

4 February 2003

Scrutiny Report to the City Council

REVIEW OF THE WEST MIDLANDS PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY AND CENTRO OPERATIONS AS THEY RELATE TO BIRMINGHAM

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1. Preface

By Councillor Mike Olley
Chair, Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee
December 2002



Members of the City Council, I believe, are united in understanding that the future of Birmingham and its people depend on a substantial improvement in transport systems. This holds true whichever viewpoint one takes – achieving a healthier economy and more prosperity; the social benefits of being able to travel more easily and more safely; or the desire for a more sustainable way of living.

Improved public transport is a key part of this agenda. Yet delivering these improvements is a complex matter in which many different companies and agencies play a role. The work of two bodies central to this task – the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority and Centro, its executive arm – is more often acknowledged than understood.

This scrutiny review has been lengthy and particularly thorough. But its defining characteristic has been the partnership between the review group and Councillor Richard Worrall, Chair of WMPTA. My scrutiny colleagues and I are very grateful to him for his involvement, and to all the representatives of operators, service users, and City Council and Centro officers who took part in and supported the review.

We have identified many detailed actions which would help to improve public transport in the city. But our fundamental recommendations are aimed at refreshing and strengthening the partnership between the City Council and WMPTA, and so improving our chances of obtaining badly needed investment for the West Midlands.

Mike Olley

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed on 13th July 2001 to establish an Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to conduct a scrutiny review of the operations of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority (WMPTA) and the Passenger Transport Executive (Centro) as they relate to Birmingham.
- 2.2 The West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority is a separate statutory body comprising 27 members (of which 10 are from Birmingham) of the seven metropolitan district councils (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton). Centro is the organisation responsible for putting the WMPTA policies into action; developing and promoting public transport across the West Midlands, within a financial and political framework set by WMPTA.
- 2.3 The review was carried out by this three-party Sub-Committee, joined, after the first meeting by Cllrs Worrall and Horton from WMPTA. Their participation ensured that the review took place in a spirit of partnership, as well as bringing their expertise and knowledge of the issues to the table.
- 2.4 The review was conducted through a programme of 13 meetings, each looking at a specific set of Centro services. At each, Centro were invited to set out their policies and give their views. The Sub-Committee then heard from relevant operators and users. In addition, the Sub-Committee visited Nottingham, one of the Core Cities where there is not a PTA.
- 2.5 The Appendix to the full report contains a list of detailed preliminary findings and recommendations drawn up by the Sub-Committee. These were shared with WMPTA and Centro. Their comments on action taken, and the Sub-Committee's reactions, are also shown in the Appendix.
- 2.6 All the issues shown in the Appendix are important in their own right. The Sub-Committee's main message, however, is more fundamental. In the discussion of the various issues what emerged too frequently was that there had been a breakdown of trust and confidence between WMPTA/Centro and the City Council.
- 2.7 The Sub-Committee believes strongly that these relationship issues must be addressed if substantial progress is to be made on the policy and practice issues.
- 2.8 The recommendations before the City Council, therefore, are aimed at rebuilding the partnership between WMPTA/Centro and the City Council in particular but more generally with all seven West Midlands Metropolitan District Councils. These recommendations are set out in section 8 of the report.
- 2.9 Also included is a minority report submitted by Cllr. Vincent Johnson.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed on 13th July 2001 to establish an Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to conduct a scrutiny review of the operations of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority (WMPTA) and the Passenger Transport Executive (Centro) as they relate to Birmingham. This reports on the conclusions of the review including responses from the WMPTA/Centro to the findings.
- 3.2 The West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority is a separate statutory body comprising 27 members (of which 10 are from Birmingham) of the seven metropolitan district councils (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton). It was established in the 1985 Local Government Act and sets the political and financial framework for the work of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, known as Centro.
- 3.3 Centro is the organisation responsible for putting the WMPTA policies into action; developing and promoting public transport across the West Midlands. Centro aims to create the conditions in which people will increasingly choose to use public transport for some of their journeys. To do this money is raised from council tax payers, from Government, from European grants and through private sector finance. This provides a fund for public transport each year. The WMPTA decides on the broad directions, policies and projects that the money should be spent on and Centro deliver these.
- 3.4 The services administered by the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority are:
- a) Providing support to run non profit making but socially necessary services.
 - b) Providing bus shelters, bus stations and passenger information.
 - c) Arranging for travel subsidies for children, scholars and pensioners, and people with disabilities and discounted tickets/travel cards for use on buses, trains and trams.
 - d) Specifying timetables, fare levels and service quality for local trains under franchise, let by the Strategic Rail Authority.
 - e) Along with the District Councils, investing in stations, track and signalling and local bus infrastructure.
 - f) Providing the transport for special mobility needs through its subsidies for the West Midlands Special Needs Transport.
 - g) Working in partnership with Local Authorities and other operators to improve services and develop initiatives such as a light rail system.

