

1 Purpose of Study

- 1.1 The West Midlands Local Transport Plan (2005 - 2008) made clear that addressing congestion would be at the heart of any West Midlands Integrated Transport Strategy. This led to the seven Metropolitan Authorities in the West Midlands and Centro-WMPTA in January 2006 commissioning a study to identify current and future levels of congestion and to examine a range of solutions for tackling the problem. The overall aim of the study was to put together a well considered Integrated Transport Package (including demand management measures) which would complement the region's economic, environmental and quality of life agendas.
- 1.2 In September 2006, 'Gridlock or Growth – Choices and Challenges for the Future' was published which outlined the congestion issues facing the Metropolitan Area and explored a number of options for changing travel behaviours, including the potential role of road pricing. The debate generated by the report led to commissioning further work to explore a wide range of transport investment measures including support for lifestyle changes and a much more detailed understanding of road pricing as part of an Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS). Furthermore, the report set out a number of conditions that would need to be met before road pricing could be introduced in the West Midlands:
- Any scheme must improve and not detract from the region's competitiveness;
 - Appropriate transport alternatives must be in place to provide alternatives;
 - There should be a 'fit' between any local road pricing scheme and the framework for national road pricing;
 - Revenues must be hypothecated for transport investment in the West Midlands;
 - Be responsive to local conditions both in terms of time of day and location.
- 1.3 These conditions were reinforced through the consultation responses to the report, setting a number of key tests for any public and business acceptability of road pricing.
- 1.4 In July 2007, 'Gridlock or Growth - Towards an Integrated Transport Strategy' was published which identified for the first time the specific transport priorities that are needed by the Metropolitan Area to both achieve the 'Growth Agenda' and tackle congestion by encouraging modal shift from private car to public transport. The report contained details of bus, rail, metro, tram-train and highway improvements as well as listing the lifestyle choice measures designed to change individual travel behaviour. It further set out some of the demand management measures already in place such as park and ride, residents parking zones and suggested others which need to be developed more widely such as the enlightened traffic manager and extending school travel plans.

- 1.5 This report, 'Tackling Congestion, Delivering Growth', now sets out the further technical work to test the role and impact of road pricing and the impact of congestion on economic competitiveness. The study sets out the assessment of the impact of a transport investment package (including road pricing) based upon extensive strategic transport modelling that takes into account a range of factors, including predicted growth of the region. In addition, impact studies covering business, consumers, journey time reliability and social impacts were commissioned to gain an understanding of how road pricing will affect these groups. The study identifies the level of possible revenues that can be raised from road pricing as part of an integrated transport strategy that includes significant investment in public transport and lifestyle choice measures. Lifestyle choice measures, which have also been termed 'smarter choices', consist of a range of initiatives to change individuals' travel behaviour in favour of the more sustainable modes - public transport, walking and cycling and more importantly to question the need to travel in the first place. Finally the study presents further evidence on the nature of the congestion from business and consumer impact studies.