

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER
METROLINK AND RAIL SUB COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY 14 JANUARY 2022 AT THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE,
MANCHESTER**

PRESENT:

Councillor Stuart Haslam	Bolton Council
Councillor Naeem Hassan	Manchester City Council
Councillor Emma Taylor	Manchester City Council
Councillor Howard Sykes	Oldham Council
Councillor Shah Wazir	Rochdale Council
Councillor Tom McGee	Stockport MBC
Councillor Angie Clark	Stockport MBC
Councillor Doreen Dickinson (Chair)	Tameside Council
Councillor Steve Adshead	Trafford Council
Councillor Andrew Western	GMCA

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lindsay Dunn	Governance Officer, GMCA
Simon Elliott	Head of Rail Programme, TfGM
Danny Vaughan	Head of Metrolink, TfGM
Gwynne Williams	Deputy Monitoring Officer, GMCA

OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Damien Chabas	Keolis Amey Metrolink (KAM)
Guillaume Chanussot	Keolis Amey Metrolink (KAM)
Dan Coles	Network Rail
Charlie French	Avanti
Lucja Majewski	TransPennine Express (TPE)
Owain Roberts	Northern

Resolved /-

That apologies be noted and received from Councillor's Mohammed Ayub (Bolton Council), Councillor Norman Briggs (Oldham Council), Joanne Marshall (Wigan Council), Mark Angelucci and Caroline Whittam (TfGM).

GMTMRC 02/22 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

Resolved /-

There were no chairs announcements or items of urgent business.

GMTMRC 03/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved /-

There were no declarations of interest.

GMTMRC 04/22 MINUTES OF THE GM TRANSPORT METROLINK & RAIL SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 12 NOVEMBER 2021

Resolved /-

That the minutes of the GM Transport Metrolink & Rail Sub Committee meeting held 12 November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

GMTMRC 05/22 METROLINK SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND METROLINK OPERATOR UPDATE

Friday, 14th January, 2022

Danny Vaughan, Head of Metrolink, TfGM introduced the Metrolink quarterly performance report which provided a performance summary for the rolling 12-month period.

Members were provided with a further update on emerging issues since the publication of the report and most notably it was reported that patronage had continued to increase and by early December, levels had reached circa 76% of pre-pandemic levels. The highest weekday patronage since March 2019 was on 2 December and had reached 86 and the strongest levels of recovery still appeared to be leisure travel. This however was prior to the implementation of the “plan B” government guidelines, which requested people to work from home where possible. Since then, patronage had decreased to 40% pre-Covid levels and face covering compliance had increased from 23% to 62% as the wearing of face coverings once again became mandatory on public transport.

The Committee were advised that operational performance during periods 7 and 8 continued to be affected by staff shortages, especially within the driver cohort. A combination of seasonal and Covid related absences had resulted in driver absence between 10-15% and as a result service changes had been implemented. Boxing Day services operated every twenty as opposed to every twelve minutes. Furthermore, short notice service changes were necessary on New Year’s Eve, the Airport, Ashton and Eccles routes were withdrawn from 5pm until the end of service, with bus replacement services operating between Ashton and Piccadilly., A more permanent reduction in timetable similarly implemented across rail services had been considered, however it had been recognised that staff absence had now gone past the peak and would no longer be necessary. Performance had improved, however there were still some gaps in services particularly over the weekends due to staff absence.

Members were informed of two fatal accidents across the network in December 2021. In one case a male fell from the platform into the path of a double tram as it departed Deansgate Castlefield. In the other, a female fell from the auto-coupler while climbing between trams from the street side at Droylsden tram stop. Both incidents were currently under investigation by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and KeolisAmey (KAM) were also carrying out their own inquiries. It was advised that the incidents reflected the usual spike in safety issues in the run up to the Christmas period as more passengers travelled across the network. It was recognised however that the most recent Christmas period had been notably more serious from a safety aspect than previously.

Friday, 14th January, 2022

It was reported that discussions continued with DfT regarding funding for Metrolink beyond March 2022 as the ongoing support remained uncertain, however, any decision was unlikely to be until early 2022. Following similar discussions, TfL had agreed in principle with Government that they would achieve operational financial sustainability by March 2023, but this would require significant changes in their operation.

More positively, Members were informed of the partnership work with GMP to tackle ASB and the recent funding as part of Safer Streets pilot which provided greater opportunities to improve safety on the network.

Damien Chabas, Director Customer, Growth and Innovation, KeolisAmey Metrolink provided the Committee with a presentation which outlined the customer and community engagement plan for 21/22. It was noted that plan was rolling over a 12-month period with key initiatives to support customer experience and social responsibility strategies. The key objectives of the plan which included improving safety and security on Metrolink and making it more accessible to all were outlined.

Members were advised that the plan was broken down into three areas which consisted of customer engagement activities providing information and reassurance, education with schools and colleges and community engagement partnering with key organisations in GM.

An outline of activities over the period November and December 2021 which included the successful roll out of a series of specialist operations as part of the Travel Safe Partnership and the launch of the Safer Streets initiative were provided.

