



Transport for
West Midlands



Midland
Metro Alliance

Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 21 NOVEMBER 2023



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).

This highly-anticipated project will be delivered in two phases. The first will see trams travel 6.5km through Sandwell to Dudley town centre serving a new terminus at Flood Street, providing convenient interchanges with local bus and rail services.

In the second phase, the tramway will extend a further 4.4km to Brierley Hill.



Getting Around

For the latest information, advice and live info on the region's roads follow the @wmroads Twitter feed and for wider transport updates follow @transportforwm.

In brief: Progress highlights in the last year

A selection of the key works undertaken on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension in the last nine months or so.

August - September: The delta structure in Wednesbury, which will link the existing Metro line to the new route saw rapid progress. Elsewhere, in Dudley, areas around the future terminus began to look more final as tracks continued to be laid in places like King Street and Flood Street.

April - July: Tram stops started to take shape across Sandwell and the terminus of phase one of the route, in Dudley, started to see track laid following the delivery of more than 860 tonnes of steel rails.

March - April: A number of large concrete pours were achieved for the project in the Wednesbury area.

With regards to our skills workstream, a competition was launched specifically for young people attending special educational needs and alternative provision schools in the Black Country.

① What you need to know...

Since our last issue at the start of the autumn, there's been a huge amount of progress for the route – and even a visit from the Leader of the House of Commons!

For those who might be new to *Connecting Sandwell & Dudley*, this page acts as a quick snapshot of the information we think you would like to know about following our last issue. If you want some more detailed information – you can read on as it's covered in the coming pages.

Birmingham New Road - Hanson's Bridge replacement

We're just a week away now from four days of activity which will involve a localised closure either side of the iconic Hanson's Ale bridge. Find out more on [page three](#).

why Metro matters...

We also recently launched a new feature – *why Metro matters...* – and in the first episode of this new video series, our Communications Team sat down with the CEO of the Black Country Living Museum, as well as staff and visitors at the much-loved attraction to find out why they're so excited about the new Metro route. Get your link to watch also over on [page three](#).

Shining a light on our people

There are so many talented people who are all working together to deliver the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension and in the last month or so some of our team have definitely been in the spotlight through industry recognition and accolades.

In October, we were delighted to be recognised for the work we do in supporting local communities as the alliance was Highly Commended in the Best Customer Initiative in the Global Light Rail Awards. And just this past weekend, Grace Hayward, who is helping to deliver this Metro scheme scooped the Young Project Manager of the Year award at the Building the Future – West Midlands awards. You can read more about these successes over on [pages four and five](#).

Finally, those of you who follow us on social media (remember, for the latest updates on the route, follow us on Facebook, X, Instagram and Threads) may have seen a short video which gives an additional bit of context about why keeping the community updated is so important to us here at the MMA. If you didn't, there's another chance over on [page four](#).

This is the final issue of *Connecting Sandwell & Dudley* for 2023, so with that in mind I'd like to wish our readers a Merry Christmas and best wishes for the new year ahead.

Speak to you again in January!

Kind regards,

Tom Bissell,

Your dedicated Stakeholder Liaison Manager



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Wednesbury Depot and Delta Junction progress

Over in Sandwell, our work to enhance and upgrade the West Midlands Metro depot continues. Much of the activity so far this autumn has been to install and improve drainage at the Wednesbury site.

As part of this drainage activity, the team have been busy with initial ironworks, including installing piping and preparing to construct manholes.



Nearby, colleagues continue to finalise the massive structure which will link the existing track on line one of the route to the new rails which will run through the former South Staffordshire Railway corridor into Dudley town centre.

Since the last issue, the construction of the structure has moved on massively with those travelling past the work on the tram really getting an idea of how the final route will look when open to the public.



Things looking more final in Dudley town centre

With the majority of the track in place across much of the footprint of the route in the town centre, work has moved to preparatory activity for systems integration, including installing ducting for nearby traffic and tram signals in King Street and pouring road surface aggregate on areas of Flood Street along with pouring concrete for track shoulders.

