
To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 19th February 2020

Subject: Bus Provision in Coventry

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 This note has been produced following a meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on 5th February 2020. It builds on information previously provided to the Committee and deals with actions arising from the 5th February 2020 meeting. Specifically, the note focuses on the following areas:

- Framework of options under the Bus Services Act 2017;
- National bus funding and opportunities, including Infrastructure solutions to improve bus service reliability and reduce journey times for passengers
- Breakdown of elements of the levy for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and how this translates to specific costs for Coventry;
- Statistics for the recently introduced platinum bus service (12 / 12X)
- UK City of Culture 2021 Bus Provision and strategy for moving people; and
- Climate change and Electric City

2 Recommendations

2.1 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee are recommended to:

- 1) Consider the information discussed and agreed at their meeting on the 5th February 2020
- 2) Consider the information presented at the meeting on the 19th February 2020
- 3) Identify any recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member or appointed representatives on partner organisations

3 Legislation and the Bus Services Act 2017

3.1 In 1985 the Government deregulated the bus market across the United Kingdom (apart from London and Northern Ireland) and created a market where bus companies were free to determine their own routes, fares and service frequencies. In Coventry and the West Midlands this meant that all bus operators became commercial entities and would operate for profit as any other business would. Within Coventry bus shelters and bus stations were managed and operated through the transport authority which, at the time, was the Passenger Transport Executive (PTE), and all bus services were operated by

private bus companies. Where services were not provided commercially by bus companies, the transport authority was able to step in and provide services with subsidy from the transport levy where a social or economic need for such services was identified. This continues today.

- 3.2 Subsequent Transport Acts recognised that the complete deregulation of services had created a rather disjointed approach to providing what many saw as a public service. In the Transport Act 2000 transport authorities / local authorities were granted powers to develop partnerships and provide passenger information. It was through this Act that Centro started to recharge bus operators for providing passenger information and for providing the bus stops and associated facilities at 12,200 locations across the region.
- 3.3 Subsequently the 2008 Local Transport Act provided local authorities with greater powers to bring bus operators together in multilateral partnerships known as Voluntary Multilateral Partnerships (VMAs). The West Midlands was the first area to utilise this legislation and developed a multi-operator partnership across Coventry back in 2012 to support the Olympics and the development of an integrated network of bus services across the city.
- 3.4 The legislation also contained provision to franchise bus services in the event that an authority felt that they were not being provided adequately by private operators. The franchise approach enables authorities to specify the bus services that will operate within their area, and the minimum service standards in terms of vehicles, fares and quality that bus companies operating the franchised services will be expected to adhere to. This is similar to the system that operates within London. To date, outside London, only Cornwall Council has been successful in introducing a franchise system. Of other Metropolitan areas, NEXUS, the then Passenger Transport Executive for Tyne and Wear local authorities, pursued this legislation which was heavily contested in the courts by the commercial bus operators. This resulted in a failed bid to franchise the bus services and acknowledgement by the Government that the legislation as it was written was onerous and not fit for purpose.
- 3.5 In 2017 further legislation was introduced providing a new suite of powers to enable stronger, more binding, partnerships known as Enhanced Partnerships, to be introduced, franchising powers with automatic entitlement to Mayoral Combined Authorities, and new powers to introduce ticketing schemes and improved data provision from bus operators. A fuller note explaining the Act and its powers is appended to this report (Appendix A).
- 3.6 In 2018 TfWM was asked by the 7 leaders to undertake an assessment of the powers within the Act. Following this assessment, a Strategic Outline Business Case was completed by May 2019 which concluded that in the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area there was a case for consideration of exercising greater intervention in the bus market. Part of this case was based on the failures within the market such as the decreasing level of competition and the significant decline in the number of bus companies operating within the West Midlands, and part of the case recognised that it may require greater interventions to deliver on the WMCA endorsed Vision for Bus.
- 3.7 In June 2019 the WMCA Board approved moving to an Outline Business Case (OBC) to consider in greater detail the powers and options contained within the Act. This detailed assessment is underway and will be completed in April 2021. The three options under consideration are;
 - Do minimum (Bus Alliance) as current

- Further deregulated powers (Enhanced Partnerships)
- Regulated powers (Franchising)

3.8 Whilst the work is undertaken there will be opportunities to input to the process from Coventry, as with other authorities. This will be in the form of discussions and interviews by the appointed independent consultant, as well as briefings through the Cabinet Member for Transport, alongside other Cabinet Members, on a quarterly basis from April 2020.

