

NEWS RELEASE

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West Midlands making good progress on Transport Priorities Action Plan

Nine detailed documents setting out important short-term transport milestones that the West Midlands region needs to achieve over the coming year are being published today.

Contents of the updated Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan were announced by regional Minister Ian Austin MP.

The priorities are consistent with the region's recent Regional Funding Advice submission to Government, which sets out the region's programme of transport investment through to 2018/19.

Mr Austin said that delivering these priorities would play a vital role in strengthening the West Midlands economy, creating jobs and providing the homes the region's families need.

Progress over the next 12 months will be monitored by the shadow Joint Strategy and Investment Board (JSIB), West Midlands Regional Assembly and Advantage West Midlands.

The nine priorities are:

- Birmingham New Street Station Gateway Project
- Birmingham International Airport - runway extension and surface access
- M6/M5 capacity improvements and Motorway Box Hard Shoulder Running (HSR)
- Rail Freight Upgrades - Peterborough and Southampton to Nuneaton
- Regional Rail Capacity, both for passengers and freight
- Black Country 'Strategic Transport Spine'
- North Staffordshire Integrated Transport Package
- New Growth Points / Settlements of Significant Development
- Smarter Choices – encouraging the use of public transport in Worcester

The projects proposed for Birmingham New Street Station, Birmingham International Airport, the M5-M6 and the freight line around Nuneaton are being promoted in the short term as they have the potential to make the greatest contribution to the regional economy and have secured the greatest level of funding.

Mr Austin said: “Delivering these priorities will make an important contribution to delivering the Government’s goals for transport in three ways.

“It will boost economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks; it will reduce carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases, to help tackle climate change; and it will improve safety, security and health by making the roads and transport networks safer.

“Over the coming months, the shadow JSIB will be working closely with regional partners – local transport authorities, Centro, the Highways Agency and Network Rail – all of which are, I know, committed to delivering these priorities.

“There has already been significant progress since the Action Plan was published (see below)¹. However, the region must also look to the future in working with Government on Delivering a Sustainable Transport System and influencing its spending priorities from 2014.

“I believe that the work which the shadow JSIB has set in train to deliver the nine priorities gives us a sound basis for doing this.”

Cllr Roger Phillips, Chair of the Regional Transport Partnership, said “The delivery of the regional transport priorities is critical for the future success of the West Midlands. I am pleased by the progress being made by regional partners, but there is still much more to be done, so I welcome the support of the Regional Minister in helping to make sure that government plays its part too.”

Mark Pearce, Corporate Director for Economic Regeneration at Advantage West Midlands, said: “In the current economic crisis, never has it been more important to make sure we get maximum value for every pound invested in transport.

“This Action Plan has brought together public and private sector partners to make sure those investments are focused where they can deliver the greatest benefits for the region and support sustainable economic growth.”

Olwen Dutton, Chief Executive of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, said “The transport priorities identified in the Action Plan are all of real regional significance, and their successful delivery, upon which we are now focused, will have very positive impacts upon the whole of the West Midlands.”

The updated documents can be viewed at ***website address***

Editor’s Notes:

Footnote ¹

During February and March the Government announced:

- £6.1m to improve access to railway stations across England and Wales, with seven stations in the region benefiting: Yardley Wood, Landywood, Cannock, Hednesford, Rugeley Town, Water Orton and Warwick
- £11.1m and DfT Full Approval for the integrated transport access scheme for Birmingham International Airport and the NEC, known as ANITA

- £50m improvements to the Cotswolds Line, to improve connections between Worcester and London Paddington with 20 miles of the line being doubled to improve punctuality, ease congestion and reduce journey times
- £6 billion package of major improvements to the strategic national road network; A significant proportion of this money is destined for investment in the West Midlands motorway network, thus supporting one of the region's nine priorities. The work is planned to begin on HSR on the M6 J8-10a north of Birmingham during 2009/10, then M6 J5-8 in 2010/12 followed by M6 J10a-13 by 2015.

Of the £3.6m extra funding made available for innovative road safety projects, two of our authorities have benefited, with Road Safety Partnership Grants of up to £854,000 for Staffordshire County Council and £66,000 for Warwickshire County Council; and

Just over £1m capital allocation has been awarded for 2009/10 to our local authorities to help them manage their roads, bridges and other highways assets.

Advantage West Midlands is the Regional Development Agency (RDA) for the West Midlands region – one of nine RDAs in England established to transform English regions through sustainable economic development.

Advantage West Midlands takes the lead role in setting the strategy and focus for regional economic improvement; building the partnerships needed to achieve the region's vision; and ensuring that public money is targeted to those activities and projects best placed to make a real difference.

With an annual budget of more than £300 million to invest in the economic development of the West Midlands, Advantage West Midlands is, at any one time, managing around 2,500 projects which are changing the lives of people right across our region.

For more information visit www.advantagewm.co.uk

For more information

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