



6 CONSULTATION AND BEST PRACTICE

CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation during the course of the year has focussed on the preparation of the new LTP which is intended to carry forward the strategy proposed by the West Midlands Area Multi Modal Study (WMAMMS). Following the extensive consultation undertaken as part of WMAMMS, which was endorsed by GOWM as one of the parties to the study, and that undertaken for the Coventry Area Network Study (CANS) the LTP consultation has concentrated on refining the strategy and ensuring that groups normally excluded have been engaged with. Information from other sources, for example, the annual MORI survey undertaken by Birmingham City Council has also influenced the detailed delivery programme.

6.2 Examples of the consultation that has been undertaken during the last year includes:

- The new LTP was launched by means of a 'webcast' in which people were invited to log on the West Midlands LTP website and see an announcement by the chair of the West Midlands Joint Planning and Transportation Sub-committee. On the day 266 people logged on. Invitations were sent to some 1700 people. The launch document 'Moving with the Times' was also available on the site.

- A mailing list has been assembled from the individual authorities' mailing lists of people interested in being consulted and this has been added to during the various consultation processes. It now includes 2100 addresses and covers the public, private and voluntary sectors.
 - Three seminars were held, one in Wolverhampton, one in Birmingham and one in Coventry. These were widely advertised and attended by some 175 people, representing a wide variety of groups and organisations. Exhibitions were held in the centres of Dudley, Stourbridge, Birmingham and Coventry. The Birmingham exhibition was linked to the Urban Summit to reach a national/international audience as well as local people to demonstrate how local authorities were working to help deliver the governments transport agenda. Two newsletters have been sent to the people on the mailing list.
 - The draft LTP has been made available on the website and comments invited.
 - The Birmingham Transport Summit in March. Feedback forms were used to assess areas for change and improvement.
 - Newspaper questionnaires, seeking views on spending priorities were distributed widely.
- The details of the outcomes from these consultation exercises are fully reported in the new LTP.

6.3 These area-wide exercises are in addition to the multitude of local consultation exercises that are undertaken to assist in the development of individual schemes. The officers involved feed the outcomes and their knowledge and experience into the LTP/APR process to help refine policies and programmes to respond to the issues raised through the LTP working group, Principal Engineers Group and Principal Assistants (Planning) Group.

6.4 In addition, a Steering Group of key stakeholders met with the Authorities to discuss the preparation of the APR and the development of the revised LTP for July 2003. This group included the Highways Agency, Birmingham International Airport, Advantage West Midlands, SRA, Bus operators, Chamber of Commerce, Environmental Groups, etc. Currently a closer working relationship is being forged with the Black Country Chamber to help carry forward improvements in that area. Individual authorities have worked closely with local groups and organisations including their Local Strategic Partnerships to develop a two-way dialogue for transport policy development.

6.5 Finally the joint team established to produce the LTP and APR has circulated the two issues of a regular newsletter to over 1700 people and organisations. This provides information on progress with the development of the LTP and APR and asks for feedback to help the preparation of the APR and new LTP.

6.6 Much of the feedback has related to operational issues and these have been taken up directly with the operators concerned. Many other responses raised issues already considered during the preparation of the Multi-Modal Study and taken into account in the recommendations.

EXAMPLES OF CHANGES MADE

6.7 Changes have been made to the overall strategy, programme and individual schemes as a result of consultation, and an example of each is given below.

6.8 With respect to overall strategy one example is that even greater emphasis has been placed on promoting walking and in addition to funding within the integrated transport block a new major scheme has been added to the programme.

6.9 In relation to the programme, as described elsewhere, funding was moved into structural maintenance during 2002/03 from integrated transport. This was in part a response to the priority given to this area by the public as evidenced by the Birmingham MORI poll, the comments of the business community as part of Walsall's local consultation and re-enforced by the outcomes from the LTP area seminars. The new LTP programme includes a bid some 25% greater than current resources to reflect this public concern.

6.10 One example of a change made to a scheme as a result of consultation is the amendment of the proposed Bus Showcase route on Hagley Road, following consultation with local residents, to avoid the removal of trees on the central reservation. Also there has been consultation where individual Showcase stops have had a direct bearing on frontages. Shelter consultations have resulted in changes of location in some instances.

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

6.11 The West Midlands Authorities were pleased to have received the Centre of Excellence accreditation in March 2002 for their approach to delivering integrated transport. At the request of the Government the West Midlands was asked to take a lead in promoting approaches to road safety.

6.12 During 2002/03 a range of activities were undertaken in relation to the Centre of Excellence status, culminating in an important conference held in Birmingham on road safety engineering, attended by 70 delegates.



6.13 One area in which the West Midlands plays a national/international role is in relation to traffic and travel information through the Matisse consortium. Officers attended the World ITS Congress on behalf of the UK where they were able to demonstrate and explain the Matisse system to a world audience, plus the Minister of State for Transport the Rt. Hon. John Spellar. Similarly officers played a major role in organising the ITS summer conference at which the development of Matisse and the linkages with the new National Traffic Control Centre were explained to a national audience.

6.14 As a Pathfinder for Street Lighting PFI, Walsall have hosted visits from many other authorities and disseminated good practice at a number of public and private sector organised seminars.

