



Transport for
West Midlands



Midland
Metro Alliance

Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 10 5 MARCH 2021

Welcome

Welcome to 'Connecting Sandwell & Dudley', a regular 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:

The overflow car park at Dudley Port Railway Station remains closed to allow access to the railway corridor where the Metro is being constructed.

The main Park and Ride car park, including provision for disabled and car sharing bays, remains open throughout construction for the Metro.

Cycle storage provision remains in place at Dudley Port and the station is regularly served by buses, too.

Those who need to travel are being advised to plan ahead and leave more time for journeys.



Construction work to get underway on Castle Hill in Dudley

The project to deliver the new Metro extension will intensify from Monday 8 March when main construction works get underway in Dudley.

From next week, work is set to begin on removing the road surface along Castle Hill, preparing the area for track to be installed. The start of construction follows the significant progress that has been made on the project last year including the upgrade and diversion of utilities in the area as well as the successful removal of several aged structures along the 11km route.

In order to minimise disruption to the road network, Midland Metro Alliance, working on behalf of Transport for West Midlands, will be undertaking the works on Castle Hill in two phases from spring 2021 through to summer 2022. Traffic will be maintained one-way in the direction of Castlegate island with clearly-marked diversion routes in place to assist road users.

Ian Collins, Project Director, said: "I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and thank colleagues who have continued to safely progress design and construction related activities throughout the pandemic. Diversions and protections of utility apparatus have been happening in Dudley throughout the pandemic and these works will soon be at a stage to enable physical track construction to commence on Castle Hill. The route is already acting as a catalyst for regeneration in Dudley Town Centre and when completed will provide a much-needed boost to public transport and wider regeneration benefits across the Black Country and Birmingham."

While construction is underway, those travelling to Dudley town centre, either by private vehicle or public transport, are being asked to leave more time for their journeys as diversions are put in place.

Anne Shaw, Director of Network Resilience at TfWM, added: "It is important that we ensure that travel is as easy as possible while construction is taking place for those who need to make essential journeys. We will therefore continue to work closely with both Sandwell and Dudley Councils, as well as our partners at Midland Metro Alliance to help minimise disruption to the travelling public and keep both boroughs moving as the Metro development progresses."

Share your reopening plans

The alliance is asking any businesses along the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro route, to share any plans for reopening following the government's announcement of a plan for easing lockdown. Sharing this information helps our construction team schedule and coordinate works, where possible.

You can get in touch with the route's dedicated stakeholder liaison officer, Tom Bissell, by emailing communications@metroalliance.co.uk.

Castle Hill, Dudley

One-way traffic management
in place

From 8 March 2021

Plan ahead



West
Midlands
Network

Plan ahead:
www.metroalliance.co.uk



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Further bridge demolitions mark another step forward for Metro extension

Construction activity for the Metro continued at pace during the winter with the demolition of aged structures along the keenly-anticipated route.

The Tame Valley and Old Main Line Canal bridges became the fourth and fifth redundant structures to be removed since summer 2020.



Speaking about the activities being undertaken in Tipton, Hamish Falconer, Assistant Delivery Manager, said: "These removals are part of a package of work which will eventually see all three canal bridges replaced with stronger bridge decks. The work is quite complex. To remove the Tame Valley structure a 500-tonne crane was with us for one day to separately lift the existing steel structures spanning the canal, each weighing 33 tonnes. Following the removal of the old deck, the remaining structure was cut to its new height, brick work cleaned and repaired ready to receive the new stronger replacement structure later this year."

Lee Allen, Delivery Manager, added: "The team have worked extremely hard to reach this important stage in the project and I am extremely proud of what they have achieved. These bridge works are essential to ensure that they can meet the needs of a modern light rail network and it is fantastic that we have continued to make great strides in construction for this highly-anticipated route, even through such challenging times."

Businesses in Sandwell come together for another for virtual community conversation

Public, private and voluntary sector organisations in Sandwell, came together last month for a virtual event hosted by Business in the Community (BITC) and Midland Metro Alliance.

Delegates got to hear more about the Metro project, which is the largest light rail scheme in the UK, and also had the opportunity to network with other likeminded organisations. For example, one company, which supplies PPE for business use, was able to share details of products with companies who had been struggling to source this all-important item during the pandemic.

A community conversation is a commitment amongst participants to continue to work together and agree on collaborative actions that can make a real difference in a place. BITC assess the output from the events into actions and pledges and help the community plan for further action.

A second virtual event is due to take place this month.



Fly-through footage gives a first glimpse of Metro extension in Dudley

A computer-generated fly-through released in January has shared a glimpse into the future and showed how the Metro extension is set to look in Dudley town centre and has now been viewed by more than 10,000 local people.



