

West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme

Frequently Asked Questions

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West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme

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1.0 The Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme

1.1 What is an Enhanced Partnership (EP)?

An Enhanced Partnership (EP) is a formal agreement between a local transport authority (LTA), local authorities and bus operators to work together to improve local bus services.

There are two parts to an EP:

- **the EP Plan** (or vision for improvement)
- **the EP Scheme** (the detailed actions to be taken by the authorities, and operators requirements for services in the area required to deliver the Plan).

1.2 What is an EP Plan?

The EP Plan tells the story about bus services in the region and provides the strategic context for the scheme(s); setting out the bus improvement objectives. It is based on the WMCA's Strategic Vision for Bus.

1.3 How many schemes can be proposed under an EP?

Over time an EP can have more than one scheme, but an EP Plan cannot exist on its own. There must always be one or more related EP Scheme.

1.4 Why do we need to improve local bus services?

Buses are key to the provision of public transport in the region, with 4 out of 5 public transport journeys taken by bus. The provision of better bus travel is vital to achieving inclusive growth in the West Midlands to the benefit of our economy and society.

Buses also have a key part to play in reducing harmful emissions, with one double decker bus having the capacity to take 75 cars off the road. The EP will make it more attractive for current car commuters to travel by bus and reduce emissions from vehicles throughout the West Midlands.

If you are unemployed or on a lower income you are much more reliant on bus services. Indeed, if you don't own a private vehicle it can affect your access to work and education, as well as family and leisure activities. We cannot tackle transport inequalities without improving bus travel.

1.5 How will an Enhanced Partnership help improve local bus services?

An Enhanced Partnership will help ensure the more ambitious plans to transform bus travel are achieved. An EP places a legally binding commitment on local authorities, bus operators and West Midlands Combined Authority (the local transport authority) to work together to improve local bus services by setting high quality standards across the West Midlands.

1.6 How was the EP developed and who was involved?

The EP has been developed with input from participating parties. This includes the bodies responsible for delivering and monitoring bus services in the region: Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the seven local authorities and local bus operators, as well as a range of other local and national stakeholders including Birmingham Airport, Transport Focus, Bus Users UK, the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), Confederation of Passenger Transport, Warwickshire County Council and the Department for Transport (DfT).

The process of preparing the EP Plan and Scheme was overseen by a Reference Group involving these key stakeholders.

1.7 Who are the seven Local Authorities involved?

The seven local authorities are:

- Birmingham City Council
- Coventry City Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council

1.8 Who are the bus operators covered by the EP Plan and EP Scheme?

There are a number of bus operators across the West Midlands covered by the EP Plan and EP Scheme, shown in the table below:

	Plan	Scheme
A&M Group (Spangap)	Plan	
Arriva	Plan	
Banga Travel	Plan	
Claribel Coaches	Plan	Scheme
Corporate Express	Plan	
Diamond Bus	Plan	Scheme
Discount Travel Solutions	Plan	
First Midland	Plan	
Grosvenor Coaches	Plan	
Johnsons of Henley	Plan	

Hollywood Travel	Plan	
Kev's Cars & Coaches	Plan	
Landflight (Silverline)	Plan	Scheme
Mike De Courcey	Plan	
Let's Go!	Plan	
National Express	Plan	Scheme
RK Travel	Plan	
Select Bus Services	Plan	
Stagecoach	Plan	
Thandi Transport	Plan	
Thandi Coaches	Plan	
The Green Transport Co	Plan	Scheme
Travel de Courcey	Plan	

1.9 What is West Midlands Combined Authority? What is their role?

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is one of ten combined authorities established in England. It is a strategic authority with powers over transport, economic development and regeneration.

West Midlands Combined Authority is made up of 18 local authorities (7 constituent members and 11 non-constituent members) and 3 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) who work together to move powers from Whitehall to the West Midlands and its locally elected politicians, who know this region best.

