

Active Travel Consultation Plan for the West Midlands Region

This document is intended to give a broad overview of how TfWM and its partner Local Authorities will engage with the public through engagement and consultation.

At the bottom of this document you will find a glossary providing descriptions for specific consultation terminology.

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and its seven local authority (LA) partners are committed to engaging with communities and undertaking extensive consultation work to ensure that the active travel capital and infrastructure for the region is inclusive and fit for purpose.

TfWM will work with local authorities to model and share best practice, to encourage local authorities to adopt an 'Announce, Discuss, Decide' model of engagement and consultation. This will therefore allow the general public and all key stakeholders to have ample opportunity to comment upon and shape cycling and walking infrastructure across the region.

Commonplace online consultation

The core online consultation for local residents and relevant stakeholders shall be facilitated through the [online engagement platform](#), Commonplace. Residents will be able to complete online surveys to provide feedback about the different infrastructure schemes and proposals. Respondents will be able to log their approval rating for the proposals, as well as use the space provided to suggest changes that they think would improve the scheme(s). Each local authority will be able to utilise a 'heat map' function, allowing members of the public to log comments related to active travel in their area and suggest changes or improvements.

Local authority online engagement platform consultation

Commonplace will be the primary means of consultation, and across the region local authorities will have autonomy to facilitate consultation using established consultation platforms (e.g. Lets talk in Coventry, Be Heard in Birmingham.). These platforms will allow local authorities to undertake their own formal and statutory consultation utilising their existing tools to complement the Commonplace platform.

Stakeholder identification and engagement

Local authorities will identify key stakeholders likely to be affected by each infrastructure scheme and will work in coordination with TfWM travel demand management team to engage with them. LAs and TfWM will ensure stakeholders are consulted appropriately via direct online surveys, personalised consultation or by feeding into Commonplace engagement, in addition to existing embedded processes for consultations. This consultation will be inclusive of, but not limited to, businesses, schools, local residents, Royal Mail, emergency services, public transport operators and community and disability groups.

Each scheme may impact a different demographic of stakeholders, and therefore an engagement and consultation plan for each scheme will be created by LAs, supported by TfWM, and where possible shared on the Commonplace site or the central TfWM website. Engaging with disabled individuals, including those with visual impairments, will be central to ensuring that the consultation is inclusive and caters to those disproportionately affected by infrastructure changes.

Consultation with Councillors and MPs

LAs will engage with Councillors (Cllrs) and MPs in wards affected by new infrastructure schemes and will ask for each of them to rate their approval for the scheme using a RAG rating (Red/Amber/Green) or a similar method of gauging sentiment. Depending on the scheme, Cllrs and MPs from bordering wards will also be kept informed where there will be potential impacts on their wards. LAs will brief MPs and Cllrs on the engagement with key stakeholders within their wards and current levels of public support for the scheme(s). All LAs will work within

their own standard democratic processes which may include schemes being formally considered by the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder at a public facing formal Decision Session. TfWM will support this process where needed and provide insight, examples, assets and comms that will support LAs with political buy-in and equip Cllrs and leaders with any comms support they need in a public forum.

Consultation with public transport operators and emergency services

We are committed to working with public transport operators to encourage people into all types of sustainable transport. Changes in road space allocation has obvious potential impacts on traffic and the operation of bus services. We will consult and engage with TfWM's Integrated Transport Services Team as well as local bus operators including National Express during the development and delivery of scheme(s). We will seek solutions that benefits both public transport and active travel with the aim to improve health and wellbeing, air quality and reduce congestion. With significant changes and events to the region, including Birmingham's Clean Air Zone and Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, provisions that encourage behaviour change to sustainable travel will be key to keep our region moving.

We will also ensure that emergency services are kept informed of any changes to highway alignment and work with Regional Transport Coordination Centre (RTCC) to identify issues and solutions.

To ensure the consultation is reaching a diverse cross-section of residents, an extensive engagement plan will be utilised.

We acknowledge that not everyone will have access to the internet or a computer to use Commonplace. TfWM will work with our marketing team and LA partners to strive for diverse and extensive public engagement, through keeping the public informed using various media channels. We will also use mail drops, mail-in surveys and community-based events to provide options for those who cannot access the Commonplace website or online content.

Review and feedback on schemes

LAs will address any feedback on the schemes as appropriate and will consider options for the schemes to ensure positive benefit. We acknowledge that the initial response to some schemes may be mixed and we will work with communities to help communicate the long terms benefits, such as the health and wellbeing of children and families, social inclusion, improved air quality, the environment and reducing congestion. There are several examples across the UK where schemes received objection in the first instance but over time have received very high level of support by both residents and local businesses.

It is important that we are clear and open with residents and are clear and supportive in our communications, explaining the long-term benefits while managing expectations that changes don't happen overnight. We will seek to make amendments based on feedback where possible, while maintaining the positive objectives of the scheme. However, in order to achieve the step change in cycling and walking levels, reallocation of road space will be needed. We will regularly communicate any changes to designs following engagement and consultation exercises.

Glossary

Below is a list of words commonly used throughout this document.

Engagement: Engagement is defined as any sort of interaction between Transport for West Midlands / local authorities and the general public. This could be making the public aware of a new scheme, asking for suggestions on changes to cycling and walking infrastructure in a local area, or allowing individuals the opportunity to have clear communication channels between themselves and their local authority.

Consultation: Consultation is defined as the process of formally consulting or discussing, whereby individuals are asked for their opinion and comments related to a specific scheme or project.

Statutory Consultation: Councils sometimes have a statutory requirement to consult their residents, especially for issues such as planning or redevelopments. Statutory consultations are bound by legal requirements, such as Best Value legislation, and can have strict rules surrounding how they should be conducted. Statutory consultations typically last for four weeks.

Stakeholder: A stakeholder is the word used for anyone that is affected or could benefit from the development of a new scheme. This could be a local business, school, community group and local residents.

Commonplace: [Commonplace](#) is an online engagement website that allows members of the public to learn about new cycling and walking schemes and have their say. This enables local authorities and Transport for West Midlands to make better and more inclusive decisions.