
Sprint Update Report- Birmingham City Centre to Birmingham Airport and Solihull (A45)

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Transport for
West Midlands

Foreword



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I'd like to thank everyone who has taken the time to engage with Transport for West Midlands on our Sprint proposals.

Whether gathered during our consultation, or since, through letters, emails, phone calls and meetings, your input so far has been invaluable to our work and has been gratefully received.

This Update Report represents the latest outcome from this feedback, detailing what we committed to review in our Public Consultation report, while touching on wider topics from each scheme, and the Sprint programme as a whole.

We recognise the importance of an effective transport system for the creation of new jobs, economic growth which benefits all, new housing, clean air and improved health in the West Midlands. Therefore, delivering the first Sprint routes will be part of a wider investment in road, rail, bus, tram and cycling infrastructure designed to deliver an integrated transport system to ease congestion, and keep the region moving.

As you will see, there have been some significant changes to the Sprint proposals, and it demonstrates that we are listening to all our stakeholders. We are committed to keeping you informed and engaged as plans develop further, and will be issuing regular newsletters with updates on Sprint.

In the meantime, please read and consider the latest progress in this report and, as always, feel free to get in touch if you have any comments or questions.

Introduction

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) launched a public consultation on 22 August 2018 for three proposed Sprint schemes: A34 Walsall to Birmingham, A45 Birmingham City Centre to Birmingham Airport and Solihull, and Sutton Coldfield to Birmingham via Langley.

Members of the public were invited to review the proposals for all three schemes and to submit their responses by 5 October 2018. Submissions were made via:

- An online questionnaire, hosted on birminghambeheard.org.uk
- On-street interviews, led by the TfWM Customer Intelligence Team
- Self-completion paper surveys, made available at public events and at 10 local libraries
- (Comments were also made by letter, email, telephone hotline and social media)

The results were published in the Sprint Route Public Consultation report in December 2018, in which we committed to provide stakeholders – that’s those who have an interest in the Sprint proposals – with updates on the latest developments.

The Sprint Route Public Consultation report can be found at www.tfwm.org.uk/sprint

of the consultation, and used them to inform updates to the proposals.

We have also continued to engage with all key stakeholders during this period to ensure they are aware of Sprint’s progress. This has included meetings with Elmdon Community Action Group, Lyndon Residents Association, Solihull Chambers of Commerce, Jaguar Land Rover, Urban Growth Company, Midland Metro Alliance, and local councillors. We are also working closely with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Birmingham City Council (our delivery partners) to ensure their requirements are considered in the next stages of the A45 Sprint scheme. We have a strong obligation to all our stakeholders and value feedback highly, and have tried to provide you with as much information as possible. It is important to note that the latest proposals are subject to revision as plans progress and further engagement takes place. If you’ve received this report, you will have either expressed an interest in being kept up-to-date on Sprint, or we will have identified you as benefiting from it.

What’s happened since December?

The December report detailed the results from the Sprint consultation, while identifying key issues on which we committed to respond. Since this report was published, we have also analysed each one of the comments gathered as part



Main Scheme Feedback

The Sprint Route Public Consultation report identified key issues in relation to the A45 Sprint scheme proposals and what we committed to do in response.

<p>Route-specific 'Issues Identified' in public consultation report</p>	<p>Potential impact of the scheme on green spaces, specifically the loss of trees in the central reservation on the approach to the Wheatsheaf from Birmingham Airport.</p> <p>There are several sections of the route where verges are reduced and trees removed in order to introduce bus lanes.</p>
<p>What we committed to</p>	<p>To consider ways in which to minimise the impact of the scheme and consider options to mitigate loss of green space.</p>
<p>Update</p>	<p>Each design has been revisited to consider how the impact on trees and green space can be minimised and further reviews will be carried out during detailed design in spring 2019 although, in many locations, it is not possible to provide bus priority without the loss of trees.</p> <p>Any green space lost as part of Sprint's proposals will be replaced according to the local highway authority tree replacement policy. In some places, replacement greenery may even exceed that which was removed. We have a number of options to replace trees removed, with alternative species that will allow us to retain trees in reduced verges while allowing vehicles to run alongside.</p>

Other Themes

Other themes identified during the public consultation have been used to inform A45 scheme progress. These include:

Road safety

Some consultation comments raised concerns about the safety of pedestrians and residents whose driveways are on the route.

