

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER
METROLINK AND RAIL SUB COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER AT 10:30AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT:

Councillor Doreen Dickinson (in the Chair)	Tameside MBC
Councillor Richard Gold	Bury Council
Councillor Stuart Haslam	Bolton Council
Councillor Naeem Hassan	Manchester City Council
Councillor Dzidra Noor	Manchester City Council
Councillor Atteque Ur-Rehman	Oldham Council
Councillor Shah Wazir	Rochdale Council
Councillor Angie Clark	Stockport Council
Councillor Peter Robinson	Tameside MBC
Councillor Steve Adshead	Trafford Council
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan Council

OFFICERS AND OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mark Angelucci	TfGM
Guillaume Chanussot	Keolis
Daniel Coles	Network Rail
Lindsay Dunn	Governance Officer, GMCA
Chris Jackson	Northern
Lucja Majewski	Transpennie Express
Victoria Mercer	Metrolink Service Delivery Manager, TfGM
Daniel Vaughan	Head of Metrolink, TfGM
Caroline Whittam	Head of Rail Franchising, TfGM
Gwynne Williams	Deputy Monitoring Officer, GMCA
Lindsay Dunn	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA
Nicola Ward	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA
Lee Teasdale	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA

GMTMRC 01/20 APOLOGIES

Resolved /-

That apologies be noted and received from Councillor Howard Sykes (Councillor Angie Clark substituting).

GMTMRC 02/20 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

That there were no Chair's announcements or urgent business.

GMTMRC 03/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved /-

That there were no declarations of interest.

GMTMRC 04/20 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved /-

That Councillor Dzidra Noor be appointed as Vice-Chair of the GMTC Metrolink & Rail Sub-Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

GMTMRC 05/20 LOCAL RAIL SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Caroline Whittam, Head of Rail Franchising TfGM took Members through a report which provided an update on local rail service operation and performance across Greater Manchester. It particularly focussed on the period from March 2020 following the start of the Coronavirus pandemic. From this period, all Rail Operators introduced a key worker timetable which provided minimal service coverage but was designed to meet the needs and shift patterns of local key workers. Since then, there had been several timetable changes as government guidance had begun to encourage people back into the workplace, and schools resumed. Over this period performance had been excellent, with all operators reporting PPMs (Public Performance Measure) in the high nineties, the challenge ahead would be to retain this high performance whilst bringing further services back online. Dialogue and engagement across operators and with TfGM had been very positive throughout this period, and all parties were keen to maintain partnership working and collaboration going forward.

The latest timetable change had taken place for most operators on the 6 September (13 September for Northern) which had overall provided another service uplift, however officers had indicated some concerns regarding Northern's proposal to temporarily withdraw the Manchester-Rose Hill line. The position in relation to this line had moved on considerably, and with thanks to officers and Members, the Rail Minister had asked Northern to re-instate three journeys per day for the benefit of passengers, specifically those travelling to Rose Hill/Marple to access educational establishments. Furthermore, there had been a reduction in services to Swinton, with the period of 9-11.30am being particularly adversely affected. Further discussions with local councillors and Northern were planned to consider how the impact of these changes on passengers may be mitigated.

Members asked when the industry were anticipating further patronage demand. Officers reported that this was unclear, and dependent on a number of factors including local lockdown restrictions and that the industry was anticipating a changeable and difficult winter season. Although communications had moved from an 'essential travel only' message to 'travel safely' it was considered that the country was not yet in a position for the industry to move encouraging more people back onto public transport as yet.

Members reported that there was no clear signage at Hyde North station in relation to the

provision of the three daily services to Rose Hill. Northern agreed to check this and install as necessary.

Members of the committee asked for an update in relation to the current status of the Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA) and the potential for future rail franchising. Officers reported that these measures had recently been discussed in Parliament and the outcomes of those decisions was anticipated shortly. With regards to rail franchising, it was expected that the Williams Review (due for publication later in the year) would give further clarity on the direction of travel, but that it was likely, as a result of Covid, that this would look different to what was initially anticipated. Transpennine Express added that they were also unaware of any announcements in relation to the EMA as yet, but would update the Committee when possible.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That as a result of detailed negotiations, there had been an updated situation in relation to the Rose Hill line, specifically the extra provision of 3 trains (2 morning peak, 1 afternoon) per day to support access to educational establishments in Marple, further supplemented by a rail replacement bus service throughout the day.
3. That it be noted that TfGM would be arranging a meeting between Northern and the Salford City Mayor to discuss the reduction in services to Swinton.
4. That a further update on December rail timetable changes be presented to the M&R Committee at the next meeting.
5. That it be noted that Northern agreed to ensure there was adequate signage to reflect current operational services at stations along the Rose Hill line.
6. That further information with regards to the next plans for Government's Emergency Measure Agreements and the future of franchising agreements were anticipated to be announced shortly and included in the Williams review (expected autumn 2020) and would be provided to the Committee once available.