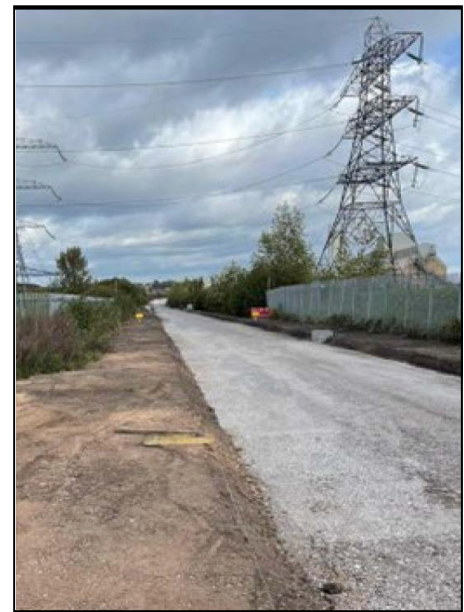
In coming weeks remaining track will be installed in Flood Street with ducting activities moving to The Minories.

From Tipton to Dudley

One of the major focuses for the project's delivery in 2024 will be the installation of the 860 tonnes of rail across the former railway corridor which makes up the majority of the first phase of the route.

In recent weeks, and in preparation for this forthcoming activity, the team have been busy installing the ballast which will form the track bed for this part of the route.

As of mid-November, the track bed has been completely installed between the Wednesbury depot and our site compound at Danks Way in Tipton – a distance of just over kilometre.



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Plan ahead as short closure of Birmingham New road to begin next Friday

Works to prepare for the final bridge installation for phase one of the Metro route are set to begin from next Friday (1 December).

In order to allow the essential activity to take place, a localised road and footpath closure, will be implemented approximately 100 metres in either direction of the iconic "Hanson's" bridge on Birmingham New Road.

These changes will be in place from Friday 1 until Monday 4 December (inclusive) with the road set to re-open by Tuesday 5 December.

During the brief four-day closure, those travelling to or away from Dudley will be able to continue their journeys using a short and clearly signed diversion route. The Midland Metro Alliance continues to work closely with Transport for West Midlands and both Sandwell and Dudley Councils to help minimise traffic disruption while the works are underway and have teamed up to provide the following advice:

Birmingham New Road

Localised footpath/road closures

1- 4 December

Plan ahead



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Plan ahead:
www.metroalliance.co.uk



- Plan ahead and leave more time for your journeys, especially if you travel along Birmingham New Road, Tipton Road, or Birmingham Road, as you'll need more time for your journey to take account of the diversion in place;
- Follow the @wmroads Twitter feed for real time traffic updates;
- Check with public transport operators before you travel as some services will be running on altered routes;
- Consider a change to how you travel. Road users are also being encouraged to take up other modes of transport such as walking or cycling, where possible;
- All local attractions and businesses remain open as usual during the period of construction activity in the area.

Black Country Living Museum explains "why Metro matters..."

One of the aims of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension is to transform public transport for the region – connecting more of Birmingham and the Black Country together via fast and frequent tram services.

Earlier this month, we sat down with staff and visitors at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley to ask them "why Metro matters" to them.

This is the first in a new series of videos which highlights excitement across Sandwell and Dudley boroughs for this new Metro extension and the content recently ran across our social channels.

If you missed it, you can catch-up by visiting the landing page of our website and look out for the next episode in the new year.



If you represent a local community group or business and are excited about the Metro route, and would like to feature in the series during 2024, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our communications team at news@metroalliance.co.uk.



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"Behind the business" with our Engagement & Skills Team

Have you ever wondered what a typical day is like for our Engagement & Skills team? They're tasked with keeping locals up to date with progress and helping sort any queries that they might have about a particular stage of delivery.

They also think it's important to give back and support the local community, too, and they share more about their work to support this important alliance ethos for a feature which recently ran on our social media channels.

If you missed it – you can catch-up with what Rose and Tom had to say here: <https://tinyurl.com/MMABTN23>



Grace scoops Young Project Manager of the Year award

This past weekend Grace Hayward, Site Agent for the route, was chosen as the Young Project Manager of the Year in last week's Building the Future – West Midlands Awards, which shines a spotlight on young professionals within the construction industry.

Her win, which was announced at a prestigious ceremony in Birmingham on Friday November 17, highlighted her considerable talent and experience in delivering some of the highest profile light rail projects currently underway in the UK, including her important role on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension.