Update: As standard practice we will undertake a Road Safety Audit as part of the detailed design phase and will use the findings to review the design. It will consider various aspects of the proposals, including junction layouts, visibility, pedestrians, cyclists, emergency vehicles, signage, road markings, access, and lighting. The Road Safety Audit will highlight any areas that may need to be addressed to ensure safety issues are mitigated. This is likely to be undertaken in summer 2019.

A pedestrian crossing will also be installed on Hobs Moat Road as part of the Sprint proposals; a concept which has been broadly welcomed by local stakeholders following two petitions to investigate crossing options for the road.

Lode Lane

There were concerns that the proposed changes to Lode Lane will have a negative impact on general traffic flow.

Update: The philosophy of Sprint recognises that bus priority measures may reduce road capacity for general traffic and may create increased delays on non-public transport modes. Increased delays for general traffic are, in effect, acknowledged as part of the trade-off when it comes to providing an enhanced public transport system that will be designed to achieve sustainable modal shift targets (in this case, the move from car to public transport). On Lode Lane the additional bus priority is being introduced through road widening, which will have limited impact on capacity for general traffic.

Existing bus services

There were a number of consultation comments about the impact of the proposals on the X1 and X2 bus services, with some enquiring as to why the proposed changes are needed.

Update: The A45 provides an important connection between Birmingham city centre and Birmingham Airport and Solihull, serving residents and businesses in Digbeth, Sheldon, and Yardley that currently do not have access to reliable forms of public transport. In addition to this, existing bus services on the route, including the X1 and X2, suffer from journey time variability; an issue which is expected to be exacerbated by growth at inward investment location, UK Central.

Sprint aims to address this journey time variability while reducing the overall length of time it takes to travel between key areas. Connectivity will thereby be improved along this route, supporting the expected growth in Solihull, Birmingham city centre and UK Central, while linking local people to new jobs, homes, facilities, and other transport connections.

We will also work with existing bus operators to optimise the services that use the route.

Existing bus service improvements

There were a number of comments which requested improvements to existing services and other locations.

Update: The proposals will improve the reliability and speed of other bus services that use the route, including those which serve Cranes Park, Chelmsley Wood, Tile Cross, Olton, and Coventry. This will ensure the maximum benefit is realised from the investment.

We will work with existing bus operators to optimise the services that use the route.

Digbeth High Street

There were concerns that the limited interventions in Digbeth would not improve bus journey times.

Update: We are working closely with Birmingham

City Council and the Midland Metro Alliance (MMA) to develop additional public transport on Digbeth High Street. These proposals will also consider

MMA's future Birmingham Eastside Extension project. The interim proposals are likely to be confirmed in summer 2019.

Swan Island

There were concerns that the proposed changes to the Swan Island will have a negative impact on general traffic flow.

Update: As mentioned above, the philosophy for Sprint routes acknowledges that bus priority measures may reduce road capacity for general traffic. The approach to Swan Island, which included reallocation of highway space from general traffic to bus lane, will require further traffic modelling in collaboration with Birmingham City Council to assess the impact of this proposal and to ensure that the effect is proportionate to the scheme. This is likely to be confirmed in spring 2019.

Loading and Parking

There were some concerns regarding changes to loading and parking arrangements, particularly on the stretch of Coventry Road between Hobs Moat Road and Keswick Road.

Update: We are reviewing parking and access arrangements, along with alternative options for businesses and residents along the route. The majority of existing parking has been retained. The decision on the design is likely to be confirmed in spring 2019.

Hobs Moat Road

Some comments expressed concern about changes to service road access on Hobs Moat Road between Melton Avenue and Coventry Road.

Update: Bus priority will be important in this location to ensure reliable bus journey times. We will be carrying out additional engagement with local residents to understand their concerns and will, where possible, amend the design to mitigate any issues. This will be undertaken in spring 2019. We will also revisit the design to consider how the impact on trees and green space can be minimised.