GMTMRC 06/20 UPDATE FROM NORTHERN

Chris Jackson, Regional Director Northern gave an update to the Committee on the last couple of periods, the current picture for the company and future plans. Northern were now running 2,000 trains per day, providing 85% of the pre-covid network coverage. The return of schools had been successful, with some services being flexed as a result of unforeseen demand.

Onboard revenue collection had now re-commenced which would be a vital element to the recovery and sustainability of the industry. Patronage levels were c. 33% of normal levels, and there was some concern that the initial message of 'essential travel only' had caused anxiety amongst passengers that now needed some reassurance communications regarding the safety of the train service in order to encourage them to return. Face covering compliance had generally been good, but with the support of the British Transport Police, stronger enforcement for non-compliance was being put into place. Members of the Committee recognised the essential need for revenue protection to re-commence and for a strong adherence amongst passengers on the requirement to wear face coverings whilst on board and at train stations.

Northern now had 139 drivers (out of 994) who had to pause their training as a result of covid, and further to this, 42 drivers had also retired during this period. These resourcing levels had a direct impact on the availability of drivers to maintain the Rose Hill line, and the resulting decision to temporarily suspend services. In addition to the school services, Northern had provided a number of rail replacement services and ring and ride provision for passengers on this line. From 26 October 2020, there would be a 90 minute service along this line, with a full timetable return anticipated for the 14 December 2020. Members welcomed this new position, and further planned uplift to Rose Hill services. Reportedly the additional schools services had been well used, and issues with the rail replacement services addressed promptly. Furthermore, Northern had assured Members at a special meeting regarding these changes that this would not be a pre-cursor to the permanent closure of the Rose Hill line.

In relation to performance, it was positive to see that despite difficult circumstances, it had been strong. It was recognised that this was crucial to maintain as timetables were increased and further passengers returned to the network. Northern were clear that this period had given a good opportunity to do things differently and would be urging colleagues to look at how congestion along the Castlefield Corridor could be addressed to support aspirations for improved punctuality. Members thanked Northern for their good general coverage and strong performance across the network, especially during the period of the key worker timetable, as this made a significant difference to those being required to travel to work.

All new trains (Class 159s) were available, however they were being rolled out onto the network inline with completed driver training. The refurbishment of other units was also progressing, which included upgrades to seat coverings to make the trains easier to clean. Members asked whether these new trains would be seen on the Hyde Loop, it was confirmed that one of the schools services was made up of a Class 159 unit, and from 21 September there would be further new trains added to this line.

Flexible season ticket trials were also underway, with a tap-in tap-out design to allow season tickets to benefit those with varying travel patterns. An extension had also been applied to the discounts available for the educational season tickets. Members recognised that season ticket sales will be key to the future success of operators, but that consideration must be given to the level of annual fare increases as to not further dissuade passengers from returning. Northern added that there had been significant season ticket refunds made over the past few months which had created a substantial revenue black hole that would be a likely contributing factor to the levels of ticket prices in 2021.

With regards to staffing levels, there had been a number of staff who had been required to isolate over the past week, the impact of this and local lockdown measures still being difficult to predict.

Members of the Committee asked for an update as to how successful the Operator of Last Resort had been to date. Northern confirmed that it had been positive so far, with a series of improvements having been made to staff accommodation, passenger experience and that there was currently a good outlook for the future of the arrangements. The 100 day plan was significant and far reaching, and despite the impact of Covid remained a substantial focus for the organisation.

In relation to works on the Gauxholme viaduct, members asked that Northern give further

consideration as to how passengers can access Littleborough and Smithy Bridge stations as rail replacement is not always accessible. It was confirmed that there was a planned meeting with STORM (the local user group) to look at the plans for these works and determine whether the rationale behind the decisions is accurate. Members added that station adoption groups and 'friends of' groups were clear assets to any station, and should be effectively used to improve the experience for passengers and support operators in encouraging people back onto the rail service.

Resolved /-

1. That the update from Northern be noted.
2. That it be noted that there are a number of new ticket options on trial, including a flexible season ticket.
3. That it be noted that from 26/10 there would be a 90 minute service on the Rose Hill line.
4. That the slides presented by Northern be shared with members of the M&R Sub Committee.
5. That it be noted that revenue protection would now re-commence across services, to help address the long term commercial viability of the train network.
6. That during the period of 24 Oct – 1 Nov there were engineering works planned for Gauxholme Viaduct that would have an impact on stations at Littleborough, Smithy Bridge and in relation to this, Northern would be meeting with Network Rail and the user group Storm to consider available options.
7. That the essential travel message was now only being promoted in areas of local lockdown, but that it would be necessary for both Operators and politicians to work together to address passengers confidence in returning back to public transport.
8. That it be noted that Class 195 new trains are being regularly added to the network, including those services on the Hyde loop.

GMTMRC 07/20 LOCAL STATIONS UPDATE

Caroline Whittam, Head of Rail Franchising TfGM took the Committee through a report which provided the latest update on rail stations across Greater Manchester. Specifically it detailed information about the Access for All Programme, improvements to Mills Hill Park and Ride, interventions undertaken and those planned for the future within the RSIS (Rail Station Improvement Schemes) Programme, work undertaken by the Rail Station Alliance and an update on Community Rail. In relation to this, congratulations were extended to Hindley Station for their recent Small Station award.

Members asked why an update on the accessibility at Newton and Godley stations had not been included in the report, officers confirmed that this was part of a different programme, but could be included in future reports.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That it be noted that Northern would respond directly to Cllr Peter Robinson with relation to works planned for Newton and Godley stations on the Hadfield Line, and information included in a future report.

3. That congratulations be extended to Hindley train station who recently received a highly commended award at the National Rail awards.

GMTMRC 08/20 METROLINK PERFORMANCE REPORT

Victoria Mercer, Metrolink Service Delivery Manager, TfGM introduced a report which detailed operational performance of Metrolink over the last year, with a focus on the most recent quarter.

Since the start of the Covid pandemic there had been a considerable impact to patronage, with a record low of 5% of normal levels in April 2020, and current levels of c. 40%. Full network coverage is now available, but with social distancing measures in place, each tram can only accommodate 23% of normal capacity. Over this period there had been four service pattern changes and two further enhancements as Government guidelines evolved and more people returned to the workplace. There had been a shift from the usual busiest lines, to those that serve Oldham, Rochdale and Manchester Airport, requiring some movement of units to accommodate the number of passengers in these areas. The network was now working to a 10 minute frequency, which is under continuous review.

The next planned service change is scheduled for January 2021, but will be dependent on the current Government guidance. Officers are very much aware of the changing picture, and the recent 'essential travel only' message applied in the North East of England. The impact of self-isolation since the return to schools and the introduction of the track and trace programme had also become evident as there had been an increase in the number of staff isolating.

Performance had remained above target over the last quarter, and despite Covid, the Trafford Park line was able to open on the 23 March and had seen patronage continue to grow steadily. There had been a reduction in the number of ASB incidents in early 2020, but as more passengers had returned to the network this had begun to increase and therefore there had been a number of targeted interventions through Travelsafe and other partners to address any particular hotspot areas. Some of these interventions had been designed to particularly increase awareness of the requirement to wear face coverings, and again these had been specifically targeted to areas of lower compliance. However, general compliance across the network had been recorded as c. 80-90% which was positive.

There had been a series of changes made to minimise the risk of Covid spread units, including enhanced cleaning regimes, increased signage to encourage social distancing and contactless payment options. Members asked whether the ability to only accommodate 23% of normal capacity was proving a challenge. Officers confirmed that it was becoming a challenge on some lines and certain times, and that the return to schools had exacerbated this challenge further. However, the spread of double units across the network, and the 10 minute service frequency was ensuring that there was the maximum opportunity for passengers to maintain social distancing on the majority of services.

Flexible season ticketing had also been introduced through the carnet ticket that allows 10 day passes for the price of 9 to be used within a 28 day period. Members asked that further consideration be given to this flexibility as working patterns had changed significantly and

passengers may not be able to use their full ticket allowance within a 28 day period.

Funding from DfT to support the operational costs of Metrolink had been secured until the 26 October, and there were ongoing discussions about future funding packages. Members questioned as to whether the level of funding was sufficient, officers reported that it only covered operating costs, and was subject to detailed audit and reconciliation.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That face covering compliance had been recorded as between 80-90% with some variance on lines and times of day and that targeted intervention had been undertaken to address areas of poorer compliance.
3. That it be noted that Government's Light Rail Funding offer had been extended until the 26 October 2020 which covers operating costs only, and there were ongoing discussions with DfT regarding future funding packages.
4. That it be noted that capacity had begun to become an issue on some peak time services under the current social distancing guidance. However, in additions to the use of doubles across the network, recent TfGM communications campaigns had been designed to encourage people to travel outside peak times where possible.
5. That it be noted that further ticket options to ensure value and flexibility were being considered by TfGM.

GMTMRC 09/20 GMTC TRANSPORT WORK PROGRAMME

Gwynne Williams, Deputy Monitoring Officer GMCA introduced the latest work programme for the GM Transport Committee and asked for Members suggestions as to future items for inclusion.

In relation to the work programme of the sub committees, a Member asked whether they could receive details of each agenda in order to submit contributions via another Member on the sub committee if required.

Resolved /-

1. That the Work Programme be noted.
2. That Members of the Metrolink & Rail Sub-Committee be given details of the publication of papers for the Bus Services Sub-Committee.

GMTMRC 10/20 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved /-

That the future meeting dates be noted by the Committee.