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Black Country Transport Strategy

A Review Document

Final Report

April 2009

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Black Country Transport Strategy

A Review Document

Final Report

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1 Introduction

Wolverhampton City Council commissioned Mott MacDonald to produce a non-technical Transport Strategy document for the Black Country. This document is intended to act as an advisory document which may be used to inform a longer term Transport Strategy for the Black Country.

As part of this study, Mott MacDonald consulted with the four Black Country Local Authorities (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Wolverhampton City Council) in order to gain an appreciation of their views of what the Transport Strategy should entail and relevant documents to review for this study.

A number of key documents and governance arrangements have already been identified which should be used to underpin the Black Country Transport Strategy, these include:

- *'The Black Country Study: The Future of the Black Country'*, Black Country Consortium, May 2006
- *'Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands'*, Department for Communities and Local Government, January 2008
- *'West Midlands Local Transport Plan 2006'*, Chief Engineers and Planning Officers Group (CEPOG) Support Team, March 2006
- *'West Midlands Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan'*, West Midlands Regional Assembly and Advantage West Midlands, December 2008
- *'The West Midlands Regional Funding Advice to Government'*, West Midlands Shadow Joint Strategy & Investment Board, February 2009
- *'Towards a Sustainable Transport System: Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World'*, Department for Transport, October 2007
- *'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System: Main Report'*, Department for Transport, November 2008

This report reviews the documents listed above and other relevant documents, and extracts information that is of direct relevance to transport in the Black Country. This will then be used to make recommendations towards the contents of a Transport Strategy for the Black Country.

2 The Black Country Study¹

2.1 General Principles

The Black Country Study was published in 2006 and forms the key urban renaissance strategy for the Black Country sub-region. It is also a key supporting document for the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Phase 1 Revision. The main focus of the Black Country Study is:

- **an Economic Strategy** aimed at encouraging higher-end knowledge-based and value-added manufacturing industries, to redress the socio-economic imbalance between the Black Country and other areas. It is recognised that the successful delivery of the Economic Strategy is dependent on improving transport access;
- **an Incubation Strategy** which aims to develop enterprise and create the environment in which technology-led businesses can grow. To deliver significant growth in high-end jobs, a major overhaul of the land use and transport structure is required to deliver suitable employment sites.

These strategies identify four key corridors for developing high quality employment sites:

- **Black Country North:** Wolverhampton Centre – Stafford Road Corridor (incorporating Wolverhampton Science Park and Wobaston Rd i54/MIS);
- **Black Country Central:** Walsall Centre – Darlaston – Wednesbury Corridor (incorporating Darlaston SDA, Hill Top, the Black Country Route, and Wednesfield Way, Wolverhampton);
- **Black Country West:** Pensnett – Brierley Hill Centre – Dudley Town Centre – Dudley Port Corridor (incorporating Pensnett Estate);
- **Black Country East:** Oldbury – West Bromwich Corridor (incorporating M5 Junctions 1 and 2 and Sandwell & Dudley Station).

Brierley Hill (including Merry Hill) is identified as the strategic regional centre in the south of the Black Country – Dudley is redefined as a key centre for housing and tourism. The four strategic centres of Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill need to expand, and Masterplans for these centres will form key planks of the Delivery Plan.

A significant growth in housing is needed to stem the outward migration of population and skills and address the growth in households which is set to outstrip housing supply. Major changes in land use patterns are needed, which requires the reallocation of underused industrial land for housing. Residential growth will be focused in large degree on corridors with high levels of public transport provision.

¹ *The Black Country Study: The Future of the Black Country*, Black Country Consortium, May 2006

2.2 Transport Strategy

2.2.1 Overview

The Transport Strategy developed within the Black Country Study is based around a core public transport network “Black Country Express”, heavily focused on an expanded Metro network. A core objective of the Transport Strategy is to unlock economic growth. Therefore, priorities for investment will be those that support growth of the key centres and land use transformation to support new housing and business locations.

Connections into and out of the Black Country also need improvement – unlocking Birmingham New Street is key here, to enable enhancements of the West Coast Main Line.

The Transport Strategy focuses on supporting the Black Country Study’s investment priorities by:

- connecting the four strategic centres by public transport (notably through the completion of the Metro network) to create a polycentric network of centres where there is a real alternative to the motorcar;
- providing communities with access to employment, leisure, education and health opportunities, again focusing on public transport improvements;
- facilitating access to quality employment land with reliable access to the national motorway network, especially for freight (within 5-10 minutes);
- focusing investment in public transport and road network improvements within identified corridors to improve accessibility for knowledge workers;
- improving access for more of the Black Country to Birmingham International Airport (BIA);
- considering the role of demand management as an ongoing priority in the development of the Phase 2 Revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The Black Country has potentially excellent links to national and international transport networks but is hampered by severe congestion on key motorway and trunk road links, and by capacity restrictions on main rail lines. Key problems are:

- inadequate facilities for walking and cycling;
- unreliable, expensive and often overcrowded public transport, often of a low standard and lacking good information;
- lack of capacity at Birmingham New Street and on the Wolverhampton to Coventry section of the West Coast Main Line;
- congestion and safety problems arising from car dependency and inefficient use of existing road space, with particularly severe congestion on the motorway network;
- high cost of transport due to road congestion;

- poor transport network in the west of the conurbation;
- congestion and access problems in growth areas such as the BIA/NEC complex.

Trips within the Black Country are dominated by car use (83%). Although the population is forecast to decline, trips are forecast to increase, especially by car, with increasing decentralisation of land use leading to more car use. The Black Country has high proportions of households without a car, who are dependent on increasingly unreliable public transport. There is poor public transport accessibility to non-central employment sites and restricted evening services. The rail network is constrained, and Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy is focused on promoting long distance travel, which is not encouraging for local users.

2.2.2 Transport Strategy

The Transport Strategy detailed in the Black Country Study has four key strands:

- developing a **culture in communities and businesses that chooses smart transport choices** to travel and to do business contributing to the future environment and economy of the Black Country and that these choices are supported by changes to support walking and cycling, protecting key transport routes, managing demand and making the best use of existing resources;
- a new more **integrated public transport system (the 'Black Country Express')** as part of Network West Midlands;
- identifying the priority transport interventions often **highway/junction improvements** to unlock economic and housing growth potential and makes best use of highway networks by red routing and enhanced traffic control;
- highlighting the investments needed to **improve external connectivity**, a prerequisite for economic growth and competitiveness. Some of the proposals have already been identified in the Local Transport Plan (LTP), others need to be given early commitment.

The **'Black Country Express'** is identified as a network of primary high volume rail, metro and bus corridors. These are based on existing volume transport corridors, which fit well with the employment and housing development corridors identified within the Study.

The four strategic centres will be the hubs of this network, providing interchanges connecting to smaller town centres, employment sites and residential areas. The intention is for each of the strategic centres to have a direct rail or coach service to London and BIA.

Key components identified for the network are:

- **Black Countrywide Metro System** – offering reliable and frequent links between the Black Country's four strategic and other local centres, as well as a link to Birmingham city centre. Fully accessible and stopping more frequently than rail, Metro will provide for many their first choice for public transport, avoiding problems of congestion and linking new housing to employment areas.

- **Rail Network** – providing more reliable strategic services to Birmingham, Birmingham International, Coventry and other national destinations; and local services across the Black Country’s town centres.
- **High Quality Bus Services** – creating a vital link from local neighbourhoods to the town centres and to the regional and national networks. Vehicles will be of high quality, and tickets will enable passengers to travel across the region using buses, trains and trams. Fast, frequent and reliable services will operate on all main routes supplemented by a network of feeder services to improve accessibility to people’s homes. All routes will be part of a quality improvement scheme to offer safer, more comfortable buses and shelters, with superior route and timetable information.
- **National Coach Services** – providing low priced, fast and frequent service to Birmingham International Airport, London and other major cities from all of the key centres in the Black Country.

