

# **MINUTES OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER TRANSPORT METROLINK & RAIL**

## **COMMITTEE**

**HELD FRIDAY, 13TH JANUARY, 2023 AT THE BOARDROOM, THE TOOTAL  
BUILDINGS, BROADHURST HOUSE , 1ST FLOOR, 56 OXFORD STREET,  
MANCHESTER, M1 6EU**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor Damian Bailey	Salford
Councillor Noel Bayley	Bury MBC
Councillor Angie Clark	Stockport MBC
Councillor Doreen Dickinson in the Chair	Tameside MBC
Councillor Stuart Haslam	Bolton Council
Councillor Dzidra Noor	Manchester City Council
Councillor Eamon O'Brien	Bury Council

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mark Angelucci	Rail Performance Officer, TfGM
Liz Boyle	TfGM (Observing)
Helen Davies	Senior Governance and Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
Simon Elliot	Head of Rail Programme, TfGM
Victoria Mercer	TfGM
Daniel Vaughan	TfGM

### **OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Chris Jackson	Northern Trains
Graham Meiklejohn	TransPennine Express
Kara Wood	Network Rail
Damien Chabas	KeliosAmey Metrolink
Nick Smith	Avanti West Coast

## **GMCA/1/20 Apologies**

Apologies were received from, Councillors: John Vickers (Wigan), Mohammed Ayub (Bolton), Aasim Rashid (Rochdale), Kevin Peel (Bury).

## **GMCA/2/20 Chairs Announcements and Urgent Business**

The Chair wished the Committee a Happy New Year and noted those in attendance for the meeting, plus a change of running order to the agenda to accommodate a diary request.

### **RESOLVED/-**

That it be noted:

- 1) That Councillor Eamonn O'Brien had now joined the Committee as he had been appointed as the Combined Authority representative and replaced Councillor Andrew Western on this Committee; and
- 2) That the rail report and update would be the first item of business to accommodate a diary request.

## **GMCA/3/20 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations received in relation to any item on the agenda.

## **GMCA/4/20 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

### **RESOLVED/-**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2022 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

## **GMCA/5/20 Local Rail Services Performance Report**

Simon Elliot, Head of Rail Programme, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) introduced a report to the Committee on Local Rail Services and noted the following points:

- Operation performance had declined and was a concern for TfGM. The practice of P-Coding (a process to make advance cancellations, when not enough staff or trains were available) had continued and there had been between 250-400 cancellations per week.
- Northern performance remained a concern, improvement was noted between Period 07 and 08 when Short-Forming (the use of a train that is shorter than usual) of services more than doubled in Period 07 performance improved in Period 08.
- Although Avanti did not use the practice of P-coding, performance remained poor with Public Performance Measures (PPM) on reduced timetables at 66.8% in Period 08 and a Right Time figure of 26.3%.
- Performance was affected by additional causes such as trespass, fatality, weather (flooding) and sickness.
- Industrial action with a strike during October continued to impact rail and Metrolink services.
- Thanks were noted by TfGM to Network Rail for support of contingency cover during challenges to business continuity.
- Transpennine Express had experienced performance issues with patronage demand for services at 65% of pre-Covid levels.
- The December 22 timetable change, weather issues in December and rostering system issues were all noted and TfGM would continue to monitor these issues closely.

The Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions, there was some discussion that included:

- Central Government had allowed train operators time to make an offer around working days. The offer submitted was a final offer in terms of value and ASLEF (the train union) was continuing negotiations;
- Specific questions were asked by Members on:
  - the financial cost to train operators (through the refund of tickets) given that there was a significant number of commuting passengers negatively affected by the strikes;
  - some Members had noticed periods where there was a significant number of passenger numbers on the platforms and concern was raised about the safety of allowing large numbers of passengers to build up on platforms; and

- some Members had noticed expensive return fares between Manchester-London and queried if there were any correlations between fair prices and the service.
- TfGM had requested ticket acceptance (across rail operators and Metrolink) for those passengers affected by strike action and cancelled trains in order to minimise further disruptions;
- TfGM gave reassurances to the Committee that an analysis had begun to understand the wider impacts of the decline in rail performance. Work was being carried out with the Chamber of Commerce and the Local Enterprise Partnership. TfGM could demonstrate figures for investment on the railway and money spent within the city region, this also assisted business cases to demonstrate the growing city region required more services and quantified the role of rail services.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

- 1) That the Local Rail Services Performance Report be received and noted.
- 2) That a report outlining the reasons for poor performance would be brought to the next committee meeting.
- 3) That it be noted that Northern and Avanti West Coast Trains agreed to respond to the questions in relation to refunded tickets, level of traffic on platforms, cancellation of trains and fair prices directly with Members.
- 4) That a report on the Value of the Railway (currently being undertaken by Transport for the North (TfN) was scheduled to the Rail North Committee on 22 February and this would be shared with this Committee at the next meeting.
- 5) That it be noted that Northern Trains agreed to directly feedback to Members on specific questions: the outcomes of the Rest Day Working to Councillor Angie Clark; and to re-circulate the information on refunds to tickets to Councillor Damian Bailey.

#### **GMCA/6/20 Rail Operator Update**

The Chair addressed the operators in attendance and specifically asked as part of the update to answer: what the current plans were for future changes being considered as part of May or December 23 timetable change.

## **Northern Trains**

Chris Jackson, Regional Director, Northern Trains addressed the Committee with an update and the following points were noted:

- The update position reflected 4-6 weeks since the last update and acknowledged the last four weeks had significant impact for customers. Nine full strike days had been recorded and 14-days of action short of a strike, where large parts of the network across GM and nationally received no cover.
- The dispute action was significant and this had made business planning difficult.
- 10-20% services were cancelled on a daily basis with 2-days notice where possible.
- 95% of employees worked Sundays outside of their contracted working week, the Regional Director noted reform was needed within the industry in this area.
- The Committee noted that in respect of the December 22 timetable, an extra 2,000 trains a week had been scheduled as part of a new timetable structure. Reassurances were given that there was capacity for drivers and conductors and in spite of flooding earlier in the week, the launch had gone well.
- The Track Satisfaction Scores reflected that the strikes and associated negative press had impacted the decisions by the public away from travelling by rail.
- The December 22 timetable now reflected an extra two-thousand trains per-week, there were enough drivers and conductors and despite recent flooding the timetable had worked.
- The flash sale of 5,000 tickets had gone well.
- Work was ongoing for:
  - the platform extension on the Airport line; and
  - Platforms 13 and 14 at Piccadilly Station.
- Salford Central remained closed until Summer 2023, the refurbishment would see a fit for purpose station that was fully accessible.

## **TransPennine Express**

Graham Meiklejohn, Regional Development Manager, TransPennine Express addressed the Committee with an update and the following points were noted:

- The training requirement had been set back because of the rest day working agreement, this had been the day used to enable training and therefore, if it came into effect this would limit future capacity for training.
- The Secretary of State (SoS) had made an offer to the Trade Union in respect of the rest day working agreement, thanks were extended to the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham for his work in lobbying the SoS on this matter.
- Apologies were made to those affected by the cancellation of services and the unacceptable service was acknowledged.
- Winter had impacted severely on the network dysfunction, and there had been localised flooding between Manchester-Liverpool. Programmes of work were scheduled to combat severe effects of flooding.
- In respect of the question by the Chair, the Committee was advised that services would be dependent on a business plan that would be updated on in due course.

The Committee noted the high absences reported in December and queried the reasons why to determine if it was preventable. The Regional Development Manager gave reassurances to the Committee that there was a process for absence management that was monitored to understand patterns. Those with medium to long term sickness absence were supported back to a position of work via referrals for support such as counselling.

### **Avanti West Coast**

Nick Smith, Regional Growth Manager, Avanti West Coast addressed the Committee and noted the following points:

- The timetable alterations in December for Avanti now ran seven trains an hour out of Euston, London. This was the biggest improvement and change to the timetable on the West Coast Mainline since 2008.
- Poor performance was acknowledged for passengers trying to plan journeys and whilst travelling when disruption affected the trains they were onboard.
- Avanti had provided a time-table not reliant on rest day working that could be delivered in a sustainable way.
- Manchester had returned to three services an hour to Euston. Rugby had been reinstated as a route due to usage as a destination and not just a connection. Data showed an increase in passengers travelling to work in Manchester.

- Avanti provided more services into and out of Manchester throughout the day and reported a short time between trains when cancellations occurred.
- Customers had been delaying travel since the train strikes and had deferred meetings until a period of stability with the trains. This had impacted on fares.
- Avanti were refurbishing the Pendolino fleet, with completion expected in 2024, depending on supply chains.
- Community rail projects continued and funding was available for this year with spend into next year.
- More engagement with staff had been undertaken, specifically to understand long-standing sickness absences.

## **Network Rail**

Kara Wood, North-West route head of performance, Network Rail addressed the Committee and noted the following points:

- There had been improvements made with staffing along the gate-line at Manchester Piccadilly station, and longer term plans were being considered to improve the gate-line where there were gaps.
- Industrial Action had dominated rail performance, however Network Rail was optimistic for a referendum rather than another date for strike action.
- The comments from operators had been noted, particularly where the impacts from Network Rail infrastructure had focussed on external causes. The underlying level of reliability of the infrastructure continued to be good but Network Rail continued to monitor that to maintain asset reliability.
- External issues could be categorised into two key areas:
  - 1) Weather. Whilst this did impact Network Rail had seen positive resilience to the asset infrastructure following physical work to it. It was noted that extremes of weather was still expected and there had been particularly low temperatures throughout December 2022 which was a challenge to the infrastructure.  
In terms of flooding, Network Rail continued a programme of works and enhancements. Planning continued to improve responses to flooding or cold periods of weather, or when preventative speed restrictions have to come into force to minimise the impacts of these interventions on the infrastructure.

- 2) Trespass and Suicide. This was acknowledged as a difficult issue to deal with, Network Rail continued practical target hardening (e.g. platform fencing) to deter incidents but also worked with partners for triage intervention such as mental health services and the British Transport Police.
- Improvement works had continued at Manchester Piccadilly to Platform 13 and were in progress at Platform 14. Tactile pavings were expected as part of the next phase of works.
- Sunday 15 January was scheduled as a planned full closure of Manchester Piccadilly Station and this was acknowledged as a challenge as there would be no rail services at all although a bus rail replacement service would be in operation.
- The Assisted Travel Lounge at Manchester Piccadilly Station was due to open in early Spring.
  - Staff Sickness was common across the rail industry, Network Rail offered in-house Occupation Health Clinics and continued to monitor the health and well-being of staff.
  - Network Rail operated within control periods that released 5-years of funding at a time. The current position was the end of control period 6, working on settlement for control period 7. Network Rail had received a statement of funds available to continue to operate the infrastructure for the 5-year period whilst working towards the Final Determination figure.

The Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions and discussion included the perception by Members that staff morale was low and clarity was sought on the measures (through a employers duty-of-care) being taken to support staff and the changes to processes and rosters during a difficult period of productivity.

The Committee asked for data to map the type of journeys between Manchester and London specifically how many were for leisure vs. business.

There was some discussion on the renovations to Platform 13 and 14 at Manchester Piccadilly Station. Members noted that there had been negative feedback from the public via social media on the removal of seating and planters and asked for further clarity on this matter.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

- 1) That the Rail Operator update be received and noted.

- 2) That all Operators be requested to bring back an item to the next Committee meeting on staff morale and what measures through a employers duty-of-care were being taken to support staff and the changes to processes and rosters during a difficult period of productivity.
- 3) That it be noted that Avanti West Coast agreed to feedback directly to Councillor Damian Bailey on the subject of data to map journeys between Manchester and London specifically how many were for leisure vs. business.
- 4) That it be noted that Network Rail agreed to feedback directly to Councillor Noel Bayley on the subject of seating and planters on Platform 13 and 14 at Manchester Piccadilly Station.

#### **GMCA/7/20 Evaluation of the Carriage of Dogs on Metrolink Pilot**

Daniel Vaughan, Head of Metrolink, TfGM presented a report on the evaluation of the carriage of dogs on Metrolink pilot to the Committee and noted that Manchester Metrolink had been an outlier in respect of the carriage of dogs on the network. TfGM carried out a pilot in August-October 2022 and had consulted with a variety of groups. Very few issues had emerged and feedback from both customers and via social media was positive. Regular commuters were less in favour of the scheme but when all the consultation was evaluated, the majority of customers were positive about the scheme.

There were terms and conditions in allowing dogs to travel on the trams including the requirement for owners to clean up behind their dogs and dogs were not allowed on seats.

The Committee queried if timings of dogs travelling on the trams could be conditioned, the Head of Metrolink clarified that some passengers used Assistance Dogs and not all disabilities were visible and therefore the approach taken was in-line with the rest of the UK and ensured that it was straightforward for the Police to manage.

The Chair noted the report referenced the Metrolink Conditions of Carriage were amended to include eight further conditions plus a recommendation for passengers to read the 'Guidance for taking your dog on Metrolink' and queried if the rules around carriage of dogs could be tightened up.

The Committee was advised that:

- TfGM was in the process of revisiting a consultant report in respect of passengers bringing bikes onto the trams.

- Not all trams were double units so it could not be stipulated that dogs travel in specific carriages;
- If dogs were vicious this would be enforced in the same way any bylaw would, Customer Service Officers would be roaming the network and staff would enforce if cases occurred. The Committee noted that there were few reports of aggressive dogs during the pilot and other parts of the UK reported that it didn't happen. Announcements could also be made on the platforms if needed.

**RESOLVED/-**

- 1) That the findings of the pilot of the carriage of non-assistance dogs on Metrolink be received and noted;
- 2) That the proposal to continue to allow non-assistance dogs on the Metrolink Network, subject to the conditions of carriage be agreed; and
- 3) That it be noted that TfGM would bring an item back to the Committee on the subject of bicycles on the Metrolink revisiting a consultant report from when the network was purchased.

**GMCA/8/20 Metrolink Service Performance Report**

Victoria Mercer, Metrolink Service Delivery Manager, TfGM presented the Metrolink Service Performance Report to the Committee and noted the following points:

- A third-party incident had occurred at the Anchorage stop where a pallet of bricks had fallen onto the track. This incident had impacted on performance;
- There had been issues on staff availability due to the constraints experienced during the winter months;
- Engineering works at Piccadilly Gardens had concluded in November;
- A programme of works for 2023 gave consideration to weekend and evening work and some tunnel and track work;
- During the last academic year 55,000 young people were engaged with, activities ranged from Key Stage 6 and secondary schools and collages with safety roadshows, Freshers Week at Manchester University with key messages against violence towards women and girls;
- TfGM was now part of the Police live-chat to work towards reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB);
- TfGM had partnered with Foundation 92, an independent Charity in Salford that focused on supporting people to improve their lives through sport. The

- partnership considered sport education and an emphasis on mental intervention specifically for those at risk of ASB. This work had helped along the Airport Line as it was reactive to ASB hotspots;
- Work had been undertaken using Virtual Reality (VR) that put youth offenders in the shoes of a tram driver to simulate ASB on train tracks (statistically not a premeditated event). VR was recognised as a powerful addition to the suite of interventions.

A Member enquired about clarity on the tunnel works at Whitefield. Clarity was provided that there was a speed restriction in the tunnel due to a cracked iron beam. The beam was in a difficult location and the work had been a complicated investigation, work had been paused and a review would commence in the summer but this would result in a Bury-Whitefield closure during this time. Replacement bus services would be in operation.

**RESOLVED/-**

That the Metrolink Service Performance Report be received and noted.

**GMCA/9/20 Metrolink Operator Update**

Damien Chabas, Service Delivery Director of KAM provided a verbal update to the Committee. Positive performance was noted specifically the dedication and resilience and the planning and delivery of teams operating in a difficult social and economic environment. The Committee were advised that there were pressures on staff availability resulting from seasonal absenteeism and the impacts of covid on recruitment. Measures had been taken in respect of mental health support with the allocation of buddies in the work-place which removed any stigma of being able to talk to management.

KAM were committed to ensuring:

- an effective partnership;
- that Metrolink was a safe place to travel;
- that Metrolink was effectively maintained as an asset to GM residents and visitors; and
- that Metrolink could become financially sustainable.

**RESOLVED/-**

That the Metrolink Operator update be received and noted

**GMCA/10/20 Work Programme**

**RESOLVED/-**

That the Work Programme be received and noted.

**GMCA/11/20 Dates and Times of Future Meetings**

**RESOLVED/-**

That the dates and times of future meetings be received and noted.