

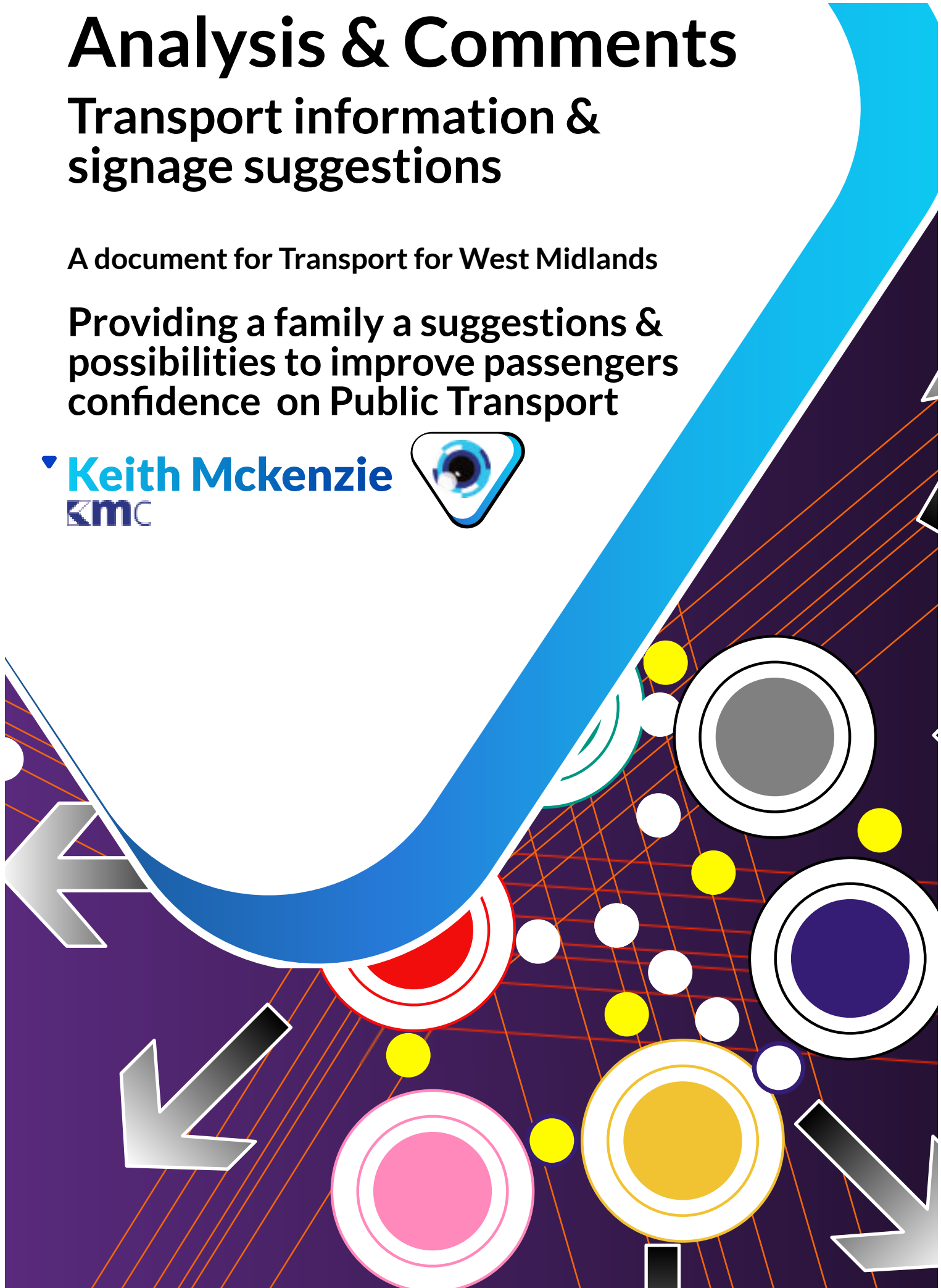
Analysis & Comments

Transport information & signage suggestions

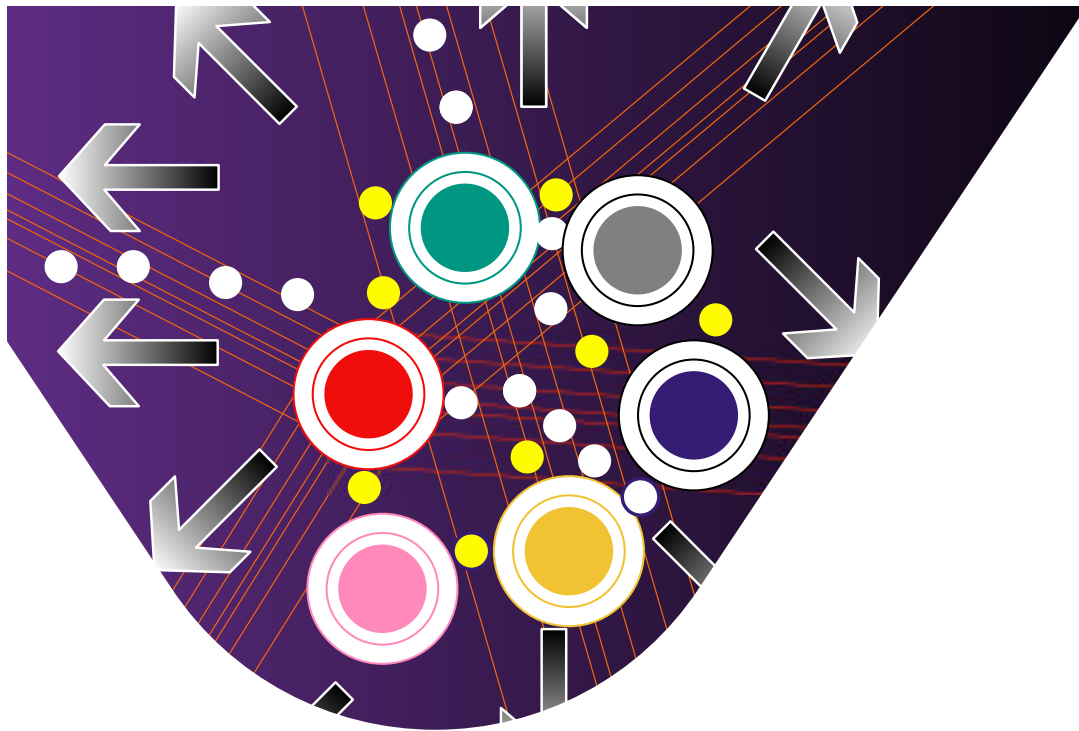
A document for Transport for West Midlands

Providing a family a suggestions & possibilities to improve passengers confidence on Public Transport

▼ **Keith Mckenzie**
KMC



Written by Keith Mckenzie



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This document is written by Keith Mckenzie creator of neurodiversity awareness projects, a qualified graphic designer and a participant of community projects

Introduction

This document explores some ideas and possibilities to improve passenger confidence when travelling in Birmingham and connecting journeys through different parts of Birmingham and the West Midlands County, along with the differences between different areas of Birmingham City Centre.

Also, this document follows a meeting I had in early 2025 with TfWM Information Products Development Lead, Craig Shipley. (related to Signage & Passenger Information)

This is based on my experiences when using and navigating public transport through different parts of the West Midlands County

The aim of my suggestions is to improve integrated possibilities and confidence in public transport, regardless of how frequent or for those who are not familiar with public transport in Birmingham and the West Midlands County. This includes tourists & visitors to the region when meeting family, friends, working clients and communities along with attending events in the city and region.

As a public transport user myself, I have only gained understanding because I have travelled the network over several years and decades. However, for those who are not familiar with the network, it can be a major challenge. My suggestions and ideas, I hope, can help remove those barriers for other users who are not regular visitors to the region.

I hope these documents will also become useful and valuable with future public transport development including tram extensions, Sprint bus services, the planned city bus services, the future HS2 railways, the planned Cross City bus network and the Very Light Rail in Coventry

Transport information & signage suggestions

Connection & outward travel: Birmingham City Centre

Because Birmingham City Centre has a network of complex layers of connectivity and interchanges, the area will have more examples of travel purposes than other areas and districts in the West Midlands region

So any information presented must manage the different levels of travel journey purposes, especially with connected journeys.