2.2.3 Key Interventions

The Transport Strategy proposes a number of interventions identified as contributing to achieving its aims. Some of these are schemes committed within the current Local Transport Plan (LTP, see section 4.1 for further details), others are further enhancements beyond the current LTP horizon. These interventions are summarised in Table 2.1. The highest priorities for the early stages of the strategy (years 1-5) are shown in bold.

Overall, the centre strategies focus on sustainable travel choices, public transport (especially Metro) linking the key centres and housing corridors, and Quality Bus Networks/High Volume Corridors linking centres and employment/housing areas. Further on from this, it is about making better use of existing road capacity, and enhanced road capacity where needed. Employment corridor interventions are aimed at encouraging sustainable travel, showcasing technology, reducing need to travel (videoconferencing etc). External connectivity improvements centre on New Street Station, rail capacity, Active Traffic Management and motorway junction improvements.

Table 2.1: Black Country Study: Transport Strategy Interventions

Area	Committed LTP Schemes	Further Enhancements
Strategic Centres		
All Centres	Hearts and minds campaigns Bus Showcase Quality Bus Networks (QBN) Red Routes Urban Traffic Control (UTC)	Further development of schemes identified in LTP programme
Wolverhampton	Transport interchange (bus/rail station enhancements)	5Ws Metro A449 and A4123 improvements
West Bromwich	A41/A461 junction	Town centre highway improvements
Brierley Hill	Metro Phase 1 Extension Burnt Tree Island Sustainable access network (including parking management at Merry Hill) Rail Showcase	High Volume Corridors (HVC) to Stourbridge and Halesowen A4123 / A4101 improvements
Walsall	Bradford Place Bus Station Town centre package Rail Showcase	5Ws Metro and Walsall extension to Varsity Metro HVC to Brownhills Rail timetable improvements
Key Employment Land Investment Corridors		
Black Country North	M54 access to i54 Site	
Black Country Central	Darlaston Strategic Development Area M6 Junction 10 A461 improvements	Neachells/Wednesfield Way improvements M6/M5 Active Traffic Management (ATM)
Black Country West		M5 Junction 2 and A461 improvements
Black Country East		M5 ATM M5 Junction 2 improvements
Walsall-Aldridge	Brownhills Package	QBN/HVC

3 Other Land Use Policies and Strategies

3.1 West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

3.1.1 Planning Policy Background

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 11: Regional Spatial Strategies was originally published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in September 2004 and amended more recently in January 2009. This document sets out the Government's national planning policies to be implemented at a regional level although it does not take precedence over other national planning policies.

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) are a requirement under Part 1 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act by all Regions, except London, and are intended to provide a development strategy for the region over a 15 to 20 year period. Some of the planning aspects identified by PPS11 that should be taken into account when developing a RSS include:

- *“Identification of the scale and distribution of provision for new housing;*
- *Priorities for the environment, such as countryside and biodiversity protection; and*
- *Transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals extraction and waste treatment and disposal.”*

3.1.2 The West Midlands RSS

The West Midlands RSS has been sub-divided into three revision stages following the identification for further work in the original West Midlands RSS published in 2004 as Regional Planning Guidance; these were:

- Phase One – the Black Country Study;
- Phase Two – including housing and employment; and
- Phase Three – including environment issues.

The current version of the RSS, incorporating Phase One, was published in 2008.²

3.1.3 Phase One – the Black Country Study

The Black Country Study (May 2006), undertaken by the Black Country Consortium (see Section 2 for further details), formed the Phase One Revision of the RSS. The study focused on the socio-economic regeneration of the Black Country. The Black Country Consortium developed and tested a plan for long term change and development of the whole area in order to deliver the Black Country “Vision” that in 30 years the Black Country will be a successful, attractive place to live and work.

² *‘Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands’*, Department for Communities and Local Government, January 2008

3.1.4 Phase Two and Three

Table 3.1 outlines the various stages of the Phase Two and Three RSS Revisions. Although Phase Two is currently scheduled for the Examination in Public, a number of Phase Three Stages are also underway in order to be on track for the Preferred Options to be launched in 2010.

Table 3.1: RSS Phase Two and Three Timetable

Phase Two – Stage of the Revision	Agreed Revised Timetable
Launch Draft Project Plan	November 2005
Completion of technical work	Ongoing Process
Strategic Authorities advise RPB	February - May 2006
Spatial Options Stage	January 2007 (8 week consultation to launch on 8th January 2007)
Development of Preferred Option	March 2007
Submission to Secretary of State	December 2007
Formal Consultation	7th January 2008 - 8th December 2008
Examination in Public	Spring 2009
Secretary of State Proposed Changes	Late 2009
Final RSS Phase Two changes published	Early 2010
Phase Three – Stage of the Revision	Agreed Revised Timetable
Draft Project Plan launch	November 2007
Draft Project Plan Consultation	27th November 2007 - 18th January 2008
Final Project Plan launch	Autumn 2008
Spatial Options launch	Summer 2008/09 - followed by a period of public consultation
Preferred Option launch	Early 2010 - followed by a period of public consultation

3.2 Growth Point 2nd Round – Draft Programme of Development for the Black Country 2008³

3.2.1 Context

The Growth Point Programme of Development (PoD) progresses the aims of the Black Country Study in relation to housing growth within the sub-region, by identifying a programme for delivery of new housing and associated infrastructure including transport.

Having regard to the thrust of planning policy, the emphasis of the Programme of Development for this Growth Point is upon:

- **Measures to accelerate land use transformation**, assisting land assembly, relocation of businesses and site decontamination;
- **Investments in infrastructure**, particularly transportation in the medium term, to improve accessibility of key growth locations within regeneration corridors and strategic centres to improve accessibility to home, work and leisure;
- **Enhanced social infrastructure** to improve the quality of place through investment in projects such as culture, sport, recreation and education facilities;
- **Investments in green infrastructure** to improve the quality of place through projects such as the Black Country Urban Park initiative; and
- **Supporting land-use change** by building a stronger and more robust economic base focused upon providing employment sites suitable to support a modern, diversified and competitive economy.

The Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 1 objectives for the Black Country capture the objectives of the Black Country Study:

- **to reverse out-migration**, by accommodating within the Black Country all of the generated household growth from 2011 and meeting at least the identified levels of housing provision;
- **to raise income levels** by raising demand and household incomes (average earnings, GDP per head) and reducing unemployment to the UK average by 2033;
- **to create an inclusive and cohesive society within the Black Country** by removing barriers to opportunity and changing the socio-economic mix by increasing the proportion of social grades A and B to match the national profile by 2033 or earlier;
- **to transform the Black Country environment** by protecting and enhancing sub-regions environmental and heritage assets and biodiversity and implementing the Black Country as 'urban park' concept.

³ 'Growth Point – 2nd Round: Draft Programme of Development for the Black Country – Draft Volume 1 Top Document', GVA Grimley, October 2008

The RSS provides a clear spatial strategy, setting out the primary focus for regeneration activity, development and investment in the four strategic centres and growth corridors. The PoD categorises the corridors as employment-led (12 corridors) or housing-led (4 corridors).

3.2.2 Growth Point Priority Schemes

The priority areas for housing growth identified in the PoD comprised the four strategic centres plus the following regeneration corridors:

- 2 – Stafford Road
- 3 – south of Wolverhampton city centre
- 4 – Wolverhampton-Bilston
- 6 – Darlaston-Willenhall-Wednesfield
- 7 – Bloxwich-Birchills-Bescot
- 11 – Dudley-Brierley Hill-Stourbridge
- 12 – Oldbury-West Bromwich-Smethwick
- 13 – Rowley Regis-Jewellery Line

Specific projects emerging within the four Employment Land Investment Corridors identified in the Black Country Study are:

- BC North – i54
- BC Central – Darlaston SDA and Hill Top
- BC West – Castle View and Yorks Park in Dudley
- BC East – North Smethwick Canalside and M5 Junction 1 West and East.

