

Midland Metro

(Wednesbury to Brierley Hill and Miscellaneous Amendments) Order



TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

Consultation Report

CENTRO

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report provides a detailed description of the consultation processes undertaken for the proposed extension to Midland Metro Line 1 from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill. The consultation process has been a continuous dialogue with certain key parties. In particular Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC), as both local authorities and project partners, have been intimately involved in the project's development.
- 1.2. Major public consultation exercises have been undertaken on two occasions during the project's development. These have sought the public's input to the process to ensure that the best possible scheme is promoted that takes account of the needs of the area and people using it, together with mitigating the potentially detrimental effects of the construction and operation of this Metro route.

2. Background

- 2.1. Midland Metro has been operating from Wolverhampton St George's via Wednesbury and West Bromwich to its terminus at Snow Hill Heavy Rail Station in Birmingham City Centre since its opening in 1999. Centro and its partners are now proposing to extend Midland Metro to create a network across the West Midlands. The first phase of the expansion will be two new routes. One will be an extension to Line 1 from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill (WBH) to serve Dudley Town Centre and Merry Hill. The second will be an extension to Line 1 through Birmingham City Centre (BCCE) to Edgbaston through the streets of Birmingham City Centre. Centro is developing plans for a network of light rail routes extending throughout the West Midlands.
- 2.2. The Wednesbury to Brierley Hill extension to Line 1 is approximately 11km in length and has a total of 13 stops. For a majority of its length the alignment runs in the mothballed South Staffs Heavy rail Corridor. The SRA have a strategic published aspiration to reintroduce freight along this corridor and Centro has worked to ensure that this Metro extension does not preclude this.
- 2.3. The Metro route will leave Line 1 at Wednesbury to join the mothballed South Staffs Heavy Rail Corridor. There are stops to serve Great Bridge, Horseley Heath, Dudley Port (allowing integration with Heavy Rail services), Sedgley Road East and Birmingham New Road. The route then deviates from the Heavy rail Corridor to cross Tipton Road

at grade, where a stop will be provided before crossing the former Dudley Freight Terminal to reach Castle Hill. From here the route travels through the streets of Dudley with a stop at Dudley Bus Station, to reach the Dudley Southern Bypass where it runs alongside the highway stopping at New Road and Cinder Bank. When reaching Cinder Bank the route returns to the Heavy Rail Corridor and over the Parkhead Viaduct to stop at Pedmore Road before deviating once again from the Heavy rail Corridor at Hart's Hill to travel through and stop at the Waterfront and Merry Hill before terminating at Cottage Street in Brierley Hill.

- 2.4. Park and Ride facilities are currently proposed at Horseley Heath, Dudley Port, New Road and Cinder Bank. It is currently planned that these sites will all be opened at the same time as the route.
- 2.5. In June 2000 Centro submitted an Initial Outline Business Case (IOBC) to the Government and received approval in principle to fund the WBH and BCCE extensions and proceed with the preparation of a Transport and Works Act (TWA) Order 1992 application. The TWA replaces the Parliamentary Bill procedure where various permissions for construction and operation of a light rail scheme were granted by obtaining an Act of Parliament.
- 2.6. As part of the process of developing the scheme and preparing the documentation required for a TWA Order application, a substantial and sustained consultation process has been undertaken.

3. Transport & Works Act Order Application Guidance and Rules

- 3.1. Consultation has a very important role to play in the promotion of a TWA Order application as the promoter (Centro) is required to consult with all those affected. Failure to do so adequately is likely to be counter-productive as this could lead to objections as some issues may be resolved through consultation and agreements reached prior to the submission of the TWA application. Considerable delays would occur between the 28-day objection period (from when the TWA application is submitted) and the Public Inquiry while negotiations are taking place with objectors. Properly conducted consultation therefore with all the relevant parties prior to application will prove to be very worthwhile.
- 3.2. The former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions DTLR (now Department For Transport DfT) produced a 'Guide to the TWA Procedures' (the guide) which describes the consultation process which promoters should undertake prior to applying for an order. There is also a document describing the rules to be followed when applying for an order known as Transport and Works Act (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules

2000. The guide recommends that promoters carry out thorough consultation with all affected parties. It also recommends consultation with all the bodies listed in Schedules 2, 5 and 6 of the rules who are entitled to formal notification of the application in advance of the application being made. Examples of these bodies, sometimes known as 'statutory consultees', include British Waterways Board, National Rivers Authority, the Statutory Undertakers, Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission, HMRI (Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate). The guide also lists other 'non statutory consultees' who would not receive a formal notice of the application but who should be consulted where the scheme may affect their sphere of interest. These include organisations such as The Ramblers Association and National Tramway Museum.

- 3.3. It must be noted that TWA consultation is different to normal consultation. The aim of this specific consultation is to inform and seek comments/information from those being consulted on Centro's proposals, it is not intended to seek peoples preferences or ideas about the alignment but to present the proposals and get feedback and act on this accordingly whether by alterations to the scheme, mitigation, compromise etc.