3.5 The membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee were:

Councillor Mike Olley (Chair)
Councillor Sue Anderson
Councillor Andrew Nicholls
Councillor Vincent Johnson
Councillor Peter Howard (replacing Councillor Denis Oakley/Councillor Mark Hill)

3.6 It was accepted that it would not be appropriate for City Council Members of the WMPTA to be included on the Sub-Committee but they would be invited to comment near the end of the process.

3.7 Following the first meeting, it was agreed that two members of the WMPTA should be invited to attend and Councillors Worrall and Horton attended almost all of the meetings.

4. Terms of Reference

4.1 The formal, agreed terms of reference for this review were as follows:

- to examine and review the operations of WMPTA and Centro in so far as they relate to Birmingham;
- to assess how effectively these operations are undertaken and whether there are any alternative models which may merit consideration;
- to produce a series of formal recommendations on the operations of the WMPTA and Centro and the City Council's relations with them.

5. Method of Investigation

5.1 A timetable of meetings and the sub division of areas of review was decided at the Sub-Committee's first meeting focussing on particular responsibilities or services. Centro were invited to set out their policies/standards and give their views, with representatives from user groups and operators invited as necessary.

5.2 A regular programme of scrutiny meetings (13 in total) were held into different services provided by Centro, e.g. Shelters, Concessionary Services, Metro, Bus Showcase, Special Needs. The meetings were conducted in a spirit of collaboration and discussions.

5.3 Additionally, a visit to Nottingham (a non-PTA area) on 3rd December 2001 was undertaken to compare and review passenger services provision in a unitary authority in comparison to Birmingham's PTA area.

- 5.4 The draft final report was discussed with Birmingham WMPTA Members and comments have been taken into account.

6. Findings

- 6.1 The findings of the scrutiny review are set out in detail in the Appendix. Given the collaborative way in which this review proceeded with the Chairman of the PTA present at every meeting – after he was invited at the first meeting to attend – what we did was to share our preliminary findings with PTA members and Centro officers. These findings (recommendations) are shown in the second column of the Appendix. In the next column we show the actions which Centro/WMPTA have indicated were about to take place or had already taken place in response to these issues. Having then discussed these responses the final column shows the Scrutiny Sub-Committee’s response to the matters. The Appendix is best described as covering on-going work – indeed some of the detailed action points have already been implemented.
- 6.2 The findings reveal the detailed way in which the Sub-Committee approached its task. This was only possible because of the excellent involvement throughout by WMPTA/Centro. Councillor Worrall the Chair of the PTA led by example in being present at all these fact finding sessions and following up issues where the answer was not immediately available.
- 6.3 There is, however, a well-used phrase “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” and this is the main message, which we feel we need to get across. From our scrutiny review all of the issues identified are very important in their own right but, as we discussed them, what emerged too frequently was that there has been a breakdown of confidence and trust between WMPTA/Centro and the City Council. City Council representatives believe WMPTA/Centro do not share their proposals adequately with the City Council. It is felt that they too often bring “rabbits out of the hat” at the last moment and fail to drive forward the critically important transportation agenda. On the other hand, WMPTA/Centro feel that their efforts are not properly recognised; that the City Council tends to “forget” previous guidance given and is too quick to criticise without recognising Central Government’s constraints which often impact on their work.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 If we are to deal with the policy and practice issues addressed we must also deal with the relationship issues. This is where the role of the 7 West Midlands Metropolitan Leaders in giving “direction” to the WMPTA/Centro policy framework also needs to be brought into the picture.
- 7.2 What we would like to see is better guidance given to the 7 Councils’ Lead Members on Joint Authorities – this also includes the Lead Member for Police and Fire and Civil Defence as well as the PTA – about their accountability back to the City Council.
- 7.3 Making a start on this, what we would envisage here in Birmingham is that at Council meetings each Lead member of a Joint Authority should present a brief update report on matters of interest to the full Council which would then be followed by a short period of question time. This will not only give the Council’s Lead Member on the Joint Authority the opportunity to present to the City Council issues of importance but will also provide an important public platform to achieve a greater awareness of the main opportunities and pressures faced by that organisation.
- 7.4 There also needs to be more precision about the roles of the 7 West Midlands Leaders and WMPTA/Centro in “championing” transport issues across the conurbation. We are conscious that this is also an issue which is currently being given active consideration by the 7 West Midlands Leaders. We understand that the West Midlands Metropolitan Chief Executives Group is making a number of proposals on these matters ranging from a new Transport Reference Group being set up and for greater opportunity to input into the Passenger Transport Executive.
- 7.5 There are currently 9 places on the Passenger Transport Executive. Only 6 of these potential places are currently taken up. Our suggestion is that the remaining 3 places should be taken up on a rotating basis by 3 of the 7 Metropolitan Chief Executives or a very senior nominee. This would introduce a more collaborative way of working and would follow a model which we believe is successfully operated by the South Yorkshire PTE.
- 7.6 Finally, like the City Council, WMPTA/Centro in striving to improve its performance is considering a number of Best Value Reviews. This is now providing a good platform for looking at improvements in performance and what we would like to see is some agreement for some joint tracking arrangements to be put in place. To this end, a further meeting between the Co-ordinating O&S Committee and Councillors Worrall and Horton will be held in 3 months’ time. This meeting will review progress made on the detailed issues set out in the Appendix.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Co-ordinating O&S Committee recommends:

1. that the West Midland Leaders be asked to consider the advisability of the vacant places on the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive being taken up by three of the seven West Midlands Metropolitan District Chief Executives (or very senior nominees), with detailed arrangements agreed by the Chief Executives;
2. that the Council Business Management Committee be asked to consider the implications of the proposal that the City Council's Lead Members on the West Midlands Police, Fire and Civil Defence, and Passenger Transport Authorities be given a formal opportunity at Council meetings to update the Council on the work of the Joint Authorities;
3. that the seven West Midlands Metropolitan District Leaders be asked as a matter of urgency to agree ways of improving the Metropolitan area's ability to champion transport issues and lobby for investment across the conurbation.

APPENDIX A

Socially Necessary Services – those services which receive subsidy from Centro in order for them to operate, i.e. where operators do not consider them commercially viable

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTRO/WMPA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
Research into customer needs	There has been a low level of research done into social need factors (such as those encountered by an elderly population in a hilly area).	<i>Operators/Centro should work together and publish annual research proposals. Centro could publish a map showing those areas not covered by the Service Quality Standards criteria.</i>	In hand through the Best Value Review of Subsidised Bus Services reporting in December 2002. Included in current Integrated Ticketing Strategy being developed in consultation with operators as part of the LTP Bus Strategy work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Monitor progress when map published</i> • <i>Measure of success needed on meeting customer requirement</i>
Services into new employment areas	Low level of services/access to employment areas. Consideration should be given to subsidising services and major employment sites in Birmingham.	<i>Consideration should be given to a proactive approach in respect of new commercial developments with Centro/Operators working together on revised service patterns.</i>	<p>A "Quick Wins" proposal approved by District Leaders and a budget of £250,000 was identified for the Centro area for 2002/03. Centro and the City Council active in promoting TravelWise where public transport facilities are available.</p> <p>In Birmingham, contract renewals means earliest date April 2003. Urban Bus Challenge will include Aston.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Welcome proposals</i> • <i>Monitor effectiveness</i>
Validity of through tickets is an issue between different operators	Problems with integration/ticketing/charges.	<i>While products such as 'Centrocad' are available, expansion of 'Smartcards' should be pursued to enable tickets to be used on a range of services.</i>	Included in Ticketing Strategy referred to above. Coventry Smartcard trial an LTP project during current financial year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Await results of trial</i>

Shelters and Information – the provision of shelters and information is a joint responsibility of Centro and operators

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTRO/WMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
Large number of shelter types. Little co-ordination with other street furniture	Joint procurement of street furniture in the light of the finish of the 'Adshel' contract in 2003.	Members felt that there was much to commend joint procurement especially removing the current "mish-mash" of designs Centro to keep District Authorities informed. Birmingham might consider "going it alone" and negotiate a single street furniture contract.	Centro is currently developing an Advertising Shelter Contract specification for West Midlands in consultation with Districts. A Best Value Review of Infrastructure Services is also taking place to be completed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early consultation required on new contract
	Being looked at by Centro with District Authorities.			
Availability and indecipherability of City Centre bus information	Complex nature of many of the maps at boarding point .	Suggestions for a planned central information point (Birmingham City Council/WMPTA).	<p>"Where to Board Your Bus" maps being reviewed as part of Network West Midlands project work this year with roll out next year.</p> <p>Information for bus passengers in the city centre is made more difficult by the number of street changes due to the city centre redevelopment. Centro works successfully with contractors, operators and City Council to provide information to bus users about these changes. PTA approved Passenger Information Strategic Plan being implemented. Proposal for co-ordinated at stop information to PTA Committee 19 August 2002.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Council to be consulted Travel West Midlands approach should be considered for roll out across the rest of City
	Information sheets produced by Centro needs to be considered.	More focused maps (relating to smaller areas) are needed.		
	Bus stop numbering system and city centre frequent changes a concern. Lack of stop information elsewhere.	Travel West Midlands experimental work on the Pershore Road, including the provision of 105 new stops/poles, each with a unique identification. Also route diagrams and customer information contact numbers were provided. Expansion to the rest of the city encouraged.		
Need for co-ordination of street advertising	Opportunities being lost by the replacement of existing advertising shelters with non-advertising ones. High quality advertising could enhance the experience of people in the City. Capital costs can be entirely advertising funded (leverage being through location). Customer recognition that beautiful street furniture was being paid for by advertising.	Discussions should take place between authorities to recognise the possibilities of co-ordinated street furniture and possible income.	In hand through advertising shelter contract specification referred to above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted

Concessionary fares – subsidised rail, bus and metro journeys for classes of users

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTRO/WMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
A satisfactory reimbursement scheme does not seem to have been agreed between operators and Centro	There was an excessive length of time being taken to agree a scheme for calculating reimbursement.	<i>Centro/Operators to agree on the reimbursement. There is need for an accurate mechanism for calculating reimbursement.</i>	Operators are involved in agreeing a revised reimbursement system. It should be noted during the interim period we have achieved savings that have been reflected in the surpluses that have been re-invested, or have been repaid to Districts as cash-back.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Process to be set out under the new powers available to the PTA</i>
Uneven fares policy for education trips	There are differences between PTE areas and the role of parental choice/eligibility being not easily understood.	<i>City Council in conjunction with Centro to conduct a review of their policies in the light of national changes (also referred to Chair of former Learning City Overview and Scrutiny Committee).</i>	In part this has been done with our liaison with Districts on withdrawal of school services, endorsed by District Leaders in January.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Refer to Sustainability & Public Safety O&S Committee as part of their review</i>
Confusion over coverage of concessionary travel schemes	The representatives of Pete's Travel highlighted the confusion being caused to drivers by the differing times of validity of the various concessions: this being a particular problem on long journeys into other areas. There were other confusions over different categories of disability and the 3 types of passes issued.	<i>It is suggested that it would be better to continue with a Countywide scheme, rather than different schemes for each authority but that the arrangements be simplified as far as possible.</i>	The implementation of the Blind and Disabled Scheme was carried out following extensive consultation with, and approval by, all Districts. The add on pass proposals, resulting in the complexity articulated by Pete's Travel, were a direct result of this. Proposal regarding a countrywide scheme are likely to come forward during 2003/04.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Views of Scrutiny to be passed on to City Council for Leaders consideration</i>
Cost of current Concessionary Fares	Free passes were found to be very valuable by pensioners but cost an increasing proportion of revenue budget each year.	<i>Centro/WMPTA to continue to liaise with District Authorities over the concessionary fare arrangements. City Council to lobby Government for unequivocal financial support for a more generous scheme.</i>	We would agree with this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Noted</i>

Local Rail – Centro is a joint sponsor of local rail services with the Strategic Rail Authority and involves specifying the basic timetable, the standards and the fare structure within the framework of the Railways Act 1993

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTRO/WMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
Effective lobbying	There is a lack of an effective, inclusive West Midlands lobby aimed at ensuring that the region receives a fair share of national rail investment.	<i>West Midlands PTA should take a regional lead with the City Council in continuous lobbying.</i>	The West Midlands Communication Strategy was approved by the West Midlands Planning & Transportation Sub-Committee in July. Lobbying strategy under consideration with District Leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clarity needed on who is leading with District Leaders</i> • <i>PTA have a key role</i>
Quality of trains and services	There are several important issues, including short platform lengths at some stations, and the possible easing of congestion at Snow Hill and New Street if trains could run through from Walsall.	<i>Centro should work with the Strategic Rail Authority and the operator to seek a franchise extension that produces additional/refurbished trains of a better quality and funding for capacity improvements.</i>	Addressed in franchise extension bid by Central Trains. Capacity improvements under consideration for funding for Strategic Rail Authority. Compliance with existing agreement is closely monitored by SRA and Centro. The SRA is paying Railtrack to carry out detailed design work on a number of capacity schemes that will approximately double rail capacity in the West Midlands over the next 10 years. This design work will be completed next March when the SRA will reassess the value for money and hopefully find the funding to implement the schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enhancement and refranchising is a key issue for the City Council</i> • <i>Progress on rail improvements not satisfactory</i>
	There is a need to provide more trains/seats at peak times, with the company (Central Trains) already deploying the 112 carriages at peak times as stipulated in the franchise agreement with Centro. The decline in government support has resulted in a loss making scheme in need of investment.			
	The condition of the present rolling stock is thought to provide a poor passenger experience.			