3.2.3 Supporting Transport Interventions

The transport interventions needed to deliver the Growth Point housing development are much as those developed in the Black Country Study. The PoD notes that modelling work (using the PRISM model) had highlighted the need for motorway ATM and improvements to M5 J1/2 and M6 J 9/10, and these priorities were enshrined in the RSS Phase 1 Revision. Key points to note:

- Public transport improvements are seen as essential to trigger expansion of Brierley Hill as a new centre (RSS Phase 1 revision);
- Plans for Green Infrastructure would be harmonised with the long distance walk/cycle network which has been identified – Dudley and Sandwell have bids to Healthy Communities Fund to tackle obesity;

- 75% of housing growth proposals are located in centres and corridors served by existing rail and metro networks;
- The transport package is aimed at damping down additional traffic demand generated by economic growth. Attracting development requires careful parking supply strategy which tightens demand management as public transport quality is improved.

The programme of proposed interventions is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Black Country PoD: Supporting Transport Interventions

Category	Implemented by 2016	Implemented by 2026
Metro	Wednesbury – Brierley Hill	5Ws
Bus	Dudley/Sandwell/Walsall/ Wolverhampton Bus Improvements Packages Brinsford BRT/i54 Walsall-Birmingham BRT	
Interchange	Wolverhampton centre access Walsall station	
Rail	Walsall-Wolverhampton line Willenhall station Stourbridge-Walsall freight line Sutton Line passenger services	Walsall station capacity improvements Chase line electrification
Highway	ATM M6 Junctions 7-10 M6 J10 improvements A41/A4031 West Bromwich Darlaston SDA West Brom regeneration M5 to Pensnett Highways Wolverhampton Burnt Tree island i54 access	M6 Junction 9 and M5 Junctions 1 & 2 improvements

In addition to these schemes three of the Black Country authorities have bid for Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) funding, for the following schemes:

- West Brom southern distributor phase 1 and eastern gateway access road;
- North Smethwick Canalside Access and Brindley II Canal Footbridge;
- Cradley Heath A4100 junction improvements;
- Brook Street metro stop, Wolverhampton;
- Willenhall rail station and interchange.

3.3 Review of Transport Implications of the Black Country Joint Core Strategy

3.3.1 Basis of Review

December 2007 saw the submission of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Phase 2 Preferred Option. A subsequent Highways Agency study was commissioned to assess the implications of the Preferred Option – assessing the network and demand management policies required to deliver it.

In order to inform the preparation of the Black Country Joint Core Strategy, the Black Country Local Authorities commissioned Mott MacDonald to review the transport impacts both of changes in spatial planning and transport provision, using the PRISM strategic transport model.⁴ Specifically the review considered the performance of the transport networks developed during the Black Country Study against the land use changes collected and processed as PRISM inputs for the HA RSS2 transport evidence study. In addition a variation on the RSS2 land-use changes has also been assessed.

A 'core' network was identified with schemes as per the Highways Agency's major scheme programme and the West Midlands Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) network assumptions along with the TEMPRO land-use assumptions. Four scenarios were tested:

- DM1 – core network with TEMPRO land use assumptions
- DM2 – core network with RSS2 land use assumptions
- DS1 – core network + BCJCS land use assumptions
- DS2 – Black Country Study network + BCJCS land use assumptions

All scenarios were assessed for PRISM forecast years of 2016 and 2026 except DS2 which was 2026 only.

In assessing the results of these tests it is worth noting that the Black Country Study land use growth assumptions predict the greatest growth in households. TEMPRO is lowest in 2016 but RSS2 is lowest in 2026. In 2016 the percentage difference is less than 1% but by 2026 the Black Country Study forecast of households is at least 1.75% higher than the others.

3.3.2 Key Findings

Implications of RSS2 Growth:

- RSS2 options result in a reduced number of car trips in the Black Country as compared to the TEMPRO distribution.
- While TEMPRO predicts a greater increase in the number of trips for centres in the Black Country, RSS2 predicts higher growth in trips for the rest of the district.

⁴ 'PRISM: Black Country Joint Core Strategy Transport Technical Document', PRISM Joint Application Team, November 2008

- The share of public transport (PT) trips for the Black Country is noted to reduce from 2001 – though the absolute level of patronage is increasing.
- The average trip length under the RSS2 and Black Country preferred housing options are greater than TEMPRO. However, this is not resulting in adverse impacts in the form of increased delay and time spent by car drivers on the network.

Implications of Black Country Joint Core Strategy Spatial Scenario:

- The Alternative spatial distribution results in a slight reduction in car dependency for trips to the Black Country centres. RSS and BCS growth assumptions show little overall difference in PT mode share, both remaining below 2001 levels.

Implications of Black Country Study Transport Investments:

- The Black Country preferred network options enable an increase in overall trip-making, especially for public transport, indicating an increased level of activity. This comes in part from a more expansive Metro network and increased rail use. However, public transport mode share remains slightly below 2001 levels, due to significant growth in car trips.
- Although vehicle kilometres increase, the delay on the network reduces with the introduction of Black Country preferred network options.
- There are local adverse impacts on the network noted due to the housing and network interventions. However, with the Black Country preferred network option there are less negative impacts of higher housing allocation.
- Sandwell sees a notable increase in car trips by 2026, resulting from highway schemes around West Bromwich.

It is noted that Brierley Hill is the most car dependent centre, while Walsall and Wolverhampton have highest percentage of bus trips. Growth within districts as a whole is more pronounced than in centres – on the whole TEMPRO forecasts the greatest growth in trips to Black Country centres (and lower growth in trips to Birmingham – the reverse is true for RSS).

On the whole, average trip lengths increase in line with assumed growth in households. However, there is little difference in total car distance, average car trip time and average delay between scenarios. The Black Country Study network notably improves network efficiency (more vehicle kms but less vehicle hrs and less delay than other scenarios).

4 Transport Strategies

4.1 West Midlands Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2)⁵

The Government and local authorities, through the Local Government Association, have agreed on four key Shared Priorities for Transport. The overall aim of these Priorities is to facilitate the delivery of improved local transport, as identified in the LTP2, as quickly as possible. The Shared Priorities focus on four themes which are discussed in the following sections.

4.1.1 Tackling Congestion

Congestion in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area (WMMA) as a whole continues to be problematic. Saturation levels on the road network are set to increase if current trends continue, therefore it is imperative to introduce and enforce traffic management measures along the surrounding motorway network and main radial routes into the strategic centres. Some of the main transportation issues identified in the LTP2 are:

- decentralisation of population is resulting in greater pressure on the strategic centres and increased commuting into the conurbation;
- conversely, insufficient economic activity and sustainable housing development in rural areas has led to people leaving these areas or having to travel further for access to services and jobs;
- need to make best use of existing regional transport networks;
- need to ensure that the West Midlands is a reliable hub to service regional, national and international connections;
- need for targeted major investment such as additional highway capacity in the M6 Corridor; improved links between the M54, M6 and M6 Toll motorways.

4.1.2 Accessibility

A strong focus has been directed towards accessibility by public transport modes in recent years, especially in light of Social Inclusion Unit's report on Transport. This complements the traffic conditions on the road network during the AM (07:00 – 09:30) and PM (15:30 – 19:00) Peak periods. The Government and local authorities have been campaigning to raise awareness of the availability of public transport links and increase accessibility, especially for people living in deprived and rural areas. This also links in closely with one of the Department for Transport's (DfT's) objectives to promote mobility and reduce social exclusion. Some of the measures currently being introduced in order to tackle social exclusion include improving personal security; and availability, accessibility and affordability of public transport.