1.10 What is Transport for West Midlands? What is their role?

Part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) is the public body responsible for co-ordinating transport services in the West Midlands.

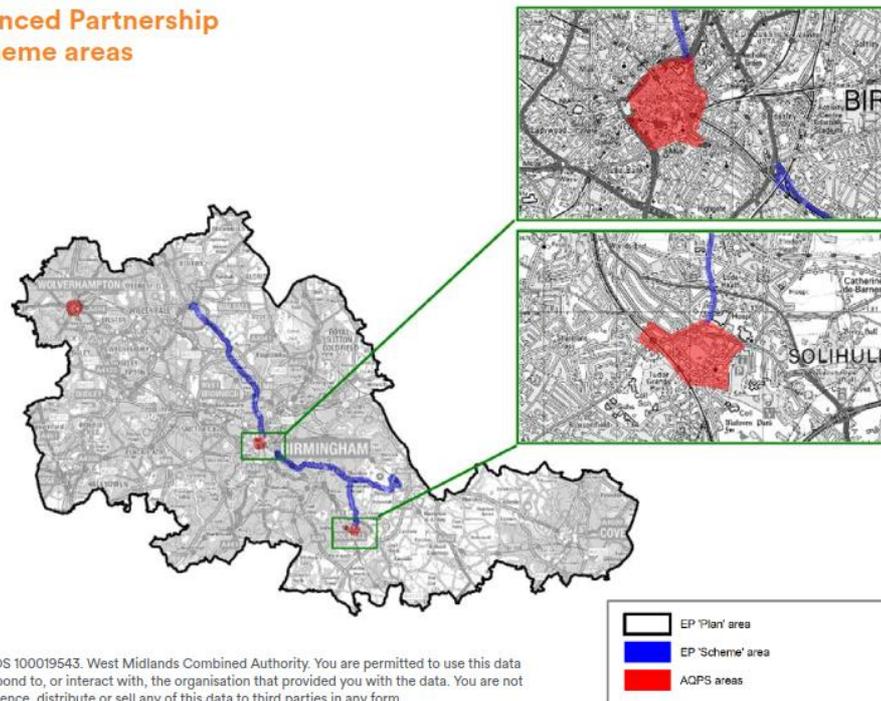
Working in partnership with 7 constituent local authorities TfWM serve a population of approximately 2.8m people. We are responsible for the oversight of bus services in the area, concessionary travel schemes and providing essential bus services that are not commercially viable.

1.11 What area does the EP Plan cover?

The EP Plan covers the area of the 7 constituent authorities in the WMCA, excluding the areas already covered by existing partnership schemes (known as Advanced Quality Partnership

Schemes) that exist in the strategic centres of Birmingham, Solihull and Wolverhampton. This is shown in the plan below;

Map of Enhanced Partnership
Plan and Scheme areas



1.12 Why doesn't the EP Scheme include Birmingham City Centre, Solihull Town Centre and Wolverhampton City Centre?

Bus services in Birmingham City Centre, Solihull Town Centre and Wolverhampton City Centre are already being improved through another type of partnership known as 'Advanced Quality Partnership' Schemes and the two schemes cannot overlap. Therefore, the EP Plan and Scheme exclude these areas.

1.13 What is the first EP Scheme proposed through the Enhanced Partnership?

The first EP Scheme proposed will involve delivery of bus facilities and measures, alongside improved bus standards for bus services along the A34 (north) and the A45 and Lode Lane Corridors. This is roughly the routes of current services (excluding Birmingham City Centre and Solihull Town Centre) for the;

- **(A34 north)** 51 and X51
- **(A45 and Lode Lane)** X1 (Birmingham-Birmingham Airport) and X2 (excluding Old Lode Lane)

1.14 What is a facility?

These are the physical assets that are provided at specific locations along particular routes (or parts of routes) within the scheme area, for example bus stop shelters, real time information screens, CCTV, bench seating and lighting.

