain and Newport and will start entering service very soon.

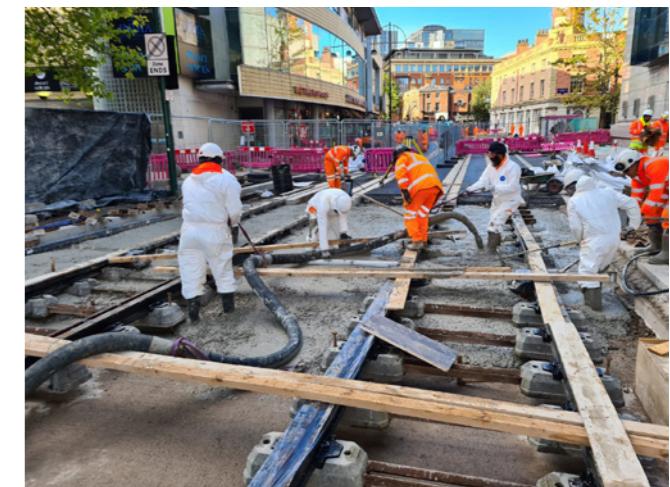
## West Midlands Metro and Midland Metro Alliance

We received approval and the powers needed to deliver the Eastside Extension through to Digbeth.

Works on Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension commenced. Utility works have begun and various old bridges have been demolished.

Major construction work took place along Broad Street as part of the Westside Extension by seizing the opportunity to advance works whilst everyone was in lockdown. In June a total area of 220m of concrete was poured along Broad Street, all in one go, which was a significant engineering feat and took 14 hours to complete.

West Midlands Metro has been working on a proof of concept project led by WM5G, to deliver the first 5G tram in the UK which went into service in September.



# Delivering our priorities

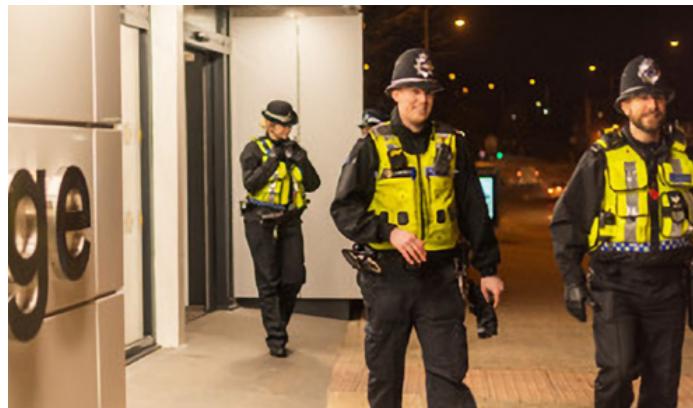
## Network Resilience and the Regional Transport Control Centre

continued their partnership work with HS2 and Highways England around the Interchange Station site in Solihull and at Curzon Street in Birmingham city centre with integrated travel demand management, mitigations and communications campaigns. Alongside supporting the upgrade of junction 10 of the M6 in Walsall and the £1 billion regeneration of Dudley town centre.

As part of the RTCC's vision to improve information on disruptions, an SMS trial went live at the beginning of November as well as a new disruptions area being launched on West Midlands Network website, with thanks to the Website Improvement team.

The Safer Travel Police team and CCTV control centre have continued keeping our network safe with the great work they do every day supporting partners and the police.

The Key Route Network team has been supporting local authorities with the KRN Action plans and highway investment schemes including the installation of 31 new cameras across Sandwell. They are also improving Road Safety, setting up a strategic partnership, chaired by an independent road safety charity to hold us and local authorities to account as we aim to reduce killed or seriously injured people by 40 percent.



## Policy, Strategy and Innovation

has worked with partners through our Connected and Autonomous Vehicle projects, to secure a major upgrade to the sensor network across the Key Route Network, using ANPR, and cutting edge 5G sensors.

The Data Insight team has continued to deliver critical services to our local highway authorities.

Our Transport Innovation team has forged ahead with the UK's pathfinder Future Transport Zone, designing and creating innovative bus services, mobility credit schemes, and improved back office functions which are now ready to go live in the new year. They have delivered a step change in our Electric Vehicle re-fuelling strategy and have been able to continue various international projects.

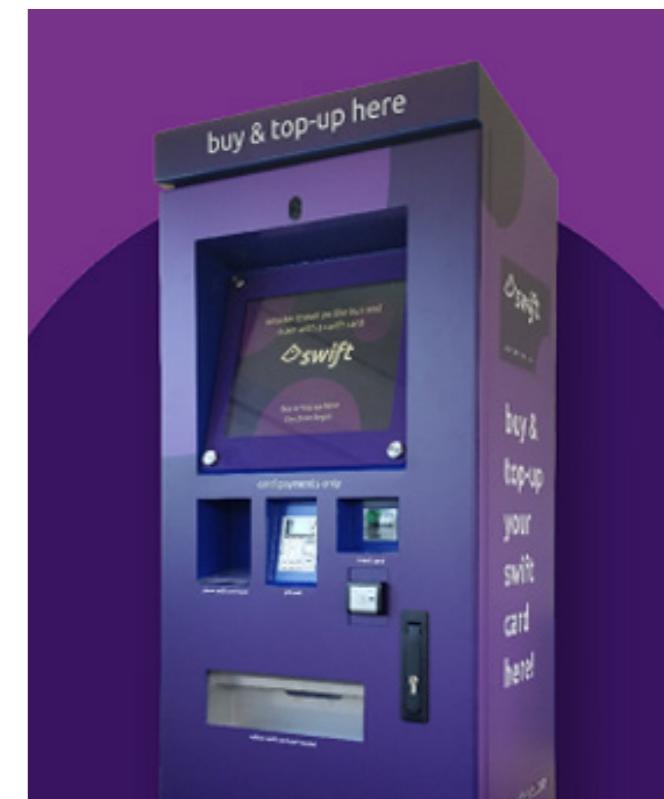
The Human Intelligence Team has created a new powerful public engagement tool set, working with partners to have a level of understanding of every household across the region and develop an on-line citizens community for deeper conversations.

Swift launched 'SwiftGo' which has been rolled out on buses and trams, which is the first multimodal best value cap anywhere in the UK outside of London.



80 percent of Swift users remain either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' following this year's satisfaction survey with more and more people moving into the 'very satisfied' category.

A fully functional Swift vending machine is now in place in the arrivals area at Birmingham Airport, so international visitors can purchase their public transport ticket on Swift before they have even left the airport.



# Delivering our priorities

## Awards and recognition 🏆

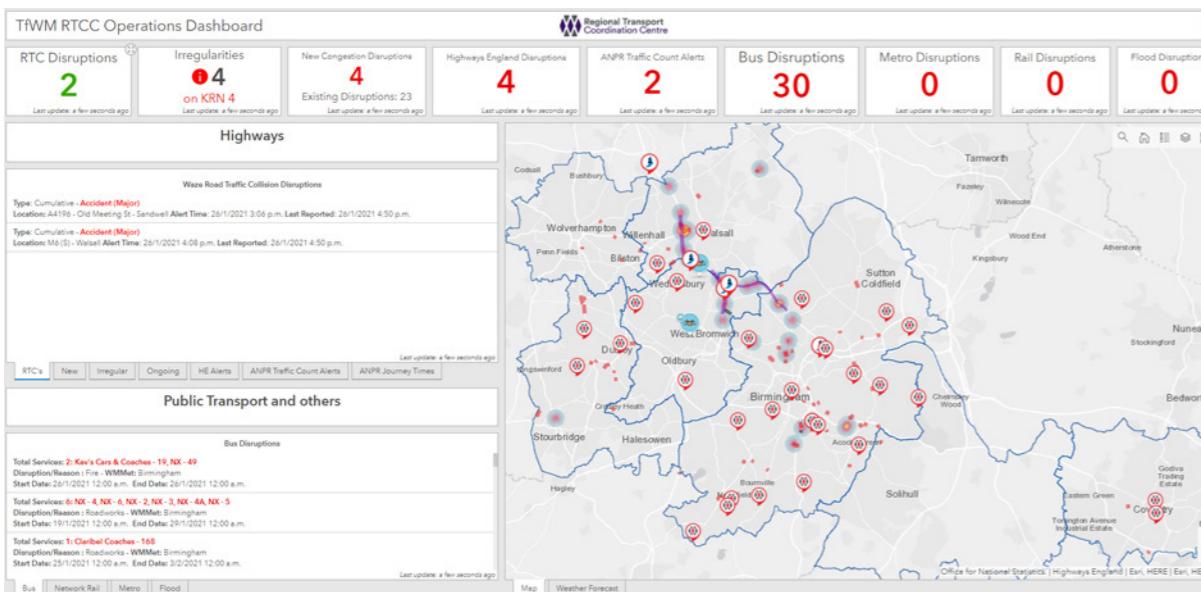
Our project to deliver Bradley Lane's Park & Ride being shortlisted in two categories at the Brownfield Awards and winning one.