Integrated map connections

One of the most important integrated transport tools is the diagrammatic key routes map which makes it easier for visitors and those who don't use public transport regularly to know which particular bus interchange, tram stop and railway terminal to use to particular destinations regardless of whether the journey goes to an intermediate location or where the route terminates.

This particular map is still an important tool to enable integrated transport journeys seamlessly. The reason why it is helpful is that you don't have to necessarily understand particular bus route numbers or services, but instead focus on particular locations where you start your journey or to connect through to other journeys or destinations.

Despite the map being mainly associated with Birmingham City Centre (with specific transport modes from particular bus stop interchanges to trains, well stations, and tram stops), it can also be useful, enabling travellers to navigate from one end of the West Midlands County or city centre to the other clearly & efficiently. This is an important tool which individual district bus maps can never convey.

The reason why the diagrammatic maps are extremely useful as I cannot rely on journey planners alone. I have used journey planners several times; on occasion, I can provide misleading choices and also inaccurate choices. For example if I ask for a quicker journey to get from where I live through to a Solihull venue which is Land Rover Sports and Leisure Centre one of the options is includes a train journey from New Street to Birmingham International then can connect with a bus service X12 directly from the interchange through to the road nearby of the venue. The only problem with that is I only have three minutes to get out of the international station through the ticket barriers and then check to the right bus stand into the bus. On the same journey, the X2 from Moor Street would be the solution to the same destination.

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Transport information & signage suggestions

Connection & outward travel: Birmingham City Centre

Removal of integrated totem display at New Street Station

Birmingham New Street station used to have a large display of the diagrammatic key routes map to and from Birmingham City Centre.

Sadly, the terminal was taken down because of the relocation of the “Ozzy” sculpture, similar to the mechanical bull used as part of the opening ceremony during the city's Commonwealth Games in 2022.

The removal of this map displays can cause a massive problem. The changes can potentially confuse people and cause misinterpretation. This makes it harder to enable anyone to navigate particular transport modes to particular modes especially if you need to connect to other parts of a city centre to complete their particular journey.

My suggestions include having the focused version of the bus and metro interchange map, New Street and Moor Street stations, similar to the version for Snow Hill.

Also a permission for train station owners at New Street, Moor Street and Snow Hill station. To have a specialised information poster display for transport for the West Midlands with an explanation guide on the city centre interchange system and how it works, along with the buses that operate through the centre loop 16, 23, 24, 82, 87. This information poster might be useful at the Birmingham Coach Station at Digbeth and will be a useful tool when the metro extension happens to Digbeth and the sprint bus services operate. On the same poster display suggestion, it could also provide QR code links to the geographic map and guide for Birmingham City Centre and for the whole of the city of Birmingham. In addition, if the diagrammatic key routes map (from Birmingham City Centre) were available online and enabled an additional QR Code, it would be an additional incentive to explore the public transport network in the West Midlands seamlessly.

On the same information poster, it could include a zoomed version of the diagrammatic map for the city centre, focusing on the connecting buses loop (16, 23, 82, 87) around the bus interchanges and the connection with the rail station and tram stop and potentially with the connection of the sprint bus routes. This does not replace the conventional city centre map & guides but improves connectivity to make it easy to understand which bus routes are grouped with each bus terminal and how it is connected with rail & metro. This will also become valuable for the Sprint bus services and the planned Cross City Bus Network in the future.

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Transport information & signage suggestions

Connection & outward travel: Birmingham City Centre

In addition, a suggestion is an interactive computer display could be made inside New Street station which TfWM could develop for outward information with information of which transport connection from particular exit of New street station, summary of the how the interchanges works in the city centre, live departures, buses on the city centre loop which serves new street and many more, cycle info, tourist guide to Birmingham city centre and much more. This might fill the gap in the map display, which was taken down.

Also, I suggest a live departures screens inside New Street Station, one version for buses near Smallbrook Queensway & Station Street exit, also a version for Metro (for Grand Central stop) near Stephenson Street exit. This could be useful for both Moor Street and Snow Hill Stations. For safety reasons, this will also be useful before leaving the rail station in the evenings, early mornings and during very busy occasions.