General Programme Themes

Some themes related to the wider Sprint programme but were not specific to any scheme; these are described below.

All Routes - Issues Identified in December report	What we committed to
1. Need for cycle lanes and other cycling infrastructure alongside Sprint schemes.	Including the integration of cycling infrastructure and facilities on all routes and along the corridors as part of the detailed design subject to business case appraisal, deliverability and necessary road safety audits.
2. Disruption to residents and businesses during the construction period.	Develop comprehensive construction management plans for each route with councils and construction companies, and develop travel alternatives to make sure people who use this route will still be able to travel during the construction.

Update

- Transport for West Midlands has ambitious plans to increase cycling and walking across the West Midlands, especially providing an integrated solution (the linking-up of multiple modes of transport) for all passengers. We have assessed each location on its individual merits to ensure other modes are considered and that future cycle routes are not ruled out. The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is also seeking funding for future cycling enhancements, with both the A34 and A45 corridor having been identified as priority routes. Cycling provision will be improved on these routes when funding is available.
- Disruption is a significant concern for those who live by, or regularly travel along, the proposed Sprint corridors. We are working with our Local Authority partners to understand and coordinate construction works planned over the coming years to ensure that we coordinate and keep disruption to a minimum. We will also be working with communities affected to highlight alternative travel options as a result of any disruption caused.



There were other key programme themes identified during the public consultation which we have used to inform progress. The other key programme themes include:

Vehicles

The consultation gathered a variety of comments on the proposed Sprint vehicle. Many expressed approval for its new look and modern facilities, while others stated concerns about its impact on other road users and the need for adequate seating.

Update: The single-deck 18-metre vehicle which Sprint proposes to use is the standard vehicle for this type of service. Like them, it will offer:

- A spacious and up-to-date passenger environment, attracting more people to use public transport
- Multi-door boarding, which will reduce stop times and make for quicker and more predictable journeys
- Increased capacity, which will exceed that of premium double-decker buses, while allowing for better on-board mobility due to the absence of stairs
- Better accessibility for all users compared to double-decker buses.

The vehicles will also be climate-controlled and will offer free Wi-Fi, next stop announcements, and information about ongoing travel; all of which will provide a high quality passenger experience that makes public transport a compelling alternative to the private car.

There are various enhancements that can be explored as part of vehicle specification, all of which TfWM will consider closely prior to procurement. We will also continue to monitor other UK bus rapid transit systems, such as Glider in Belfast, particularly in relation to safety, pollution and performance.

Emissions

The vehicle specified in the Sprint proposal will have a better than Euro VI engine as a minimum standard. Consultation feedback, however, showed enthusiasm for zero-emission vehicles.

Update: We will be evaluating zero-emission vehicles (in accordance with delivery timescales) against other types of propulsion system, as part of the vehicle procurement process. We will keep partners and stakeholders updated as this progresses.

Stopping locations

The consultation saw several questions about the stops served by Sprint, with some requests for additional stops and some requests for fewer.

Update: The stopping pattern will be reviewed with prospective operators and local authorities to ensure appropriate coverage of the corridors. The final decision on stopping locations will be agreed in summer 2019.

Shelters

There were some comments related to the shelter design.

Update: We are planning to install a prototype shelter in spring 2019 to assess its suitability and robustness. We will be engaging with representative groups to ensure it is appropriate for all users.

Ticketing and method of payment

There were several questions related to the price of tickets and payment methods.

Update: We are working with prospective operators to review the fare payment and revenue protection strategy. Concessionary pass holders will be able to use their pass on Sprint. It is anticipated that nBus card holders will be able to also.

Funding and costs

A common question arising from the consultation related to how the schemes are being funded and how much they will cost.

Update: As described above, there is a significant need to invest in transport infrastructure in our region. A Sprint scheme can be provided for less than 25% of the capital cost of Metro and, using existing highway powers, can be delivered in less time.

The schemes are predominantly funded through the HS2 Connectivity Package which is ring-fenced for transport projects as part of the investment portfolio for the West Midlands. The funding is allocated to enhance connectivity for the region and also to maximise the benefits of HS2 in the future.

