



Transport for
West Midlands



Midland
Metro Alliance

Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 6 JUNE 2020

Welcome

Welcome to 'Connecting Sandwell & Dudley', a quarterly publication designed to keep those working and living in the area up-to-date on the progress of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension which we're building on behalf of Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).



Getting Around

We appreciate that everyone will have a different journey; the following is to assist you to plan ahead:

Works are taking place on Castle Hill in Dudley to allow contractors working on behalf of Transport for West Midlands to begin utility upgrades and diversions on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension.

The utility works are taking place ahead of full construction and mean that:

- From Monday 8 June, for up to five weeks, Castle Hill became one way (towards Dudley)
- The bus lanes and two bus stops on Castle Hill have been removed during the works
- Clearly signed diversion routes are in place for vehicular traffic and public transport
- Cyclists may wish to use King Street, Union Street and Trindle Road for access to the town centre avoiding Castle Hill.

Elsewhere in Tipton, from Monday 22 June, vehicular traffic will flow on a short portion of Sedgley Road East, between Mayfair Gardens and Sacred Heart School, under three-way traffic signals. It is expected that this traffic measure will be in place for up to four weeks.

From Monday 6 July utility upgrades and diversions will be taking place in Flood Street car park in Dudley Town Centre. Up to half of the parking bays will be out of use until Autumn 2020. For the duration of the work, access and egress from the car park will be from Oakeywell Street. The area is well served by other nearby town centre car parks.

Only use public transport if you have no other travel options. This keeps the services safe and available for those who need them most.

If you do need to travel by public transport during this time, you can get the latest updates on bus, train or tram services by visiting: wmnetwork.co.uk/networkoverview

Utility works for Metro in Dudley Town Centre progressing despite Covid-19 lockdown

A variety of work, including preparatory utility diversions and detailed design, for the much-anticipated Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension continued through much of the spring, even despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK government's lockdown.

As you might be aware, though activity directly being undertaken by the Midland Metro Alliance paused briefly in both the Sandwell and Dudley areas following the Prime Minister's 23 March announcement as construction industry guidance was awaited, a considerable amount of work for the scheme has taken place during the Covid-19 lockdown in a safe manner.



In Dudley town centre, for example, South Staffordshire Water, have continued the necessary upgrade and diversion of the water main on Castle Hill, while adhering to crucial social distancing guidelines at all times. These works moved to a new phase in early June and have resulted in a brief lane closure being put in place which continues to allow the work to progress safely. For more info on how these works might impact your essential journeys, see the Getting Around sidebar on the left.

Similar utility diversions and upgrades, as well as trial excavations, are taking place across Dudley Town Centre, including in Union Street and Flood Street, with further activity planned throughout the summer. In addition, a site compound, offering welfare facilities for team members working on the project, has been erected in Danks Way. The site, which became live in May, was built with the need to socially distance in mind.

In coming weeks, and with continued adherence to Covid-19 safety guidance from the Government, activity will begin to increase in a number of locations across Sandwell and Dudley, too.

Much of this work will largely be along the rail corridor that forms around 7km of the route and will primarily consist of the strengthening of several structures, vegetation clearance and the erection of safety fencing on, what will be, a live worksite. You can find more information about the first significant piece of work in Sandwell overleaf.



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Metro Hub at Churchill Shopping Centre helping first steps into work for local person

Due to the current government guidance related to Covid-19, our plans to open the Metro Info Hub have been temporarily postponed until it is safe for us to do so.

Whilst the Metro Hub is not yet open to the public, it is being used on occasion by members of the alliance's dedicated Stakeholder Liaison support for the project as office space when they are working in the town. With the heightened cleaning measures required as we all deal with coronavirus, the team have employed a regular cleaner to support the all-important hygiene measures needed.

To assist with this task, Darren has been employed from a charitable organisation called Just Straight Talk, which helps those with barriers to employment take their first steps into regular paid work.

Kate Beale, Project Manager at Just Straight Talk, said: "We are so thankful to Midland Metro Alliance for this valuable job opportunity for our participant Darren. It was key to MMA to employ both a local person and to employ someone that had a lot to offer but had been disadvantaged by the labour market for some time, this is where JST were able to be the conduit between the two."

In the meantime, until the Info Hub opens to the public, you are still able to keep up-to-date with the progress on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension via the social media channels below or by visiting our website at www.metroalliance.co.uk.

Metro Info Hub



Metro team helps raise funds for Covid-19 research and Construction Industry mental health helpline

Metro team members helped raise £13k for essential research into a vaccine for Covid-19.

They joined colleagues at property and construction consultancy firm Ridge by taking part in running and cycling challenges for its Exercise for Victory fundraising event in support of the research being carried out by Oxford University.

Meanwhile, the MMA helped to raise more vital funds for the Lighthouse Club, a charity that provides financial and emotional support to those in the construction industry, as staff across the organisation took part in the 2.6 Challenge last month.

The fundraiser involved participants taking part in socially distanced activities based around the numbers two and six. All the money raised by the MMA helps the Lighthouse Club to operate its Construction Industry Helpline, which has seen a significant increase in demand with people struggling during the Covid-19 crisis.

During mental health week, which also took place in May, staff at the MMA learned more about the health and wellbeing support available to help navigate them through these unprecedented times, including information provided by The Samaritans at <https://www.samaritans.org/>.



Tipton asked to plan ahead as first Metro works to begin in Sandwell in June

A lane restriction on Sedgley Road East in Tipton will go live from 22 June 2020 as an access road is built ahead of wider works in the area scheduled for the summer as part of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension in Sandwell.