6.15 Finally, officers from the West Midlands have contributed their knowledge and experience to a number of national working groups e.g. the DfT-led 'Making Buses Run Faster Task Force' where our input in relation to Bus Showcase has been particularly welcomed. Key officers from across the West Midlands have presented papers to conferences on the LTP and other transport issues, e.g. the Nottingham Planning and Transport Conference and others organised by the Department and the Local Government Association (LGA). Through the Core Cities Group our experiences have been disseminated to other key cities in the UK, with a new casualty reduction group being established this year.

6.16 One positive outcome from this work has been that a number of new graduates/post graduates have been encouraged to commence their careers in the West Midlands as it is increasingly being seen as a dynamic, challenging area in which to work.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

6.17 Across the West Midlands there has been an extensive effort to learn from best practice, both within the Metropolitan area and wider. This has focussed on the areas where achieving LTP targets is proving a challenge.

6.18 A particular area of attention is highway maintenance. In addition to working jointly to identify local best practice, visits to other authorities e.g. Hertfordshire, a Beacon authority for maintenance, have been undertaken. This has been supplemented by some informal benchmarking undertaken as part of a detailed review of our operations. This will lead to a revised maintenance strategy to ensure we make best use of the resources available.

6.19 Similarly in respect of UTC operations a Best Value type study was commissioned to examine how well we compare with other authorities. This examined the approaches of, and benchmarked against, Manchester, Transport for London (TfL), Essex and Liverpool. This work is now being rolled forward to develop the business case for a new way of operating bringing both congestion and cost savings.

6.20 With a major focus of our strategy being the development of public transport a range of study visits, by both officers and Members have been undertaken, within the UK and to continental Europe to examine bus and metro operations. These included visits to Leeds and York in respect of bus issues and various French cities in respect of metro and super showcase bus. At a more detailed level, Centro consulted with West Yorkshire PTE on its experience with its Guided Bus schemes in order to inform the specification being developed for Super Showcase/Bus Rapid Transit

6.21 In order to improve the delivery of the programme authorities have been developing partnerships with private consultants. During 2002/03 Solihull were investigating an appropriate form of contractual relationship. In addition to consulting with partner authorities they examined the approaches of a number of authorities and found that for their purposes a model developed by East Sussex was most appropriate. A partnering agreement is now in place.

6.22 Similarly Dudley has continued to develop partnership working with contractors and have been active in the Midlands Cluster of Rethinking Construction. The A491/A4101 Contract trialled, as a demonstration project, partnership working with a contractor on Highway Reconstruction and received Demonstration Project Status (No 337). The contract sought to move from work priced from a series of rates, where a standard level of risk is assigned, - which may or may not apply - to pricing by activity schedules together with an allowance for risk which is included within the target cost or carried by the client as a contingency. The concept has been developed to put in place a Partnered Framework Agreement for Principal Road Reconstruction and Highway Improvement schemes. Dudley are now looking at Early Contractor Involvement for delivery of major schemes - that is reliant on early indications of Government support to a scheme.

6.23 The area has also played host to a number of key conferences from, for example, the Urban Summit in October to the Aston University series at which local professionals, from both the public and private sectors have contributed.

6.24 Finally officers from the area have attended a number of conferences/workshops to learn more about the success authorities are having in delivering transport schemes and developing the linkages between transport and other policy areas e.g. the Office of Public Management workshops regarding encouraging thriving communities as part of the neighbourhood renewal agenda; and events organised by Telford and Wrekin as a Beacon authority in the field of transport.

CROSS BOUNDARY AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

6.25 The seven local authorities and Centro are involved in several cross-boundary projects and working groups. For example there is a Coventry Solihull Warwickshire Forum where members meet and agree sub-regional issues and priorities. The Coventry Area Network Study was commissioned to support this work. Solihull also work with Warwickshire on cross boundary bus and rail routes. Wolverhampton and Centro have worked with Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Councils on issues relating to rail services and through ticketing.

6.26 A number of regional groups exist to promote regional working on transport matters, including the Regional Transport Group and its sub groups, Regional Travelwise Group and Mercia Road Safety Officers Group.

6.27 The West Midlands authorities have several groups looking at many aspects of transport. Politically there is the Joint Committee with its Planning and Transportation Sub-committee. At officer level there is a Chief Engineers and Planning Officers Group, supported by several working groups including ones developing the LTP. Examples of other working groups are those dealing with Matisse, carriageway maintenance, bridges maintenance, road safety and transport monitoring.

6.28 Particular examples of cross boundary working include that on developing a regional strategic park and ride methodology and strategy, which led by Centro has involved a cross section of all authorities in the region. Work on specific projects has included the development of proposals for Park and Ride facilities at Brinsford in Staffordshire and a new rail interchange at Coleshill, Warwickshire.

6.29 A good example of partnership working is the opening of the multi modal interchange at Birmingham International Station. Key partners included Solihull Borough Council, Network Rail and Birmingham International Airport, with LTP funding top sliced from all metropolitan authorities. The ongoing development of bus showcase relies on good partnership working between Local authorities, Centro, Bus Operators and the police. The relationship that has been developed is reflected by the major operator seconding a member of staff to work full time on the Central Implementation Team.

6.30 The examples of learning, sharing and partnership working can only be brief highlights to reflect a wide range of work undertaken across the area that reflects a real commitment to learn from the best and to share our knowledge with others.