



**Meeting:** West Midlands Rail Executive Board of Directors

**Venue:** West Midlands Combined Authority, 16 Summer Lane, Birmingham / Microsoft Teams

**Subject:** Minutes

**Date:** Tuesday 21 June 2022 at 10.00am

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**Present:**

Andy Street (Chair)	Mayor of the West Midlands
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Liz Clements	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Ken Hawkins	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Peter Hughes	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Richard Overton	Telford & Wrekin Council
Councillor Simon Phipps	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Mike Rouse	Worcestershire County Council
Councillor Stephen Simkins	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Phillip White	Staffordshire County Council

**In Attendance:**

David Balme	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Emily Barker	Worcestershire County Council
Matt Crowton	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Malcolm Holmes	West Midlands Rail Executive
Noel Lavery	West Midlands Rail Executive
Ian McConnell	West Midlands Trains
Victoria Mumford	Warwickshire County Council
Marianne Page	City of Wolverhampton Council
Tom Painter	West Midlands Rail Executive
Matt Powell	Telford & Wrekin Council
Toby Rackliff	West Midlands Rail Executive
Margaret Rogers	West Midlands Combined Authority
Roshida Sangha	West Midlands Rail Executive
Peter Sargent	West Midlands Rail Executive
John Seddon	Coventry City Council
Anne Shaw	Transport for West Midlands
Councillor David Williams	Staffordshire County Council

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Harrington (Herefordshire) Councillor Richard Marshall (Shropshire) and Councillor Richard Worrall (Transport Delivery Committee).

**12/22 Election of Vice-Chair**

Malcolm Holmes reported that due to Councillor Ahmad Bostan no longer being a member of the board, it was necessary to appoint a new Vice-Chair from amongst the metropolitan authorities.

**Agreed:**

Councillor Stephen Simkins be appointed Vice-Chair of the board.

**13/22 Forward Plan**

A plan of items to be reported to future meetings of the board was noted.

In addition, Malcolm Holmes reported that the approval of West Midlands Rail Executive's accounts for 2021/22 would be considered at the meeting on 20 September and the final approval of the Rail Investment Strategy would be considered at the meeting on 13 December.

**14/22 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

**15/22 Board Leadership Group**

The board considered a report from Malcolm Holmes providing an update on the progress made by the Board Leadership Group during the previous quarter.

**Agreed:**

That the report be noted.

**16/22 Rail Industrial Action**

The board considered a report from Malcolm Holmes providing an update on the challenging industrial relations climate in the UK rail industry, and the likely impact on the West Midlands.

Malcolm Holmes reported that the series of planned strikes would cause significant disruption to passengers as it was intended to prioritise freight services. These disruptions were also likely to impact the day after strikes were held. Ian McConnell explained that West Midlands Trains had prepared for the strike days, although there were concerns that passengers may be deterred from returning to regular use of the railways if the strike action was to be prolonged.

The Chair expressed his disappointment at the lack of services running on the Snow Hill line on non-strike days during recent planned works. It had been expected that one service would run, but this turned out not to be the case. The board discussed the role that the Chair and other directors could help in trying to resolve the current employment dispute, and whilst it was recognised that West Midlands Rail was not a party directly involved in the dispute, there was a willingness to help reach a solution acceptable to all if West Midlands Rail was asked to help in this regard.

**Agreed:**

The policy position of West Midlands Rail be that:

*“We are disappointed that rail passengers will be impacted by the strikes. While we acknowledge the pressures facing both parties, we expect them to work together to resolve matters of difference and agree a way forward without impacting the travelling public, and that West Midlands Rail will be prepared to help be part of the solution to this dispute if we are invited to assist in doing so.”*

**17/22 West Midlands Trains Update**

The board received an update from Ian McConnell on the latest activity with West Midlands Trains. Current patronage was at around 75% of pre-COVID level and recent operating performance had improved, although there was a growing vacancy gap in respect of station staff. The driver recovery programme was making good progress in ensuring there were sufficient train drivers for the services operated, and it was expected that this would be achieved by the end of the year.

The Chair requested that at the next meeting, a report be submitted on the forthcoming timetable change, along with more details on new trains. Councillor Simon Phipps enquired whether surplus diesel train units could be used on the Stourbridge line when required. Ian McConnell indicated that this was not possible due to the diesel fleet not fitting the platform at Stourbridge Town station and the units being cascaded to other part of the country.

Councillor Liz Clements welcomed the new services being introduced on the network, but stressed the importance of good performance management. The Chair requested that West Midlands Trains' Head of Drivers meet with Councillor Liz Clements and Councillor Stephen Simkins to understand the work being done in this important area.

**Agreed:**

That the update be noted.

**18/22 Commonwealth Games Rail Readiness**

The board considered a report from Tom Painter on the preparedness of the rail industry for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The report set out the changes implemented following a review of Commonwealth Games related rail industry governance so as to ensure strong accountability. Contingency planning for industrial action had also been undertaken, which included a number of mitigation measures should strike action on the rail network be called during the Games.

The Chair indicated that the Minister for Sport had confirmed that the additional rail costs associated with the Commonwealth Games would be fully reimbursed by the Government and would not fall on Transport for West Midlands.

**Agreed:**

The report be noted.

19/22 **West Midlands Rail Executive/Great British Railways Partnership Agreement Principles**

The board considered a report from Tom Painter on the progress being made towards a new partnership agreement between West Midlands Rail Executive and the Great British Railways Transition Team.

At the last meeting, directors were advised that the Great British Rail Transition Team and West Midlands Rail Executive were working towards June 2022 for an agreed Heads of Terms. This had the advantage of aligning with the Trailblazer Devolution Deal that has been offered by the Government to the WMCA. However, the nationwide rail strikes had led the transition team to ask for the programme to be re-baselined to conclude in August. West Midlands Rail Executive was amenable to extending the timescales, so long as the alignment to the Trailblazer Devolution Deal was maintained. Conversations were underway with WMCA colleagues on this point and will also be discussed with Great British Rail at the meeting scheduled for 22 June.

Tom Painter indicated that he expected any existing collaboration powers with the Department for Transport to be rolled over to Great British Railways, and discussions were on-going as to how these could be enhanced.

**Agreed:**

That the report be noted.

20/22 **West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy**

The board considered a report from Peter Sargant seeking approval of the draft West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy, in readiness for a stakeholder consultation exercise in the Autumn.

West Midlands Rail Executive had been developing a revised Investment Strategy for a number of months with the help of consultants. The main document was underpinned by specific demand forecasting work. These forecasts looked at high and low growth scenarios based on the best industry evidence at the time. It was decided to focus on the high growth scenario within the plans, but it was recognised that there was considerable uncertainty about future rail usage, and the figures used for the West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy might not necessarily align with those used in other planning documents. The Head of Rail Development reported that the demand forecasting had been scrutinised and tested, and there was confidence in the figures.

The Chair also suggested that the strategy should also be used to support non-rail projects where appropriate.

**Agreed:**

- (1) The draft text of the updated West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy be agreed.
- (2) It be noted that the strategy had been considered and commented on by West Midlands Rail Executive Officers Group members.
- (3) An eight week stakeholder consultation exercise take place following the Commonwealth Games.
- (4) It be noted that the final designed version of the document would be produced following this meeting, and it be agreed that Councillor Peter Butlin could sign off on the final document on behalf of this board.

21/22 **West Midlands Rail Business Update**

The board considered a report from Malcolm Holmes on progress against West Midlands Rail Executive objectives since the last meeting.

**Agreed:**

That the report be noted.

**CHAIR**

[The meeting ended at 12.00pm.]