

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER
METROLINK AND RAIL SUB COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 22 JANUARY 2021 AT 10:30AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT:

Councillor Richard Gold	Bury Council
Councillor Stuart Haslam	Bolton Council
Councillor Dzidra Noor	Manchester City Council
Councillor Howard Sykes	Oldham Council
Councillor Doreen Dickinson (in the Chair)	Oldham Council
Councillor Peter Robinson	Tameside Council
Councillor Steve Adshead	Trafford Council
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan Council

OFFICERS AND OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mark Angelucci	Rail Officer, TfGM
Guillaume Chanussot	Managing Director, KeolisAmey Metrolink
Simon Elliott	Head of Rail Programme, TfGM
Charlie French	Regional Growth Manager, Avanti West Coast
Chris Jackson	Regional Director, Northern
Danielle Lahan	Customer Account Manager, Network Rail
Lucja Majewski	Transpennie Express
Victoria Mercer	Metrolink Service Delivery Manager, TfGM
Bob Morris	Chief Operating Officer, TfGM
Lee Teasdale	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA
Daniel Vaughan	Head of Metrolink, TfGM
Nicola Ward	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA
Caroline Whittam	Head of Rail Franchising, TfGM

GMTMRC 01/21 APOLOGIES

Resolved /-

That apologies be noted and received from Councillor Naeem Hassan (Manchester CC), Councillor Atteque Ur-Rehman (Oldham Council), Councillor Shah Wazir (Rochdale Council) and Gwynne Williams (GMCA).

GMTMRC 02/21 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

That it be noted and agreed that an additional supplementary item be added to the agenda at 5a – verbal Operator Update and to be a standard agenda item going forward.

GMTMRC 03/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved /-

That there were no declarations of interest.

GMTMRC 04/21 MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE METROLINK & RAIL SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2020

Resolved /-

That the minutes of the meeting held 20 November 2020 be approved.

GMTMRC 05/21 LOCAL RAIL SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Caroline Whittam, Head of Rail Franchising TfGM took Members through a report which provided an update on local rail service operations and performance across Greater Manchester for rail periods 08 and 09, 2020/21 (18 October – 12 December 2020).

It was advised that there had been strong consistent performance by all operators in the area and patronage was at around 15 – 20% of pre-Covid levels. Furthermore, face covering compliance had varied between operators and journey type/time, with average reports of between 80 – 85%.

Train services experienced a further incremental uplift in timetable changes brought in on 13 December and were now at around 88% of pre-Covid levels. Avanti West Coast had reduced services between Manchester – London to two trains per hour (tph) from 14 November 2020. However, it was noted that a number of timetables had changed again since the third national lockdown imposed on 5 January 2021.

New Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) brought in for train operators on 20 September, remained in place. New agreements would feature additional payments to operators for good performance. TPE had many contract changes during the period due to the effect of the pandemic and would therefore enter into a direct award arrangement from the 1 April 2021. Further detail on this arrangement would be reported at the next meeting.

An update was provided regarding the consultation launched on 14 January 2021 into Timetable Options to Improve Rail Performance in the North of England. The consultation is aimed at improving the reliability of rail services in and around Manchester and of considerable significance to the Committee. An overview of details of the consultation was provided highlighting the requirement of increased infrastructure to operate services. Members were advised that consultation would close on 10 March 2021 and a report detailing the proposed approach in response to the consultation and recommend next steps would be presented to GMCA on 12 February 2021.

The Chair acknowledged the supplementary update relating to Timetable Options to Improve Rail Performance in the North of England and infrastructure requirements. The outstanding work by Community Rail groups and subsequent awards in November and December were also recognised.

Members requested further information regarding the recording of criminal activity on the railway and suggested further comparable data in relation to fatality and crime trends be included in future reports to the Committee.

Additional detail relating to newer trains fitted with more advanced braking systems and wheel-slip protection less susceptible to braking issues and wheel-flats was provided. The Committee were informed that the business case had been approved to fit wheel-slip protection to the remainder of the fleet by the end of 2021. A further update on the progress of the programme would be provided throughout the year.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That further comparable data in relation to fatality and crime trends be included in future reports to the Committee.

GMTMRC 06/21 OPERATOR UPDATE

The Committee invited Train operators to provide feedback on train services in GM over the recent period, with a particular emphasis on the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on services and recent flooding.