Removal of bus stop totem

I have noticed some changes in the city centre recently with stop totem displays being removed and replaced by more general bus stop flags and timetable boards. My concern with the changes is that the replacement bus stop flags and timetables do not replicate the same information standards as it is presented just like any other interchange in other parts of the city and the County.

I feel that the additional information that was used on the totem should be transferred as an additional display on the particular bus shelters. Including the information of the five City Centre bus terminals, bus routes that operate the city loop, and a bus routes summary, which connects through different interchange areas of the city centre, along with walking distance information. It could contain directions to specific places of interest and tourist attractions. This is important as the bus stops in the city centre are not the same as any bus stop in other areas, such as Cotteridge or Kings Heath, but it is part of a city centre bus interchange family with high levels of connectivity.

Focused bus and metro interchange maps

During my meeting with Craig, I was shown the focus bus and metro interchange map for the Snow Hill area, which includes the interchange stops around Colmore Row bus interchange (& nearby stops) and Bull Street tram stop. I suggested there should be additional versions at Priority Queensway, New Street, The Markets, Moor Street and the combined area of Bull Street and Corporation Street

Removal of interchange totems

I was informed about the proposal of removing the interchange totem display, which also includes the integrated diagrammatic connections map to and from the city centre, for maintenance cost reasons.

I agreed with a suggestion to transfer the information that is shown on the interchange totem into standalone information display boards.

Transport information & signage suggestions

Connection & outward travel: Explore the network in the West Midlands

As mentioned elsewhere, the diagrammatic key routes map is not just a useful tool to navigate passengers around and from Birmingham City Centre, but is a useful integrated tool which can enable you to navigate from one part to another part of the West Midlands county. Also, I think the map will be valuable when the metro expands to Digbeth and when the sprint bus services begin. So I do feel this map needs to be visible and more widespread.

My suggestions include the map available online and for download.

This map could be used if it were displayed in selected bus shelters at major interchange areas within major bus corridors within the Birmingham City Boundary and at Birmingham International bus interchange.

To improve accessibility in the long term, a modified version might be helpful for selected rail stations and selected tram stops.

For integration reasons, I could imagine this concept could similarly evolve with versions for Wolverhampton and Coventry. These may improve confidence tools to be aware of which buses serves either the city centre streets or the respective bus stations. The evolved diagrammatic maps will be useful with connection information between rail and metro in Wolverhampton and the newly created bus interchange near Coventry train station and the planned Very Light Rail and the existing rail lines through north & south of Coventry

Transport information & signage suggestions

Signage

Signage & branding

Around West Midlands County, there are clear distinctions of transport & signage using the TfWM signage system.

Despite the signage and information present and a strong and vibrant network, I am concerned about the lack of clear connectivity between travel modes at interchanges between two or three travel modes.

Birmingham New Street

If you arrive at New Street station from the entrance at Smallbrook Queensway, you wouldn't know it connects with the metro. This also applies if you arrived at New Street Station from the Grand Central tram for connecting with buses.

To improve the importance of integrated transport, I do feel the totem poles outside the entrance at Smallbrook Queensway need to be updated, which incorporate the national railway and the TfWM (purple) signage, with a minor acknowledgement which connects with local trains, buses and trams.

Stations not owned by West Midlands Railway

I also felt that on stations not owned by West Midlands Railway, there is a lack of connectivity with some stations with National Rail (Double arrow), totem poles no TfWM or related symbols within the West Midlands. This applies to stations within the TfWM area owned by Network Rail, Avanti West Coast, and Chiltern Railways. I feel an arrangement is needed where the National Rail (Double arrow) and TfWM are needed at the totem pole. Also, the same totem has a connected indicator symbol and mode text next to it. For example, at Birmingham International, Birmingham Moor Street and Coventry, it could display bus & local train indicators (with updated versions in the future for Sprint buses at Birmingham International & Birmingham Moor Street along with Very Light Rail at Coventry Station). At Birmingham New Street & Wolverhampton it could display bus, local rail & metro. The rail-only indicator could apply to Dorridge.

The integrative totems to be encouraged further, not just between rail & metro, but also between bus & rail, bus & metro and all three modes. This should also apply to future travel modes including very light rail and the sprint bus services.