4 Vision for Bus

4.1 The Vision for Bus was approved by the WMCA in November 2018 and is the agreed Vision for the region to set out what it wants to see from its bus services. The Vision is appended to this report (Appendix B).

5 West Midlands Bus Alliance

5.1 The Bus Alliance is a partnership that came into being in 2015 with the aim of delivering improvements across the bus network throughout Coventry and the wider West Midlands. The Alliance is held up at a national level as a leading example of what can be achieved through public and private partnership.

5.2 The Alliance is independently chaired by Transport Focus with representatives from local authorities, the WMCA's Transport Delivery Committee, and Birmingham City Council's Cabinet Member for Transport. It also includes the following organisations:

- Confederation for Passenger Transport (CPT)
- Local Bus company representatives – currently National Express West Midlands, Diamond Bus and Claribels
- West Midlands Police / British Transport Police (Safer Travel)
- Department for Transport
- Transport for West Midlands

5.3 As the Alliance is approaching its 5-year review in April 2020, below is a summary of its objectives and achievements to date;

Objective		We Did (31 December 2019)	Red, Amber, Green Rating
Outputs	Zero or ultra-low emissions with every other bus at least Euro VI.	62 per cent of the bus fleet is Euro VI through a combination of new buses and bus retrofit. Commitment to get all buses at least Euro VI by April 2021	
	More intuitively understandable core turn-up-and-go routes.	29 Platinum routes which provide passengers with an enhanced user experience and 2 partnership routes with branded 'West Midlands Bus' livery offering a turn up and go service.	

	Fare rises of no more the RPI +1% per annum.	The overall fares basket has met this. Examples for National Express shown are within RPI per annum increases: 2015 Adult NX Daysaver £4.20 2020 Adult NX Daysaver £4.60 2015 Adult 1-week Travelcard £16.50 2020 Adult 1-week Travelcard £17.50 2015 Child Daysaver £2.90 2020 Child Daysaver £2.30	
	Discounted young person's travel for everyone under 19 years old.	Child Concessionary Fares Scheme Discounted travel to all 17-18 year olds including apprentices	
	Integrated ticketless travel in line with intelligent mobility policy.	cEMV contactless payment solutions are now available on Diamond Buses, West Midlands Metro and National Express services. A single capped solution is not available across all operators, but account-based ticketing and best value capped is being developed.	
	Network Development Plans to support the economic objectives of the next decade.	75% of the region have Network Development Plans in place, with 2 areas to be developed.	
	Increased investment in highways infrastructure to aid journey times and reliability.	£25m invested across the Combined Authority area, with a further £30m secured in principle for further investment in bus priority and highways infrastructure.	
	Improvement on board through improved seating, next stop announcements and Wi-Fi.	293 new vehicles with improved seating, next stop announcements and Wi-Fi, along with a further 115 new buses	
Outcomes	Customer satisfaction levels remain over 85%.	2015 – 85% 2019 – 84% Up in all sub areas of satisfaction.	
	Improvement in peak time journey speeds.	2015 – 19.4 km/h 2019 – 17.4 km/h (-10 per cent) Improvements on routes with bus priority implemented (i.e. Harborne Road)	
	Increase bus patronage by 5%	-3 per cent (275.9m / 267.1m), but an increase in the last 2 years	
Impacts	The financial benefits of increased patronage contribute towards infrastructure and buses.	Over £85 million invested by operators in new buses since the Alliance launched.	

