

# West Midlands Rail Recovery

## Peter Sargant

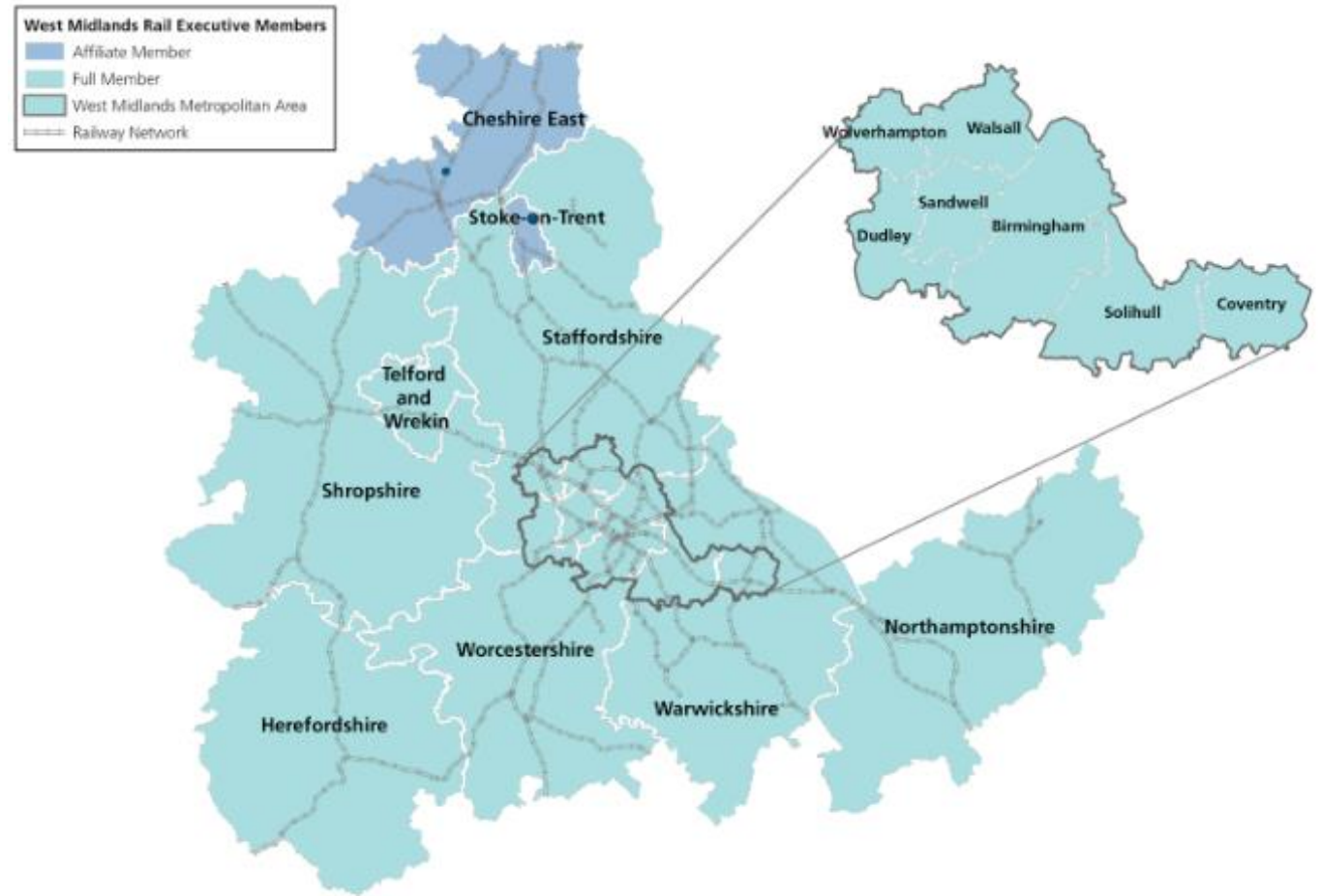


Railfuture “Attracting passengers back to rail” webinar  
Saturday 3 October 2020

