

# Midland Metro

## 2.3 The Need for the Scheme

Light rail provision is a key policy objective for the West Midlands, identified as the most appropriate solution to meeting the high level of identified travel demand and capable of making a “step change” required to sustain the economic future of the region. The provision of a LRT system was first identified in the transportation strategy of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority (WMPTA) and Centro in 1986 as a solution to the existing and future transportation problems of the conurbation of Birmingham.

It also forms an integral part of WMPTA and Centro’s 20 Year Public Transport Strategy for the West Midlands <sup>(16)</sup> and is supported in the West Midlands Multi-modal Study <sup>(17)</sup> and draft Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands <sup>(18)</sup>.

The proposed Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme is part of the Midland Metro network development and will provide a clean, quick and regular public transport system to Birmingham city centre and Wolverhampton via the existing Line 1, Dudley Port Railway Station with interchange to the West Coast mainline, Dudley town centre with interchange at Dudley Bus Station, office and leisure development at the Waterfront and shopping facilities at Merry Hill and Brierley Hill.

The need to improve public transport accessibility to help foster economic growth and employment opportunities in the area is also an important driver for the scheme. The proposed alignment serves to link the following redevelopment areas:

- a proposed new development site at Gold’s Hill;
- proposed residential developments at Tipton;
- mixed-use development at Castle Gate and proposed development at the former Freightliner site, adjacent to Dudley Zoo;
- proposed mixed-use development at the Guest Hospital;
- Dudley town centre;
- Harts Hill Regeneration Area;
- the Merry Hill Centre and Waterfront development; and
- Brierley Hill town centre.

A description of planned and proposed development sites located adjacent to the proposed scheme is provided in *Section 5* of this ES. Developers have worked in collaboration with Centro to integrate the alignment into their proposals. Financial contributions under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 are being sought to contribute towards capital costs and further contributions from these sources are anticipated. These are set out in the funding statement that accompanies the Order application.

The scheme also runs through DMBC’s Central Employment Zone (CEZ), which stretches from Castle Gate in the north through Dudley town centre and on to Brierley Hill in the south. The CEZ contains over one third of the employment opportunities in the Borough, but also many disadvantaged areas, with high levels of unemployment and social deprivation <sup>(19)</sup>.

It is envisaged that the scheme will support and stimulate regeneration promoted by Advantage West Midlands and Sandwell MBC in Gold’s Hill and with Dudley MBC in Dudley town centre, Harts Hill and the development of the wider Brierley Hill area.

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