<p>Overcrowding on peak services and a lack of barriers to fraudulent travel</p>	<p>The checking/collection of tickets is hampered by the absence of gate controls at all stations. Inspection of tickets at New Street station collected £190,000 additional fares over a 40 day period (40% was Central Trains income). The estimated £1million capital expenditure required to install a gating system at New Street Station could be quickly recouped through the generation of an additional £2million per annum in fares revenue.</p> <p>The current penalty fare needs to be substantially higher (than £10) in order to act as a deterrent. More frequent ticket inspection would help to enforce the penalty fare.</p>	<p><i>Centro/WMPTA to explore with the operators measures to ensure effective penalties for fraudulent travel and introduction of ticket barriers starting with central Birmingham stations.</i></p>	<p>Central Trains have proposals to provide staffed barriers at central Birmingham stations. Included in Central Trains Franchise extension work.</p> <p>Central felt £10 penalty fare should be £25.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look to operating companies and other PTA areas to support higher penalties</i>
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Bus Showcase

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTRO/WMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
Value of bus lanes and other Showcase measures	In order for a Showcase to be successful, all elements of the full package are needed. Of importance to passengers is the provision of better buses and greater reliability of service. The importance of bus lane enforcement was highlighted. City Council are members of the Local Authority Bus Lane Enforcement Working Group led by the Government.	Centro should update the Bus Showcase Handbook with District Authorities. City Council/ Centro to take a more in-depth investigation of corridors/ route problems to provide more continuous improvement by tackling problem junctions and feeder routes. A trial of bus lane enforcement cameras should be pursued on a Showcase route.	Bus Showcase Handbook prepared by Centro in discussion with Districts for approval by West Midlands Planning & Transportation Sub-Committee in September.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted
			CEPOG Support Team Best Value Review of Showcase states "The Bus Showcase services provided by WMPTA are good and have promising prospects for improvement".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trial of enforcement now agreed for Digbeth
Showcase Line 33 performance	Centro has undertaken a Best Value Review of Line 33 – key issue co-ordination of infrastructure /vehicle investment The review has emphasised the need to pursue innovative ideas, such as the targeting of remedial work on junctions, rather than merely creating bus lanes through a route. There is also a need for slightly longer term planning – Operators said that the lead in times for the purchase of new buses are at least 9 months; vehicles being built to order at around £140,000 each, with around 10 to 20 buses required per route (single deckers on line 33 were not coping at peak times).	Centro/ Operators should monitor the performance of the route and seek to plan for longer term change including capacity of bus fleet.	<p>Audit Commission Best Value Inspection published in July 2002 of Showcase states "the Bus Showcase services provided by WMPTA are good and have promising prospects for improvement".</p> <p>Route performance will be monitored through Bus Quality Partnerships from introduction of the first statutory agreement which is likely to be Route 67.</p> <p>Improving the bus vehicle fleet is a matter for commercial bus operators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monitoring of patronage and performance needs to be reported

Revenue cost implications of Showcase	The cost of operating Showcase routes as currently constructed are much higher than conventional routes.	<p><i>Ways of reducing fixed costs to Centro/local authorities should be pursued e.g. carefully targeting real time information or using advertising shelters. Satellite tracking systems e.g. linked to the highways SCOOT system.</i></p>	In hand through Quality Bus Partnership meeting with Districts, regarding maintenance. Revenue recovery could be via an access charge to operators. The debate on replacing shelter glass is as yet unresolved but is under review by Centro for areas of high vandalism damage. The revenue consequences of capital investment across a range of facilities is being addressed through District Treasurers Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creative solutions needed, e.g. Civil Action</i> • <i>Detailed information is needed and timescales for implementation</i>
Value/ role of 'Real Time' information in different situations	It was suggested that Centro might need to consider removing the passenger information on a route, if good service frequency so warranted, or consider upgrading that technology.		In hand. Successful bid for RTI money from DTLR currently being implemented for December 2003 with significant input from Birmingham City Council. Future revenue implications under consideration including access charge on operators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Costs should be shared with operators</i>

Consultation

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTRO/WMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
Role of City Council, Operators, WMPTA and Centro information	Public understanding of roles of City Council, operators, PTA and Centro in respect of bus and rail operations is poor. Widespread use of Centro logo is confusing.	<i>Centro/ WMPTA should take measures to ensure that the public, Councillors and MPs understand who is responsible for which specific roles in public transport provision. The use of the Centro logo should be revised.</i>	In hand as part of West Midlands Communications Strategy referred to above. The Network West Midlands Project will review all branding logos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Birmingham branding should be considered</i> • <i>Report to City Council on PTA choices</i>
Consultation framework	Joint development of Consultation Framework is needed. Issues of value for money have been addressed in the PTA Best Value Review and consideration is being given to the production of a good practice guide on consultation.	<i>Centro and the local authorities should develop a consultation framework for use in joint consultations on public transport projects.</i>	Centro will work with Birmingham in developing a joint consultation framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>City Council referred Centro to City's framework</i> • <i>Await developments</i>
Effectiveness of local liaison	The present regular forum for consulting on local transport matters is Birmingham and Solihull transport users advisory committee set up by Centro. There is little representation from ethnic minorities or young people and public attendance is poor.	<i>Alternative methods for local public involvement need to be considered jointly with operators.</i>	<p>This is being addressed as part of the PTA Best Value Review of Subsidised Bus Services due to report in July 2002.</p> <p>PTA are investigating ways of improving the social/ethnic mix of Advisory Committees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Methods of measuring success should be agreed and tested out</i>
Metro Extension Consultation	City Council's approach to consultation not necessary followed. Targets for feedback not set. Some groups felt they had not been properly consulted.	<p><i>See recommendation on framework above.</i></p> <p><i>Success factors for consultation should be agreed.</i></p>	Full consultation was undertaken to meet Transport & Works Act Order requirements of PTA. Further consultation will follow publication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>See above</i>