1.15 What is a measure?

There is deliberately no definition of what a 'measure' is, in order to maximise the flexibility for authorities and operators to agree actions that are best suited to their local circumstances. The only requirement is that 'measures' must aim to:

- Increase the use of local services serving the routes which the measures relate to, or ending or reducing the decline in the use of bus services: or
- Improve the quality of local bus services.

1.16 How much will the EP Scheme cost?

The EP Scheme includes a number of bus priority infrastructure and enhanced bus stop and highway infrastructure commitments to be delivered and funded by TfWM as part of the delivery of Sprint. In total the improvements will cost £88 million. There will also be costs associated with improved bus operating standards for local bus operators, which the operators will have to fund themselves. More information about Sprint is available under question 1.17 below.

1.17 How will the EP Scheme be funded?

The bus priority infrastructure, enhanced bus stops and highway infrastructure delivery will be funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority as part of the delivery of Sprint. For more information on Sprint please see <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/development/sprint/>

Operators will be expected to fund the cost to improve their own bus services, with the obligation to meet the minimum service standards made clear as part of the EP Scheme.

1.18 How is the EP Scheme different to Sprint?

Sprint aims to deliver a Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) service along a number of routes, with the first two of which running along the A34 (North), A45 and Lode Lane Corridors. A BRT service aims to deliver predictable journey times and high frequency, dependable timetables.

For comments or further information on Sprint, please refer to:
<https://www.tfwm.org.uk/development/sprint/>

The EP Scheme provides a legally binding commitment for TfWM to deliver the associated bus priority infrastructure to support BRT.

Through the EP Scheme, TfWM and their partners have set minimum vehicle standards, ticketing arrangements and passenger information for all bus services along these corridors.

1.19 Why have you developed this EP Scheme? Why is it a priority?

We want to improve the standard of bus travel across the West Midlands, as part of our integrated transport system. This first EP Scheme will also support the 2022 Commonwealth Games which is expected to bring many extra people to the region. This scheme has been developed as a priority to help facilitate improved bus travel in readiness for the 2022

Commonwealth Games, to ensure that the bus network runs efficiently to support the Games' travel plans and ensure bus users' day-to-day travel is improved during this time.

1.20 Why have you chosen these routes?

The routes included in the EP Scheme (the A34 (north), A45 and Lode Lane) have been chosen as they provide important connections into and out of Birmingham, the region's strategic economic centre.

The A34 North connects Birmingham to Walsall serving residents and businesses in Aston, Perry Barr and Great Barr.

The EP Scheme aims to set minimum standards along the route, aiming to reduce inconsistent journey times and the overall length of time it takes to travel between key areas. This will improve the connectivity along this route and support the expected growth in areas such as Walsall, Perry Barr and Birmingham City Centre, linking people to new jobs, homes, facilities, and onward connections.

The A34 forms a significant part of the Metropolitan Rail and Rapid Transit Network which is outlined in the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan - Movement for Growth. The surrounding area will also be subject to significant development and regeneration, including within the Birmingham City Centre Enterprise Zone, HS2 Curzon Street Station and surrounding Masterplan area, the main location for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games at Alexander Stadium, the regeneration of Perry Barr and Walsall Town Centre.

The EP Scheme will support growing demand on this key route corridor, generate inclusive growth as a result of new developments and encourage sustainable travel through better uptake of public transport.

The A34 was included within Birmingham Mobility Action Plan (Birmingham Connected) in 2014, the HS2 Connectivity Package in 2015 as part of the HS2 Growth Strategy, and the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan (Movement for Growth) in 2016.

The A45 and Lode Lane corridor connects Birmingham city centre with Birmingham Airport and Solihull, serving residents and businesses in Hobs Moat, Sheldon and Yardley.

