

# Metro extension reaches new milestone

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The Metro extension in Dudley has reached a major milestone, with the first pieces of track being delivered for the project.

Overall, 300 metres of rail arrived at the Castle Hill site, in Dudley town centre, on Monday in preparation for installation work, due in the coming weeks.

The light rail project is the biggest of its kind in the UK. It is the culmination of two months of work as well as two evenings of overnight road closures getting the site ready.

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, said: "The delivery of the first section of rail is a really exciting moment for the Black Country Metro extension and I am delighted that we will shortly see track installed along Castle Hill. This is such an eagerly-anticipated route, not least because it will better connect Dudley with more of Sandwell, Wolverhampton, and the east and west of Birmingham by tram. Not only that, but it will also provide a direct route for many across the Black Country to travel directly to the new Curzon Street station for HS2, providing links to the rest of the UK. This Metro extension truly is a game-changer for Dudley and the Black Country, and we're pressing on and making it happen."

Councillor Simon Phipps, cabinet member for Regeneration and Enterprise, added: "The laying of the first

few metres of track will be very exciting and a huge symbol of progress in this scheme, which will be a real gamechanger for Dudley. We have almost £1 billion worth of regeneration projects coming to fruition in the next few years which will change the face of the borough forever, and the new Metro route will play an integral part in this. It will help to create more opportunities for people in terms of jobs, training and connectivity and I look forward to seeing it take shape in the coming weeks and months.”

Preparatory work got underway along Castle Hill in 2020. Since then, the team at the Midland Metro Alliance (MMA), which is designing and delivering the route on behalf of Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), have made constant progress, including the removal of the road surface and the upgrading and diverting of utilities in the area. More recently, half of Castle Hill has been prepared for rail installation and future work will see concrete track beds poured ahead of rails being installed and welded in place.

Tom Maplethorpe, project director at MMA, said: “The team have been hard at work undertaking a number of essential activities in preparation for the track to be installed, despite the ongoing challenges of the new wave of Covid-19 cases. Residents, visitors and businesses will soon start to see the area take shape in what will be a really exciting time for the project.”

The Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension is designed to boost public transport in the Black Country, providing links to the existing heavy and light rail networks, and helping connect people to education, training and career opportunities further afield in the West Midlands.