Because to the plan to convert the national rail network into the government operated Great British Railways, a standardised system may be needed between local rail stations, major terminals and interchange stations within the TfWM area.

Displayed at Integrated locations

Because some stations like Jewellery Quarter, Cradley Heath and The Hawthorns is integrated between two transport modes, I insist that this should be of equal standards with the display at the posters when walking into the station. This means this should be a poster display for the metro or buses, presented in the same way as local trains. This is very important to have consistency in integrated Transport and not have one priority mode over the other. More details on the next page.

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Signage

Integrated between different modes

I visited the Jewellery Quarter area and travelled from the tram stop and it felt that this totem sign at the entrance of the station is misleading, we're only showing the symbols of the National Rail and West Midlands railway symbol with no mention of the metro. However, if you look on the right-hand side of the entrance, it does have the entrance sign, which includes metro as well as local trains. Also when you walk in the entrance you see poster cases from the trains with the metro information that was laminated

I'm aware that West Midlands Railways owns the majority of the stations in the county. However, as the station is integrated between two travel modes, I felt that an improvement in partnership would be to have equal integrated standards between the two modes, the same complex or next to each other.

In this case, the totem display at the entrance of Jewellery Quarter station should not only display the national TfWM symbol but also the local rail and tram variations of the TfWM symbol.

Examples of stations which should totem sign of display different integrated modes like this are rail stations with bus interchanges such as Marston Green, Stourbridge Town, Moor Street (with sprint buses), Perry Barr, Crawley Heath, Solihull, Birmingham International (with Sprint buses) & Coventry (with future Very Light Rail). This can also be applied with integrated Tram & bus signage at Bliston, Wednesbury Great Western Street and the future stop at Dudley Interchange. Additionally, all three modes with bus, local rail & metro apply to Wolverhampton and Birmingham New Street. There may be other locations that I may not be aware of.

Connecting Solutions

This is related to navigating public transport event organisers & venues around Birmingham City Centre

With the information I have shared, along with my suggestions, there is a different angle I feel that needs to be aware of.

By attending two major events around the city centre, I have observed that there is a lack of understanding which helps people be aware of connecting seamlessly to specific destinations. This relates to the following events: Birmingham Design Festival and Motion City, one of the UK's biggest Latin dancing festivals.

Birmingham Design Festival

This two-day event took place at different locations.

The majority of events in the day took place at Birmingham City University's Parkside & Curzon Campuses. On day two, the conference took place at the Birmingham Town Hall. Unless you understand the network, you will either have to walk across the city centre to the venue or use the taxi. A lot of the visitors stayed at the event's official hotel, the Bloc Hotel, near St. Paul's tram stop.

When chatting to the event organisers they will not be aware of the public transport possibilities. For example, if they were travelling on public transport during the day one event, they could just avoid a tram at some point, then get off at Bull Street, and take a short walk to Priory Queensway, then catch bus route 14, which stops outside the Parkside & Curzon campuses of Birmingham City University. Also on day two of the events, visitors & guests could have travelled directly to the town hall tram stop.

Motion City

One of the UK's largest Latin dancing festivals. This year the event moved to The Eastside rooms. (This is located near Aston and Birmingham City universities along with Millennium Point.) Previously, the event took place at the Hilton Metropole Hotel in the NEC, which was very simple to get to the venue, either by taxi directly to the hotel or by bus and train to the Birmingham International Interchange, with a walk through the NEC and the nearby park.

I have participated in this event since 2017, and when I was informed about the venue change, I was very concerned that not only could this potentially confuse visitors who are not driving, but it could also cause harm to their confidence in getting to the event in the future if they find it difficult to navigate to the venue. Also using the journey planner is misleading as it claims it takes 20 minutes to walk from New Street Station to the east side room when it can take half an hour. The mobile planners also mentioned that it would take a 15-minute walk from Moor Street station, when in reality it takes 25 minutes. Continues on the next page

Connecting Solutions

Motion City: continued

So using my knowledge of the public transport network, my graphic design skills and research, I developed a series of connecting guides to make it easier for visitors of the event to get from the east side rooms. I attached some examples of the guides (in the text two pages) I have developed and how what I have developed makes it easier to navigate the public transport network in a city centre to and from the venue. As well as direct buses from the venue, I also developed variations and how to connect from the three railway stations, along with the tram connections (between Grand Central and Bull Street tram stops), towards Priory Queensway bus interchange. I also developed a connecting bus guide from other destinations, including buses from Chelmsley Wood, North Birmingham, Walsall and parts of Staffordshire.