The route is the key link to East Birmingham and Coventry making it susceptible to significant congestion as a result. The existing services on the route suffer from inconsistent journey times and the expected growth at UK Central Solihull (a thriving business district) is expected to exacerbate the situation. The EP Scheme aims to set minimum standards along the route to make journey times more reliable, whilst reducing the overall length of time it takes to travel between key areas. This will improve the connectivity along this route and support the expected growth in Solihull, Birmingham City Centre, and UK Central linking people to new jobs, homes, facilities, and onward connections.

1.21 What will happen if a member of the Enhanced Partnership doesn't meet their commitment?

The Enhanced Partnership is legally binding. If a bus operator does not meet its commitment, they could have their operating licence removed by the Traffic Commissioner and will not be able to operate bus services. If the authorities fail to meet its commitments, they could have legal action taken against them.

1.22 What will happen if a bus operator goes into administration and cannot afford to make the required improvements?

If a bus operator cannot afford to improve their service to the required standard, they will be expected to withdraw their services on the corridor.

1.23 Are there any plans or priorities for future schemes? How (and when) will these be decided?

There are no plans to create any future Enhanced Partnership Schemes for the region at this time. However, partners can work to introduce new Schemes if this is deemed the most appropriate course of action to support further investment to improve bus services in the region.

Any partner is also able to propose a new Enhanced Partnership Scheme for consideration should they feel it appropriate.

1.24 When will the improvements begin?

Improvements have begun with designs being prepared for the bus priority infrastructure and bus operators already investing in improving their bus services.

However, the EP Scheme will ensure all bus operators meet minimum vehicle standards in the future, with the first milestone being a minimum Euro VI engine standard for all buses by 28th April 2021. This will be followed by the delivery of bus priority infrastructure in 2022 and other bus service improvements for accessibility and passenger information.

1.25 Who will benefit?

The simple answer is everyone who uses one of the 52 bus services on the A34 (north), A45 and Lode Lane. This includes those who use bus services to commute to work as well as those travelling regularly on these routes for leisure, family and other reasons. The EP Scheme will also benefit businesses and employers across the region through improved accessibility and residents from improved air quality through lower vehicle emissions.

By improving journeys on these key corridors, the scheme will also benefit visitors to the region (particularly during the Commonwealth Games) and help to improve travel on routes in the area.

1.26 What are the benefits of the EP Scheme?

The EP Scheme aims to improve journey time reliability and customer satisfaction for bus services on the A34 (north), A45 and Lode Lane Corridors.

The Scheme will set **minimum standards for high quality buses** and involve **improvements to the current 52 services and any subsequent new services**, along almost 550 miles of route – this equates to nearly 6% of routes across the West Midlands.

As well as investment in **bus priority measures**, **77 bus stops will be upgraded**, offering more pleasant waiting environments, along with **real-time information** that will provide reassurance to passengers, enabling bus users to **link journeys** with rail, tram and plane travel. This, together with the setting of **vehicles specifications for emission standards** will help to improve air quality in the region.

Improved and better integrated bus services will also help to support the **shift towards more sustainable forms of transport** in the area, reducing the need for private car trips.

The proposed EP Scheme runs through some of the most deprived areas of the West Midlands and so will help to **tackle transport inequalities** in the region.

1.27 How is this related to the Commonwealth Games?

Development of the EP Scheme will help the local transport network to cope with the additional number of people visiting Birmingham and travelling to the Commonwealth Games stadium.

It is important to note that the first EP Scheme is not being delivered solely because of the Commonwealth Games (CWG). The need for improvements to bus travel and the scheme are identified in 'Movement for Growth' to support the Strategic Economic Plan for the region. In December 2017, improvements to the transport network along the A34 (north), A45 and Lode Lane Corridors became a priority due to the success of the CWG bid and the additional benefits the EP Scheme will bring by setting minimum standards for bus travel helping both regular users and those travelling to the CWG.