⁵ 'West Midlands Local Transport Plan 2006', Chief Engineers and Planning Officers Group (CEPOG) Support Team, March 2006

4.1.3 Improving Air Quality

An Air Quality Strategy has been developed as part of the LTP2 in order to tackle the effects of transport emissions on the environment. The Strategy involves:

- *“Working with the Highways Agency to deal with the substantial emissions from motorway traffic*
- *Detailed initiatives to tackle hotspots through engineering and traffic management*
- *Broader policies to encourage forms of transport that have less impact on air quality, such as alternative-fuel vehicles”.*

4.1.4 Road Safety

The Road Safety Strategy as part of the LTP2 seeks to:

- *“Educate and train road users to travel as safely as possible*
- *Ensure all who live, work and travel in the West Midlands have access to road safety advice*
- *Target safety training at vulnerable users such as cyclists and pedestrians*
- *Subject new infrastructure to safety audits*
- *Implement a programme of safety schemes aimed at accident cluster sites*
- *Use safety cameras to enforce speed limits and traffic signals, backed by educational campaigns”*

Casualty rates in deprived areas are double those of the least deprived area. As a lot of the Black Country area is considered to be deprived as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), it is essential that the Road Safety Strategy is put into action to reduce casualty rates on the sub-region’s road network.

4.1.5 Local Transport Plan Schemes for the Black Country

Table 4.1 lists the schemes identified in the LTP2 that are relevant to the Black Country

Table 4.1: Black Country Local Transport Plan 2 Schemes

Scheme Category	Scheme Name	
Current Schemes	Red Route Package 1 (traffic management)	
	Wolverhampton Centre Accesses, Change and Integration	
	Cradley Heath Town Centre Strategy	
Provisionally Accepted	Walsall Town Centre Transport Package	
	Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Network	
	Darlaston SDA Access Project	
	Owen Street level crossing relief road	
Programme Commitments Only	West Midlands UTC	Burnt Tree Island
	Rail Showcase – Cannock Line	Brownhills Transport Package
	Red Route Network 2, 3 & 4	Wolverhampton Railway Station
	Wolverhampton Bus Station Redevelopment	Bus Rapid Transit III
	M54 Junction 1 Wobaston Road	Quality Bus Network III
	M6 Junction 10	Midland Metro Extension 11A

It should be noted that this list was produced at the outset of the LTP2 period and that more recent spending priorities have been developed during the LTP2 period; these are detailed in the following sections.

The current LTP2 period ends in 2011, when a new local plan will be required (LTP3). Guidance on the preparation of LTP3 documents is currently out to consultation.

4.2 West Midlands Regional Transport Priorities

In August 2007, the Regional Transport Partnership, Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and the West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) were tasked by the then Minister for the West Midlands Region, Liam Byrne, to liaise with partners to agree and set out transport priorities for the Region. Nine Transport Priorities were identified in the context of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and Regional Economic Strategy (RES); these would assist with the delivery of jobs and homes across the region and identify the opportunities arising from the Local Transport Bill. The nine Transport Priorities for the West Midlands are as follows:

- Birmingham New Street Station
- Birmingham International Airport – runway extension and surface access
- M6/M5 Capacity Improvements and Motorway Box Active Traffic Management
- Rail Freight Upgrades – Peterborough and Southampton to Nuneaton
- Regional Rail Capacity – both for passengers services and strategic freight connections
- Black Country Strategic Transport Spine
- North Staffordshire Integrated Transport Package
- New Growth Points (NGPs)/Settlements of Significant Development (SSDs)
- Smarter Choices

A Transport Challenge conference was held in March 2008 at Worcester Rugby Club which was attended by more than 85 senior representatives from a broad range of partner and stakeholder organisations. Liam Byrne, Cllr Roger Phillips, Nick Paul (Chair of Advantage West Midlands) and Olwen Dutton (Chief Executive of the West Midlands Regional Assembly) presented at the conference and announced the Regional Transport Priorities. Support for the Priorities was conveyed by the stakeholders and an agreement to produce a Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan (RTPAP) was made.⁶

The RTPAP, which was launched by the new Regional Minister, Ian Austin, on Monday 15th December 2008, seeks to identify the contribution each of the Priorities will make to deliver the Region's objectives.

Of particular interest to the Black Country is the delivery of the schemes within the Black Country Strategic Transport Spine Priority and the NGPs/SSDs Priority as the Black Country has also been identified as a SSD. The schemes identified within each of these Priorities are listed in Table 4.2.

⁶ 'West Midlands Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan', West Midlands Regional Assembly and Advantage West Midlands, December 2008

Table 4.2: Black Country Regional Transport Priorities and Schemes

Regional Transport Priority	Scheme Name	Scheme Name
Black Country Strategic Transport Spine	A41/A4031 West Bromwich	A449/Wobaston Road Corridor Improvements (I54 Access)
	Midland Metro Line 1 Enhancements	Wolverhampton Centre Access Interchange
	A4123/A461 Burnt Tree	Midland Metro Extension: 5 W's Route
	Brinsford BRT / Wolverhampton to I54 Rapid Transit	Midland Metro Extension: Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Centro
New Growth Points/Settlements of Significant Development	Dudley Bus Improvements	Walsall Town Centre Interchange
	M5 Pensnett	West Bromwich Regeneration
	M6 J10	WM Red Routes Network
	Sandwell Bus Improvements	Wolverhampton Bus Improvements
	Walsall Bus Improvements	Wolverhampton Highways Improvements

The economic challenge facing the Black Country and West Midlands Region as a whole is great. A £10 billion output gap in the Region of which the Black Country accounts for £2.6 billion has been highlighted and needs to be tackled in order for growth and prosperity to thrive. The Regional Transport Priorities in part will help to alleviate some of the economic challenges facing the Black Country through improvements to transport infrastructure and services. The schemes categorised under each of these Priorities are currently undergoing further investigative work in order to establish the scheme promoters, costs and funding agencies. At present this information is currently unavailable.

The 'West Midlands Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan' launch document published in December 2008, by AWM and WMRA provides further details of the aims of the Transport Priorities. In brief, it summarises the Black Country and NGPs/SSDs priorities as follows:

Black Country Strategic Transport Spine:

"This Regional Network Priority is a package of 8 potential projects which provide public transport improvements along with a supporting programme of highway improvements, to underpin economic regeneration and employment growth in the Black Country. The package will improve the accessibility of the strategic centres in the Black Country and provide better connectivity and integration with the wider regional and national networks."

New Growth Points/Settlements of Significant Development (NGP/SSD):

"This Regional Network Priority provides a wide variety of public transport and highway schemes (currently around 28 potential projects), which when integrated with other regional transport priorities will support sustainable growth in the new areas of regeneration and development, known as NGPs/SSD (Birmingham and Solihull, Coventry, East Staffordshire, the Black Country/Sandwell, Burton upon trent, Stafford, Telford, Shrewsbury, Hereford, Worcester, Redditch, Warwick/Leamington, Rugby and Nuneaton/Bedworth)."

4.3 Regional Funding Advice 2

The second round of Regional Funding Allocation, known as Regional Funding Advice 2, is in progress with schemes currently being considered for submission under RFA2, the Advice to Government having been submitted in February 2009.⁷ Table 4.3 shows those schemes identified for RFA2 funding within the Black Country, categorised as follows:

- Category 1: Schemes which could be constructed before 2014 where preparation work is well progressed;
- Category 2: Schemes where development work has begun and construction could be commenced before 2014;
- Category 3: Schemes which require development work before 2014 but are likely to be constructed post 2014.

The delivery timescales implied by these categories are as defined by the promoters and have been subject to an independent review.