With the permission of the event organisers, my guides were displayed on the event's social media channels, on the encrypted WhatsApp group for event participants and volunteers. In addition, I developed a printed version of the guides that was displayed at the reception areas of the venue. I receive extremely positive feedback, and it has improved the confidence of the event visitors and participants in getting to and from the venue if they are not driving. It has been confirmed that next year's event in summer 2026 will be at the same venue. Because of the tram expansion, it will be easier to access the venue when the tram line expands to the temporary stop at Millennium Point and, in the long term, the future permanent stop at Curzon Street, with a short walk.

There is an important aspect of sharing these aspects, which is that venues and event organisers around the city centre need to have greater knowledge, enabling visitors and event participants who are not driving to navigate to and from the event on public transport.

Some of my suggestions, which I have developed in this document, could be developed as part of a printed or digital information documents. Additionally, a special information webpage could be developed for venues and event organisers in the West Midlands, which could provide links and documents to download with the suggestions I have shared. Also, there may be an opportunity for the TfWM to develop a series of educational information and training sessions which enable event organisers and venues around the Birmingham City Centre to improve awareness of the public transport network in the city centre, enabling visitors to access the locations seamlessly and with confidence. With my suggestions, it enables the event organisers and venues around Birmingham to include accurate information in the venue, which makes it easy for public transport users to access the venues and the events.

To widen the awareness and idea of online arrangement between TfWM and Visit Birmingham & the West Midlands website to provide an information summary of connecting and outward travel with online links to the TfWM website.

Continues on the next page: Visitors guide by public transport to The Eastside Rooms

Connecting Solutions

Motion City: continued

Below are some examples on how I have developed a series of connection guides for visitors towards the event at the Eastside Rooms.

Connections Guide towards MotionCITY Using Trains & taxi



Ordering taxis from Snow Hill station

Travelling from Snow Hill station is quick and easy for reaching the Eastside Rooms. Just book your journey with taxi apps or local services from the station entrance. Be cautious as taxis may arrive on either side of the busy road.

Ordering taxis from New Street station

You can order taxis using apps or local services from the "Drop and Go" taxi area. Ask the station staff if you need directions.

Train passengers towards Moor Street

Due to road restrictions at Moor Street Station, you cannot order taxis to The Eastside Rooms. Instead, please take a train to Snow Hill Station and ensure your ticket is valid.

Allow extra time for your journey from New Street station, particularly during rush hour on Fridays and on Saturday and Sunday after 11:00 a.m.

Heavy traffic may add at least 20 minutes or more to your trip, including return journeys.

Reminder

Taxi apps and local taxis cannot use bus-only roads in the city centre. This information is subject to change, so please check before traveling.

Keith McKenzie is not responsible for any errors.

Connections Guide towards MotionCITY Buses between City Centre and Eastside Rooms



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This map is not drawn to scale

Buses towards The Eastside Rooms

14
Bus Stop PQ16 at Priory Queensway.
Travel two stops to Millennium Point, with a short walk.
Follow directions on the map.
Every 10 minutes Monday-Saturday daytime, 15 minutes on Sunday.
Evenings: Monday-Saturday every 20-30 minutes, Sunday every 30 minutes.

94 95
Bus Stop PQ12 at Priory Queensway
Travel two stops to Millennium Point, with a short walk.
Follow directions on the map.
Frequent service Monday-Saturday daytime, every 10 minutes on Sundays, and every 15 minutes during evenings

66
Bus Stop PQ10 at Priory Queensway.
Travel three stops to Colehill Street, with walk to the Eastside Rooms.
Every 15 minutes (Monday - Saturday daytime) and every 30 minutes (Evenings & Sundays).



