

GREATER MANCHESTER TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: 1 October 2021

Subject: Bus Performance Report

Report of: Stephen Rhodes, Customer Director & Interim Head of Bus Services, TfGM

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To inform members of the performance of the Greater Manchester bus network during the August 2020 to July 2021 period, with particular focus on the subsidised bus network.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

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Equalities Implications:

N/A

Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures –

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: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

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?		No
GM Transport Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
N/A	N/A	

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Greater Manchester has an extensive bus network covering approximately 45.9 million miles in 2020/21 and supporting an annual ridership of 70.9 million passengers (down from 187 million the previous year due to the impact of the pandemic). The network (720 services) is provided on both a commercial and subsidised basis by 38 operators (as of July 2021).
- 1.2 Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), financially supports and manages the subsidised bus network on behalf of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). The subsidised network (20.25% of the network mileage) is provided utilising a budget of £27.6 million (2020/21). The funding level supports areas of the network which are not deemed commercially viable by operators, but are considered socially necessary, and also delivers an extensive network of school bus services.
- 1.3 Bus service provision represents a vital element of the Greater Manchester public transport network. Currently, three out of every four public transport journeys in Greater Manchester are undertaken by bus services. It is therefore essential that the performance of the bus network is closely monitored and understood, ensuring that not only is the quality of provision and customer journey experience maintained and enhanced, but the subsidised services budget is effectively and efficiently deployed.
- 1.4 Transport Focus surveys have consistently indicated that key customer priorities are value for money, driver behaviour, punctuality, and journey time.
- 1.5 This report covers the period of August 2020 – July 2021 which includes the impact of the ongoing pandemic, a period of national lockdown along with subsequent government support measures, including advising where possible for people to work at home, essential travel only messaging and social distancing on buses reducing passenger capacity. Various local lockdowns were in place throughout this period which impacted mileage and patronage. Step 4 of the release from lockdown roadmap took place on 19th July 2021 and meant all social distancing measures were removed.
- 1.6 Patronage and mileage reporting continued throughout the pandemic period but both measures were significantly impacted and a return to pre-covid patterns of travel have yet to become clear.
 - 1.6.1 Commercial network – The reporting period of August 2020-July 2021 includes one month of reduced mileage for the commercial bus operators. The easing of restrictions saw mileage return to 100% of pre Covid levels by September 2021. It is to be noted that social distancing requirements on vehicles were introduced in June 2020 and remained in place until July 2021. During this period, capacities on vehicles ranged between 30 and 50% maximum occupancy.

- 1.6.2 Subsidised network – General subsidised bus services operated at 100% of pre-covid mileage throughout the reporting period. In addition, school service mileage was also at 100% of pre-covid levels. Social distancing was not required on school services where they were registered as ‘closed door’ meaning members of the public were not permitted to travel, whereas social distancing on the general subsidised services saw vehicle capacities reduced to the levels outlined above.

2 OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

- 2.1 This section of the report presents network wide bus operational performance statistics for the Greater Manchester region, extracted from TfGM’s in-house Punctuality Reliability Monitoring System (PRMS). Performance levels are tracked against internal and Traffic Commissioner targets.
- 2.2 Figure 1 provides a comparison between financial years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 of the key bus services operational performance indicators, split between those registered to adhere to a timetable with specific departure times (scheduled services) and those registered to operate six buses an hour or more, with the associated timetable stating the service frequency (frequent services).
- 2.2.1 PRMS manual observations were suspended between April 2020 and September 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Estimates for these months have been generated using the previous 3 years of data (17/18, 18/18 and 19/20) for reliability, punctuality, and regularity. The 2020/2021 results include these estimates along with actual survey observations for the period of October 2020 – March 2021.

Figure 1: Bus Service Operational Performance

		2019/2020		2020/2021		
Indicator	Standard	Number of Observations	%	Number of Observations	%	Direction Change
Scheduled Services						
Reliability	97.00%	63, 563	97.82%	71, 523	98.31%	↑
Start Point Punctuality	90.00%	30, 652	88.35%	32, 977	91.09%	↑
Mid-Point Punctuality	70.00%	32, 911	79.77%	38, 546	85.37%	↑
Overall Punctuality	80.00%	63, 563	83.91%	71, 523	88.01%	↑
Frequent Services						
Regularity	97.00%	24, 776	95.79%	24, 420	97.42%	↑