Those travelling through Park Lane West and Sedgley Road East in the coming weeks and during the summer are being asked to leave more time for their journeys and to follow clearly signed diversion routes. Public transport users are also being advised that bus services in the area may run on amended routes when works take place and they should check the West Midlands Network website before they travel.

From Monday 22 June, vehicular traffic will flow on a short portion of Sedgley Road East, between Mayfair Gardens and Sacred Heart School, under three-way traffic signals as work to build the access road gets underway. It is expected that this traffic measure will be in place for up to four weeks.

Then later in the summer, the same part of Sedgley Road will completely close to vehicular and pedestrian traffic, as the Midland Metro Alliance, working on behalf of Transport for West Midlands, will begin the first structure upgrade along the 11km route with the temporary removal of the railway bridge crossing the A-Road. The closure is expected to last for up to four weeks and later in the construction project a replacement bridge will be erected.

The Midland Metro Alliance is working closely with Sandwell Council and Transport for West Midlands to notify residents, businesses and organisations directly impacted by both the lane restriction and localised closure sharing tips on how they can avoid disruption by using travel planning information.

Councillor Jackie Taylor, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for sustainable transport, said: "We are very excited that these works will mark the start of construction on the new Metro extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill. This extension will bring much-needed investment and regeneration to Sandwell. The route will support those in Tipton and surrounding areas making it easier for people to travel around the region using a sustainable mode of transport. There will be some unavoidable disruption now and we urge those we are getting in contact with to heed travel advice from our colleagues."

During both elements of the planned works, people will be able to complete their journeys following a short and clearly signed diversion route. Transport for West Midlands, Sandwell Council and the Midland Metro Alliance have teamed up to provide the following travel advice:

- Plan ahead and leave more time for your journeys especially if you travel along Sedgley Road East, Park Lane West, Mayfair Gardens or Victoria Road, you'll need more time for your journey to take account of the lane restrictions that will be in place. Follow the @wmroads Twitter feed for real time traffic updates
- The busiest times to travel are changing as lockdown eases. Check with operators before you travel.



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Coronavirus safety in Dudley Town Centre

To support the reopening of town centres on Monday 15 June, Dudley Council has implemented a package of social distancing measures.

These include introducing one way systems, removing parking bays and no stopping. The measures will help to keep shoppers safe, while maintaining social distance. Shoppers are being urged to adhere to the guidelines and shop alone where possible. For further information and advice please visit www.dudley.gov.uk/coronavirus-guidance



Feedback from Early-2020 Metro info sessions

As reported in the last issue of Connecting Sandwell and Dudley, earlier in the year, the Midland Metro Alliance hosted a series of information events across the West Midlands to share updates on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension.

Fourteen information sessions took place between February and March as part of our continued aim to keep people updated with progress on project's development. The informal events provided the opportunity for local people to ask any questions about forthcoming works.

Although the sessions had to be cut short, due to the need to socially distance as Covid-19 measures came into place, they were a great success with more than 1,500 local people engaged with.

Key amongst peoples considerations were:

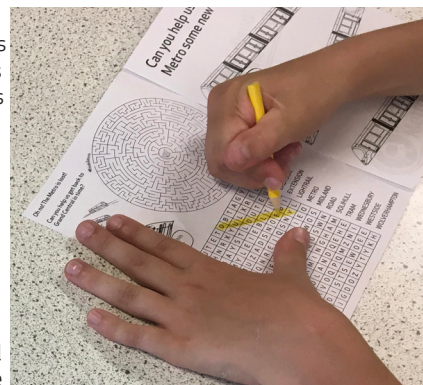
- Wanting to know more about the route itself and how construction might impact them
- What opportunities construction may bring to the local area in terms of jobs and training
- How it fits into the wider regeneration of both boroughs
- And, perhaps as you might expect, when it is due to open for passenger service

The events were a positive experience with excitement from local people clear in our interaction with them. The alliance plans to continue this method of keeping local people informed on the progress of the scheme as soon as government guidance allows the resumption of similar events.

Midland Metro Alliance supports local children with generous donation

The Midland Metro Alliance's Engagement and Skills Team has been supporting children across the region by donating hundreds of colouring and activity books, crayons and calculators to local schools and charitable youth organisations during the Covid-19 crisis.

They made the generous donation in a continued effort to support organisations in the West Midlands providing crucial care for young people and those who are vulnerable.



A key element of the team's engagement activities involves collaborating with educational facilities and youth organisations across the West Midlands to share careers advice and help inspire the next generation of engineers and rail and construction workers.

As well as the donation of books and crayons to youth organisations and schools in Sandwell and Dudley, the Midland Metro Alliance also donated scientific calculators to a secondary school in Sandwell to further support children with their STEM education whilst studying from home.

Julie Thompson, Skills and Engagement Advisor at the Midland Metro Alliance, said: "Although we are unable to visit local schools to inspire children on the many and varied career opportunities in the light rail sector during this time, we thought it was still important for us to do our part and support those we traditionally work with who are giving their all during this crisis. The Coronavirus pandemic has caused a huge impact on our everyday lives and we hope this donation will go a long way in supporting and inspiring our children. We will be returning to schools to share our experiences and knowledge of the sector as soon as it is safe to do so in line with government guidance.

Speaking of the donation, Leigh Moore, Principal at Wodensborough Ormiston Academy in Wednesbury, said: "We are so grateful for the support and generosity of our local community during these challenging times. It has been wonderful to be able to share the colouring books and crayons donated by the Midland Metro Alliance with our families and also the children of key workers who are attending school."

Vi Wood, of Leslie's Care Packages, added: "A huge thank you to the Midland Metro Alliance for the donation of colouring and activity books during this time."



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