Further information:
Transport for West Midlands
www.twm.org.uk
West Midlands Metro
www.westmidlandsmetro.com

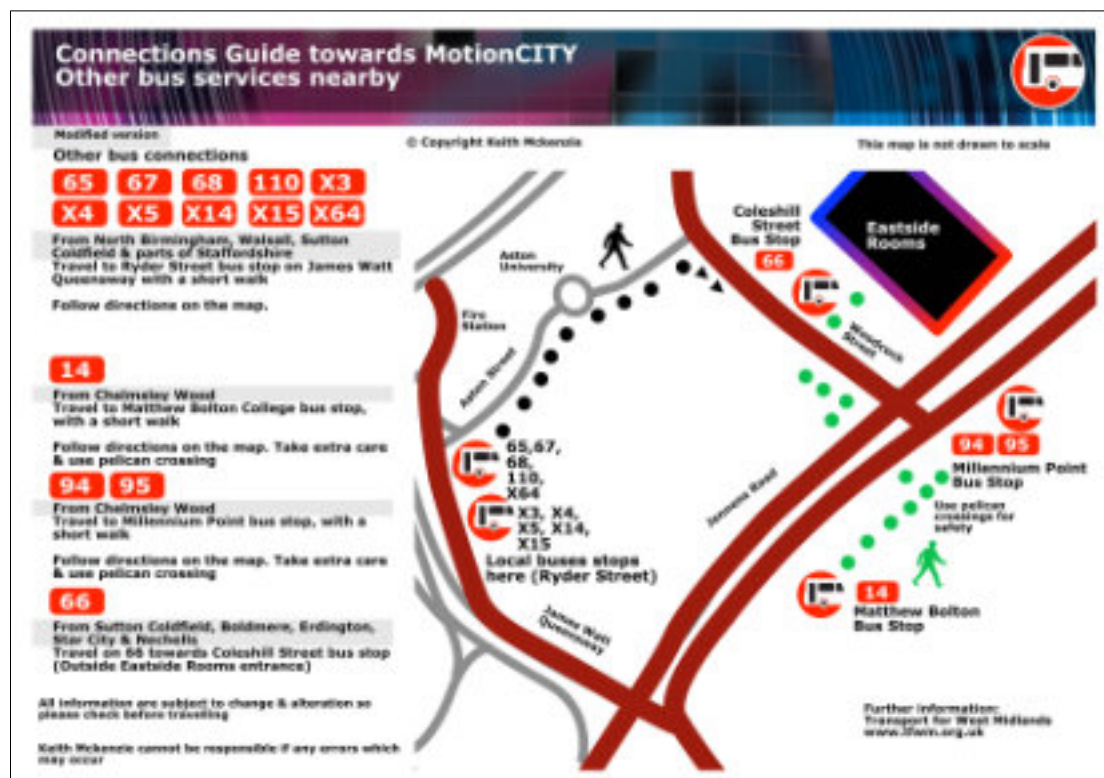
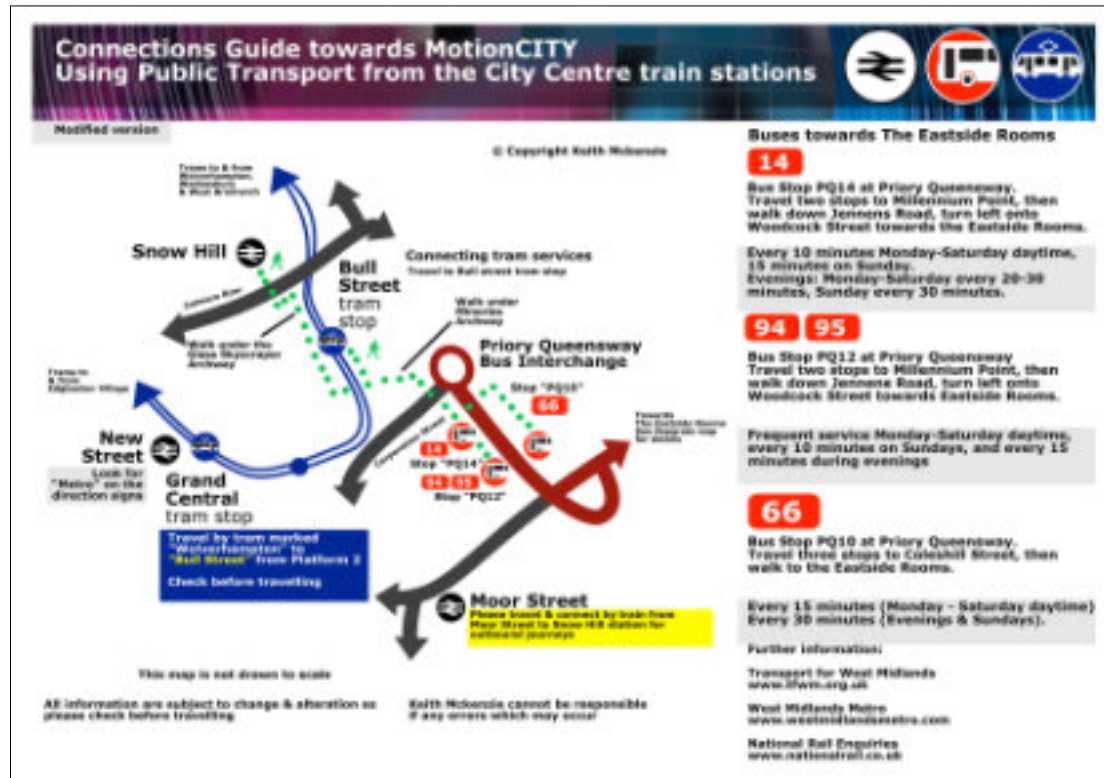
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Transport information & signage suggestions

