

GREATER MANCHESTER TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Friday 17th March 2023

Subject: Get On Board Campaign Update

Report of: Carla Nuttall, Head of Strategic Communication, TfGM.

Purpose of Report

To update members on the 'Get On Board' campaign to promote use of Public Transport and Active Travel in Greater Manchester.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to:

1. Note the content of the report and comment on implementation of the campaign;
and
2. Note the proposal to develop a Consumer and Commercial Growth Strategy.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: None

Background Papers

N/A

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No.

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

N/A

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 A report to the Greater Manchester Transport Committee on Network and Market Renewal ([link](#)) in October 2022 highlighted the way that significant investment in Greater Manchester will dramatically improve the transport offer. Greater Manchester's move to bus franchising provides the mechanism to deliver transformational change. This all builds towards delivering the Bee Network, an integrated 'London-style' transport system, which will transform the way people travel across the city region by bus, tram, active travel and, ultimately, rail.
- 1.2 At the same time, Greater Manchester was facing uncertain passenger numbers on public transport, increasing energy prices and inflation as the city region recovered from the pandemic. Since March 2020, Greater Manchester's public transport network had been supported by emergency funding provision. This ended in October 2022 for Metrolink and will end for buses in June 2023.
- 1.3 To overcome these challenges and prepare GM's public transport network for the delivery of the Bee Network, GMCA agreed to undertake a programme of work focused on market renewal. The aim of the programme is to navigate and move past the current shortfalls in demand, to plan for and promote a growth path for public transport in Greater Manchester to 2025 and provide the basis for further growth through franchise operation thereafter. This work has been supported by the #GetOnBoard campaign to promote use of Public Transport and Active Travel in Greater Manchester.
- 1.4 There are clear market opportunities to increase the number of journeys made by public transport and active travel. Currently over two-thirds of journeys in Greater Manchester are made by car; including 30% of trips under 1km, the equivalent of a 15 minute walk. Road congestion is rising and Greater Manchester has the fastest growing population of any metropolitan county in the last ten years increasing the demand for public transport. The delivery of safe, reliable, frequent and affordable public transport and active travel will, therefore, help encourage more people to travel in this way, tackling congestion, reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality in the process.

2. Campaign Approach

- 2.1 Get On Board launched in two waves. The initial wave (17 August – 8 September) had a specific focus on raising awareness of the early introduction of simple and low bus fares in Greater Manchester, ensuring that people were able to benefit from the

introduction of £2/1 adult/child single fares (£5/£2.50 AnyBus All Day) when they went live from September 2022.

- 2.2 Building on the launch of new low bus fares, the second wave of #GetOnBoard (29 September to 10 November) introduced a longer-term, multi-modal behaviour change campaign. The overarching aim of the integrated Get On Board campaign was to provide a powerful, recognisable and flexible platform to support the holistic promotion of Public Transport and Active Travel (PT/AT) in Greater Manchester, which could be underpinned by complementary activity in support of specific modes, products, services and strategic priorities.
- 2.3 The messaging approach for the second wave of the campaign reflected ongoing concerns about rising fuel costs and the cost-of-living crisis more generally. It promoted PT/ AT with a call to action, and encouraged people to visit the TfGM fares and ticketing website to learn more about the best value options for their journey, with reference to specific Metrolink products and continued promotion of new low bus fares. It also encouraged people to consider Active Travel (walking, cycling and wheeling) for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey using public transport.
- 2.4 With a dynamic and uniform look and feel, featuring film and photography showing people using PT /AT across Greater Manchester, and clear and consistent messaging, Get On Board was promoted across multiple communication and engagement channels, including: Marketing (digital advertising, paid social, Out of Home, Radio, TfGM/bus poster sites, bus sides, and internal assets across bus and Metrolink cross-promoting modes); PR and media relations; and stakeholder/partner communications with a specific focus on business engagement and advocacy. Examples of campaign materials can be found in Appendix 1.

3. Campaign Reach

- 3.1 The first wave generated strong reach across the range of channels used, this included: 110 media reports, including key titles (Manchester Evening News, BBC and ITV), with overwhelmingly positive sentiment (94%) towards the introduction of new low fares; 539,500 social media impressions; and 34,292 visits to the TfGM.com/GetOnBoard campaign web page, where people were able to find out more.
- 3.2 Campaign evaluation showed strong results for awareness and sentiment of new low bus fares, which was the primary focus. Research conducted by the TfGM Surveys Research and Analysis Department (SRAD) (survey conducted 01 November and 03

December 2022), reported strong levels of awareness, with 72% of people saying they 'know all about it' and further respondents saying they knew about certain elements of the offer. Only 9% of respondents had no awareness. Complementary focus group research (Brand Edge – September 2022) provided evidence that promotion of new low bus fares had had a positive impact on perceptions of public travel, with the potential to influence behaviour change. Just under half (46%) of survey respondents said that campaign activity showed that bus travel could be good value, with a third (32%) saying that it made them consider travelling by bus more often; and 11% saying they would consider using their car less frequently.

- 3.3 An evaluation¹ of the first three months of Greater Manchester's £2 / £5 Bus Fare Offer (September – December 2022) shows that this initiative contributed to an increase of bus patronage of 10% over this period. Whilst it is difficult to directly attribute the proportion of this increase which results from the fares offer and what is attributable to the ongoing recovery of travel markets post pandemic, initial estimates are that approximately 5% is due to the fares offer, equating to approximately 1.5 million additional journeys in just three months. This is particularly encouraging in respect of promoting changes in travel behaviour and encouraging mode shift from car.
- 3.4 Research by [Transport Focus](#) published in February 2023 reported that the North West region had the second highest level of awareness of low bus fares among the eight English regions outside London where they have been introduced.
- 3.5 The second wave of Get On Board utilised the same mix of communications and engagement channels but with broader multi-modal messaging and an additional focus on partnership opportunities with the private sector, and promoting advocacy for Public Transport and Active Travel through a refreshed [Business Portal](#).
- 3.6 Launched with one year to go to Day 1, Tranche 1 of bus franchising, it generated more than 5m opportunities for people to see or hear Get On Board messaging through 25 pieces of coverage across key regional and local media and 278,400 organic social media impressions. The campaign generated 158,360 page views of the tickets and passes web page, an increase of 174% on an equivalent period and 55% above the benchmark set.
- 3.7 The business engagement strand of the campaign, supported by the Transport Commissioner, provided an opportunity for engagement with representatives of 70%

¹ <https://tfgm.com/data-analytics-and-insight/surveys-and-research/low-bus-fares>

of Greater Manchester's private sector organisations, as well as local authorities and Business Improvement Districts, generating significant stakeholder support for Get On Board. Dedicated business collateral was shared by partners to circa 50,000 businesses. Business portal use significantly increased as a result, with a 550% increase in users in the first week of its launch and sustained higher views in the months thereafter.

- 3.8 Evaluation by Brand Edge confirmed strong public appeal for Get On Board, and crucially, highlighted the potential for the campaign to change behaviour with 50% of respondents finding it motivating. More than a third of respondents (37%) said they would use public transport more as a result; with a slightly higher percentage (39%) saying they would seek further information. One in five (19%) said they would walk or cycle more, with 23% saying they would find out further information, and 19% saying they would tell friends and family about walking and cycling.
- 3.9 Evaluation has also provided useful insight into sentiment towards the developing Bee Network and people's appetite for Public Transport and Active Travel use. When told about the aims of the Bee Network, 56% of the public said they would be more likely to use public transport or engage in active travel. Another benefit of the integrated #GetOnBoard campaign was that even those that hadn't used the low bus fares offer, had increased positivity about the idea of travelling by bus in GM, going from 53% before September 2022 to 70% since the new fares were introduced.