4. Early Consultation

- 4.1. The idea of a Midland Metro route from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill is not unknown in the local areas surrounding the route. The development of the WBH route started before the granting of the Midland Metro Act 1992, the Midland Metro (No 2) Act 1992 and the Midland Metro (No 2) Act 1993 which authorised a route from Wolverhampton via Walsall and Wednesbury to Brierley Hill. In January 1999 the part of the line from Wolverhampton via Walsall to Wednesbury was relinquished. The powers of the remainder of the route from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill were retained until they expired in March 2002.
- 4.2. In 1997 Centro sought to serve Notice to Treat on third party lands that were required for the scheme which was evolving from the original Parliamentary route.

5. Pre Application Consultation

- 5.1. In early 2002 a further large consultation exercise was undertaken. This exercise was not intended to determine views regarding the principle of extending the Metro nor to offer alternative route options. The objectives of this particular exercise were to present Centro's specific proposals, to inform and seek comments and provide updated information to those that may be affected by proposals and obtain feedback so that where possible action could be taken in response to

the feedback and issues raised whether by adjustments to the scheme, mitigation etc. This consultation exercise had several strands to it explained in more detail in sections 6 to 12 below.

6. Statutory and Non Statutory Consultees

- 6.1. The relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees identified in the 'guide' and 'rules' have all been contacted by letter in early 2002 with details of the scheme and an offer of further contact if they felt it desirable. There has been a dialogue with some of these bodies over an extended period of time such as British Waterways Board and HMRI to discuss specific issues as they have arisen during the design development process. As project partners SMBC and DMBC have been involved with the development of the scheme from inception.

7. Open Meetings

- 7.1. A series of seven open meetings were held at which Centro, SMBC and DMBC officers were present to explain the scheme and obtain feedback. Property owners and occupiers within approximately 200m of the route were invited to attend one or more of the open meetings at which the scheme was presented followed by an opportunity for questions and answers. This invitation was included in an information pack sent to over 3500 addresses in February 2002. The information pack is in Appendix 1. A list of the streets in which deliveries were made is in Appendix 2. The pack was contained in a clear plastic wrapper to ensure easy identification of its contents and ensure as few as possible were discarded. The packs contained a letter of introduction explaining the Metro proposals, brochures and leaflets with dates and locations of meetings and exhibitions. No detailed maps were included in the packs to avoid potential misunderstandings and confusion about the scheme. The objective was to encourage people to attend meetings and exhibitions in order that Centro and local authority partner officers would be able to discuss the proposals and answer any questions.
- 7.2. An invitation was extended to MPs, council members and the key consultees mentioned below in addition to wider organisations to attend the first of the open meetings which was used to launch the consultation process.
- 7.3. The seven open meetings were held at various locations along the proposed route and at varying times in order to allow as many people invited as possible the opportunity to attend. These took place between late February 2002 and April 2002. In some cases the meetings were chaired by a PTA councillor, others were chaired by Centro officers. The format included a short presentation and a showing of the Metro promotional video followed by a general question and answer session. Following this, time was made available for

Centro staff, supported by both local authorities and in some cases technical consultants, to talk through details of the project with the aid of plans, drawings and aerial photographs on a 'one to one' basis.

- 7.4. Feedback forms were completed by those attending either upon departure, or were taken away and subsequently returned to the Metro office. All feedback forms were then processed and issues requiring follow up dealt with by the project team.
- 7.5. Appendix 3 details the date, location and attendance for all of the meetings. It can be seen that the attendance at some meetings especially those in the Dudley area were poor. However the attendance at the exhibitions (see Section 10 below) was particularly high.

8. Key Consultees

- 8.1. The aim of including all owners/occupiers affected ("Key Consultees") as well as a wider audience in the general information pack mail drop was to enable them to initially come to a wider meeting and that any issues would be raised and then followed up (if appropriate) through further one to one meetings.
- 8.2. Any of the Key Consultees who did not register an interest or attend a meeting were then identified and a letter was sent asking if they would like to meet and discuss the proposals. These consultees included residents and businesses along the route. Those who responded were given more details of the scheme and some raised concerns. Those who did not reply were sent a further follow up letter resulting in a subsequent meeting being held, or failing that Centro contacted them directly by telephone to see if they had any issues about the scheme. In most cases principal issues were highlighted for Centro to explain or to be considered and where possible resolved prior to submission of the TWA Order application.
- 8.3. Appendix 4 lists all of the Key Consultees. Most of these consultees do not have any issues once the proposals were explained to them. However there are a few of these consultees that Centro must maintain dialogue with in order to resolve any issues or undertake further work in light of the meetings that have taken place.

9. Utilities companies

- 9.1. Utilities companies such as British Telecom, Severn Trent etc have been and are subject to on going consultation. A special presentation was made to them on 27th March 2002 to explain the scheme and initiate a dialogue. That dialogue continues with these organisations

as the engineering impact of the scheme is being developed and the effect on their cables, pipes etc is refined. Centro's project team includes a Utilities Co-ordinator whose specific responsibility is to manage that continuing dialogue.