Special Needs

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTRO/WMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
Accessibility of rail stations	Not all railway stations in the West Midlands are accessible Responsibility of meeting the obligations of the disability discrimination act 1995 (ensuring accessible rail stations) falls to Railtrack as Centro do not own the rail infrastructure.	<i>A programme of upgrading of the remaining Birmingham stations to DDA requirements should be agreed with Railtrack and Central Trains.</i>	In hand with SRA, Railtrack and train operators (who are statutorily responsible for station access) following PTA Policy & Strategy report in April 2002.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Timetable needed for upgrading to be agreed</i>
Ring and Ride service	<p>Ring and Ride services are not fully tendered (they are provided by West Midlands Special Needs Transport) and are not provided in conjunction with low floor bus services. There was resistance by the operator to tender a demand responsive service.</p> <p>Ring and Ride Service users experience difficulties in making bookings.</p> <p>Need for Ring and Ride to provide facility for those wishing to travel to and from hospital and longer journeys.</p> <p>Leaflet and information was not always easy to obtain.</p>	<p><i>The efficiency of the current service (subsidy of over £4/journey) needs to be tested and the booking arrangements overhauled.</i></p> <p><i>Mechanisms by which socially important services can be met should be integrated by Centro/WMSNT.</i></p> <p><i>Ring and Ride should provide leaflets in minority ethnic languages.</i></p>	In hand. Special Needs Transport is subject to a Best Value Review reporting in 2003.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Await report but needs to be followed through</i>
Accessible Vehicles	Only 56% of fully tendered bus services were provided with vehicles which complies with the Disabled Persons Transport Authority Committee's specifications.	<i>As tenders are renewed, then specifications should be examined to see if fully accessible vehicles are required and be cost effective.</i>	District Leaders have allocated funding to increase the use of low floor vehicles for tendered services as a "Quick Win". Part of Best Value review of tendered services, due December 2002.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Monitor how effective Tendered Services are following change</i>

Residential bus routes	Improvements for estate routes should be considered within Policy review.	Bus routes on housing estates and in residential areas should have a coherent set of policies (identifying standards such as stop information, shelter location, frequency of services and access).	In hand through Best Value Review of Subsidised Bus Services. Also improvements to estate services are included in District Leaders Quick Wins (£500,000). Work is progressing on the 333 in Walsall & Wolverhampton as a model "estate" service suitable for small scale improvements as part of the Bus Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable needed for implementation in Birmingham
Travelling in the city centre	Difficulty experienced in travelling across and around the city centre due to poor interchange. Shopmobility was only available from two locations.	Centro should plan for more integrated transport across the city with better interchange. Shopmobility should be more widely available and also offered to people arriving in the city centre by car.	Plans are in hand for improved interchange through the City Centre Bus Mall Scheme. Centro is also proposing improvements to the 77 City Centre service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better interchange needs to be given prominence in City Centre plans • City Council should expand Shopmobility to other car parks
Blind and disabled passes	Travel passes provide an easier option than cash fares for the blind and disabled.	Blind and disabled concessionary fares travel should be given priority in the forthcoming review by District Councils and the WMPTA.	Matter being brought to attention of District Leaders. Taxibus is included in the Best Value Special Needs Review referred to above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countrywide scheme preferred • Timetable for completion of review needed
	Ability to travel to work for the disabled is very important.	Centro should investigate quality taxibus for young disabled wishing to travel to and from work.		