1.28 Has the EP Scheme been proposed just because of the Commonwealth Games?

No, it is important to note that the first EP Scheme is not being delivered solely because of the Commonwealth Games (CWG). The need for improvements to bus travel and the scheme are identified in 'Movement for Growth' to support the Strategic Economic Plan for the region. In December 2017 improvements to the transport network along the A34 (north), A45 and Lode Lane Corridors became a priority due to the success of the CWG bid and the additional benefits the EP Scheme will bring by setting minimum standards for bus travel helping both regular users and those travelling to the CWG.

1.29 Will Covid-19 affect the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme?

There is currently no effect on the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme due to Covid-19. TfWM and partners plan on delivering all improvements contained in the documents but recognises that in the future, some dates for completed improvements may have to be extended.

1.30 What is TfWM doing to ensure the safety of bus users throughout the Covid-19 pandemic?

TfWM have been working closely to support local highway authority colleagues and local bus operators, in order to keep a safe, clean and functioning transport network available for those that need it throughout the pandemic. This will continue. 'Recovering the Transport network – towards a new normal' sets out how we see the transport system changing to reflect the impacts of the Pandemic and achieve our longer-term ambitions. TfWM will work closely with all regional partners to continue to aid economic resilience and recovery. For further information on the response to COVID-19 please see:
<https://www.networkwestmidlands.com/plan-your-journey/network-overview/>

2.0 The consultation

2.1 What is this consultation about?

We want to hear your views on the Enhanced Partnership (EP), Plan and Scheme. The Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan sets out our proposal for closer partnership working between bus operators, local authorities and Transport for West Midlands, the transport arm of the West Midlands Combined Authority. The EP Scheme outlines the proposals to improve the standard of bus travel and passenger experience along the A34 (north), A45 and Lode Lane Corridors.

2.4 Who is being consulted?

The EP Plan and Scheme have been developed in collaboration between Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the 7 constituent local authorities and local bus operators, as well as other stakeholders for passenger groups, industry and business.

As part of this consultation we want to hear your views, on whether we have set the right improvements for bus services, proposed the right facilities and measures or anything else you may wish to share with us regarding the improvement of bus services in the region and on these corridors.

2.8 How can I find out further information? Where can I get a consultation leaflet?

The consultation leaflet and all other consultation materials, for example, full copies of the draft EP Plan and draft EP Scheme documents are available from the consultation website www.EPConsultation.tfwm.org.uk

The consultation leaflet provides a summary of the Enhanced Partnership, draft Plan and Scheme, the benefits of our proposals and next steps.

Paper copies, together with the consultation questionnaire and business reply envelopes can be requested from Transport for West Midlands/West Midlands Combined Authority (16 Summer Lane, Birmingham, B19 3SD, Tel: 0345 303 6760).

2.5 How can I respond to the consultation?

You can download a copy of the EP Plan and Scheme by visiting www.EPConsultation.tfwm.org.uk

We would prefer for you to submit your responses using our online questionnaire, however, you can also respond in the following ways:

- **Online by visiting** - www.EPConsultation.tfwm.org.uk
- **By Email** – EPConsultation@tfwm.org.uk
- **By post** – [Request a Business Reply envelope by contacting TfWM](#)

2.6 Is the information available in other formats?

Yes, information is available in other formats on request. Please contact the following freephone number [0345 303 6760](tel:03453036760) or EPConsultation@tfwm.org.uk