The PA team and Kili Thomas won at the West Midlands PA Awards.



Their work on the RTCC's real time dashboard was shortlisted by the Geography in Government (GiG) Awards in the category of excellence.



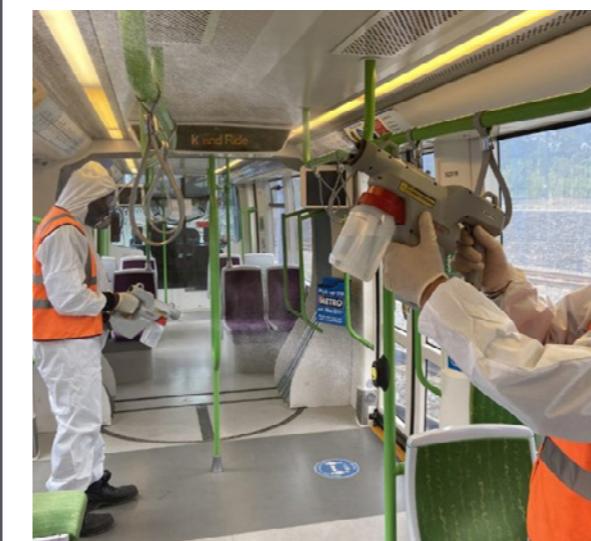
Both the RTCC and the Travel Demand Team were highly commended for projects at the CIHT Awards.



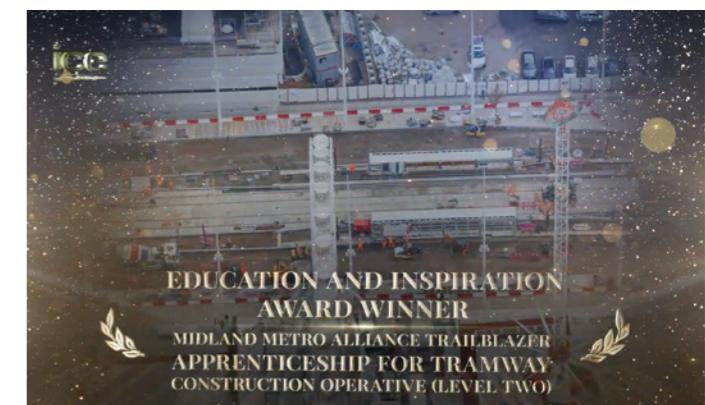
Anne Shaw was announced as the winner of the award for Leader in the Customer & Passenger category at the Everywoman in Transport & Logistics Awards. With Laura Shoaf shortlisted in the final for the Outstanding Contribution to Transport and Logistics Award.



MML won awards at the International Light Rail awards for the work they are doing to keep the trams clean and safe for passengers.



The MMA won for their Light Rail Construction apprenticeship scheme at the annual Institute of Chartered Engineers awards.



The Data Insight Team received a Special Achievement Award at the ESRI Global User conference.



# The year ahead

## A greener cleaner transport network

Transport for West Midlands journey to better connect the West Midlands is one that never ends, and 2021 will see us continue our mission to develop and manage an integrated transport system for the West Midlands that is reliable, affordable and accessible for all.

Rebuilding our transport system, following the Covid-19 pandemic, is essential for our customers, businesses and the regional economic recovery.

However, we cannot miss the opportunity, following millions of people changing their travel behaviour and being active locally, to reduce congestion and improve air quality in the longer term, which is why we will be putting cycling at the heart of a green recovery, and, with our local authority partners, we will be improving the 500-mile Starley Network and introducing the West Midlands Bike Share Scheme.

Transport has a huge role to play in tackling the climate emergency too, and this is why we will be refreshing our long-term strategic plan so we can continue to not only support inclusive growth through better connectivity, but do so in a way that's sustainable for our planet.

Underpinning a greener transport system will be the use of smarter data solutions and we will continue leading the UK on transport innovation and walk with our residents through a revolution in mobility.

We will continue to develop and deliver new public transport infrastructure such as the West Midland Metro extensions, providing reliable and cleaner alternatives to the car. We will be building new rail stations and upgrading others to add capacity while introducing new trains to improve people's journeys. We will be giving bus services priority on our roads, so they can avoid congestion and provide reliable journeys passengers expect.

Working with our partners at HS2, Highways England and Network Rail, we will support their delivery of other road, rail and high-speed projects improving the desirability of the West Midlands to businesses and creating employment opportunities for future generations. While these works take place, we will be there to support our residents through the short-term disruption to their journeys.

Our passengers and their needs will be central to everything we do and underpin our decision making. We will keep them safe, provide world class transport facilities and continue to work with transport operators to improve their journeys. Through improved data management and technology, we will develop smarter systems that provide simple information and ticketing solutions that connect our citizens to jobs, education and housing ensuring the West Midlands is one of the best-connected regions in the UK.



# The year ahead

## Key Milestones

Opening of Wolverhampton City Centre Metro extension in September 2021

Opening of the Edgbaston section of Westside Metro extension in December 2021

Work begins connecting Birmingham's Eastside to the tram network

Major works will begin between Wednesbury and Brierley Hill

Construction of University train station and work to refresh Perry Barr train station will begin

We will be moving forward with plans to reopen the Camp Hill line and the train stations at Willenhall and Darlaston

The first two Sprint routes will move into construction on the A45 and the A34

Our Swift team will be cementing and promoting Swift Go on bus and tram which will make it easier than ever to access public transport

The launch of the new West Midlands Network Travel Planner and Swift Pay App, which will replace the various travel apps we have to create a single mobile solution

The 'Swiftification' of the rail network, we should see the rollout of Swift platform validators and ticket vending machines

Works will begin at Dudley Interchange and deliver a multi modal transport interchange that Black Country residents will be proud of

Rollout of the £24m cross city bus service between the 50 and 82/87 routes connecting south Birmingham with North Birmingham - Sandwell

We will be delivering a UK first to make Coventry an all electric bus city which is a £50m investment coming through the WMCA for TfWM to deliver a national pilot scheme in 2021

# The year ahead

## Key Milestones

Delivery of the schemes set out in the £13m funding from Government to support the increased demand in cycling

Launch of the cycle hire scheme which will revolutionise people's access to cycling;

The Regional Transport Coordination Centre will continue supporting people's journeys and working with our operators on major disruptions

Our Transport Planning team will be prepare for a business case for a slice of over £4bn of transport investment which the Government has committed from 2022 onwards.

Finalising the 2022 Games Transport Plan to support 12,500 athletes and 1.2 million spectators move alongside the 4 million residents and commuters in the region

We will be keeping people moving through travel demand management alongside our partners at HS2, Highways England, Network Rail, Midland Metro Alliance and local authorities to improve our roads, rail and Metro service

The transport innovation programme will conclude one of the most ambitious connected and autonomous vehicle programmes in the country

Finally, the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan "Movement for Growth" will be reviewed and replaced with a new Local Transport Plan in 2021. We have brought the review of the plan forward from 2026 to adapt to the changing needs of our residents' post Covid-19. Transport has a huge role to play in tackling the climate emergency and meet the needs of our own WMCA 2041 Action Plan, and we want to ensure our long term strategic focus can balance our aspirations with the needs of our residents and continues to enable inclusive growth through better connectivity.



Transport for  
**West Midlands**