A new rapid transit system for local people
Revised plans for the A34 between Merrions Close and Great Barr for residents, businesses and community groups
**What is Sprint?**

Sprint is a reliable, frequent and low-emission bus-based transit system offering the comfort, look, and feel of a modern tram or light rail system.

It will provide a new, cost-effective way for local people to travel between Walsall and Birmingham along the A34. It is one of seven new Sprint routes planned for the West Midlands.

Sprint uses the existing A34 but there will be alterations to ensure that traffic flows as smoothly as possible between Walsall and Birmingham city centre. The changes include modifications to some of the verges and central reservation, parking being added and retained as well as measures to improve traffic flow.

Dedicated bus lanes will be created along some sections of the route to minimise congestion. Sprint will also have priority at traffic lights to ensure the quickest journeys possible.

The new, improved experience for passengers includes faster ticketing, on-board wifi and new improved shelters. Low-level flooring makes Sprint more convenient for passengers with mobility issues, such as wheelchair users.

**Why do we need Sprint in Sandwell?**

Sprint is a key element of delivering an integrated, environmentally-friendly transport network for the West Midlands. It will help to reduce car use and the associated harmful emissions and pollutants.

Everything about Sprint is designed to make journeys quicker, more reliable and more sustainable. In addition to road priority, Sprint vehicles have three doors for passengers to board and disembark compared with one entrance/exit on conventional buses. This means the boarding process is quicker – and journeys are subject to fewer delays.

All tickets are purchased prior to travel, which reduces the length of time vehicles have to wait at stops. The stops themselves are spaced at greater intervals than traditional bus routes, so journey times are quicker.

Sprint will allow for reliable and dependable journey times between the Scott Arms junction and Birmingham City Centre. Under the revised route, this journey is expected to be 20 minutes or less, a saving of 20%.

Sprint vehicles have a greater capacity than double-decker buses – 110 passengers compared with 90 – so they are more efficient at moving large numbers of people.

During the day-time, there will be at least one Sprint every 10 minutes. Extra Sprint buses can be put on to cater for mass spectator events.
Why now?

Sprint has been a key feature of the regional transport strategy for several years and was first proposed in 2011 as part of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan.

The programme is being accelerated now so Sprint is in place for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, when large numbers of spectators, athletes, media and local volunteers will be travelling to the Alexander Stadium and Athletes Village in Perry Barr.

But Sprint is not just being introduced for the Games. It is part of the long-term strategy for sustainable public transport for the wider West Midlands.
Plans for the A34 Walsall to Birmingham Sprint route were the subject of a public consultation in autumn 2018. Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) has listened to local residents, businesses and community groups, and taken advice from transport professionals.

As a result of the consultation, TfWM has produced revised plans for the Sprint scheme between M6 Junction 7 and Scott Arms.

The Sprint work will take place in two phases: Phase 1, from Birmingham city centre to proposed Park & Ride (north of M6 Junction 7), which is scheduled for completion by December 2021 and Phase 2, from proposed Park & Ride to Walsall, is due to be completed in December 2022.
All tickets to travel on Sprint are purchased at dedicated shelters at Sprint stops prior to boarding – reducing delays and speeding up journeys.
The proposed Sprint route between M6 Junction 7 and Scott Arms has undergone detailed revisions to take account of public feedback. The revised plans reinstate all parking that was originally earmarked for removal along the Sandwell section of the A34.

The changes mean a total of 11 trees will be removed to make way for Sprint. However, for every tree that is taken down, at least two will be planted as part of Transport for West Midlands commitment to the environment. The community will be asked to recommend locations for the new trees.

In order to prepare for Sprint, we are making a number of minor capacity improvements to the Eastbound and Northbound lanes to improve the flow for traffic at the Scott Arms junction.

**Key**

- Carriageway adjustments
- Landscape
- Proposed footway
- New Sprint lane
- Existing bus lane
- Sprint bus stop
- Existing bus stop
- Trees retained
- Trees removed
- Tactile pavement
Sprint is ideal for elderly passengers and people with mobility issues because it has a single low floor and no stairs.
The population of the West Midlands is forecast to grow by 444,000 by 2035 and Sprint will help meet increased demand for sustainable public transport.
More than 129,000 jobs are located along the 14.5 km route between Birmingham and Walsall.
Section 4 | Sundial Lane Junction

The A34 Sprint will improve connectivity for local residents – 89,000 people live within 500 metres of the route and will benefit from quicker transport.
Sprint was suggested back in 2011, long before the Commonwealth Games 2022, but work is being accelerated for this global sports event.
Proposed 12 hour bus lane 7am - 7pm. No loading within these times.
What you will see over the coming months

Here is a timeline for the A34 Sprint route. Transport for West Midlands is committed to keeping residents and businesses updated on all developments.

October 2019 – February 2020:
Trial holes dug into the road and verges to assess the position of utilities (electric cables, gas pipes etc) prior to main construction works. Utility diversion works. Advance landscaping/tree removal takes place.

Spring 2020:
Main construction work begins along A34.

December 2021:
A34 Phase 1 Sprint route (Birmingham city centre to proposed Park & Ride, north of M6, Junction 7) due for completion.

Spring 2022:
Sprint buses start operating on Phase 1 route.

Spring 2023:
Sprint buses start operating on Phase 2 route. The forecast Sprint journey time between Birmingham city centre and Walsall is 38 minutes.

December 2022:
A34 Phase 2 Sprint route (proposed Park & Ride to Walsall) due for completion.