2.7 Why haven't you put copies of printed consultation materials in publicly accessible venues?

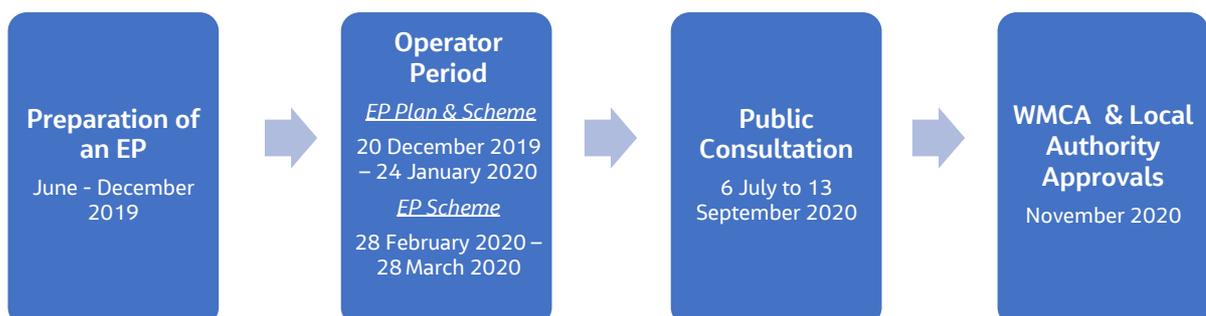
TfWM are working to ensure we keep you safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. With this in mind we took the decision to focus the consultation online and only send out printed copies of materials on request. All consultation materials and supporting documents are available via the consultation website www.EPConsultation.tfwm.org.uk

2.7 What will happen after the consultation? How will my feedback influence the proposals?

Once the consultation closes on [Sunday 13 September 2020](#), we will carefully consider all feedback received and prepare a consultation report. This report will summarise the key themes and note how your responses have been used to inform the final EP Plan and EP Scheme. The report will be published on the TfWM website.

The EP Partners, including operators, will consider how the proposed EP Plan and EP Scheme need to change to reflect suggestions made in this consultation. If changes are made to the EP Plan and/or Scheme, the EP will be subject to another operator period, for a minimum of 28 days. Once agreed, the EP Plan and EP Scheme will go to the WMCA Transport Delivery Committee for approval. The EP Plan and EP Scheme will then be made by the WMCA and the local authorities.

The figure below provides our current timeline for the making of the Enhanced Partnership.



3.0 Sprint

3.1 How is this different to the Sprint consultation?

Sprint is an ongoing consultation. First carried out in 2018, the Sprint consultation asked people for their views on potential new routes for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service and the detailed design of infrastructure associated with BRT. These transport Corridors (the A34 (North), A45 and Lode Lane) happen to be included in the first EP Scheme. The Sprint consultation focuses on the detail of 'what will go where' and is separate to that of the EP.

To keep up to date on the latest Sprint developments, we encourage you to sign up to the Sprint newsletter, details available on <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/development/sprint/> If you have any questions relating to the Sprint construction work please email sprintenquiries@tfwm.org.uk or call 0345 303 6760, option 2, then option 3.

The EP consultation is *not* about the detailed design of infrastructure associated with the corridors in the EP Scheme. The EP consultation asks for your views on the establishment of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme. The EP Plan sets out our vision for better bus travel across the West Midlands and the EP Scheme sets out improvements to facilities and measures, along with the minimum bus service standards we want along the EP Scheme Corridors. The EP Plan and Scheme form a legally binding commitment on all partners, including operators, to ensure the improvements happen as specified. It will ensure bus priority infrastructure and enhanced bus stops are delivered by TfWM and operators meet minimum standards for bus services.

4.0 Air quality

4.1 What is a non-diesel vehicle?

A vehicle that is not powered by diesel fuel. Several non-diesel bus technologies are in operation or development, each with their own unique set of characteristics; and the technologies are rapidly evolving. As non-diesel bus technology is evolving, it is not appropriate to specify a single type of technology for future bus services under the EP. Therefore, we have specified an approach that helps ensure that the community can gain the benefits of reduced emission towards zero, without losing the efficiencies that can be gained from future developments in non-diesel bus technologies.

4.2 What is meant by Euro VI engine standard or better?

Since 1992, European Union regulations have been imposed on new vehicles, with the aim of improving air quality - meaning a vehicle has to meet a certain Euro emissions standard when it is made. The current Euro VI was introduced in September 2014 for new type approvals and rolled out for the majority of vehicle sales and registrations in September 2015.

The regulations, which are designed to become more stringent over time, define acceptable limits for exhaust emissions of new light duty vehicles sold in the EU and EEA (European Economic Area) member states.