6 Funding Streams & The Future

- 6.1 The Government has recently announced several additional funds for buses and has also given the go ahead for a new £28m cross Birmingham bus scheme between Dudley, Smethwick, Birmingham, Kings Heath and Druids Heath. This has been granted because Birmingham has worked in partnership with TfWM and bus operators to develop a series of shovel ready bus schemes across the region. The Black Country authorities are also currently developing a similar programme and Solihull has introduced some significant bus priority, which has resulted in recognised improvements in the reliability and punctuality of services.
- 6.2 In addition, the Department for Transport (DfT) has announced plans to overhaul bus and cycle links for every region outside London, with £5 billion of new funding over 5 years, which is anticipated to be around two thirds bus and one third cycle related. Discussions with Government suggest that much of this is going to be predicated on the introduction of bus priority measures that promote the bus above other modes of traffic.
- 6.3 This announcement is in addition to the £50 million recently unveiled for All-Electric Bus Town / City opportunities, the further £70 million set aside for new, transformational, 'Superbus' networks, and the £30m additional subsidised bus top-up.
- 6.4 Coventry has already secured funding through the Government's Ultra-Low Emission Bus (ULEB) scheme to begin the process of electrifying the city's bus fleet. Supported by the ULEB funding, National Express is procuring 10 electric buses and installing the necessary charging infrastructure at their Coventry depot. The process of bidding for Electric bus town / city and Superbus is through TfWM and will see one bid from across the region, so an assessment criteria is being developed. More details on these funding opportunities are summarised below.

7 All-Electric Bus Town / City Fund

- 7.1 The newly announced All-Electric Bus Town/City fund provides a potential opportunity to accelerate the process of electrification.
- 7.2 There will be a two-stage competition for the available funding. Initially all interested towns and cities will submit an expression of interest by 30 April 2020. The DfT will then produce a shortlist of applicants, who will be asked to submit a more detailed outline business case later in the year.
- 7.3 Any expression of interest from Coventry City Council would need to be submitted via the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), and would need to be supported both by every bus operator currently providing services in the city, and by neighbouring authorities where existing services cross local authority boundaries.

8 'Superbus' Networks

- 8.1 The Government will fund a four-year pilot in Cornwall from May 2020 to bring down fares. It will build on Cornwall's existing One Public Transport project, aiming to provide integrated public transport by joining up the bus and rail networks to demonstrate whether and how such an approach works in a rural area.
- 8.2 The Government is also exploring whether a further pilot could be developed to decrease fares and improve frequencies in an urban area through the local authority and bus operators entering into a partnership; the local authority would provide capital

investment in bus lanes and other bus priority measures, in exchange for the bus operators delivering high frequency services.

- 8.3 Similar partnerships have already been established in the West Midlands, notably the West Midlands Bus Alliance as well as the three Advanced Quality Partnership Schemes, and the developing Enhanced Partnership.

9 Subsidised bus top-up

- 9.1 To improve current bus services, or restore lost services where needed, the Government will pay an extra £30m to local authorities in 2020/21.
- 9.2 It is not yet clear how this £30m will be apportioned and if TfWM, and therefore Coventry, will receive any of it. The fact that this was fixed in 2014 means that TfWM now funds more of the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) towards tendered bus services than it receives. Confirmation that this funding stream will continue is welcome as there had previously been no guarantee beyond 2020/2021.
- 9.3 A wider review on commercial BSOG paid directly to operators is understood to be part of the review. It is anticipated this will address the current anomaly where electric buses do not qualify for BSOG, yet have a higher life-cycle cost than a diesel bus.

10 Innovative Future

- 10.1 Whilst the city is proud of its track record to date, and is particularly excited by innovative projects such as Very Light Rail, it also recognises that the bus will continue to be an important element of the transport network, providing flexible access to parts of the city that would otherwise be difficult to serve by public transport.
- 10.2 Building on the work already in hand to electrify the city's transport network, and invest in the bus infrastructure, Coventry provides a golden opportunity to showcase a fully electrified public transport network covering bus, taxi and, in future, Very Light Rail.

11 Bus services in Coventry

11.1 Patronage

- 11.2 Overall bus usage within Coventry stands at around 28 million passenger journeys a year, which has remained fairly constant over the last few years.
- 11.3 Commercial sensitivities present challenges in breaking this down to an operator level, however National Express (NE), who provide over 90% of bus mileage, has provided a more detailed breakdown of how their patronage levels has changed in recent years in Coventry:



11.4 This represents an increase of around 10% over the past seven years, which is in contrast to the national position where bus passenger numbers are in decline. There is some evidence that the introduction of 'platinum' services on individual routes has driven this increase in passenger numbers:

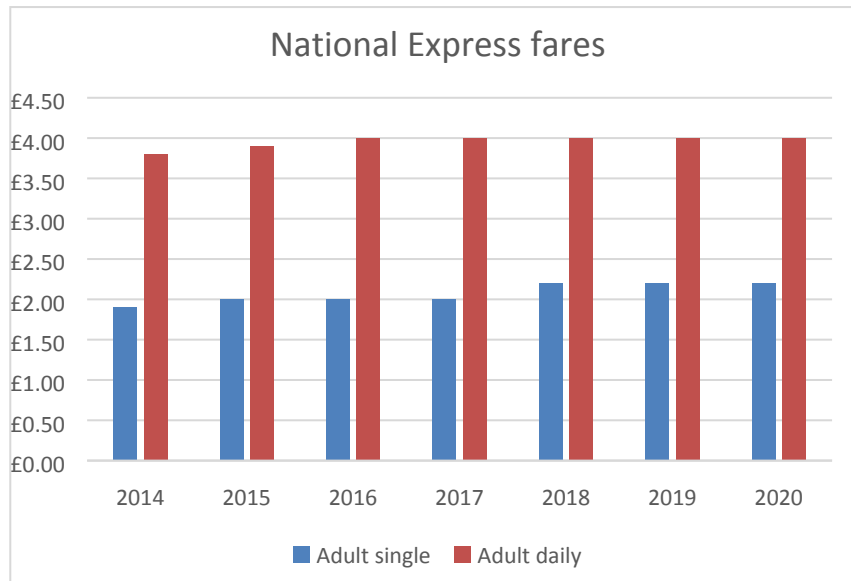
- There has been a 9.3% increase in passenger numbers on the X1 route (Coventry to Birmingham) in the two years since this was introduced
- There has been a 5.4% increase on the 12X/11X route (serving the University of Warwick), which is still in its first year of operation as a Platinum service.

11.5 This rise in patronage is, however, not reflected across all other operators in Coventry, who have seen a collective decline in passenger journeys of approximately 1.2 million between 2014 and 2019.

11.6 Coventry Pool Meadow Bus station currently accommodates nearly 5 million passenger movements per annum and 400,000 bus departures. This actually makes it one of the highest bus departure locations in the region, reflecting its importance as a bus interchange.

11.7 **Fares**

11.8 In terms of fares there has been a slight increase in adult single tickets since 2014, however this has remained unchanged for the since 2017. The adult daily tickets has remained fairly constant since 2016.



11.9 Service reliability in Coventry and the West Midlands

11.10 Overall bus punctuality (the percentage of services operating no more than 1 minute early and 5 minutes late) in Coventry was 82% in 2017/18 and 80% in 2018/19, which is slightly above the West Midlands average of 77% across both 2017/18 and 2018/19. Nationally 83% (2017 / 2018) of bus journeys operated on time and 83.1% in 2018 / 2019.

11.11 However, NE report that the punctuality of their services has worsened over the past 12 months. These delays relate to congestion, particularly during peak times and mainly at pinch points on the network.

11.12 The table below provides some specific examples, comparing three weeks in November 2018 with the same three weeks in November 2019. Times quoted are for 90% of buses to complete the identified section of route.

Service	Section	Time Period	Nov 2018	Nov 2019	Change	% Change
10	Dane Road – Gosford Green	Morning Peak	14m49s	16m20s	1m31s	+10.0%
8	Potters Green Road – Arch Road	Morning Peak	13m47s	14m59s	1m12s	+8.6%
21	St James Lane – Abbey Road	Morning Peak	8m15s	9m27s	1m12s	+14.4%
21	Wood End – Willenhall	Morning Peak	51m25s	56m29s	5m04s	+9.9%
6 et al	IKEA – Farman Road	Shopping (1000-1400)	7m0s	7m23s	0m23s	+5.4%
8/8A	Alderminster Road – Glendower Ave	Shopping (1000-1400)	9m4s	10m44s	1m40s	+18.4%

20	Oban Road – Leicester Row	Evening Peak	20m40s	23m20s	2m40s	+12.8%
21	Wood End – Willenhall	Shopping (1000-1400)	64m30s	67m33s	3m03s	+4.7%

11.13 Although some of the individual increases may appear relatively small, these do accumulate. Of those routes that were unchanged by the September network changes, all have suffered from worsening punctuality because of traffic delay, congestion and junction issues.