Light Rail

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTRO/WMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
Learning from Metro Line 1: tram operation and purchase	Travel Midland Metro explained that there has been difficulty in running all 16 trams. Presently the maximum number of trams able to run at one time is 13 and of those only 10 were described as very reliable. Spare parts are difficult to obtain from Ansaldo and the concession deed is insufficient.	<i>For future extensions the operators (such as Travel Midland Metro) views should be sought in the revisions to procurement documentation.</i>	Had detailed meetings with Travel Midland Metro on problems. 15 trams expected operational by Christmas. In hand through Metro Line 1 Best Value Review reporting in December 2002.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Procurement lessons to be applied for Metro extensions</i> <i>Attention to trams and current service welcomed</i>
	Trams can now be bought 'off the shelf' rather than ordering bespoke designs.	<i>There is a need to for any new trams purchased to include provision for maintenance as well.</i>		
	There appears to be no clear contractual relationship between Travel Midland Metro and Ansaldo which has resulted in TMM seeking other ways of repairing rolling stock rather than persisting with Ansaldo.	<i>WMPTA/ Centro should ensure that any future contract concerning the Metro line extension should include safeguards for a satisfactory working relationship between all parties.</i>		
Financial costs of implementing a light rail scheme	A major preoccupation had been to pass risk to the private sector and it had not been possible to legislate in a way that a partnership would work. The losses on the Line 1 scheme were not easily overcome without the City Centre extension.	<i>Light Rapid Transit needs to be affordable to district councils through the levy arrangements.</i>	Centro is now developing its approach to procuring Metro extensions. Birmingham will be involved in this as a stakeholder and all Districts will be involved in final decisions on financial issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Risk transfer to be part of evaluation process</i>
		<i>All parties should work towards providing a network with fair transfer of risk through the procurement process.</i>		

WMPTA/Centro Financial Issues (arranged as a result of Centro's former Finance Director's letter to the Evening Mail).

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTROWMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
The level of WMPTA cash balances	Balances have increased to £87m in 2001/02. Useable reserves have increased from £10m in 1999 to £23m in 2001. Sale of Bus Company in 1991 - £26m still left from proceeds.	<i>In view of the difficult position of District Council revenue budgets, the provision for future expenditure and the level of surpluses appeared very high and should be regularly reviewed with the City Council. Centro need a culture of looking for savings.</i>	All the earmarked provisions and surpluses are being fully discussed through the District Treasurer's Group. Centro has already undertaken a budget review that has identified further savings and has reported back through District Leaders. Balances to be reviewed early in 2003.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Growth in balances a real level of concern</i> • <i>Welcomed early review by District Leaders</i>
Reduction in investment in heavy rail	It was noted that discussions on possible double counting of rail investment were protracted. Recent investment was well below other PTE areas. Lack of leadership in West Midlands.	<i>Centro/WMPTA need to have due regard for designing and funding local rail improvements including interesting the private sector and providing leadership.</i>	PTA/Centro in discussion with SRA/Railtrack re Phase 1 schemes in West Midlands Rail Capacity Study recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not convinced that improvements will materialise</i>
Late delivery of projects e.g. Bus Showcase	There was a 27% increase in salary budget (compared to a 11% increase in numbers). Over £5m slippage in capital schemes was a concern.	<i>Need to work with District Authorities at targeting resources and realistic partnerships and programmes.</i>	District partners and Centro have taken action through West Midlands Planning & Transportation Sub-Committee to address current problem of delivery of LTP projects. Confident that underachieving will have been solved in 12 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Monitor achievement in 12 months</i>

Nottingham Visit

ISSUES	FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN - CENTROWMPTA	SCRUTINY COMMENTS
Differences between PTE areas and Unitary/Shire county areas in provision of services	Bus companies: Nottingham City Council has 80% of the shareholding and the Transdev Board 20% of Nottingham City Transport. Maintenance costs are high but are replacing fleet (still profitable).	<i>Close liaison with transport operators has produced good marketing and benefits - could be better applied in Birmingham.</i>	Timescale for introduction of Quality Bus Partnership set.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Monitor introduction of partnerships and impact</i>
Provision of park and ride	Park and Ride – 2 sites provided commercially by Nottingham City Transport and 2 subsidised with other operators.	<i>Close liaison needed between operators and funders of facility. Bus Park and Ride for Birmingham needs careful consideration.</i>	<p>Christmas Park and Ride services have not been successful in Birmingham in the past. Local rail network focussed on Birmingham has some 4,500 park and ride spaces.</p> <p>Bus Park and Ride e.g. on Showcase routes is hampered by the District Council generally unable to identify suitable sites. Joint Centro/District Park & Ride Study establishing criteria.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Study will help but real impetus needed to the programme</i>
Funding rail projects	PTE's involved in rail franchising. Nottingham City Council had a less close relationship with the rail industry.	<i>Close relationship with rail industry welcomed.</i>		
Integration with wider City Council transport strategy	Nottingham branded Nottingham – Birmingham branded Centro TravelWise Centre – 40% funded by County Council, remainder City Council.	<i>Need for WMPTA/Centro to consider a Birmingham branding of initiatives within the City. City/Centro should consider a joint TravelWise centre.</i>	The Network West Midlands Project proposals under discussion between Centro, operators and Districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Possible Birmingham branding is to be considered</i>

MINORITY REPORT FROM CLLR VINCENT JOHNSON

This is the first minority report to any major scrutiny review carried out by the City Council so far. I have three reasons for taking this unprecedented step.