10. Exhibitions

- 10.1. Exhibitions have been held over several years as part of a general awareness raising and information provision programme. They have generally been held in public places such as the Merry Hill Centre and Dudley Market and at ASDA Great Bridge. These locations have been selected to allow as many people as possible an opportunity of finding out about the project. During the main open meeting consultation period the number of exhibitions was increased to complement the meetings being held. Details of the dates etc were included the information pack delivered to all owners and occupiers along the route as well as being announced in the local press.
- 10.2. Centro and SMBC and DMBC officers staffed the exhibitions to explain the project and allow informed discussion concerning the proposals. Aerial photos and plans were on display and feedback forms were also available during these exhibitions as at the consultation meetings.
- 10.3. Appendix 5 lists the locations of these, the dates they were held and the number of people attending during early 2002. Although, as mentioned above, there was a disappointing response to meetings, there were far higher numbers of people visiting the exhibitions, the highest being over 600 on 23 March 2002 at the Merry Hill Centre.

11. Public Awareness

- 11.1. As mentioned above Centro has been undertaking a general public awareness campaign both before, and continuing after the main consultation period.
- 11.2.
- 11.3. This included exhibitions and leaflets as well as information available on Centro's web site. The Metro team also have a dedicated hotline purely for calls from the public to attain more information about Metro either by speaking directly to a project team member or requesting information packs. This was found to be extremely useful when undertaking the referencing exercise and following the confirmation schedules mailing as people could easily call with any queries.

12. Additional Consultation

12.1. A number of additional consultation meetings/exercises were undertaken along the route with individual residents and also groups of residents. The vast majority of this additional consultation arose from attendance at public open meetings where specific area concerns were raised. The locations of the groups of residents are listed below:

- Great Bridge Stop area residents
- Bramah Way to Mansion Drive residents (those backing onto the corridor embankment)
- Heath Close residents
- Birmingham New Road Stop area residents
- Pedmore Road Stop area residents

A brief list of the issues are listed below, a more comprehensive synopsis of the issues and events is contained in Appendix 6.

12.2. Great Bridge

Due to the proposed secondary access at the Great Bridge stop and the very poor response to the information packs and meeting attendance in the immediate area around the proposed stop at Great Bridge Centro undertook a further detailed consultation exercise. A questionnaire was hand delivered to all residents in close proximity to the stop who may be potential users of this access to ascertain their opinions on this proposal. As a result of the opinions expressed by the residents who responded to this consultation, this secondary access has been removed from the scheme.

12.3. Residents backing onto the corridor embankment (Bramah Way, St Helen's Avenue, Mansion Drive, Daisy Close)

At the meeting held at Great Bridge School on 21 March 2002 questions and concerns were raised by residents regarding any possible widening of the corridor embankment in the vicinity. Despite Centro officers discussing this issue at length it was realised subsequently to the meeting that the residents were still unclear as to the scheme. Therefore a letter was hand delivered to all households in the vicinity to confirm Centro's proposals.

12.4. Heath Close

Following the consultation meeting on 21 March 2002 a few residents of Heath Close were concerned about Centro's proposals to break through from the disused private walkway linking Horseley Heath and the railway corridor into Heath Close. Subsequently to this meeting a petition was given to Centro against this proposal and at the consultation meeting at the Black Country Museum on 25 April 2002 a number the residents attended to express their concerns and displeasure on the proposals. Following the reaction to Centro's proposals this has been removed from the scheme.

12.5. Birmingham New Road Stop Residents

Following the consultation meeting at Coneygre Community Centre on 14 March 2002 a number of concerns were raised by some of the residents of Lindley Avenue and the surrounding streets. Centro undertook work to investigate the concerns and a residents meeting for Lindley Avenue residents took place on 11 June 2002. The concerns raised at the meeting were discussed and subsequently a questionnaire was undertaken as to whether they supported the principle of the stop. The results of the questionnaire were that a large majority were in favour of the stop therefore Centro is retaining the stop in the Metro scheme.

12.6. Pedmore Road Stop Residents

Following concerns raised at the general consultation meeting at Woodside Community Centre on 19 March 2002 a discussion took place with Councillor Rahman and the local Dudley Priority Neighbourhood Manager and a further public meeting was held on the 3 December 2002 to give all local residents another chance to see Centro's proposals and ask any questions. As a result of this further exercise Centro is to investigate the location of the stop proposed to serve the local area.

13. Conclusions

Centro has endeavoured to consult with all statutory bodies, frontages, residents along the proposed route in order to comply with the TWA Order application rules and keep local people informed with Centro's proposals the latter of which are not a requirement of the procedures.

A number of consultees have not had any specific concerns. However there have been a number of parties with whom Centro has had to initiate contact with as they did not come forward through the initial consultation.

Through meetings, correspondence, further consultation and further more detailed specific work in some cases this comprehensive exercise has brought up a number of issues, some have been resolved some are ongoing dependant on timescales and some have been dealt with by compromise and the initiation of agreements.

**APPENDIX ONE:
Information Packs**