11.14 For example:

- The 8/8A route has been affected by worsening delays at Walsgrave, Ball Hill, Spon End and Broad Lane
- In the morning peak, the end-to-end journey on route 21 is now taking 5 minutes longer, a slow down of 10%. This effectively means that of the two additional buses added to this route in September, only one is benefiting passengers because the other is a wasted resource stuck in traffic delays
- On route 13 an extra 6.5% of all buses in the evening peak were late this year compared to last year. There were no changes made to this route or timetable
- On route 20 another 2% of buses ran late, again with no changes to the route or timetable

11.15 **Bus priority measures and urban design**

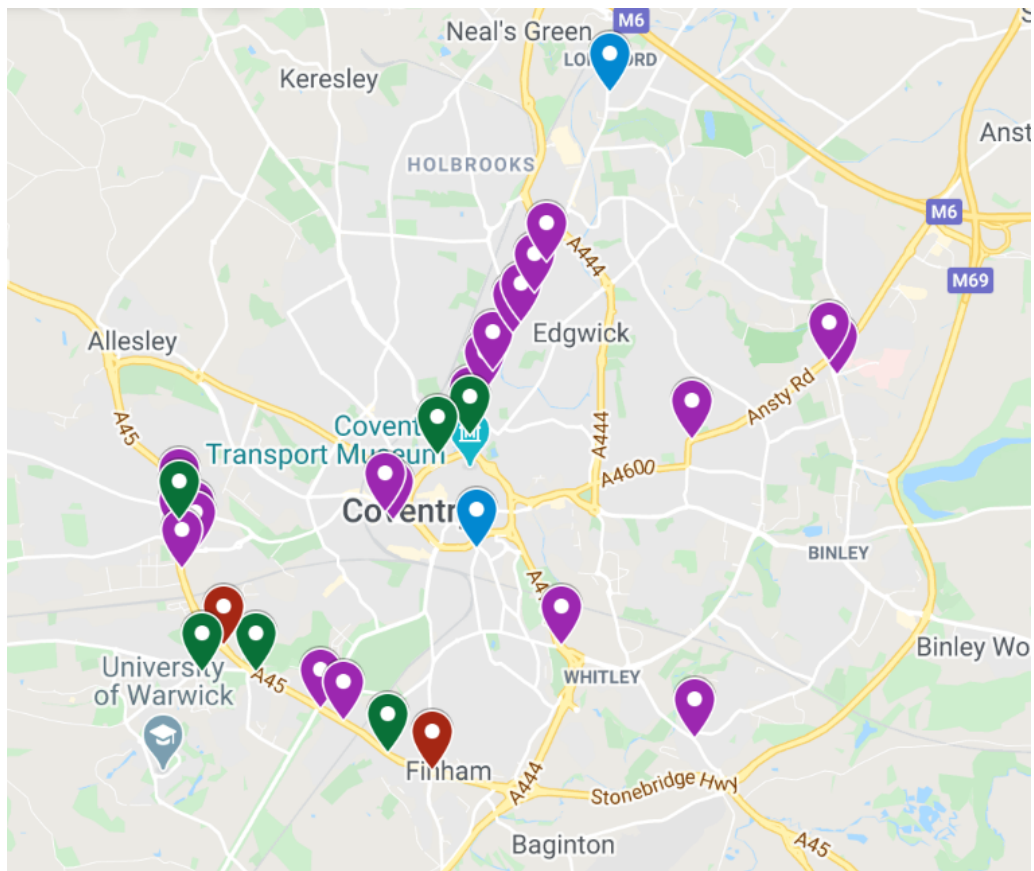
11.16 Government funding is becoming increasingly predicated on bus priority, whether involving bus gates, bus lanes, signal optimisation or any other measures that promote bus and sustainable access.

11.17 A good design that promotes public transport provision and reduces the reliance on the private car is key to the backdrop of sustainable travel in Coventry. Whilst this may be far easier to undertake in new developments that are earmarked for Coventry North and South, there are opportunities to enhance the existing network with bus priority and enforcement measures.

11.18 On the current network bus priority is provided, at the locations where the buses benefit most, in the form of bus gates, which are rigorously enforced through the use of enforcement cameras.