4. Get On Board Phase 2

- 4.1 Get on Board Phase 2 will go live from 13 March and run for 12 weeks until 7 May. Based on evaluation and performance insights from Phase 1, it will take an audience-led approach, featuring PT/ AT users across Greater Manchester using their experiences to create empathy and highlight tangible benefits and opportunities that are available to others.
- 4.2 Content will include video case studies and photography featuring Public Transport and Active Travel users and clear calls to action related to PT/ AT use, and specific products and tickets. It will run concurrently with other complementary campaign activity supporting specific modes, with examples including: **MetroLink Days Out and Destinations** – targeting prospective leisure travellers to promote journeys to places where they can enjoy days out during the weekday inter-peak travel period, in the evenings, and at weekends. **Hyper Local Active Travel** – targeting people on the basis of the local authority area where they live, work and travel and highlighting the

infrastructure, products and services that are available to them and will enable them to become active travel participants.

- 4.3 In addition, socio-economic factors have been considered, including work from home trends and changing travel patterns; the impact of changes in road fuel prices and more general cost of living. Operational and modal factors have also been considered, including encouraging use of Metrolink outside of peak periods, bus service reliability and the transition towards the Bee Network, and that car journeys have returned to pre-pandemic levels.

5. Supporting Campaigns

- 5.1 Since launch, the look and feel of #GetOnBoard has been adopted across a range of aligned campaign activity to build excitement and momentum around the delivery of the Bee Network, while continuing to encourage use of Public Transport and Active Travel in support of both revenue generation, and addressing barriers to behaviour change by promoting safer and more sustainable journeys.
- 5.2 Key activity in support of the revenue generation strand included campaigns for Metrolink targeting the Christmas leisure market, highlighting affordable travel options and opportunities during the festive period; a campaign promoting 'ways to pay' and tackling fare evasion; and promotion of off-peak travel offers. Supporting Active Travel, the '10 for 10' campaign, led by Dame Sarah Storey encouraged people to make active travel a part of their everyday lives; while a 'minute bundles' campaign promoted the use of Cycle Hire.
- 5.3 A tier of 'hygiene' campaigns with their own look and feel, including TravelSafe activity targeting crime, ASB and perceptions of safety across the network have been delivered in parallel. Alongside, wider road and highways safety campaigns such as Tram Aware, Mindless Moments and Saccadic Masking which have been aimed at supporting Vision Zero by contributing to a reduction in RTCs which can impact wider network reliability or contribute to people feeling unsafe on the road.

6. Customer Growth Strategy

- 6.1 Get On Board is the first time that an integrated, multi-modal campaign approach has been taken and it has been critical to landing brand awareness and baseline perceptions of the Bee Network, and the propensity for it, and the campaign itself, to drive behaviour change. It has achieved a very positive response from the Department

for Transport and messaging treatments have also been picked up by TfL. It will continue to be an important brand building tool as the Bee Network is delivered across Greater Manchester.

- 6.2 The focus and scale of activity resourced and delivered through Get On Board and aligned campaigns has created a strong platform and will continue to enable positive incremental change. However, a step change will be needed to deliver a financially sustainable network, meaning supplementing existing activity with a focus and investment on more sophisticated, and measurable, targeted marketing specifically designed to drive incremental patronage, usage and revenue.
- 6.3 To that end, a consumer-focused sales and marketing strategy and plan are being developed that will outline the need for a continuous, systematic stream of targeted marketing campaigns, aimed at different areas, and geo-demographic and lifestyle segments, conveying the most relevant and motivating proposition to each segment.
- 6.4 Targeted campaigns will also seek to drive and influence travel behaviours in order to optimise network usage and revenue (as well as supporting broader strategic objectives). Crucially, campaigns will be tested against a control to evaluate the impact, and learnings will be used to optimise future campaigns, enhancing the return on investment.
- 6.5 The first wave of targeted marketing activity will commence by June 2023. Additionally, TfGM will look to simultaneously enhance its CRM, Digital Marketing and Direct Marketing capabilities, and grow consumer reach (ability to directly connect with customers and prospects) which will help to optimise income from advertisers, partners, and sponsors.
- 6.6 Other key focuses will be increasing customer insights, reducing fare evasion, and enhancing the customer experience at every touchpoint (physical and digital). Enhancing the customer experience is critical for driving business growth because it directly impacts customer retention and advocacy, driving an increase in sustainable travel, and increasing revenue in support of a more financially sustainable network.