Congestion

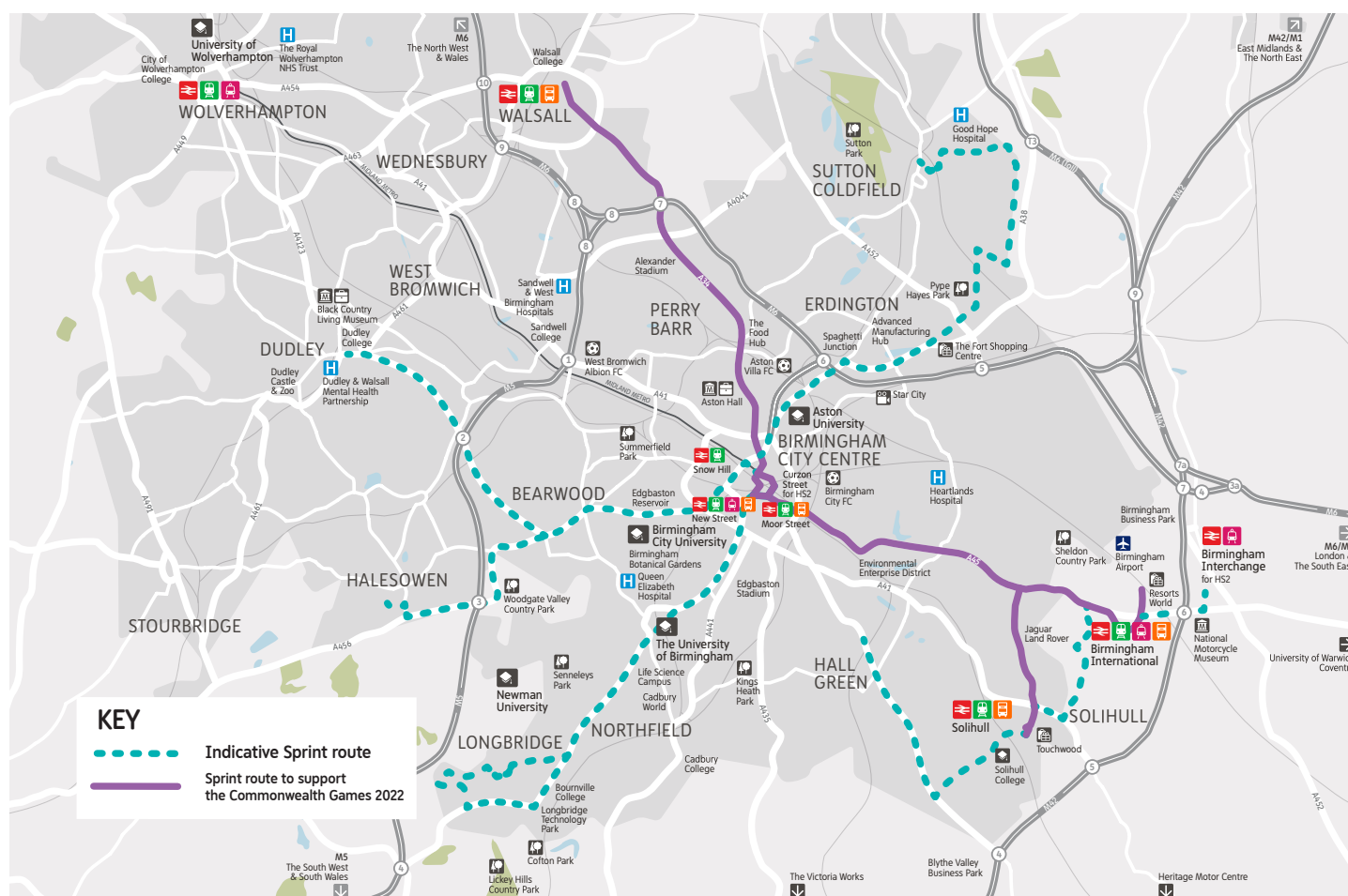
Some participants of the consultation raised concerns that newly-installed bus lanes will be detrimental to other road users.

