

NEWS RELEASE

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Regional Assembly Welcomes Government Transport Investment

Whilst the West Midlands Regional Assembly welcomes the government's transport investment package for major improvements to the strategic national road and rail network announced last week, it is disappointed that investment in the Black Country appears to have been deferred.

This investment package, which sets out a long term programme of investment, largely supports the Assembly's Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan, which was published last month.

It builds on the success of the M42 ATM pilot of Hard Shoulder Running in the West Midlands. In addition to the Hard Shoulder Running on the M6, M42 and M40, which has already been approved and is due for completion by March 2011, the Secretary of State also confirmed that funding for M6 Junctions five to eight will follow in 2010/11 to 2011/12 and funding for improvements between junctions 10a and 13 on the M6 will begin in 2015. The Assembly also welcomed the longer-term plans for improving the M5 between Junctions 4a and 6, the Junctions 2 to 4 on the M6 and the remaining M6 between Birmingham and Manchester. However it was disappointed that the package does not include two sections of the Motorway Box in the Black Country (M5 J24a and M5 J2 to M6 J8) at the current time, as these were assessed by the Department for Transport as offering relatively low value for money.

The announcement also included the formation of a new company 'High Speed 2' to work on proposals to develop an entirely new, high speed line between London and the West Midlands as part of its work to improve rail links and speed up journeys between London and the North of England and Scotland.

Commenting on the investment package, Cllr Roger Phillips, chairman of the Regional Transport Partnership said, "The West Midlands is at the heart of the country's transport infrastructure. Ensuring that people and goods can get to, from and around the Region is vital, not only for those who live,

work or run businesses in the West Midlands but for the country as a whole. Whilst we are pleased that this has been recognised by government and welcome the transport investment and development that was announced, we are disappointed that there is no sign of when there will be investment on the motorway in the Black Country.

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For further information please contact Jo Kite, Head of Communications on 0121 678 1044

Notes to Editors

1. The West Midlands Regional Assembly ('the Assembly') represents a wide range of democratic, social and economic interests throughout the West Midlands Region.
2. The Assembly's membership consists of 100 nominated representatives, with 68 elected members representing the local authority, 16 representing the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.
3. The Assembly provides a platform for organisations to consider matters of common concern including: regional planning, transport, economic prosperity, sustainability, culture and Europe. It also supports regional policy forums and task groups on social inclusion, faith, housing, life long learning/skills, health, rural and community safety/crime reduction.
4. The Assembly works in partnership with Advantage West Midlands (AWM) the regional development agency (RDA), the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM), Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM) the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA) and other regional and local organisations from across the West Midlands region.
5. The Assembly is the Regional Planning Body, and is also responsible for scrutinising the operation of the Region's RDA, Advantage West Midlands.
6. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk