

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER
METROLINK AND RAIL SUB COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 19 MARCH 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 Atteque Ur Rehman	Oldham Council
Councillor Doreen Dickinson (in the Chair)	Tameside Council
Councillor Shah Wazir	Rochdale Council
Councillor Peter Robinson	Tameside Council
Councillor Steve Adshead	Trafford Council

OFFICERS AND OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mark Angelucci	Rail Officer, TfGM
Guillaume Chanussot	Managing Director, KeolisAmey Metrolink
Daniel Coles	Network Rail
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
Eddie Muraszko	Department for Transport
Lucja Majewski	Transpennine Express
Victoria Mercer	Metrolink Service Delivery Manager, TfGM
Bob Morris	Chief Operating Officer, TfGM
Owain Roberts	Northern Rail
Lee Teasdale	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA
Daniel Vaughan	Head of Metrolink, TfGM
Nicola Ward	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA
Gwynne Williams	Deputy Monitoring Officer, GMCA
Caroline Whittam	Head of Rail Franchising, TfGM

GMTMRC 11/21 APOLOGIES

Resolved /-

That apologies be noted and received from Councillor Joanne Marshall (Wigan Council)

GMTMRC 12/21 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair made reference to the ongoing inquest into the death of Jack Barnes, who the coroner

ruled was unlawfully killed following his restraint by four individuals employed by Palladium Associates and contracted by the former operator MRDL to provide additional temporary support on the Metrolink network.

The Chair echoed the comments made by the GM Mayor that this was a tragic incident, and the thoughts of the Committee were with those closest to Jack. The coroner had been very clear in his ruling and due to the potential for ongoing enquiries by the police and CPS the Committee was, at the current time, unable to discuss the matter in any detail. At the appropriate time a more detailed update would be requested to come back to the committee.

Members were advised that an additional meeting of the overarching GM Transport Committee would be taking place on 24 March 2021.

Resolved /-

1. That the Committee expresses its condolences to those affected by the death of Jack Barnes, however, note that the coroner was very clear in his ruling and due to the potential for ongoing enquiries by the police and CPS the Committee were unable to discuss this matter in any detail.
2. That the additional GM Transport Committee date of 24 March 2021 be noted by the Committee.

GMTMRC 13/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved /-

That there were no declarations of interest.

GMTMRC 14/21 MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE METROLINK & RAIL SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2021

Resolved /-

That the minutes of the meeting held 22 January 2021 be approved.

GMTMRC 15/21 LOCAL RAIL SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Caroline Whittam (Head of Rail Franchising, TfGM) provided an update to members on rail service and operation across Greater Manchester over rail Periods 10 & 11 2020/21 (13 December 2020 – 6 February 2021).

It was advised that operational performance has remained consistent over the periods covered by the report, although some declines were recorded during Period 11, largely due to severe weather caused by Storm Christoph in the second week of the period.

The December 2020 timetable on 13 December had seen a further uplift in train services across Greater Manchester, representing around 88% of pre-Covid service levels. Industry preparations for Christmas (Covid restriction) relaxations included easement of ticketing and peak restrictions, additional strengthening, and standby buses, however, were not subsequently needed due to a

change in government policy. Christmas services operated to a similar format of previous years and planned engineering works were successfully completed on schedule.

In response to a third national lockdown on 5 January 2021 and Department for Transport instructions to focus on maintaining a reliable service for essential workers, whilst reducing operating costs, emergency train plans were once again introduced. These plans followed a similar pattern to operations between July – September 2020, with around 70% of pre-Covid services operating.

Face covering compliance had increased on rail to around 90%, with a slightly higher figure on longer distance and morning peak services. British Transport Police had recently moved from engagement to greater enforcement of rules.

In response to feedback from Members, a section of the report now detailed incidences of fatalities and suicides on the network. The period had seen fatalities within Greater Manchester at Belle Vue and Levenshulme, affecting South Manchester services. An additional fatality at Hebden Bridge, whilst outside GM, had impacted upon local Calder Valley services. In comparison, nationally there were 26 suicides on the rail network in Period 11, two more than in the same period last year. Overall, the figure stood at 210 this year, 15 fewer than at the same point in 2019/20.

TfGM had successfully applied to become the station licence holder for Horwich Parkway Rail Station. The TfGM-owned station was previously operated by Northern Trains Limited but had come under local control from 01 February 2021. Horwich Parkway would act as a blueprint for GM's future approach to station management, including working with local partners and the rail industry to ensure station accessibility, full integration and reflecting the needs of their communities. TfGM would be responsible for everything at the station apart from the running of the trains and the tracks they operated on. This included selling tickets, customer service, passenger assistance, cleaning and day-to-day maintenance, plus long-term renewals, and enhancements.

Due to the imposition of higher tier restrictions and the third national lockdown, station Friends groups and volunteers had been instructed not to work on stations until further notice. It was hoped that once restrictions began to ease, possibly from 08 March 2021, volunteers would be allowed back.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the addition of fatality and suicide statistics within the report be noted by the Committee.
3. That TfGM's successful application to become the station licence holder for Horwich Parkway rail station be noted by the Committee.

GMTMRC 16/21 UPDATE ON TIMETABLE CONSULTATION

The Committee welcomed Eddie Muraszko from the Department for Transport to provide an update on the timetable consultation in his role as the DfT lead for the Manchester Recovery Task Force. He explained the short, medium, and long-term works taking place to improve services throughout GM.

On 14 January 2021 the Department for Transport, in conjunction with Transport for the North and

Network Rail had launched a public consultation: Timetable Options to Improve Rail Performance in the North of England. The consultation set out three options which featured increasing levels of change from the pre-Covid service patterns, planned to be implemented from the May 2022 timetable. The three options affected different routes, and which routes had direct services to Manchester Oxford Road, Manchester Piccadilly, and Manchester Airport stations. On 12th February 2021 GMCA had approved delegation of authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor of Greater Manchester, to approve and submit a response to this consultation on behalf of GMCA. This response was submitted on 10th March and was included within the agenda papers.

The GMCA response identified a revised option which had better outcomes for GM. GMCA had instructed TfGM to continue to progress the Revised Option B/C solution and to work with DfT and Network Rail counterparts to explore it further with a view to an appropriate timetable solution being taken forward which could command the support of GM.

Members enquired as to the level on public feedback that had been received into the consultation. It was advised that over 800 responses had been received to date, and these included individual responses as well as those on behalf of user groups.

Members stated that they would welcome a separate session for Committee Members to consider the ramifications of the timetable changes in more detail. The Chair advised that she seek to have this incorporated into the work programme of the overarching Transport Committee – officers advised that the presentation would prove most useful after the next stage had concluded and the option being taken forward was fully understood.

Members enquired whether May 2022 remained as the proposed date for implementation. It was advised that this would be dependent on the option selection – which had variable implementation dates ranging from May to December 2022.

Members enquired about the process for the second consultation on the proposed timetable changes following the outcomes of the initial option chosen. It was advised that the second consultation would follow along the lines of statutory requirements for any timetable changes and would go into considerably more detail on the specifics of the train arrival times and frequencies. The train operators themselves would take the lead role in this process.

Resolved /-

1. That the update on the Timetable Consultation be noted.
2. That it be noted that GM's response to the consultation has now been returned to the Rail North Committee of Transport for the North.
3. That it be noted that over 800 responses to the consultation had been submitted, including representations from members of the public and user groups and that these responses would be published at the end of the process.
4. That it be noted that the implementation date of any timetable changes would be dependent on which option was selected, but that this would be between May-December 2022.
5. That it be noted that the second consultation would be in line with usual practice undertaken by operators in relation to any proposed timetable change.
6. That an informed session will be scheduled for the GMTTC in relation to how the work of the Rail Task Force supports the rail infrastructure ambitions for the city region.

GMTMRC 17/21 OPERATOR UPDATE

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

Comments raised by train operators included the following:

- Northern Rail – Current ridership levels sat at 22% of their pre-Covid levels – there had been no time in the past 12 months that had seen ridership go any higher than 45% of pre-Covid levels. Plans were in place for significant national and local campaigns which would focus on encouraging and giving the public the confidence to return to rail – emphasising all the changes for the positive that would be revealed to them through updated fleets and enhanced safety and cleaning measures. The current timetables of operation would remain in place until 17th May 2021, at which point a new uplifted service would operate at a level similar to that of the start of January 2021. Background modelling work had been taking place to give operators full confidence in terms of the service provision – part of the modelling had revealed that leisure travel was expected to return at a faster pace than commuter travel, however, even this was not expected to initially exceed 68% of pre-Covid levels. Service punctuality was now at the highest level seen since 2013, which was welcome, and following member comments, it was agreed that enhancements to Sunday services would have to be strongly considered with expected increases in leisure travel at the weekend. Operators also asked that Members help in encouraging rail confidence by sharing the improvements seen with the public.
- Transpennine Express – Performance remained at a very high level. Week on week increases were being seen in patronage, with a notable pick up at weekends, however, this still only represented 15% of pre-Covid levels. The timetable would be uplifted from 29 March 2021, and would represent around 82% of the full timetable, this would be followed by another uplift in May 2021. As with other operators, plans around welcoming customers back with reassurance campaigns were in place – studies had indicated that safety concerns remained a key barrier at present and so the campaign would focus on the Covid safe measures taken, stating “We’re ready when you are”.
- Network Rail – Recent performance figures had been very welcome, and it was hoped these would be retained when customers returned in higher numbers. Work was taking place with colleagues at each of the operators to facilitate customers returning in a safe and reassuring manner. If, as expected, leisure travel was to increase, then Piccadilly Station would become a major leisure travel hub in the near future, and there would need to be reassurance around how well the Station was prepared for this.
- Avanti West Coast – A presentation was on future plans for high-speed rail now that Avanti West Coast had taken over the running of the west coast mainline. Plans included the introduction of a fleet of new trains; investments at stations; service increases; Simplified ticketing; investment in colleagues and communities; and making the railway accessible for all.

Resolved /-

1. That the verbal update from Train Operators be noted.
2. That it be noted that there were service uplifts planned for the end of March and mid May which would provide c. 80% of timetable coverage, akin to provision in January 2021.
3. That it be noted that train operators will be launching their ‘We’re ready when you are’ campaign to reassure passengers about the covid-safe measures on the network from the end of March 2021.
4. That it be noted that performance remained good, and operators were keen to ensure that as services were increased, performance remained as punctual and reliable.

GMTMRC 18/21 METROLINK SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Victoria Mercer (Metrolink Service Delivery Manager) introduced the latest update on Metrolink operation and performance.

Following the commencement of the third national lockdown, patronage figures sat at around 15% of pre-Covid levels, this then stabilised throughout January and February to 17-19%. However, following the government roadmap announcement, and the return of children to schools – patronage levels were now steadily increasing, currently sitting at 23% of pre-Covid levels.

During the third lockdown, service frequency had not been reduced to the same extent that it had been during the previous lockdowns, with the Metrolink still running at a high frequency service, of trams every 10 minutes.

It was fully understood that as restrictions began to loosen in line with the government roadmap, social distancing measures would become increasingly limited. With this in mind, all possible support ranging from enhanced cleaning regimes to a full cohort of customer service ambassadors would be in place. All advances would be closely monitored.

Engagement work had taken place with schools ahead of students returning from 8th March.

There had been an unfortunate increase seen in criminal damage to trams on the network – which had caused some impact on tram availability. Unfortunately, as these incidences of damage were not confined to a particular point on the network, it was difficult to pinpoint exactly where the issues were. However, work was taking place with partner agencies on the best way to tackle this problem. On a more positive note, general anti-social behaviour and crime had reduced on the network.

Some previously notable problems and obstructions on the airport line had now been addressed through strong collaborative work with partners. Following comments received at the Transport Committee about Hollinwood Station in Oldham – namely the perception that the station was unsafe and isolated. TfGM, together with local representatives and GMP had made a site visit to the location and following this the operator had conducted a full review to undertake enhancement work at the station. A patch of land opposite the station had been one of the main areas of concern, and Oldham Council had taken an action to look at how this could be improved. Members representing Oldham on the sub-committee thanked officers for their work in addressing the issues at the station.

Planned works on the network across the spring and summer were explained to members. It was advised that these works had been arranged to have the lowest possible level of impact and inconvenience to service users.

Guillaume Chanussot (Managing Director, KeolisAmey Metrolink) provided an update on operational performance. Employee absenteeism numbers due to Covid19 were improving, though some issues did remain around needed to self-isolate. Some challenges had been faced in terms of maintenance activities, as the availability of equipment from suppliers and contractors did not allow the service to be as reactive as it would be in normal times.

Resolved /-

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That it be noted that as a result of previous discussions at GMTC, a site visit had taken place at the Hollingworth Metrolink stop which had resulted in a full review of lighting and vegetation and investigations into the maintenance of adjoining private land.

GMTMRC 19/21 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 20/21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved /-

That the GMCA governance team would be in contact to confirm dates for the 2021/2022 council year.