11.19 The Council's Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC) system also provides the capability to support the reliability of bus services through measures such as extending green time to ensure approaching buses pass through the junction, and by ensuring that the impact of traffic congestion upon key bus routes is minimised through careful adjustments to signal timing

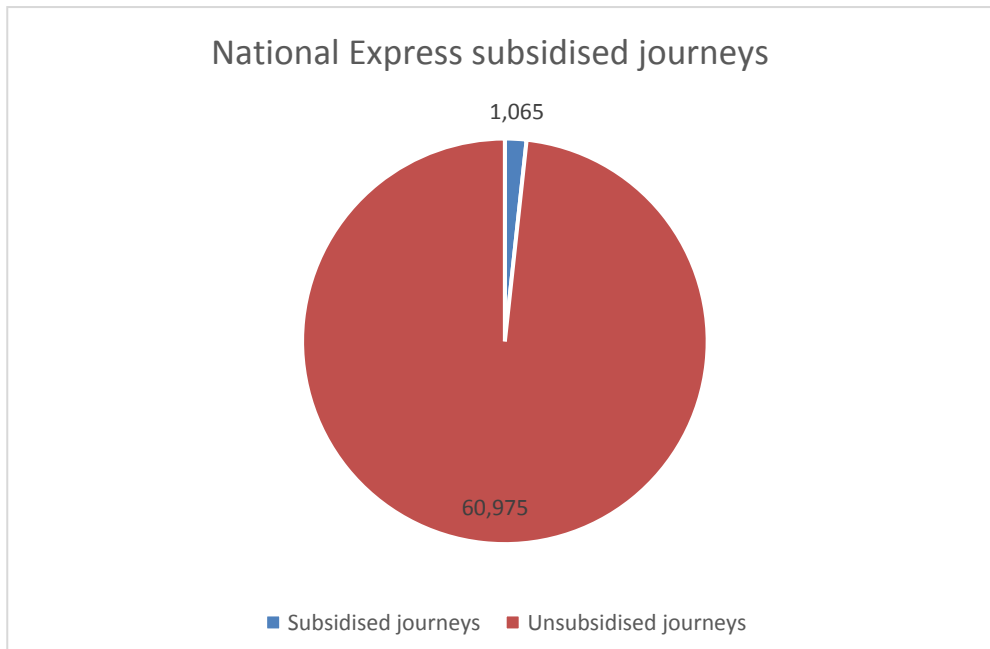
11.20 A map showing the locations of these existing measures is provided below:



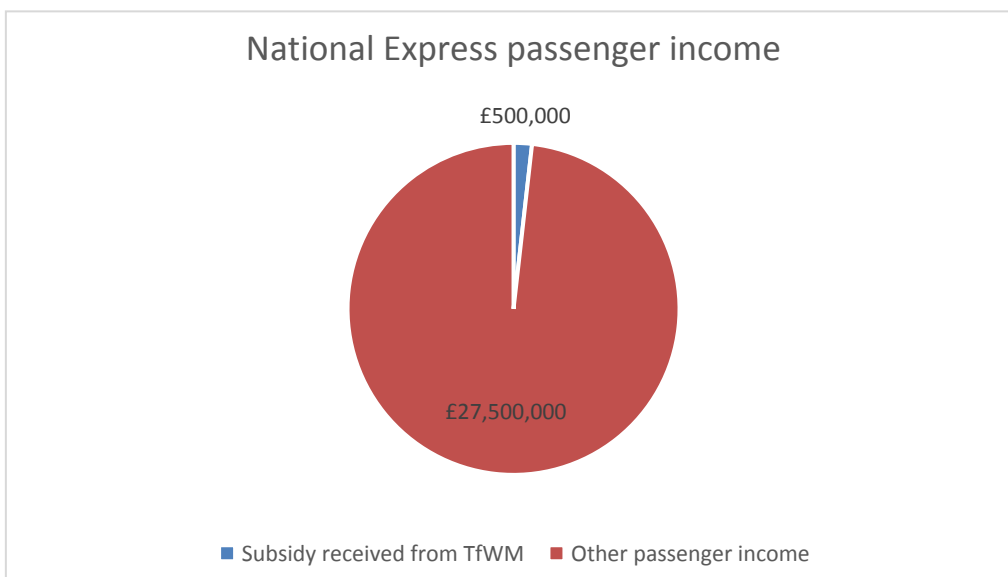
-  Bus gate
-  Signals
-  Part time signals
-  Crossing

11.21 Subsidised services in Coventry

11.22 The vast majority of bus services in Coventry are provided on a commercial basis. Data provided by NE reveals that, out of a total of 60,975 passenger journeys per week, only 1,065 (1.7%) of these are on subsidised services.