The Chair acknowledged the positive work being undertaken with the community along with the provision of the service. In response to the unfortunate fatalities on the network, Members recommended that the communication campaign between TfGM and KAM was integral in developing a firmer safety message over the forthcoming year and in particular around the festive period to ensure passenger safety remained paramount and at the forefront as the Christmas season approached.

It was agreed that in relation to pedestrian and passenger safety around Metrolink trams, greater consideration would be provided to the development of an overarching safety strategy encompassing partners across the travel industry to develop targeted and specific

communication and campaigns.

Appreciating the challenges regarding staff absence, Members welcomed further clarity regarding the anticipated timescale for full resource capacity across the network. It was advised that the outlook was positive as the peak of the absence rate had been reached with performance improving. It was recognised that the current establishment of fully qualified drivers was lower than required due to training under social distancing constraints during the pandemic. Furthermore, staffing levels in the engineering department had been affected by absence which had caused a back log in maintenance. KAM were considering the impact of Covid and were addressing the short- and longer-term view of operations including undertaking further recruitment.

The update regarding the safety of customers was welcomed along with the launch of the Safer Street initiatives. Concern was expressed however that the introduction of cameras at five stations along the Rochdale/Oldham/East Didsbury line may displace ASB and criminal activity along the network rather than eradicate instances. It was suggested that a further outcome of the initiatives should be linked to the improvement of customer service by reducing the levels of ASB. It was agreed that a permanent staff presence across the network would be the most effective option to improve safety, the perception of safety and increase patronage across the network although it was reported to be costly.

Face covering compliance by line was also discussed linked to perceptions of safety and the challenging situations of non-compliance faced by Metrolink staff.

Members were reassured with regards to the Safer Street pilot that the TravelSafe Partnership was working alongside Local Authority and GMP officers in Oldham and Rochdale and would provide consideration to the concerns raised surrounding displacement of crime and ASB that may arise due to the installation of cameras at specific points. Further displacement into town and the city centre was also considered. Guillaume Chanussot, MD, KAM offered his personal support as an advocate for safety and security across the network and reassured the Committee that it was the priority of the operator for both passengers and colleagues. An approach of continuous improvement had been adopted to improve safety and security across the network with all partners. Furthermore, the benefits of key initiatives undertaken as part of the customer and community engagement plan had been recognised by all staff involved.

The reporting of historical data within the reports was welcomed and it was advised that forward looking predictions based on current data was analysed to enable timetable and services changes. Future assumptions that may have to be made regarding the operation of Metrolink services linked to financial packages from government were considered.

Further detail regarding service improvement since the Christmas and New Year period was requested by the Committee. It was confirmed that 97% of planned services were operational in the last three months of 2021 up to the prevalence of the Omicron variant. This had resulted in one in ten services impacted by staff availability with a reduction to 93%, which was a drop from pre Covid performance levels of 99%. Since then, performance had improved to 99% on most days although there were still gaps in driver availability which was being resourced by overtime.

A further comprehensive discussion regarding safety to include Network Rail, rail operators and the British Transport Police (BTP) was considered. It was advised that both Northern along with BTP were now part of TravelSafe Partnership and it was agreed to convene regarding safety across the industries to share knowledge and best practice across the networks.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That on behalf of the Committee, appreciation and recognition of the launch of various initiatives through the Safer Streets funding be received.
3. That further consideration be provided by TfGM Officers and the wider TravelSafe Partnership to the concerns raised by the Committee in relation to the possible displacement of crime of and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) with the deployment of cameras as part of the Safer Streets pilot.
4. In relation to pedestrian and passenger safety around Metrolink trams, that greater consideration be provided to the development of an overarching safety strategy encompassing partners across the travel industry to develop targeted and specific communication and campaigns.
5. That it be advised that both Northern along with the British Transport Police (BTP) are part of TravelSafe Partnership and greater sharing of knowledge

and best practice linked to the wider TravelSafe Partnership be undertaken.

GMTMRC 06/22 LOCAL RAIL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Simon Elliott, Head of Rail Programme, TfGM provided an update to members on rail service and operation across Greater Manchester over rail periods 7 and 8 between 19 September – 13 November 2021.

Operational performance remained broadly consistent in period 7 but had declined in period 8, largely due to weather-related events. PPM was reported to be in the higher 80% for the longer distance operators, around 90% for Northern and almost 95% for TPE. Right Time at Destination figures for both Northern and TPE remained strong at around 70%. Cancellations stayed relatively low, however total delay minutes had more than doubled across Network Rail's Manchester Delivery Unit. Delayed minutes in period 8 were reported to be adverse to target for the first time in ten periods, by 16%.

Train operating companies experienced crew availability issues as a direct result of Covid and services were subject to both pre-planned and some late-notification cancellations, further details of the mitigations were outlined in the report.

Patronage levels over the period continued to increase, with Northern reporting around 78% of pre-Covid levels at its highest and TPE 68% of pre-Covid levels. However, since the introduction of Plan B restrictions due to the Omicron wave these had decreased overall to approx. 60%.