Table 4.3: Provisional List of RFA2 Schemes in the Black Country

Scheme No.	Scheme Name	Promoter
Category 1		
8a	Red Routes Package 2	CEPOG Support Team
8b	Red Routes Package 3	CEPOG Support Team
19	Brinsford Park & Ride	Staffordshire CC
24b	Midland Metro Phase 1 – Wednesbury to Brierley Hill	Centro
24c	Midland Metro Phase 1 – Line 1 Improvements and Wolverhampton City Centre	Centro
43	West Bromwich Regeneration Infrastructure Phase 1	Sandwell MBC
45	A461 Junction Improvements	Walsall MBC
79	Darlaston Strategic Development Area	Walsall MBC
80	i54 Access ("A449/Wobaston Road Corridor Improvements")	Wolverhampton CC
Category 2		
66	Wolverhampton to i54 Rapid Transit	Centro/ Wolverhampton CC
Category 3		
21	M6 Junction 10	Walsall MBC
72	Walsall Town Centre Interchange	Walsall MBC/Centro

⁷ 'The West Midlands Regional Funding Advice to Government', West Midlands Shadow Joint Strategy & Investment Board, February 2009

4.4 Rail Strategies

4.4.1 Network Rail CP4 Delivery Plan 2009⁸

Network Rail published its plan for Control Period 4 (CP4) (1/4/2009 – 31/3/2014) in March 2009. The Government has summarised its requirements for CP4 in the form of a High Level Output Specification (HLOS). The key requirements in the HLOS are:

- A 3% reduction in risk of death and injury to staff and passengers
- Achieve 92% punctuality on regional services
- Reduce cancellations and delays of over 30 minutes by 27% on regional services.
- Provide for a 14% growth in passenger kilometres in the West Midlands.
- Meet a 15.6% increase in peak hour arrivals in Birmingham (17,800 total arrivals predicted between 0800 and 0859), with an average maximum load factor of 55% (based on DfT loading standards).
- Provide £128m towards delivering additional passenger capacity at Birmingham New Street.

The schemes defined by the Office of Rail Regulation to be delivered are:

- Bromsgrove electrification;
- Redditch branch enhancement; and
- Linespeed improvements on the Wrexham to London Marylebone route.

In addition train lengthening schemes on Strategic Routes 16 (Chilterns), 17 (West Midlands) and 19 (Midland Main Line and East Midlands) are necessary to support the operational plans.

The delivery of the New Street Gateway project is being funded in partnership with Advantage West Midlands, Birmingham City Council and Centro. The project will improve passenger capacity and facilities at the station and provide better access into and through the station.

4.4.2 Centro WM Region Rail Development Plan⁹

In February 2009 Centro/WMPTA published a 20-year vision to expand the local rail network and encourage significant modal shift from road to rail. Plans include a number of new stations and line re-openings and a major expansion of Moor Street Station as a commuter hub, which will bring benefits to the Stourbridge line.

⁸ 'More Trains, More Seats, Better Journeys: Control Period 4 Delivery Plan 2009', Network Rail, March 2009

⁹ 'West Midlands Region: Rail Development Plan', Centro, February 2009

Centro's plans for each of the rail lines within the Black Country are as follows.

The Birmingham - Walsall - Rugeley line is seen as an important passenger and freight route although 'the service remains quite poor with long journey times, poor frequency and low-quality stations.' Morning peak usage has increased between 2005 and 2008 and 'overcrowding on the Cannock services is a problem.'

The layout of Walsall Station restricts operations, and connectivity with the national rail network was reduced in December 2008 resulting in 'a town of 300,000 (having) no direct link with London or other national cities.' The plan proposes:

- Short term (2009-2014) – re-signalling the Walsall area, line speed improvements including raising Cannock Line from 45 to 75 mph, and extending platforms at Bescot, Hamstead, Perry Barr, Tame Bridge and Witton;
- Medium term (2014-2019) – building a station at Aldridge (2014-2019);
- Long term (2019-2029) – investigating the re-opening of the Walsall - Lichfield route.

The Walsall to Wolverhampton line has had an hourly shuttle service since 2005, but usage has been low and the service was discontinued in December 2008. Centro is however committed to reinstating the service. The plan proposes:

- Short term – re-signalling the Walsall and Wolverhampton areas, and looking at linking service with Walsall - Birmingham service to create new through links;
- Medium term – creating new stations at Willenhall and Darlaston.

The Stourbridge Line has seen consistently high growth since the service frequency was increased to six trains an hour in 2004 and it now has the most severe overcrowding in the morning peak with about one in eight passengers having to stand. Services are provided primarily by London Midland, but Chiltern Railways provide important links through to London at peak times. The plan proposes:

- Short term – a major upgrade at Snow Hill station, line speed improvements, platform lengthening and train lengthening to cater for growth.

4.4.3 Walsall Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan 2007¹⁰

Walsall MBC published a Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan in October 2007. It set out the Council's aspirations for rail services in the Borough up to 2027, pulling together the rail related policies contained in Walsall's Unitary Development Plan. These plans are summarised in Table 4.4.

¹⁰ 'Walsall Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan', Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, October 2007

Table 4.4: Walsall Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan

Station/Line	0-5 Years	5-10 Years	11-20 Years
Walsall station	Direct London service Signal renewal	Remodelling as part of “urban interchange”	Regular inter-city services
Birmingham to Stafford	Wrexham-Marylebone stopping at Tame Bridge 5 trains/day 4 trains per hour at Bescot to serve P&R Enhanced offpeak & evening service on Cannock line Rail Showcase station enhancements Bloxwich-Rugeley Enhanced P&R north of Walsall	Electrification of Sutton and Chase lines Enhanced links to national network, 6 trains/hour to New Street More frequent services north of Walsall Further enhancements to station and P&R provision	Chase line electrification and “other improvements”
Wolverhampton to Sutton	Improvements to Wals- Wolv and new Willenhall station Potential for reopening Wals-Sutton with stations at Aldridge & Streetly Ryecroft Chord feasibility	Half hourly Wolv-Wals service Willenhall/Aldridge/ Streetly stations Ryecroft chord	Tram-train Sutton line electrification
Stourbridge to Lichfield	Wals-Brownhills with P&R? Strategic Freight Network funding? Tram-train?	Short term PT solution Progress case for freight /passenger services and P&R	Freight & passenger services reinstated Tram-train Ryecroft chord

5 Updating the Transport Context

5.1 Delivering a Sustainable Transport Strategy (DaSTS)

The Department for Transport issued a discussion document in October 2007 entitled “Towards a Sustainable Transport Strategy” (TaSTS).¹¹ This document aimed to build on the recommendations of the Eddington study on transport’s role in improving economic growth and productivity, and the Stern Review focusing on the impact of transport on climate change. TaSTS identified five key goals for transport and outlined its plans for transport planning and investment up to and beyond 2014.

TaSTS was followed in November 2008 by a more structured action plan for delivery of the transport goals, in the document “Delivering a Sustainable Transport Strategy” (DaSTS).¹² DaSTS is based on five goals in the following areas:

- **Competitiveness and productivity** – the impact of transport on business activity, particularly the cost to industry and the importance of reliability, and the contribution transport makes to the competitiveness of regions and the UK economy as a whole;
- **Climate change** – particularly in the context of carbon reduction targets which will significantly impact on the transport system, while recognising that reducing emissions should not be at the expense of economic growth;
- **Safety, security and health** – particular areas of concern are the encouragement of health-promoting transport and ensuring the robustness of the transport system in the event of disturbances such as terrorism;
- **Quality of life** – the positive and negative impacts of transport on quality of life, and the challenge to transport of rising expectations of users.
- **Equality of opportunity** – the contribution of transport to redressing inequalities, both locally in terms of social exclusion, and nationally in terms of economic and social disparities between regions.

Long term transport planning should be broader ranging than a simple mode focus and should consider a range of policy options including behavioural change, making better use of existing infrastructure, technology and innovation, pricing signals, regulation and enforcement, in addition to more traditional options based around new infrastructure and services. A key shift in emphasis is that mode shift is not considered a goal in its own right; mode shift needs to be demonstrated to contribute to achieving the DaSTS goals.

¹¹ ‘Towards a Sustainable Transport System: Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World’, Department for Transport, October 2007

¹² ‘Delivering a Sustainable Transport System: Main Report’, Department for Transport, November 2008

One of the key areas in which DaSTS aims to improve transport planning is in improving decision making. A top-down approach is proposed, starting from identifying long-term strategic objectives, through medium term regional to short-term (5 year) local plans, building on existing planning structures but with less emphasis on modal solutions. The focus is on identifying the problem and considering a wide range of policy options, which will form the basis of a strategic appraisal. This will be designed to sift out the least promising policy options without undertaking large amounts of detailed appraisal.