Comments raised by train operators included the following:

- Northern advised 15% of drivers and 9% of conductors were currently absent from work due to Covid related circumstances. TPE had also seen an increase in staff absence, however due to the implementation of a reduced timetable, the impact on performance and service was marginal. Network Rail reported 40 members of staff were currently absent, although staffing levels were not affecting operations.
- Northern reported patronage as low at circa. 15% of pre Covid levels. However, there had been a 4% uplift when compared to previous lockdowns. TPE advised patronage was circa 10% pre Covid levels.
- A year on year decrease of 85% footfall at Manchester Piccadilly station was reported by Network Rail.
- There were no concerns for social distancing capacity on trains. Average train loading into Manchester at the morning peak was reported by Northern as 23 and 26 people per train during the afternoon peak.
- Mask compliance across the network had improved and considered to be helped by the additional employment of 11 Travelsafe officers.
- Customer messaging had evolved during the pandemic. Most recent messaging advised passengers to only travel if the journey was essential and only for legally permitted reasons in line with national guidance.
- Northern had introduced timetable changes on 18 January 2021 to provide stability and punctuality due to increases in Covid related absence. There would now be a focus on identifying any gaps in services ahead of schools reopening on 8 March 2021. From 24 January 2021, there would be a temporary reduction of some Sunday station and ticket offices shifts. This would affect Bolton, Manchester Oxford Road and Victoria and Rochdale stations.

- Future timetable changes to be introduced by Northern in May 2021 were being considered. High level detail of this had been shared with the North of England Contingency Group and an update would be provided to the Committee at a forthcoming meeting.
- Timetable changes would come into effect 25 January 2021 on TPE southern routes between Manchester and Cleethorpes and subsequently on 1 February 2021 on northern routes. Services would temporarily decrease and services could be reinstated if required within two weeks.
- Northern advised that Covid had impacted the driving training programme significantly and would affect May timetable changes and beyond as emphasis would remain on reliability and resilience.
- Northern had launched a scooter policy and permit scheme to allow scooter users to travel on 21 routes using 140 stations reflecting fleet accessibility. Furthermore, modifications in line with legislation for those with reduced mobility were reported to be 90% complete across the fleet.
- A Northern customer panel had been established providing honest feedback to help shape the future.
- 157 Amazon lockers had been installed at along with LED lighting at stations.
- Body cameras had been introduced by Northern for conductors from 12 January 2021 along with recent smart card revenue training to enable more comprehensive revenue enforcement.
- Northern had implemented a controlled shutdown of network on Wednesday 20 January due to weather conditions resulting in more than 50 flood sites across the network. Fortunately, all passengers had been returned home and much of the network had reopened within 48 hours.
- TPE advised they were still experiencing operational issues due to flooding in and around the Garforth area of Leeds which was affecting services passing through Manchester.

Resolved /-

That the verbal update provided by Operators be noted.

GMTMRC 07/21 LOCAL RAIL STATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATE

Simon Elliott, Head of Rail Programme, TfGM provided Members with an update on local rail stations matters within Greater Manchester. The report provided a summary of the background and an update on the progress and current position in relation to rail infrastructure schemes and initiatives.

It was reported that following the successful submissions to DfT for Access for All (AfA) main programme funding, providing step free access via lifts for Daisy Hill, Irlam and Walkden stations, TfGM and rail industry Alliance partners had been progressing the development of the schemes. A summary of the 22 AfA Mid-Tier funded stations along with proposed improvements supported by a GMCA funding contribution was detailed in the report.

An update was provided on Rail Station Based Park and Ride Programme at Mills Hill, Walkden, Swinton and Bromley Cross stations. Members were advised that the Mills Hill Park and Ride project would deliver an enhanced Park and Ride facility on the site of the existing car park, to complement Network Rail's Access for All scheme. The Network Rail programme anticipated an estimated completion in early 2021.

It was reported that over the past few months, the Alliance had been progressing a number of initiatives, however, the pace at which these had progressed has been impacted by COVID. The Alliance was working throughout GM to identify a series of community, regeneration and development opportunities. The group had identified several potential station area projects which presented the opportunity to provide new and improved community assets to the locality.

An update regarding Salford Central Station additional platforms scheme included within the list of prioritised schemes as part of the Local Transport Body devolved majors funding part of Local Growth Deal 1 was detailed within the report.

Members were informed that as part of platform extension plans, work had recently been completed by Network Rail on extending the bay platform at Wigan North Western. Further platform extensions had been announced for Hyde Central and Hyde North stations. Network Rail advised that the passenger lift which serves platforms 13 and 14 at Manchester Piccadilly would be out of service due to replacement between 08 February – 19 May 2021. A fixed stairlift would be available to help passengers to and from the platform level, with staff available to help. Passengers would be made aware via an information campaign.

The Committee were reminded that the Rail Station Improvement Strategy (RSIS) was established to improve existing passenger security and information systems at smaller rail stations across Greater Manchester as funding became available. To date, seventy-one stations had benefited from improvements with a further five currently being developed with works anticipated to be completed on site in summer 2021. In addition, Arriva Rail North committed approximately £30 million to enhance stations across the Northern franchise and developed a programme of works. However, the SIF programme was paused as a result of the changeover to the Operator of Last Resort and Northern Trains Ltd. were asked to develop a prospectus for investment moving forward.