Members were reminded that face covering compliance on services in the previous period had decreased, however, the change in government guidance had resulted in an increase between 65-80% although this appeared lower at weekends and amongst younger travellers.

An update regarding the Manchester Recovery Taskforce was provided and Members were advised that there had been a consultation for the proposed timetable changes to be introduced in December 2022. TfGM had made strong representation on behalf of the Committee and the GMCA regarding infrastructure commitments to deliver future service improvements.

It was advised that TfGM continued to work with local communities and station groups on various projects in the region, an overview of the projects was detailed in the report. Furthermore, ongoing support was provided to local Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and on behalf of the Committee, South Lancashire CRP were congratulated on recent wins at the national community rail awards for the Hate Crime and Sunday Rivington bus projects.

Due to the Omicron variant, the agreed Community Day event for Community Rail Groups scheduled for December 2021 would now be arranged by TfGM officers for February or March 2022 subject to government guidance.

Members were informed that the next round of funding for the Rail Station Accessibility Programme for 2024-29 was accepting bids. It was agreed that the Committee would receive an updated report on the approach to the Access for All programme prior to submission in April 2022 at the next meeting.

In discussion the Committee considered the financial challenges faced by the rail industry and reassurance was provided on the assistance and communication to customers travelling at Manchester Piccadilly station regarding stair lift access.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the recent announcement by DfT on Access for All funding be noted and that the GMTC receive an update on the approach at the next meeting on 18 February 2022.
3. That the Committee receive an updated report on the approach to the Access for All programme of improvements to take place between 2024 and 2029 prior to submission in April 2022 at the next meeting on 11 March 2022.

GMTMRC 07/22 RAIL OPERATOR UPDATE

The Committee invited rail operators to provide feedback on train services in GM over the recent period.

Comments raised by operators included the following:

- Avanti West Coast – reported that issues with regards to staff absence had resulted in upcoming services changes. An amended timetable would be introduced to cover the period 17 January until 25 February 2022 in response to the challenges faced by staff absence which would ensure the service was more reliable and capacity was balanced in connectivity with other operators across the network. The service between Manchester and London would be drastically reduced from three to one train per hour from 17 January 2022 via Stoke. Four additional trains between Manchester and London would operate throughout the day via Crewe. Customers that had already purchased advance tickets had been notified with the option to apply for a refund. The situation would be under constant review and any additional services would be considered where possible to reflect any events scheduled to take place.

Patronage throughout December was between 65-70% of pre-Covid levels but had since dropped to 40% which reinforced the view that the reduction in service would accommodate demand.

- Network Rail – reported the similar issues with regards to customer facing staff absence prior to Christmas, however the position had improved. Operation centres and engineering teams appeared to be less affected by Covid related absence and remained stable.

Face covering compliance had increased to 80-90% although there was some variation at weekends. Footfall at Manchester Piccadilly during December was reported to be 70-80k per day and had decreased to between 50-55k during January 2022. In comparison, footfall in January 2019 was approx. 110k passengers per day.

The Committee were provided with an overview of activities and messaging which had taken place in the run up to the festive period concerning safety and security.

An update regarding track and platform upgrade across the network was also provided and Councillor Clarke (Stockport) offered support for the bridge works

that were taking place at Romiley station.

- Trans Pennine Express (TPE) – advised that an amended timetable to improve reliability to provide stability due to levels of sickness absence had been introduced from 10 January 2022. For those passengers that had already pre-purchased tickets, a ticket acceptance scheme had been agreed with other operators until the end of January.

Patronage was reported to have reduced to approximately 51% from 75-80%. Prior to the Omicron wave, weekends had been operating at pre pandemic levels.

A new WhatsApp service had been introduced to book passenger assistance operating 7 days a week between 6am and 11pm excluding Bank Holidays. Furthermore, Good maps had been made available at seven TPE stations across the network which included Manchester Airport and Stalybridge to help navigate passengers with mobility or visual difficulties safely around train stations.

- Northern – similarly reported that 2D maps had been introduced at stations.

The current timetable had been implemented on 4 January 2021 to provide reliability for customers with a reduction in 10% of services compared to December 2019. School flows had been protected where possible with bus services to support where services had been removed. There was no current end date for the new timetable, however it would be reviewed over the forthcoming weeks ahead.

Sickness absence for the company overall was reported at 9.6% of which 3.9% was due to Covid, however some depots had absence at 25% which reflected the necessity for an amended timetable. Demand was reported to be significantly reduced from levels in November and early December 2021 and for period 10 between 12 December and 8 January 2022, levels where 64% revenue and 56% journey recovery.

Resolved /-

That the update by Rail Operators be noted.

GMTMRC 08/22 GMTC TRANSPORT WORK PROGRAMME

The latest work programme for the GM Transport Committee was presented for approval.

Resolved /-

That the Work Programme be noted.

GMTMRC 09/22 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved /-

Friday 11 March 2022 at 10:30am