The footage, created by MMA designers, shows West Midlands Metro's blue trams travelling in both directions along Flood Street transporting virtual passengers to Wolverhampton and Brierley Hill. The short video shows how tram stops are likely to look and how the Metro route will interact with vehicle and pedestrian traffic in the Black Country town.

Paul Marshall, Head of Design at the Midland Metro Alliance, said: "We were really excited to be able to share this early vision of how the extension is set to look in coming years. Throughout the global pandemic the team have been busy working on the design for the route and work has progressed well. The final



design for the tramway is set to be completed this year, so viewers should be aware that some details in the video may differ slightly from what is constructed."

You can view the video by visiting: <https://vimeo.com/487162274>.

Find out what it's like to work in construction and transportation

More career videos have been added to our recently launched online platform to help inspire young people to consider careers in construction or railway engineering. In recent weeks, colleagues from West Midlands Metro have also joined the project and shared their expertise on careers in transportation, too.

In total, more than 40 members of staff have now shared their personal insights into their career journeys and job roles on the Connecting Futures hub. Jobs represented include graduate schemes and track engineering as well as office-based roles such as human resources, communications and finance. On the operational side of running a tramway, young people can learn more about business development, customer service, safety and landscaping.

Organisations can also use the site to get directly in touch with the alliance for further help and guidance on this important area.

Videos will be regularly added to the hub which anyone interested in a career in construction can access by visiting: www.metroalliance.co.uk/connecting-futures.



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Work placement students complete health and safety project

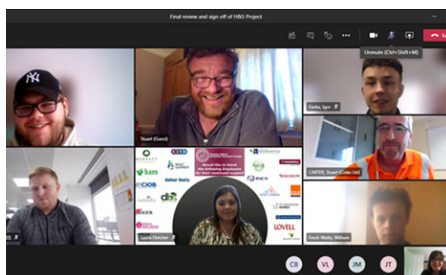
Work placement students have shared their knowledge about the importance of health and safety in construction.

Igor Fierka, William Finch-Watts and Oliver Brooks, students at Thomas Telford University Technical College (UTC) in Wolverhampton who have been learning more about working in the sector during their work placement, demonstrated their learning by delivering a presentation to the alliance's safety team.

Some of their ideas included the use of 3D models and innovative technology such as geographical information systems to gain better data on safety risks.

The students, who have all recently completed studies including a BTEC in Construction and the Built Environment at UTC, joined the alliance on work experience last October to gain experience in all the different aspects of a construction project.

Simon Maxfield, Vice Principal at Thomas Telford UTC, said: "We are very proud of our students and would like to thank all of the Midland Metro Alliance team for giving them the amazing opportunities."



Preliminary work for project, including utility diversions and upgrades underway in Brierley Hill

As reported in previous issues of Connecting Sandwell & Dudley much of the work undertaken in Dudley borough for the project so far has been in identifying, upgrading and diverting existing utility services (gas, water, electricity and telecoms, for example).

Towards the end of 2020, work began in Brierley Hill to confirm the location of existing services across the town through several small excavations, and throughout 2021 work to upgrade and futureproof utilities in this area are scheduled to take place.

From Thursday 1 April, utility works will be underway in Brierley Hill on Cottage Street requiring a localised road closure. Clearly marked diversion signage will be in place for those completing their essential journeys.

You can learn more about how a Metro extension is built, including on this preliminary stage around buried services, by watching our short video at <https://vimeo.com/282978259> and can keep up-to-date on works in Cottage Street, and across Brierley Hill, by following us on social media.



Covid-test boost for Metro operation and construction



Midland Metro Alliance, working with public health bodies, is keeping workers safe during the pandemic by rolling out regular lateral flow testing to construction staff working on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro project.

The move comes alongside Midland Metro Limited (MML), the operator of West Midlands Metro, helping to keep the

tram safe for its customers and employees by offering similar rapid testing for all frontline staff.

Stuart Cormack, Safety and Sustainability Director at MMA, said: "Construction is a sector which has been able to continue throughout the pandemic with additional safety measures in place. Testing is part of a number of wellbeing initiatives which we've put in place to ensure the safety of our staff and the general public as we move across Sandwell and Dudley building the tramway. We would like to thank Dudley CCG for helping us to roll out the lateral flow testing and would recommend other organisations work with their local public health departments to implement a similar testing regime where necessary."

Anthony Stanley, MML's Head of Quality, Health and Safety, and the Environment, added: "Employees such as drivers and conductors are also considered key workers, and, thanks to their efforts, we've been able to maintain an essential service for those who still need to travel during the pandemic. Now that lateral flow testing has become more widely available, we've struck an agreement with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council which is offering members of the Metro team priority access to test appointments at West Bromwich Town Hall."



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