

Agenda Item No.12

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
Assembly Meeting - 16 January 2008**

Transport Challenge

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Assembly of the on-going process to respond to the Regional Minister's 'Transport Challenge'.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Assembly notes the on-going process and the next steps.

3. Background

- 3.1 In August 2007 Liam Byrne announced a West Midlands 'transport challenge'. He requested that Cllr Roger Phillips (Chair, Regional Transport Partnership), Olwen Dutton (Chief Executive, West Midlands Regional Assembly), John Edwards (Chief Executive, Advantage West Midlands) and GOWM should produce a 'game plan' that addresses the Region's transport priorities and maximises the forthcoming Local Transport Bill.

4. Transport Challenge Response

- 4.1 The response has been developed in partnership with the Local Authorities, Centro - WMPTA, Highways Agency, Network Rail, West Midlands Business Council and West Midlands Business Transport Group and demonstrates the ability of the regional partners to work together to identify regional priorities.
- 4.2 The attached Executive Summary document identifies the Region's strategic regional transport priorities and considers funding and governance options. The summary has been informed by a more detailed paper that sets out the rationale that the Region has taken in developing the transport priorities, recognises the need to explore a wide range of funding mechanisms and develop structures which build on the opportunities provided in the Sub National Review.

4.3 The regional transport priorities identified are:

- Birmingham New Street Station;
- Birmingham International Airport - runway extension and surface access;
- M6/M5 capacity improvements and Motorway Box Active Traffic Management;
- Rail Freight Upgrades - Peterborough and Southampton to Nuneaton;
- Regional Rail Capacity, both for passengers services and strategic freight connections;
- Black Country 'strategic transport spine' (rapid transit);
- North Staffordshire Integrated Transport;
- New Growth Points/ Settlements of Significant Development
- Smart Choices

5. Next Steps

5.1 The AWM Board met on 27th November 2007 and endorsed the proposed process, namely: sending the Minister the Executive Summary with the longer 'work in process' paper. They agreed that any development of the 'work in progress' background paper, between now and January 2008 should only focus on developing the economic argument i.e. the evidence, and not produce a narrative on a range of issues

5.2 At their meeting on 5 December 2007, the Assembly Board also discussed and agreed the proposed approach and next steps.

5.3 The Executive Summary and covering letter was sent to the Minister prior to the event on the 10th December 2007 at which the RES was launched and RSS submission made. The Executive Summary and the supporting paper will provide the starting point for debate and discussion with Regional Minister, Liam Byrne MP, early in the New Year. This will provide the opportunity to agree the 'game plan' for the region and show how a region at the heart of the nation can deliver sustainable economic growth underpinned by a robust, high quality transport infrastructure.

**Olwen Dutton
Chief Executive**