Resolved /-

That the report be noted.

GMTMRC 08/21 METROLINK SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Victoria Mercer, Metrolink Service Delivery Manager, TfGM introduced a report which provided a performance summary for the rolling 12-month period.

Members were advised that since the start of the Covid pandemic, there had been considerable impact to patronage which was currently averaging 15% of pre-COVID levels. The current service provision adopted during the pandemic was outlined and members were informed that all available trams run in service on weekdays, with as many doubles as possible to facilitate social distancing.

There had been a number of operational incidents since the last meeting which had impacted on performance. Firstly, there had been a burst water main in the Oldham Mumps area and two overhead line failures at Chorlton and Cornbrook along with a serious road traffic collision in Ashton requiring a multi-agency response. It was advised that the recent bad weather had caused some disruption to the East Didsbury line, however services overall had been maintained.

Tram availability had significantly improved since the last meeting and increased to above 90% in period nine. The delivery of the first new tram was on the 14 November 2020 and the second tram arrived just before Christmas. Other trams would continue to arrive throughout the course of this year which would increase capacity on the network by enabling the use of more doubles to support social distancing in the short term and support the delivery of patronage growth in the longer term. However, the delivery schedule had been impacted due to the latest national lockdown and would remain under review.

Recorded incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour on the network remained lower than those recorded in 2019. On average, 181 incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour per month were reported to Metrolink across the duration of the year. However, criminal damage had escalated across the network through November and December affecting platform shelters, TVMs, ticket validators, saloon windows, tram seats and cycle hubs. TravelSafe Days of Action have continued and an overview of the activities of the Travel Safe Partnership was provided.

It was reported that during December, additional cleaning resource were introduced onto the network to increase the number of daily touch point cleans along each line and onboard trams. This was an increase of approx. 500 hours per week of touch point cleaning activity. In the same week a team of 'Trambassadors' had been introduced to support customers using the network by informing them of the safety information when using the network and requirements to wear face coverings. Hand sanitiser units were introduced on all city centre stops which have the highest footfall traffic.

Face covering compliance had been monitored across the network and levels remained consistently high on Metrolink at circa 85% compliance. Metrolink Travel Safe Officers had conducted dedicated activities around educating and encouraging the use of face coverings as well as collaborating with the Transport Unit to conduct targeted operations at key locations where compliance was lower and support enforcement activities. In addition, a significant amount of work had been undertaken with local schools and colleges near the network.

The latest funding package available to Metrolink had been confirmed following the latest national lockdown announcement. The total shortfall for 2020/21 was forecast to be circa £64m and a package of support from central government had been agreed. However long-term funding remained uncertain.

Essential maintenance and renewal works would continue to be planned as per the annual programme and work was currently being finalised for scheduling in March and April. Significant track work would take place in the city centre including Victoria and Piccadilly as well as Trafford Bar, Cornbrook, Rochdale and Eccles. Network Rail planned bridge works at Victoria would also impact upon Metrolink services and work was underway with Network Rail to plan and minimise the impact on services as much as possible.

Members welcomed the improvement in compliance in the wearing of face coverings across the network and requested further details on the number of fixed penalties issued for non-compliance. It was confirmed that the within the report details of interventions for non-compliance of face coverings was recorded and 18 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued across the transport network as a result of enforcement activity. Travel Safe officers had made over 5k interventions including engagement and education and preventing those passengers without exemption from travelling on the network.

It was reported that the business case in relation to the suspension of wi-fi access on the Mertolink network had been provided to the GM Mayor in July 2020 and it was suggested that a copy be circulated to all Members of GMTC following recent concern regarding transparency of the decision-making process expressed at previous meetings.

It was proposed and agreed that further detail in relation to customer contacts and complaints categories would be provided in future reports to the Committee.

Guillaume Chanussot, Managing Director, KeolisAmey Metrolink supplemented the report by providing a verbal performance update highlighting the strength of collaborative work between TfGM and KAM. It was advised that along with operational performance and customer satisfaction, safety across the network remained of significant importance and performance remained high. He reported circa.9% absenteeism in the organisation due to Covid, however, this had not affected service performance. He further highlighted passenger satisfaction had reached the highest level since the commencement of the contract, above 90%.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the briefing in relation to the removal of Wifi facilities on Metrolink be shared with all Members of the Committee.
3. That a breakdown of complaints by type be included in future reports to the Committee.

GMTMRC 09/21 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 10/21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved /-

That the future meeting dates be noted by the Committee.