The planning framework outlined by DaSTS is also a top-down approach in that a hierarchy of international, national, regional and local transport is framed within a corridor-based structure focusing on 14 strategic national corridors which link with international gateways and connect regional and local networks.

The NATA Refresh process, which is reviewing the methods and scope of transport appraisal, will phase in a number of significant changes in the appraisal process from 2010 onwards. These changes are driven by the requirements of DaSTS as well as addressing issues within the existing NATA process.

5.2 Sub-National Review

The Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) was published in July 2007.¹³ It presented proposals on how to improve sub-national economic development and to tackle deprivation by enabling regional, sub-regional and local partners to tailor solutions to their specific problems, making best use of available talent and opportunities. This was followed in March 2008 by the publication of the SNR consultation document which sought responses from the regions on key economic development and regeneration issues.

The key principles for the SNR were to ensure that policy is managed at the right spatial levels, ensuring all levels are clear in their roles and that the review enables places to reach their potential. The review sought to empower and incentivise economic development, supporting collaborative working across all tiers of local government, streamlining the regional tier and reforming the relation between central and regional/local governments.

The West Midlands Region has established a Joint Strategy and Investment Board to oversee the development of the SNR including the Regional Funding Advice (RFA) process. They are supported in this process by a high-level multi-agency RFA Advisory Group.

¹³ 'Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration', HM Treasury, July 2007

5.3 Local Transport Act 2008¹⁴

The Local Transport Act, which gained Royal Assent in 2008, is designed to give local authorities more power to address local transport needs. The Act is designed to achieve the following:

- Give local authorities the right mix of powers to improve the quality of local bus services, as proposed in “Putting Passengers First” in December 2007 following an extensive bus policy review;
- Allow for the creation of an influential new bus passenger champion to represent the interests of bus passengers;
- Give local authorities the power to review and propose their own arrangements for local transport governance to support more coherent planning and delivery of local transport;
- Update existing legal powers so that, where local areas wish to develop proposals for local road pricing schemes, they have the freedom and flexibility to do so in a way that best meets local needs - whilst ensuring consistency and interoperability.

The change in emphasis on local transport governance includes the renaming of Passenger Transport Authorities as Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs), with a wider remit, covering any areas which it considers transport to have an impact on the economic and social well-being of its area – this might include road safety or the environment. The ITAs will also have enhanced powers to implement Quality Bus Contracts.

5.4 Local Transport Plan – LTP3

A new LTP document will be required from 2011. The new LTP process will give planning authorities more flexibility in terms of developing strategies and timeframes for delivery of their plans. In the Metropolitan Areas it is envisaged that the ITAs will be responsible for production of the LTP3 with strong coordination with the local authorities in the area.

The Shared Priorities which formed the basis of LTP2 will be replaced by the five DaSTS goals. The process of developing LTP3 plans is expected to follow the DaSTS model of setting clear goals, identifying the problems and developing a range of strategic options.

There will need to be a specific focus on the contribution of transport to mitigating climate change through a Strategic Environmental Assessment, and consideration of the needs of disabled people through the Equalities Impact Assessment, which considers the impacts on a range of potentially disadvantaged groups. The need to contribute significantly to national greenhouse gas emission reduction targets is likely to be a major transport policy driver.

Funding for LTP3 will be set in the context of Regional Funding Allocations. The funding itself will not be ring fenced or subject to national performance funding. LTP3 delivery will be assessed within the context of transport’s contribution to Comprehensive Area Assessments.

¹⁴ Local Transport Act 2008, online via Office of Public Sector Information website (www.opsi.gov.uk)

No mandatory targets will be set for LTPs, however LTP3 Implementation Plans should identify the expected impact on

- the 10 specific National Indicators relating to transport;
- relevant non transport specific NIs;
- Any other relevant local targets and indicators.

Guidance on the LTP3 process is currently out for consultation.¹⁵

¹⁵ *'Consultation on Local Transport Plan 3 Guidance'*, Department for Transport, December 2008

6 Recommendations for the Black Country Transport Strategy

6.1 Overview of Transport Plans and Strategies

There is a high level of accord between the various land-use and transport policies and strategies pertaining to the Black Country. The proposed interventions fit in within the broad framework of the Black Country Study in terms serving the Strategic Centres, Key Employment Land Investment Corridors and Housing Growth Corridors.

Table 6.1 shows the distribution of identified proposed investments across all strategies. A number of interventions serve more than one centre/corridor therefore the number of interventions is not additive across centres and corridors.

Table 6.1: Total Numbers of Proposed Transport Interventions

Number of Proposed Interventions		Number of Proposed Interventions	
Strategic Centres		Housing Growth Corridors	
Wolverhampton	10	A1	3
Walsall	18	A2	2
West Bromwich	6	A3	4
Brierley Hill	7	A4	4
Employment Land Investment Corridors		B1	3
Black Country North	3	B2	2
Black Country Central	9	B3	3
Black Country West	4	B4	3
Black Country East	6	C1	3
Walsall-Aldridge	3	C3	3
		C4	1
		C5	2
		C6	2

The table shows that there is a reasonably equitable geographical balance, particularly across the Housing Growth Corridors. Walsall has a high number of interventions because of the number of proposed rail projects in the Walsall Rail Plan that are not referred to in other strategies. The Black Country Study therefore provides the basic framework within which all interventions identified within subsequent transport policies and plans are framed, and as such provides a valid and inclusive framework for a Black Country Transport Strategy.

The Black Country Study itself did not identify a significant number of specific interventions on the rail network; these have been subsequently developed through the various rail-specific plans. While the Regional Transport Priorities identified a number of rail related priorities there do not appear to have been any specific priorities identified within the Black Country, although priorities such as New Street Station will undoubtedly help in enhancing all rail services across the West Midlands.

6.2 Future Context

The emerging Black Country Transport Strategy will need to be framed within the context of the DaSTS approach and demonstrate its contribution to achieving the five key DaSTS aims. This approach is enshrined in the emerging guidance on LTP3 and the NATA Refresh.

DaSTS requires a 'mode-neutral' approach based on clear identification of problems and strategic objectives. The problems and objectives have been defined at a high level through the Black Country Study; the focus of the BCS was on stimulating economic revitalisation and encouraging residential growth, objectives mirrored throughout subsequent plans and strategies, notably the Regional Transport Priorities and the Growth Point PoD.

The Transport Strategy will need to ensure that in striving towards the BCS objectives that national environmental and equality objectives are not compromised. In particular, the Strategy will need to demonstrate its contribution to achieving national greenhouse gas reduction targets and address the needs of potentially disadvantaged groups, particularly the disabled.

The establishment of the Integrated Transport Authority in the West Midlands should lead to a more integrated approach to planning. The ITA will be responsible for delivering the LTP3; the delivery of a Black Country Transport Strategy would be greatly assisted by establishing a Black Country specific Implementation Plan within LTP3.

6.3 Modal Issues

While the future strategy for transport in the Black Country needs to be presented as 'mode neutral' at the highest level, to accord with the DaSTS philosophy, there are issues relating to each mode which should be considered when it comes to identifying packages of measures to delivery the strategy.

6.3.1 Metro

Funding for Midland Metro schemes remains an issue, with the Phase 1 extensions already delayed by some years; recently the Birmingham City Centre extension has been scaled back to Snow Hill-New Street only, and business cases for the proposed routes still lack DfT approval. The long timescale envisaged for the 5Ws route is likely to encompass a number of changes, possibly in governments and hence attitudes to light rail as a solution to urban transport issues (notwithstanding any technical evidence in favour of light rail demonstrated through the appraisal process).

6.3.2 Rail

Much of the focus of proposed investment on the rail network is on Birmingham New Street and Walsall stations. It is unlikely that many of the improvements proposed for the rail network for the Black Country could be achieved without the improvements at New Street that enable enhanced capacity. Therefore this scheme is critical to delivering external connectivity by rail.

