



Meeting: West Midlands Rail Board of Directors

Subject: Minutes

Date: Friday 4 December 2015 at 10.00am

PRESENT:

Councillor Mark Winnington	- Staffordshire County Council (Chair)
Councillor Khurshid Ahmed	- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Adrian Andrew	- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Peter Butlin	- Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Michael Clarke	- Northamptonshire County Council
Councillor Darren Cooper	- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Simon Jones	- Shropshire Council
Councillor John McNicholas	- Coventry City Council
Councillor Ted Richards OBE	- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Paul Rone	- Herefordshire Council
Councillor Kuldeep Sahota	- Telford & Wrekin Council
Councillor John Smith OBE	- Worcestershire County Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Babs Coombes	- West Midlands Rail/Department for Transport
Beatrice Filkin	- Department for Transport
Malcolm Holmes	- West Midlands Rail
Clare Horton	- Staffordshire County Council
Toby Rackliff	- West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority
Laura Shoaf	- West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tahir Ali (Birmingham), Peter Bilson (Wolverhampton), John Clancy (Birmingham) and Roger Lawrence (Wolverhampton).

1. Chair's Remarks

(a) Stephen Rhodes - Centro's Director of Transport Operations

The Chair reported that this was the last meeting that Stephen Rhodes, Centro's Director of Transport Operations, would be attending before he took up his new post of Director of Customer Operations at Transport for Greater Manchester. He thanked Stephen for his involvement in establishing West Midlands Rail, his work in driving forward rail devolution across the West Midlands, and wished him well in his new role.

(b) Chancellor's Autumn Statement

The Chair welcomed the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement on 19 November, particularly in respect of its specific mention of West Midlands Rail. He considered that this was clear evidence that rail devolution within the region was a key part of the Government's future planning.

2. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. Forward Plan

Directors noted a forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings of West Midlands Rail.

4. Board of Directors

(a) Establishment of West Midlands Rail Ltd

Malcolm Holmes reported that this was the first meeting of the Board of Directors of West Midlands Rail, and he confirmed that all 14 partner authorities had now approved the new governance arrangements.

(b) West Midlands Rail - Local Enterprise Partnership Representation

Malcolm Holmes noted that at the last meeting, it had been agreed that two Local Enterprise Partnership representatives be invited to attend meetings of the West Midlands Rail Board of Directors. He reported that Andrew Cleaves from Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP had been nominated as one representative, and he was expecting a representative from a shire LEP to be nominated shortly.

The Board of Directors APPROVED that Andrew Cleaves be invited to attend future Board meetings of West Midlands Rail Ltd in a non-voting capacity.

5. The Hendy Review - Implications for the West Midlands

Directors received a presentation from Toby Rackliff on the implications for the West Midlands of the recent review undertaken by Sir Peter Hendy into Network Rail's investment programme to 2019, with a view to achieving a better understanding of cost and delivery challenges.

The presentation set out those schemes within the region that were planned to be delivered by 2019, including electrification of the Walsall - Rugeley line, infrastructure works to enable services to the new Kenilworth station and capacity enhancements through the Stafford area.

Toby Rackliff also reported on a review undertaken by Dame Collette Bowe's review of the planning of Network Rail's enhancement programme for the period 2014-19 and on the forthcoming review to be undertaken by Nicola Shaw on the longer-term future shape and financing of Network Rail.

Councillor McNicholas stressed the importance of the 'electric spine' proposals for the sub-region, Councillor Andrew noted Walsall's particular need for infrastructure upgrades and Councillor Ahmed stressed the importance of connectivity on the Walsall - Brierley Hill line.

Recognising the importance of good project management in order to deliver the needs of the industry, the Chair proposed that he write to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chair of Midlands Connect outlining those issues that West Midlands Rail considered should be addressed as part of the Hendy, Bowe and Shaw reviews.

It was AGREED that

- (1) the Chair write to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chair of Midlands Connect setting out those issues that West Midlands Rail considered vital for the delivery of a rail network that met the region's needs;
- (2) a copy of Toby Rackliff's presentation be circulated to all members of the board.

6. West Midlands Franchise Competition Update

Directors received an update from Beatrice Filkin on the latest developments with the West Midlands franchise. The Department for Transport had announced on 3 December that London Midland had been awarded a franchise extension to run from April 2016 - October 2017. She set out the passenger benefits that would be delivered during the course of this extension, including improved customer information, free wifi on longer distance routes and later evening services.



7. West Midlands Franchise: Stakeholder Consultation

Directors received an update from Babs Coombes on the draft West Midlands rail franchise consultation document that would be used to consult with stakeholders. She explained that the key themes of the consultation would focus on rail services being responsive to passengers' needs and aspirations, catering for competitive growing economies, making sure passengers felt valued and safe, and providing for a considerate and sustainable railway.

In respect of on-board cleanliness, Councillor Clarke enquired whether stakeholders could be asked specifically about the importance to them of the cleanliness of services. The Chair asked Babs Coombes to look into whether this was possible and to inform Councillor Clarke directly.

Councillor McNicholas noted that the current franchise had failed to deliver a seven-day rail service that councillors had been led to believe would be introduced, and he asked how this would be addressed within the new franchise. Beatrice Filkin explained that the franchise prospectus did ask bidders how they would deliver a '24/7' service, and it was for these bidders to set out how they intended to do this. Given the importance to councillors of a seven-day service, the Chair stressed the need to give sufficient weight to this issue when evaluating franchise bid submissions.

Councillor Richards noted that the increase in unstaffed stations and the reliance on automated ticket machines could pose a significant barrier to travel for passengers with learning difficulties. Beatrice Filkin stressed that the Department for Transport was aware of this particular issue, and whilst it was not specifically for the franchise consultation document to address, it was a matter that was a significant consideration whenever a station became unstaffed.

The Chair thanked Babs Coombes for all of the work she had undertaken in order to prepare the consultation document for publication.

The Board of Directors AGREED that the West Midlands rail franchise consultation document be approved for release as a joint exercise between West Midlands Rail and the Department for Transport.

8. West Midlands Rail/Department for Transport Memorandum of Understanding Progress Update

Clare Horton reported that officers had met with Department for Transport officials to discuss progress on the memorandum of understanding. She intended to bring an update report on the memorandum to the next meeting.

[The meeting ended at 11.15am]

CHAIRMAN