Update: A commitment to bus priority is required for Sprint to achieve its primary aim of increased journey reliability. In some cases, re-allocation of road space has been considered so that Sprint and other bus services can avoid long delays as a result of congestion, with minimum impact to local residents. At the same time, it is intended that Sprint will increase the amount of capacity on the road network, which, in turn, may help to relieve pressure at major pinch points.

Tree loss

Some participants raised concerns that loss of trees will have a negative impact on local residents.

Update: The importance of green space is recognised by WMCA as a promoter of good physical and mental health, which is why Environmental Impact Assessments will be carried out for every Sprint scheme to ensure appropriate mitigation. The local highway authority tree replacement policy will also be applied to Sprint schemes.



What is Sprint?

Sprint is a bus rapid transit (BRT) service that delivers predictable journey times and high frequency, dependable timetables.

Bus rapid transit is used as part of integrated transport systems across the world.

BRT is used across the world as part of an integrated transport system and the standard vehicle for this type of service is an articulated bus.

BRT replicates the spacious feel and speed of tram, whilst maintaining the flexibility, lower cost and simplicity of a bus system.

BRT offers a similar journey experience to a light rail or tram system and uses low floor, multi door vehicles. Serving fewer stops and with passengers using off-board ticketing or contactless payment, this reduces the dwell times at stops and helps reduce minimise the delays often experienced with regular bus services.

BRT runs on existing roads enhanced by a range of measures to ensure journey time reliability and an enhanced customer experience including high priority lanes, signal controlled priority at traffic lights and new improved shelters.

Sprint will have on board Wi-Fi, next stop announcements and CCTV security all part of ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience to encourage more people to switch from using their car.

Why does the West Midlands need Sprint?

Our region is growing. By 2035, the population of the West Midlands is set to increase by up to 444,000 (100 people every day) and we expect 215,000 new homes to be built across the region by 2030. In the same period, we anticipate that business investment will generate an additional 50,000 jobs, while the introduction of HS2 will open our connections to a wider area.

We also want growth to be inclusive and sustainable so that everyone can benefit from the opportunities it will bring. Investment in our passenger transport network will help provide the capacity and quality of service we need, while helping to keep our region moving.

Did you know, based on current travel habits, expected growth could add 1.2 million trips to our network each weekday, increasing car kilometres by 34% across the region?

Ongoing Engagement

Working in partnership with the local authorities, TfWM brought Sprint's schemes to the preliminary design stage, at which we released the preferred options for public review and comment.

The public consultation was our first opportunity to engage widely on the initial proposals. Where there were concerns, we have been engaging with resident groups, businesses, schools and communities, to fully understand the issues, and to ensure we can minimise any impact.

We understand that there may still be some concerns regarding the proposals, however, and therefore intend to engage in a meaningful way that will allow us to support in these instances.

We will continue to work with all stakeholders, while using the feedback from our consultation to inform the next stages of Sprint, throughout which there will be rigorous assurance reviews. Ultimately, decisions to proceed are made by the local highway authorities and the WMCA Board, including the leaders of the seven Local Authorities and the Mayor of the West Midlands.

Staying in Touch

We will continue to update our website ([www.tfwm.org.uk /sprint](http://www.tfwm.org.uk/sprint)) with Frequently Asked Questions, future engagement activities and the latest information.

We will also be issuing quarterly Sprint newsletters, which will be made available to all our stakeholders and the general public. Sign up through our website by entering your email address in the 'Stay up to date' box.

Alternatively, get in touch using the contact details below.

Phone:

0121 214 7321

Email:

sprintenquiries@tfwm.org.uk

Address:

**Transport for West Midlands,
16 Summer Lane, Birmingham, B19 3SD**

You can request hard copies of any of our three Sprint Update Reports (A34, A45 or SBL) by using the contact details shown.

If you've received this report, you will have either expressed an interest in being kept up-to-date on Sprint, or we will have identified you as benefiting from it. If you no longer wish to receive Sprint-related correspondence such as this, or would like to request the reports from our other two Sprint schemes, please get in touch.



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West Midlands**

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