The Black Country highlights an ambition for each of the strategic centres to have a direct rail or coach service to London and BIA. This already exists in rail terms for Wolverhampton and less directly for West Bromwich (via Sandwell and Dudley station), and is feasible for Walsall. It would, however, be difficult to achieve for Brierley Hill, although Metro links to the national rail network would be available.

6.3.3 Bus

Bus improvements are not identified in specific detail within the reviewed documents. There is reference to Quality Bus Networks, Red Routes and Bus Showcase which are intended to deliver reliability although these are not identified on a corridor-specific basis. Schemes will need to demonstrate that they do not add to greenhouse gas emissions by adversely affecting highway traffic through bus priority measures.

The ITAs will have stronger powers to implement Quality Contracts, which was previously the preserve of the Secretary of State. Such a Quality Contract may cover the Black Country sub-region, possibly as part of a Black Country Implementation Plan.

6.3.4 Coach

Long distance coaches are seen as a method of delivering increases to the external connectivity of the strategic centres. Coach may therefore provide an infill network where rail cannot provide these direct links. Coach travel has traditionally been dominated by leisure travel and therefore may need to refocus to provide a service more comparable to rail to attract business users.

6.3.5 Highway

It is clear from DaSTS that the focus of transport strategies needs to move away from viewing modal shift as a goal in its own right, but to focus on its contribution to relieving urban congestion, reducing emissions and improving accessibility for those without access to a car.

However, it is possible that improvements in vehicle technology could contribute significantly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The vehicle fleet within the Black Country sub-region is older than in Birmingham and Solihull, and the age of the fleet will have an impact on the level of emissions in the sub-region. Incentives for residents to upgrade to newer vehicles may assist in reducing emissions – this could expand on the vehicle scrappage incentive scheme (£2,000 towards the cost of a new car when scrapping a car over 10 years old) announced in the 2009 Budget.

6.3.6 Walking and Cycling

Walking and cycling are not given significant priorities throughout the policies and strategies reviewed. As the focus is on connecting the strategic centres and moving large volumes of people and goods along key investment corridors the focus is on motorised modes. The Black Country PoD refers to Green Infrastructure and connecting in with the long distance cycle/walk network. To develop a holistic strategy covering journeys of all types and distances, and to encourage less environmentally damaging and more health-promoting modes of transport, the Transport Strategy needs to provide a stronger emphasis on non-motorised modes.

7 The Emerging Transport Strategy

7.1 Strategy Framework

The Black Country Transport Strategy takes as its basis the framework established in the Black Country Study and subsequent documents of:

- **Strategic Centres**, functioning as hubs of the Black Country transport network, with strong transport links between them, strategic links to the national transport network and a network of locally important transport growth corridors focused on them;
- **Key Employment Land Investment Corridors**, providing the focus of economic regeneration plans within the Regional Spatial Strategy, with strong transport links to the Strategic Centres;
- **Housing Growth Corridors**, focused on existing high volume transport corridors where housing growth is focused on redeploying underused industrial land.

The definition of these centres and corridors provides the framework for delivering the objectives for the Black Country sub-region in respect of encouraging economic revitalisation, shifting the focus towards high-end technology-led employment, and improving the quantity, quality and accessibility of the housing stock, to reverse the trend of outward movement of people and jobs from the area.

Proposed transport investments across a variety of policies and strategies fit within this framework. While different strategy programmes differ to some degree in relation to the anticipated delivery timescales, there is a general agreement on the priority order in which investments should be made. The following tables summarise the proposed interventions for Strategic Centres, Key Employment Land Investment Corridors and Housing Growth Corridors, split across a twenty year strategy period follows:

- **Short Term Priorities** – priority schemes to be delivered within years 1-10 of the strategy;
- **Medium Term Priorities** – priority schemes to be delivered within years 10-20 of the strategy.

In addition to the centre- and corridor-specific interventions listed in these tables, there is a more general category of interventions which can be considered to be Black Country-wide, and which will be ongoing throughout the strategy period. These include:

- Bus Showcase and Quality Bus Networks;
- Red Routes and Urban Traffic Control;
- Hearts and minds campaigns such as Smarter Choices and Travelwise.

Table 7.1: Transport Strategy Priorities for Strategic Centres

Centre	Mode	Short Term Priorities	Medium Term Priorities
Wolverhampton	Metro/Rapid Transit	Metro Line 1 Enhancements	Brinsford BRT/i54 5Ws
	Bus	Bus Improvement Packages	
	Rail	Walsall-Wolverhampton line Wrexham-Marylebone line speed improvements	New Street capacity improvements
	Highway	Highways Wolverhampton	A449 and A4123 improvements
	Interchange	Wolverhampton interchange (bus/rail)	
Walsall	Metro/Rapid Transit		5Ws Varsity Metro extension HVC Brownhills
	Bus	Bus Improvement Packages	
	Rail	Rail Showcase Walsall-Wolverhampton line Stourbridge - Walsall freight Sutton Line passenger services Walsall resignalling Cannock Line speed improvements	Timetable improvements Walsall station capacity improvements Chase Line electrification New Street capacity improvements Investigate Walsall-Lichfield feasibility Ryecroft Chord
	Interchange	Bradford Place Bus Station	
	Area Schemes	Walsall Town Centre Package	
West Bromwich	Metro/Rapid Transit	Metro Line 1 Enhancements	
	Highway	A41/A461 Junction A41/A4031 junction Southern Distributor Road and Eastern Gateway Access*	Town centre highway improvements
	Area Schemes	West Bromwich regeneration	
Brierley Hill	Metro/Rapid Transit	Wednesbury - Brierley Hill	HVC Stourbridge/Halesowen
	Bus	Sustainable Access Network	
	Rail	Rail Showcase Stourbridge - Walsall freight	
	Highway	Burnt Tree Island	A4123 and A4101 improvements (M5/Pensnett)

Table 7.2: Transport Strategy Priorities for Key Employment Land Investment Corridors

Corridor	Mode	Short Term Priorities	Medium Term Priorities
Black Country North	Metro/Rapid Transit		Brinsford BRT/i54
	Rail	Brinsford Park and Ride	
	Highway	M54 Access to i54	
Black Country Central	Rail	Willenhall station Stourbridge - Walsall freight Wrexham-Marylebone line speed improvements	Darlaston station
	Highway	M6 Junction 10 M6/M5 ATM A461 improvements	Neachells/Wednesfield Way improvements
	Area Schemes	Darlaston SDA	
Black Country West	Bus	Sustainable Access Network	
	Rail	Stourbridge - Walsall freight	
	Highway	Burnt Tree Island	M5 Junction 2 and A461 improvements
Black Country East	Highway	M6/M5 ATM A41/A4031 junction North Smethwick canalside access/Brindley II footbridge*	West Brom town centre highway improvements M5 Junction 2 and A461 improvements M6 J9 and M5 J1 improvements
Walsall-Aldridge	Metro/Rapid Transit		HVC Brownhills
	Rail		Aldridge Station
	Area Schemes	Brownhills Package	

Table 7.3: Transport Strategy Priorities for Housing Growth Corridors

Corridor	Mode	Short Term Priorities	Medium Term Priorities
A1	Rail		New Street capacity improvements
	Highway	North Smethwick canalside access/Brindley II footbridge*	A449 and A4123 improvements
A2	Rail	Snow Hill upgrade	
	Highway	North Smethwick canalside access/Brindley II footbridge*	
A3	Rail	Cannock Line speed improvements Line speed improvements Enhanced P&R north of Walsall	Chase Line electrification
A4	Rail	Platform extensions Walsall-Bham line Platform and train lengthening	New Street capacity improvements
	Highway		M6 J9 and M5 J1 improvements
B1	Metro/Rapid Transit	Metro Line 1 Enhancements Brook Street stop, Bilston*	
	Highway	A41/A461 Junction	
B2	Metro/Rapid Transit	Wednesbury - Brierley Hill	
	Rail	Stourbridge - Walsall freight	
B3	Metro/Rapid Transit		5Ws
	Highway	M6 Junction 10	Neachells/Wednesfield Way improvements
B4	Rail	Stourbridge - Walsall freight	Darlaston station
C1	Metro/Rapid Transit		Brinsford BRT/i54
	Rail	Brinsford Park and Ride	
	Highway	M54 Access to i54	
C3	Metro/Rapid Transit		HVC Brownhills
	Rail		Ryecroft Chord Walsall-Lichfield feasibility
C4	Highway		A4123 and A4101 improvements (M5/Pensnett)
C5	Metro/Rapid Transit		HVC Stourbridge/Halesowen
	Rail	Stourbridge - Walsall freight	
C6	Metro/Rapid Transit		HVC Stourbridge/Halesowen
	Highway	Cradley Heath A4100 junction improvements*	

7.2 Strategy for Strategic Centres

7.2.1 Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton already has good connections to the national transport networks with access to the M6 and M54, and with national rail services at Wolverhampton station. Locally, public transport connectivity to West Bromwich is provided by Metro although direct rail connections to Walsall have recently been lost.