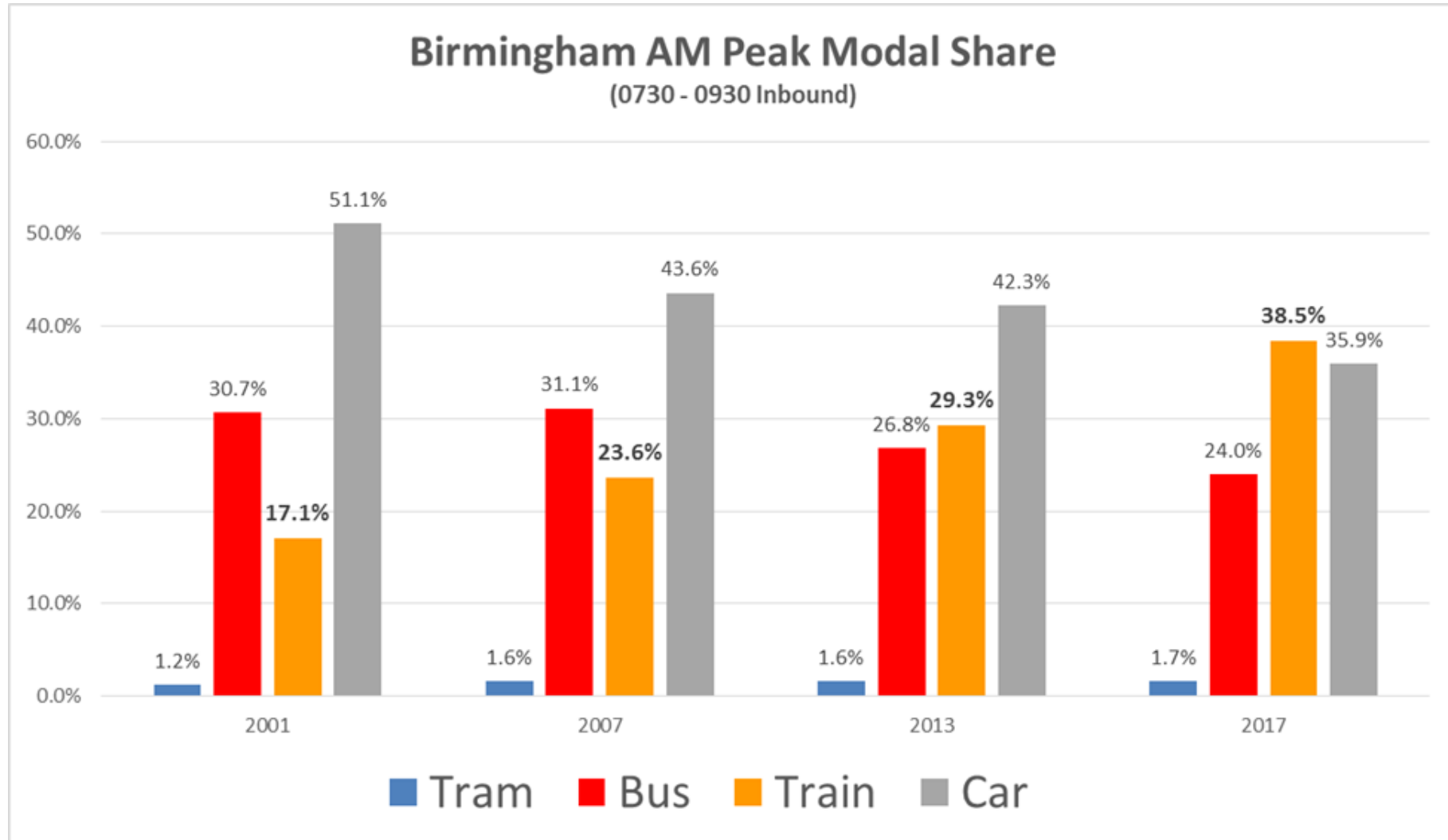
This presentation can be viewed from  
[www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences)

# Who are West Midlands Rail Executive?

- Devolved rail body for West Midlands
- 16 local authority members
- Co-manages West Midlands franchise with DfT – Collaboration Agreement in place
- Alliancing and partnerships
- Strategic planning
- Rail scheme development



# Rail use had been growing strongly....



# Then Covid happened.....

In West Midlands:

- Bus 50% ↓
- Rail 70% ↓

But road use back to pre-Covid levels....

Rail commuters:

- Largely white-collar office based – now working from home
- Have access to a car – or choosing to drive

# Uncertain times.....

- What will be impact on:
  - Office working practices?
  - City-centre employment levels?
  - Willingness to tolerate overcrowded trains?
  - In-person business meetings?
  - Economic growth?
  - Government funding for rail?

## But some opportunities.....

- Industry reform
- Rail fares reform
- Deliver cost efficiencies – can we make rail more affordable?
- Change focus to performance rather than capacity





# West Midlands Projects

- Case for investment remains strong
- New stations and services to discourage car use
  - Camp Hill Line
  - Willenhall/Darlaston
- University station rebuild
- Perry Barr station rebuild
- Commonwealth Games 2022



# Conclusions

- Short-term :
  - recovery likely to be slow – core office-worker market unlikely to return to previous level
  - Lapsed users must be encouraged to return
- Rail is a long-term business
- Case for large-scale strategic interventions remains strong – e.g. HS2
- De-carbonisation agenda will continue to strengthen
- Industry reform needs to make rail more affordable for passengers and taxpayers
- Industry needs to promote long-term value of rail to justify short-term financial support