Judges were impressed with her technical ability but also how she gives back through mentoring and education programmes, particularly those which help promote the industry to women and girls.



"I am really honoured to be selected as the Young Project Manager of the Year at this year's Building the Future Awards and am inspired to have been recognised alongside other brilliant nominees who drive excellence in our industry."

**Grace Hayward, Site Agent, Wednesbury to Brierley Hill
Metro extension**



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Prestigious education accolade

Our Head of Engagement and Skills is celebrating after she was recognised for her work in inspiring the next generation into careers in construction at the prestigious Institution of Civil Engineers West Midlands Awards.

Rose Rees scooped the Bob Dunn Award for her tireless efforts to promote construction as an inclusive industry to schools and colleges across the region. The award is presented in memory of the late Bob Dunn, who made an outstanding contribution to the promotion of civil engineering in the West Midlands.



Alliance's customer service given the thumbs-up by Global judging panel

In the last issue of *Connecting Sandwell & Dudley*, we told you that we had been shortlisted in the Global Light Rail Awards for the support we provide to local businesses – and we can now announce that we were highly commended for our initiatives.

We received the nod in the Best Customer Initiative category at the awards, dubbed the 'light rail Oscars', recognising our work in keeping stakeholders up to date on the Metro extension schemes, including the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill route.

The judges recognised our collaborative work with our broadcast partners Local TV, to showcase some of the area's businesses, including Dudley's fantastic attractions and the many-and-varied independent traders within the Churchill Shopping Centre.

"So much collective effort goes into keeping residents, businesses and the general public informed about our works with additional efforts undertaken to highlight that businesses are open as usual. It is fantastic that this has been recognised by our industry at this year's Global Light Rail Awards."

Antony Lowbridge-Ellis,
Head of Communications



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Coventry Very Light Rail vehicle tested on revolutionary track for the first time

The pioneering Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) project has achieved a major milestone with successful running of the vehicle on its test track at the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC) in Dudley.

The innovative track is thinner than the track used in existing light rail or tram systems. As a result, it can be laid just 30cm deep into the road surface, reducing the need to divert all pipes and cables.

The project is backed with funding from the £1.05 billion City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) awarded to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) by the Department for Transport. The CVLR project has been allocated £40m from that funding to progress the research and development to deliver an affordable integrated mass transit system that could be deployed in cities across the country.



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Leader of the House of Commons joins local leaders to celebrate track progress in Dudley

Late last month, the Leader of the House of Commons joined local leaders to mark significant track progress during a visit to the future terminus of phase one of the scheme.

The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, Leader of the House of Commons, was invited by Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, to see some of the tram tracks being laid in Flood Street. They were joined on the visit by Nicola Richards MP and Councillor Patrick Harley, Leader of Dudley Council.

The visit came shortly after Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) welcomed a £2.7 billion investment into the region's transport infrastructure to fund a wide range of improvements to transport infrastructure. An immediate £100 million investment will enable TfWM, which is part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), to complete the second phase of the extension in full, taking trams from Dudley town centre to Brierley Hill High Street.

Speaking as part of a number of events organised to highlight the major regeneration taking place in Dudley town centre, Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, said: "It's great to see such tremendous progress being made on this much anticipated route – with funding now confirmed from Government to enable us to extend the metro route all the way through to Brierley Hill High Street. Large-scale public transport projects like this play a pivotal role in boosting our regional economy – creating highly skilled jobs and training opportunities for local people. I cannot wait to see residents benefitting from this fantastic new infrastructure in the months and years ahead."



Celebrating our cultural diversity during National Inclusion Week

We're proud of the cultural diversity within our workplace and to celebrate it our team in Dudley enjoyed a special event aimed at raising awareness of equity, diversity and inclusion.

The event was held at our Castle Mill HQ compound to mark National Inclusion Week, which aims to highlight the importance of inclusion in the workplace.

Staff celebrated by cooking and sharing dishes that hold a special cultural significance to them, while talks were also given on the important subject.



See you in 2024

This will be our last issue of *Connecting Sandwell & Dudley* for 2023. We're set to return with issue 22 in the new year but until then, we'd like to take this time to wish all of our readers a Merry Christmas and all the best for the year ahead.

Remember, you can continue to keep up to date on the project via our social channels, which can be found at the bottom of the page.



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