



WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Board Meeting

Date	7 April 2017
Report title	Street Works - Permit Schemes on West Midlands Roads
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Report has been considered by	STOG on 6 March 2017

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Combined Authority Board are recommended to:

1. Agree the need for a common set of principles for permit schemes covering the Key Route Network to be in place by end of April 2017.
2. Agree the need to achieve cost efficiencies during the business case development phase along with consideration of common back office functions.
3. Agree that across the WMCA area local constituent authorities should either adopt the West and Shires Permit Scheme (WaSPS) or the Birmingham Scheme.
4. Agree that a project schedule setting out the activities to support successful introduction of the permit schemes should now be developed, with the Traffic Managers Group supported by the relevant reporting back to the designated STOG lead Stuart Everton.
5. Note the progress made on agreeing the introduction of permit schemes across the WMCA area by October 2018.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This report provides an update on progress regarding the introduction of permit schemes across the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area. It was agreed at STOG on 30 January 2017 that the options for investigating the introduction of permit schemes should be further explored.

2.0 Background

2.1 The introduction of Permit Schemes on roads in the West Midlands is a key priority for ensuring that the network across the area continues to be managed effectively, reducing disruption and improving journey quality and time for our customers. The scheme will allow for greater coordination of road works, with the potential to reduce impacts thereby enabling improved performance and better network resilience. The previous approval from STOG provided the mandate for the Key Route Network Manager and the Traffic Managers Group, to specifically investigate the following options:

- 1) Each authority to be operating a permit scheme on the KRN with a unified set of conditions by April 2018.
- 2) WMCA to operate a permit scheme (Back Office) with local authorities carrying out inspection/enforcement processes by April 2018.
- 3) Each authority adopts the current scheme promoted by Birmingham, potentially renamed as West Midlands Combined Authority Permit Scheme (WM-CAPS) by April 2018.

2.2 Programme Board should note that the introduction of a permit scheme empowers highway authorities to impose conditions (e.g. traffic management, diversions, working hours) and the associated permit fee provides a mechanism to fund the service and invest any surplus into managing traffic in the future. The feedback that we've had from across the country indicates that the process of introducing permit schemes could take up to 18 months.

3.0 Impact on the Delivery of the Strategic Transport Plan

3.1 The impact of the contents of this report on delivery of the 15 STP Policies and/or the development/operation of:

- The National & Regional Tier
- The Metropolitan Tier: Rail and Rapid Transit Network, Key Route Network, Strategic Cycle Network

3.2 The policies that are supported include:

- Policy 1 - Accommodate increased travel demand by existing transport capacity and new sustainable transport capacity;
- Policy 2 - Use existing transport capacity more effectively to provide greater reliability and average speed for the movement of people and goods;
- Policy 3 - Maintain existing transport capacity more effectively to provide greater resilience and greater reliability for the movement of people and goods.
- Policy 4 - Improve connections to new economic development locations to help them flourish, primarily through sustainable transport connections
- Policy 5 – To help make economic centres attractive places where people wish to be.
- Policy 6 – To improve connections to areas of deprivation.

- Policy 8 – To improve connections to new housing development locations to help them flourish, primarily through sustainable transport connections.

4.0 Wider WMCA Implications

4.1 The report deals with permit schemes on the KRN which is located within the constituent authority area, but will serve to improve connectivity across the wider WMCA through cross boundary links to access the Strategic Road Network.

5.0 The National Picture

5.1 On Tuesday 14 February 2017, a meeting was convened at Summer Lane with the various representatives from WMCA, local constituent authorities, the Department for Transport and Joint Authorities Group (UK).

5.2 The meeting provided an opportunity to gather information about the national picture as it relates to permit schemes. The Department for Transport provided an overview of approaches being taken across the country by the 90 schemes currently in place. It was noted that an evaluation of these schemes is currently underway with completion scheduled for November 2017. This however should not impede the introduction of any new schemes. It was also reported that Transport Minister Andrew Jones is very much in favour of permit schemes being used to help effectively manage the road network for the benefit of road users.

5.3 David Capon of Joint Authorities Group UK, provided attendees with useful information regarding how to design a scheme and the matters that needs to be considered including costs, staff, key performance indicators and other areas.

6.0 Examining WaSPS and the Birmingham Scheme

6.1 The previous report to STOG identified the status of permit schemes across the WMCA area. The emerging Birmingham Scheme and the West and Shires Permit Scheme (WaSPS) were the two most relevant to the Combined Authority. Prior to convening the above meeting, WMCA commissioned a report to examine the key differences between the two schemes. The report concluded that the two permit schemes have broad similarities with the main difference being the fee scale. This was not considered to be a major issue amongst the partners. This report is included in **Appendix A**.

7.0 Constituent authorities perspective on the options

7.1 The three options for further investigation were discussed extensively by all partners. It was agreed that the best option to progress at this stage would be for WMCA to support its constituent authorities as they introduce permit schemes to cover the KRN and other local roads by October 2018, accompanied by a common set of principles.

7.2 There was initial consideration about these principles and further discussion and agreement will be required.

7.3 The principles may include the following:

- Improving planning to support efficient movement on the KRN.
- Collaborative working to reduce the impact on the West Midlands economy.

- Supporting WMCA vision for better connected and more prosperous West Midlands.
- Reducing year on year reduction in the number of days of disruption.
- Using existing transport capacity more effectively to provide greater reliability and average speeds for movement of people and goods.
- Maximising the opportunities for better use of activity data sharing and smarter communication methods through the use of a common platform.

- 7.4 The input from Warwickshire County Council's Keith Davenport suggested that the recruitment of staff is one of the critical factors likely to be encountered, amongst others. It was suggested that a year to complete the full process of introducing permit schemes was insufficient time, hence an 18 month period was accepted as more realistic but still challenging.
- 7.5 It should be noted that the examples from around the country indicate that a single permit scheme in an area is not required to achieve the overall objectives. With Coventry already operating WaSPS and Birmingham introducing a scheme, the best solution at this stage, would be for remaining authorities to join one or the other of these two schemes. The examples of Greater Manchester and Transport for London provide a mixed picture in terms of the success of a single scheme and there is significant duplication across both.
- 7.6 Therefore, constituent authorities will have the first option to introduce a scheme but WMCA will however retain the right to introduce a permit scheme using its powers.
- 7.7 Most constituent authorities cited a preference for the WaSPS scheme but there was no firm decision taken on this. It was agreed that constituent authorities will explore cost efficiencies in developing business cases – especially those in the Black Country; and set out as part of this, how any common back office function could be introduced.

8.0 Next Steps

- 8.1 The above initial principles along with others and any subsequent implications and mechanisms for monitoring, should be further discussed and agreed with all partners. It is also essential that a plan for taking forward this activity is now developed with the Traffic Managers Group and progress is reported back to the relevant STOG lead Stuart Everton.

9.0 Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report

10.0 Legal implications

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

11.0 Equalities implications

- 11.1 The introduction of permit schemes are likely to have a positive impact on users of the highways network. Through reduce disruption and better planning of activities it is likely that the impact on all users should be less. There may be some negative disruption to people with disabilities and older age groups where works are planned in areas of high pedestrian traffic.

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