Connecting Solutions

Motion City: continued

Below are some examples on how I have developed a series of connection guides for visitors towards the event at the Eastside Rooms.



Transport information & signage suggestions

About the author

Over the past two decades, Keith has developed a variety of awareness projects, campaigns and activities. His projects have been involved with many awareness and support organisations across the UK and have participated in several presentation talks at different events around twenty-five years. In 2015, Keith developed "Plus Value Awareness", an information and campaign website focusing on human aspects of hidden areas of neurodiversity. Enable to value a person beyond understanding, perceptions and their difficulties.

Outside awareness, Keith has been involved in the behind-the-scenes of a unique music project, which includes filming and other behind-the-scenes assistance with developing video documentaries and music events that involve music artists, DJs and producers.

Keith is a participant in salsa dancing classes in the community as an assistant, along with volunteering, and a participant in salsa-related dancing conventions: "Motion City" & Latinmotion's "NYE Fest" based in Birmingham.

Keith has a background in art & design and has been involved in many projects related to Graphic design, selected photography and visual art.

In 2022, Keith became a featured community participant and was part of a video campaign for Birmingham City Council to showcase the city's legacy since hosting the Commonwealth Games

In 2023, Keith participated in an awareness campaign by visiting for supporting the annual events Autism Dance Day (by Anna Kennedy OBE) and International Dance Day (by The Dance Committee of ITI). To support both events, Keith developed "Embrace Dancing", a family of awareness information and projects that encourage inclusivity at dancing-related environments for dancers with Neurodiversity, Invisible Disabilities and those who have experienced anxiety.

Also Keith took part in a transport related Health & Safety meeting organised by Transport for West Midlands to provide lived experiences and suggestion in front of public transport safety teams on Buses, Trains & Trams. In the same year, Keith has participated in the public consultation in Birmingham by the Department for Work and Pensions and published two insight & analysis documents as part of the consultation. In 2024 Keith attended a meeting with West Midlands Trains on his lived experiences on West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services and has developed an insight document with suggestions. In 2025 Keith was featured in travel safety videos with Transport for West Midlands and National Neurodiversity Training.

Find out more about developments and achievements by visiting his website
<https://keithmckenzie.dudaone.com>

Notes

Useful Links online

Personal website

A summary of projects and developments from Awareness, Creative, Participation, Community, Involvement and Activity related

<https://keithmckenzie.dudaone.com>

Awareness website

Titled “Plus Value Awareness”. Hidden neurodiversity awareness website which contains a variety of projects and information based the experiences on changing public perceptions for over 25 years.

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>

Written and developed by Keith Mckenzie

<https://keithmckenzie.dudaone.com>

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>

