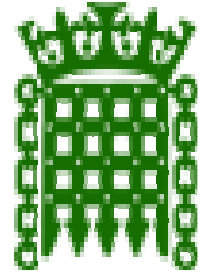


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West Mids explores low cost alternatives to Metro



Metro: too expensive?

6th February 2015

The new rapid transit study for the West Midlands conurbation will study lower cost alternatives to light rail.

The West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority announced proposals for a study of rapid transit connections between the Black Country and Birmingham last month (LTT 23 Jan).

The background to the study is revealed in a letter sent in December by ABCA – the Association of Black Country Authorities (comprising Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) – to Roger Lawrence, chair of the ITA and leader of Wolverhampton.

Paul Sheehan, Walsall's chief executive and the secretary of ABCA, said the Black Country leaders wanted Centro – the PTE – to appraise "lower-cost alternative routes and modes of rapid transit" and produce an incremental delivery plan for the four proposed Black Country Metro routes that Centro identified as priorities in 2004:

- 5Ws (Wolverhampton to Wednesbury via Wednesfield, Willenhall and Walsall)
- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill
- Varsity North (Birmingham to Scott Arms/Junction 7 of M6)

This meeting by invitation only, where MPs, Stakeholders etc., within the Light Rail industry and invited members of the Public will have a chance to discuss debate and raise questions concerning Light Rail & Trams.

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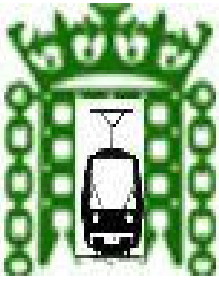
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Light Rail (UK),
Transport & Training Services Ltd
Warrington, Cheshire, England,
United Kingdom WA2 8TX
Tel 01925 243500, Fax 01925 243000
, 07721378223
Mr Jim Hawkins FCILT
www.applrguk.co.uk
Email applrguk@aol.com
www.lightrailuk.com

RSVP to applrguk@aol.com



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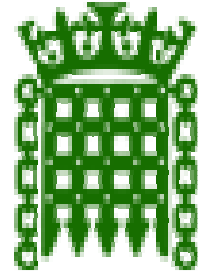
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- the Hagley Road corridor (Birmingham to Quinton)

Laura Shoaf, the ITA's strategic director of transport, told council leaders last week that the Metro routes had been proposed "in an era when funding for light rail was more readily available".

Discussing the Brierley Hill to Wednesbury route, for which Centro has Transport and Works Act powers, Shoaf said: "In recognition of the difficulties in securing funding, the potential for 'Very Light Rail' using innovative methods of track construction and motive power are being investigated in tandem with proposals for a light rail innovation centre alongside the route.

" The Government has just announced funding for the innovation centre in the new Local Growth Fund announcement.

The review of routes, to be undertaken by a steering group of Centro and the district councils and chaired by a council representative, will feed into the West Midlands strategic transport plan, due for completion by the end of the year.

Courtesy Local Transport Today



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RSVP to applrguk@aol.com

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