11.23 In terms of revenue, NE reports receiving £500,000 p/a in subsidy for Coventry services from TfWM, against a total income from passenger fares of £27.5 million (1.8%).



11.24 Whilst the network is operated across the West Midlands and subsidy levels are paid to operators at the regional scale, TfWM has, however, undertaken some further analysis and estimated that the level of subsidy for Coventry is £1.02 million. This is 11.1% of the total subsidised bus budget for the West Midlands. This is because other operators have a higher overall percentage of tendered bus services than National Express.

11.25 In terms of concessionary journeys, TfWM funded 53 million concessionary journeys across the entire West Midlands Network in 2018/19 at a cost of nearly £55 million. As reimbursement arrangements are undertaken by the organisation as a whole, rather than by geographic area, it has not been possible to disaggregate the proportion of these figures that relate to Coventry or any other specific area of the West Midlands.

12 Improving Bus Services

12.1 One of the objectives of the West Midlands Vision for Bus is to establish accountable network performance management, thereby tackling issues causing congestion and reliability problems for bus passengers.

12.2 In order to address this, the West Midlands Bus Alliance has established the region wide Network Performance Board. The Board focuses on monitoring the performance of the bus network from a passenger perspective and the delivery of improvements to performance with the aim of maintaining and improving bus journey times, reliability and punctuality to grow patronage and passenger satisfaction.

12.3 The board is made up of representatives from TfWM, each of the seven constituent authorities, including the City of Coventry, as well as bus operators.

12.4 A particular focus can be given to issues affecting bus performance in Coventry with a view to identifying any measures for improvement, including additional bus priority, parking issues, removing right turns etc. as well as any issues in the control of the operators. Given the recent Government announcements it is proposed that a dedicated Bus Performance Board for Coventry is established with the objective of improving the performance of bus services across the city and also developing a series of shovel ready bus schemes for Coventry if that is supported by the members.

13 Climate Emergency

13.1 Improved bus services will reduce the reliance on the private car, and by doing so will have environmental benefits promoting sustainable travel and a modal shift away from private car. It is envisaged that this, in turn, will provide support to the objectives set out in the Council's Low Carbon Management Plan and the emerging Local Air Quality Action Plan.

14 UK City of Culture 2021

14.1 The Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 is forecast to generate around 2.5 million visits to the city, and will see a significant increase in travel demand to and from the city, especially around the major events expected to attract larger audiences. A transport strategy is under development in partnership with the City of Culture Trust, and it is anticipated that the bus will play an important role in getting people to and from events within the city.

14.2 Bus based Park and Ride is being considered as part of the transport strategy alongside potential enhancement of existing public bus services and the role that longer-distance coach travel could also play in getting people to and from the city.

14.3 Investment in the improvement of Pool Meadow Bus Station, within a budget of £1.5m, has already been identified by TfWM and Coventry City Council as an important element of the UK City of Culture Transport Strategy. Proposals which are all being developed from the WMCA investment include the refurbishment of the bus station, including:

- Complete refurbishment of the public toilet facilities and driver facilities. This would follow a specification similar to that of recent successful refurbishments of Walsall and West Bromwich toilet facilities.
- New Electronic Passenger Information Screens – Currently stand and small summary screens are at end of life and when they break down TfWM’s maintenance contractor cannot readily source parts. This means that some stands do not have properly functioning screens, leaving passengers without accurate information. New screens would also be more efficient and allow for service change messages to be displayed more clearly and easily.
- LED lighting refit – Replacement of old lighting units for more efficient units that provide a better quality of light. Lighting quality can have a transformative effect on sites, as recently experienced at the LED replacement at Bilston Bus Station. Not only will this create a more pleasant environment, it will lead to increased utility efficiency and will have a Return on Investment within 5 years.
- New wayfinding signage – New signage in accordance with the West Midlands Bus rebranding exercise, potentially incorporating City of Culture branding too. Due to the age of the station, this area does need updating to include prominent areas of the city.
- Painting – The painting of all metal work, fixtures and fittings in line with the latest branding or to align with the creative concept defined.
- Bins, seats and benches – the replacement of all bins, seats and benches in line with the latest branding and rollout across the rest of the Bus Station estate.
- Enhancement of the external presentation of retail units

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