The first is simply to provide fellow Councillors with more up to date information which has become available since the main review report was drafted but which illustrates the depth of concern over public transport both locally and nationally. The City Council itself on 3 December 2002 debated and approved a motion which expressed serious concern about the damage being done to the local economy by the continued disruption to West Midlands rail services. Council called on the Government to instruct the Strategic Rail Authority to provide immediate investment in the network.

More fundamentally, perhaps, the same week saw the publication of a report entitled "Public Subsidy for the Bus Industry" from the Commission for Integrated Transport. That report – three years in the making – sets out a range of measures to "enable the bus network to expand and grow – providing a better alternative to the car, offering new hope to the socially excluded, and helping the bus to provide necessary access, to reduce traffic congestion and to curb pollution". While many of the Commission's proposals challenge the Government – for example, to incentivise local authorities and bus operators to provide better services – there are also hard decisions for local decision makers. For example, the Commission recommends that fare concessions for elderly people and those with disabilities should be restricted to 50%; funds saved should be used to provide half-fare concessions for people on means-tested benefits and adults in full-time education. The Commission believes this would significantly increase bus patronage. Elsewhere in its report the Commission asks for sharper performance indicators – including a separate target for increasing bus patronage outside London by 10% in the ten years to 2012.

In mid-December the Government announced its annual transport settlement. In the details of the spending plans, Members of the City Council can see exactly why the Scrutiny Committee's report emphasises the importance of lobbying effectively for our region. I have read the Government's press releases detailing their transport spending plans for the North West region and for the West Midlands region. Both regions receive money for widening the M6. Putting that to one side, the North West has been allocated £924 million, £520 million of which is for extensions to the Manchester Metrolink. On the other hand, the West Midlands allocation is only £177 million. The contrast is stark.

As Councillors – and particularly those of us who take the overview and scrutiny role – our job is to represent the needs of our communities. Transport is pre-eminently an area where this is a complex task, where economic, social and sustainability arguments all come to bear. One part of our role is to champion the needs of passengers. From this point of view, I must criticise the O&S Committee's report. There is little here to convince passengers that between them the City Council, the WMPTA, Centro and the bus and train companies have clear, well-thought out proposals for early, fundamental improvements to services. Recommendations are too often couched in terms of "considerations should be

given to”, “Centro could”, “Birmingham might consider”. The Centro/WMPTA responses use phrases such as “currently developing”, “being reviewed”, “likely to come forward.” This is simply not robust enough. Firmer, clearer targets should be set so that passengers, other citizens and businesses alike are informed of planned improvements. Doing so would also allow WMPTA and Centro to be properly accountable.

This brings me to my final point. The evidence taken during the review – which is not recounted in the report but which is contained in the minutes of the many meetings of the Sub-Committee over the last seventeen months – raises questions as to whether the WMPTA and Centro have the capacity to deliver significant improvements to Birmingham’s public transport system. Government’s recently announced plans for transport expenditure add to these questions. This capacity has several dimensions.

At a personal level, the individuals currently occupying leadership positions in WMPTA and Centro need to ask themselves frankly whether their performance has been adequate. Whether or not different individuals come to occupy those leading positions, in future much tighter performance indicators for the postholders must be agreed and publicised. This would supplement the current arrangement whereby the contract between WMPTA and Centro is expressed in the form of a business plan. Moving to the organisational level, the functions of the PTA and Centro are set out in the scrutiny report. These cannot realistically be described as a coherent package, necessary and sufficient to deliver an integrated transport policy. Some functions might well be better delivered at a local level, such as supporting socially necessary bus services, providing bus shelters, and working with operators on improved traffic management. Others – the specification of train timetables comes to mind – could equally be more effectively controlled at a regional level.

Looking wider afield I am struck by the number of institutions which are involved in providing transport infrastructure and services, including the Strategic Rail Authority, the successor to Railtrack and the Train Operating Companies; bus operators; Government Departments and agencies; and local government. As the Government appears to be discovering, bringing all these together in partnership to deliver an integrated transport policy is extremely difficult. In my opinion, some degree of re-regulation is not only necessary but inevitable.

My recommendations, which are additional to those in the majority report, are therefore:

- that the City Council ask the Clerk to the WMPTA to agree and publicise clear and ambitious performance targets against which the WMPTA and the Director General of Centro can be held accountable; and
- that the City Council inform Government, MPs and the Commission for Integrated Transport of the difficulties encountered in delivering improved public transport in Birmingham, as set out in both the majority report and this minority report and elsewhere.