

## **West London Alliance Transport Bureau**

### **Introduction to WLA**

The West London Alliance (WLA) is a local authority partnership comprising Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow councils.

In working together the councils participating in the WLA aim to:

- Provide improved and more resilient services, focussed on and responding to the needs of residents, businesses and other service users;
- Achieve better value for money and realise financial savings; and
- Enhance the social, economic and environmental position of West London.

Their objectives are to:

- Improve the prospects of achieving the participant councils' strategic objectives by working together where that adds value over the option of councils acting individually;
- Share investment, purchasing and resources where it will achieve improved services, better value for money and financial savings; and
- Provide a unified voice for public sector interests in West London in order to have a greater impact on the regional and national policy and strategies affecting the interests of West London councils and its communities.

The WLA members collaborate in programmes and projects through which the participating councils aim to realise service improvements and efficiency savings.

### **Project Scope**

The West London Transport Improvement and Efficiency Programme comprises five councils: Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Hounslow and Harrow. The aim is to create a single West London Passenger Transport service by 2013 incorporating: passenger transport; fleet; concessionary travel; and, independent travel. In doing so the programme also aims to support personal choice by users. The programme proposes to create the shared service and support choice by developing a regional:

- Transport bureau to act as one central point in the region and co-ordinate the delivery of efficiencies within current borough based transport services
- Framework for the procurement of external transport
- Contract for mobility assessments
- Eligibility policy for assisted transport for adults
- Eligibility policy for assisted transport for children
- Programme for independent travel training

- Concessionary travel unit
- Fleet strategy

The business case for the programme was developed between 2008 and 2011 with the production of a high level review in June 2009, an outline business case in 2010 and a detailed business case in February 2011. The programme has been supported by £32,890 grant to produce the detailed business case and a further £200,000 grant for implementation costs from Capital Ambition.

The business case showed that the transport services across West London had expenditure of around £34m per annum on Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Adult transport across five councils. The cost per child varied between £8,077 and £5,107 per annum and the cost per adult was between £3,984 and £2,468. There was little evidence of councils collaborating in sharing routes or resources. There was not a consistent regional approach to eligibility for passenger transport or concessionary travel. Not all councils had developed independent travel training programmes.

### **Current Status and Achievements**

Significant progress has been made in delivering the programme during 2011/12 although there was also a set back where the savings to be secured from the sharing of routes in a route planning exercise in summer 2011 forecast in the business plan were not realised. This prompted a review of the business case by the Programme Board in November 2011. The original detailed business case projected £15m savings over four years. Following the November review, the savings forecast was revised to reflect a more cautious scenario of £8.4m over four years (£11m over five years).

It also proved more challenging and complex than anticipated to set up and staff the Bureau which in 2011 Hounslow council offered to host. This principally related to the HR issues concerned with transferring staff to the Bureau.

Notwithstanding these challenges overall good progress is being made in achieving the programme's aims.

Some **out of borough routes** sharing was implemented in 2011 and it is anticipated that as the Bureau commences operations in 2012 further out of borough sharing opportunities will be identified.

The phased implementation of **Transport Bureau** commenced in 2011/2012 with three councils now in place and the permanent bureau manager appointed in 2011/12 and starting in June 2012. New route planning software has been procured and the facilities set up in Hounslow.

Procurement for a **regional framework contract for contracted passenger** transport was commenced in 2011 and the tender evaluation process was completed on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012. An analysis of a sample of current routes in each council

indicates savings could be within expected levels contained within the business plan for Hounslow, Ealing, Barnet and Brent. The framework contract will be available to use from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012. Its estimated value is £46m over four years; Brent council was the lead council for the procurement.

The councils in the programme committed to develop and use a **regional mobility assessment contract**. Bids were invited from providers in 2011 and have been evaluated and the successful provider informed so that the contract is now available for councils' use. To date Hounslow and Ealing councils have confirmed they will be using the contract.

A working group met during 2011/12 to develop a business case for a **Regional Concessionary Travel Unit (CTU)**. Their work has shown there is a business case for a regional CTU formed by Hounslow and Ealing councils from March 2013 with Brent or Harrow councils potentially joining later. The CTU working group will now work with the bureau manager to develop a service delivery model/proposal and implementation plan and report back to the Programme Board in September 2012.

A draft regional **Adults eligibility policy** has been completed and a regional timetable for implementation produced. Consultation on the policy is necessary and has been completed in Brent and started in Barnet.

The Children's Working Group produced in 2011/2012 a draft **regional eligibility policy for children's transport** which was considered by the April 2012 Programme Board. The draft policy is now being finalised and will then be considered by Directors of Children services.

A regional strategy for **Independent Travel** has been produced and was agreed by the Programme Board which saw the need to produce an independent travel offer in line with the eligibility policy during consultation. The overall business case for independent travel has been accepted and the intention is for the new Regional Commissioning Group to take this work forward and oversee the production of a regional development and delivery plan.

A draft short-term **Fleet strategy** (i.e. for April 2012 to March 2013) has been produced and an outline longer-term strategy (April 2013/14 onwards). The work has identified collaborative opportunities within participating councils for sharing and redeploying fleet across the region. In particular Barnet and Brent are keen to collaborate and other councils will be encouraged to participate.

The programme has sought to **share the experience and learning** from developing and delivering its objectives with other councils in West London and more widely in London. In particular, Hillingdon, Hammersmith and Fulham and Richmond upon Thames councils participated in the West London route sharing conference in 2011. The programme manager has been actively liaising with other councils and with London organisations and during spring 2012 prepared with the Programme Board a further application to Capital Ambition for £105,043 grant aid which was subsequently agreed by the Capital Ambition board. The grant will support further sharing of learning and knowledge to other councils, particularly the sub-regional

model of working, as well as enabling the exploration of the widening of the programme to other sectors such as the NHS.