July-August 2022:
Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games take place.
1. **Do we really need Sprint? Aren’t there enough local transport options?**

Our region is growing rapidly – and we need greater transport capacity to cope. By 2035, the population of the West Midlands is set to increase by up to 444,000 – that’s 100 people per day – and 215,000 new homes are set to be built by 2030.

In the same period, we anticipate business investment will generate an additional 50,000 jobs, while the proposed introduction of High Speed 2 will open our connections to a wider area. The A34 is an important link between Birmingham and Walsall. The route is also a diversion route for M6 traffic and is susceptible to heavy congestion. Existing services suffer journey time disruption.

Sprint aims to address inconsistent journey times and reduce travel times between key locations, improving connectivity and meeting the challenges of population growth.

The current bus journey time from Walsall to Birmingham ranges from 30 minutes to 85 minutes during peak periods. Sprint aims to deliver an average peak journey time of 38 minutes.

2. **The name Sprint makes it sound like it’s really fast. That might scare some people.**

Don’t worry, Sprint is just a name, inspired by its ability to travel between places with minimal disruption from other traffic. Sprint can move more quickly between two points than a traditional bus because it benefits from road priorities, innovations in the way tickets are purchased, and boarding via multiple doors. Sprint is bound by the same speed limits and road safety regulations of all other modes of transport on UK roads.

3. **So is Sprint suitable for elderly passengers and people with mobility issues?**

Absolutely. In fact, Sprint is ideal for older people and passengers with mobility issues, such as wheelchair users. Sprint is designed with a low floor to provide more stable, smoother journeys for all passengers. The low floor provides better accessibility for people who cannot climb stairs and extra space for wheelchairs and buggies. Sprint vehicles have 46 seats on a single level floor providing easier access for anyone with reduced mobility.

4. **What is the capacity of Sprint?**

Sprint has a capacity of 110, with 46 seats. To compare, a double decker bus has 73 seats with an overall capacity of about 90. So Sprint can potentially transport 20 more passengers than a conventional bus.

5. **How frequent will Sprint be along the A34?**

The timetable isn’t confirmed, but a set of Sprint standards has been developed. Minimum features included daytime services at least every 10 minutes, operating a core timetable 07:00 – 19:00 Monday to Friday, 09:00 – 18:00 on Saturdays and night-time and Sunday services according to demand.

6. **But will Sprint really save time?**

Sprint will help passengers to cut journey times by an average of 20%, allowing people to spend more time doing other things – working, meeting people, or just having fun. The service will be more reliable so you can leave the right amount of time for your journey instead of factoring in time for possible delays.
7. How close together are the bus stops— and will they replace existing stops?

There are about 20 new Sprint stops in each direction of the route between Birmingham Moor Street and Walsall town centre. The average distance between stops is 794 metres. It is intended that all bus stops on the A34 will continue to be used as normal by other bus services.

8. Where will on-street parking be removed?

The revised plans (October 2019) highlight where on-street parking will be removed, where parking is retained or relocated, and where parking restrictions will apply.

9. Will Sprint replace the X51?

Like all existing bus services, the X51 is managed by an independent operator and it’s too early to say what services will operate alongside Sprint. However, we expect all bus services that operate on the A34 will benefit from improved reliability due to the Sprint improvements.

10. Will Sprint have a dedicated lane all along the A34?

Sprint will use a combination of existing designated bus lanes and new bus lanes, and it will also use the main carriageway at various points. Sprint will have priority in congested areas.

11. Will there be terrible congestion during the Sprint roadworks?

A transport infrastructure project like Sprint is likely to cause disruption but a lot of work is going into minimising this. Transport for West Midlands is working with its local authority partners to understand and coordinate the works. We will work with communities to highlight alternative travel options and keep local people informed. Please visit www.networkwestmidlands.com to help plan your journey during construction.

12. Can I use my current bus pass on Sprint?

It is anticipated that concessionary pass holders and nBus card-holders will be able to use their passes on Sprint. Once the operator of the service is confirmed, other season tickets may also be accepted.

13. How much will it cost to use Sprint?

It is expected that Sprint will cost the same as the current bus services.

14. How much will the Sprint project cost and who is paying for it?

The estimated cost of Sprint between Birmingham and Walsall is £42m. This is subject to change due to potential revisions to the scheme. The project is funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority with third-party contributions (including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government funding for Perry Barr). Devolved central government funding has been identified by the WMCA as part of the HS2 Connectivity Package.

15. What alterations will be made to road regulations in light of the measures being introduced to improve traffic flow?

There are no proposed changes to speed limits. Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) will be required for any parking or loading changes, and for any other new restrictions, such as banned turns. These will be communicated to the local community and implemented after the scheme is approved by Sandwell Council and West Midlands Combined Authority, but before any work commences.
Staying in touch

We will continue to update our website www.tfwm.org.uk/sprint with Frequently Asked Questions, community engagement activities and the latest information.

We will also provide updates via our quarterly Sprint newsletters, which will be made available to all stakeholders and the general public.

If you would like to sign up to the newsletter, please visit our website and enter your email address in the “Stay up to date” box. You can also sign up by emailing: sprintenquiries@tfwm.org.uk or call 0345 303 6760, option 2.

We can provide copies of this booklet in another language or a larger format. Please email sprintenquiries@tfwm.org.uk or call 0345 303 6760, option 2.

tfwm.org.uk/sprint

@TransportforWM