The primary focus for Wolverhampton is on enhancing its role as a key strategic transport hub. In the short term, this involves improving bus and highway access and bus/rail interchange in the city centre, along with enhancements to strengthen the role of Metro as a key transport route linking Black Country strategic centres to Birmingham and the transport network beyond. In the medium term, further measures to enhance the external connectivity of the city and encourage high-end employment in the Black Country North corridor are the priority areas for investment.

7.2.2 Walsall

Walsall is well connected to the national motorway network although the sections of the M6 through the borough are among the most congested sections of motorway in the country, which has significant knock-on impacts on the local road network. Measures to improve the reliability of motorway journeys through active traffic management are at an advanced stage within Walsall and this is expected to deliver early benefits which are likely to be felt in the town centre.

Public transport links are in need of improvement – rail services struggle from inadequate capacity, and some services are heavily overcrowded while cutbacks in service provision have been made elsewhere. Transport interchange is fragmented and public transport links to other Black Country strategic centres are heavily reliant on conventional bus services.

The strategy for Walsall concentrates in the short term on improving interchange in the town centre, reinstating rail services to Wolverhampton and improving reliability for rail services north of Walsall. In the medium term, further enhancements to capacity will pave the way for further services and timetable improvements, to create a genuine rail hub at Walsall. This will be supported by Metro services providing additional connections to other Strategic Centres and Housing Growth Corridors.

7.2.3 West Bromwich

West Bromwich has good connections to the national road network with Junction 1 of the M5 close by, and with connections to national rail at Sandwell and Dudley station. Metro connects West Bromwich to Wolverhampton and provides further links to rail services to Birmingham and beyond via the Jewellery Line.

The short term focus for West Bromwich is on maintaining accessibility and traffic movements through key junction improvements and encouraging the continuing regeneration of the town centre area. This will be supported further in the medium term with highway improvements in the town centre. Enhancements to Metro in the short term will also pave the way for further Metro extensions elsewhere to improve the connectivity with the other Strategic Centres.

7.2.4 Brierley Hill

Brierley Hill is perhaps the poorest connected of the four Strategic Centres. This reflects the relatively recent development of the Brierley Hill/Merry Hill area as a regional centre, where the Merry Hill Centre was developed within an Enterprise Zone without significant investment in supporting transport infrastructure. More recently, the Dudley Southern By-Pass and enhancements to the A4036 have improved access but there remains a need to develop strategic access by a range of transport methods to support further development of the Strategic Centre.

The delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro and the development of a Sustainable Access Network (including parking charges at Merry Hill) are therefore key short term priorities for Brierley Hill, to ensure that current and future demand can be effectively managed. Metro in particular is a critical element in connecting Brierley Hill to the other Strategic Centres.

Re-use of the rail corridor between Stourbridge and Walsall, in the short term for freight and in the medium term for passenger services (including possible tram-train service) build on the short-term delivery of Metro, to improve connections to the national rail network. Links to the national road network (via the M5) will also be enhanced through improvements to the M5 to Pensnett corridor and improvements to the heavily congested Burnt Tree island.

7.3 Strategy for Key Employment Land Investment Corridors

7.3.1 Black Country North

The Black Country North corridor comprises the Stafford Road corridor and encompasses the business park developments at the northern end of the corridor. The focus of the strategy for this corridor is improving access at the north end, from the M54 to the i54 Technology Park, and providing high quality public transport connections from the north end of the corridor into Wolverhampton through area through bus rapid transit and park and ride at Brinsford.

7.3.2 Black Country Central

The Black Country Central corridor is focused on the Black Country New Road and Black Country Route, which were both completed in the late 1990s, the corridor connecting significant areas of development land with the Strategic Centres of Wolverhampton, Walsall and West Bromwich. The corridor also encompasses the Wolverhampton-Walsall rail line.

The key transport objectives for this corridor are to maintain the accessibility provided by the new roads, by improving key junctions and building on the reliability benefits generated by motorway ATM, and providing effective access to the Darlaston Strategic Development Area. Investing in the Walsall-Wolverhampton rail corridor will also enhance the economic viability of local centres at Willenhall and Darlaston.

7.3.3 Black Country West

Black Country West runs from Dudley Port via Dudley to Pensnett and Brierley Hill. This corridor is the principal link between Brierley Hill and the other Strategic Centres and contains a significant number of development areas around Dudley and Pensnett. As with Brierley Hill, the key focus is on enhancing the connectivity both to other Strategic Centres and to the national transport network.

Re-use of the rail corridor between Stourbridge and Walsall, in the short term for freight and in the medium term for passenger services (including possible tram-train service) build on the short-term delivery of Metro, to improve connections to the national rail network. Links to the national road network (via the M5) will also be enhanced through improvements to the M5 to Pensnett corridor and improvements to the heavily congested Burnt Tree island.

7.3.4 Black Country East

Black Country West comprises the West Bromwich to Oldbury corridor and incorporates access to the national motorway network via junctions 1 and 2 of the M5. A key focus for this corridor is improving external linkages, via the rollout of ATM to this section of motorway in the early part of the strategy period, coupled with motorway junction improvements in the medium term. The proposals within the strategy for West Bromwich will also assist this corridor.

7.3.5 Walsall to Aldridge

While not categorised specifically as a Key Employment Land Investment Corridor, Walsall to Aldridge has been identified as a significant potential growth corridor. While a long-term aspiration is for rail services to be reinstated in the Walsall-Brownhills corridor as part of a wider reinstatement of services from Stourbridge to Lichfield, a shorter term need exists for a local public transport solution, to provide a high quality connection between the local improvements under the Brownhills Package and Walsall centre.

More likely to be feasible in the medium term within this corridor is new rail passenger services on the Sutton line with a new station at Aldridge.

7.4 Strategy for Housing Growth Corridors

Many of the Housing Growth Corridors align with Key Employment land Investment Corridors; while the objectives for those corridors are focused on economic regeneration there will also be housing objectives met by the same packages of interventions.

The Housing Growth Corridors are primarily focused around high volume routes with good public transport; the strategy aims to uplift the quality of public transport provision in these corridors. Most corridors have identified proposals for enhanced rail-based public transport, either new Metro lines or heavy rail passenger service. Many of the rail measure are envisaged to be delivered in the short term, whereas Metro or High Volume Corridor services (be that enhanced bus, BRT or LRT) are generally anticipated to be medium term projects.

8 References

The following is a list of reference documents reviewed or referred to within this document. Individual references are also contained in footnotes on the relevant pages of this document.

1. 'The Black Country Study: The Future of the Black Country', Black Country Consortium, May 2006
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4. 'PRISM: Black Country Joint Core Strategy Transport Technical Document', PRISM Joint Application Team, November 2008
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7. 'The West Midlands Regional Funding Advice to Government', West Midlands Shadow Joint Strategy & Investment Board, February 2009
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14. Local Transport Act 2008, online via Office of Public Sector Information website (www.opsi.gov.uk)
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