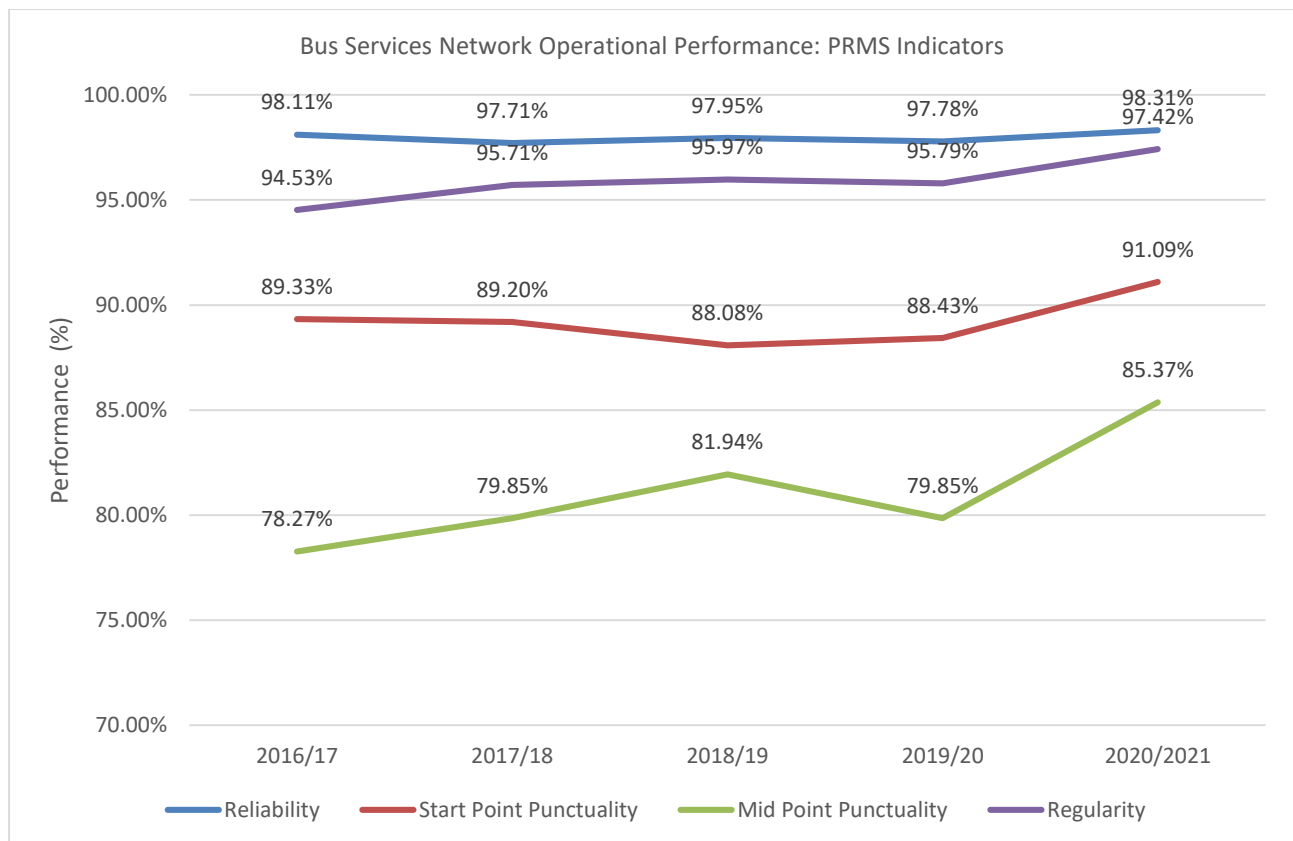
Scheduled Service Performance

- 2.3 The reliability of scheduled services (Figure 1) at the network level was 98.31% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing a broadly stable, improving position from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (97.78%). The level of performance remains above the CoC VPA minimum standard of 97.00%.
 - 2.3.1 Over the last 5 years, the reliability of scheduled services (Figure 2) at the network level has remained above the CoC VPA standard of 97.00%.
- 2.4 Start-point punctuality of scheduled services is an area where TfGM has sought more action on the part of the operator, as it is incumbent on them to provide reasonable recovery time and develop contingency plans to enable journeys to start punctually. Traffic congestion in the Regional Centre has historically hampered the increased recovery times put in place by some operators, particularly given the limited space available for vehicle layover. However, the reduced traffic levels on the highways network resulted in operator performance improving during the pandemic and this period of reporting.
- 2.5 The start-point punctuality of scheduled services (Figure 1) at the network level was 91.09% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing an improvement from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (88.43%).
 - 2.5.1 Over the last 5 years, start-point punctuality of scheduled services (Figure 2) at the network level has remained at the anticipated minimum standard of 90.00%, with the exception of the financial year 2020/2021. Performance fell between 2016/2017 and 2018/2019, before improving between 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.
- 2.6 The mid-point punctuality of scheduled services (Figure 1) at the network level was 85.37% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing an increase in performance from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (79.85%). The level of performance remains above the expected minimum standard of 70.00%.
 - 2.6.1 Over the last 5 years, mid-point punctuality of scheduled services (Figure 2) at the network level has remained above the minimum standard of 70.00%.
- 2.7 Overall punctuality for scheduled services (Figure 1) at the network level was 88.01% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing an increase from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (83.91%).
- 2.8 Performance of the key bus services operational performance indicators have improved in the 2020/2021 financial year which is the result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent government measures of national lockdowns, advising where possible for people to work at home and essential travel only messaging, positively impacting traffic conditions.
- 2.9 An Operational Performance Reporting system is being introduced which uses both automated vehicle location (AVL) to determine punctuality performance and will

supersede the PRMS process. Data is collected for all services and journeys covering the Greater Manchester network, for the commercial and subsidised network, including the school services.

- 2.9.1 Over 50% of Greater Manchester operators have so far been integrated into the Operational Performance Reporting system, with performance reporting expected from the system by October 2022.

Figure 2: Bus Services Network Operational Performance and Trend



Frequent Service Performance

- 2.10 In the case of frequent services, the key issue for passengers is not the adherence to a specific set of timetabled departures, but the regularity of the service compared to their expectations. Performance is measured at intermediate timing points of a journey therefore this is another area where internal targets acknowledge there may be a need for highways management interventions to achieve the minimum standards.
- 2.11 The mid-point regularity of frequent services (Figure 1) at the network level was 97.42% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing an increase in performance

from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (95.79%). The level of performance is above the CoC VPA minimum standard of 97.00%.

Fleet Profile

- 2.12 Since 1992, European Union (EU) regulations have been imposed on new engines, with the aim of improving air quality - meaning an engine must meet certain Euro emissions standard when it is made. The aim of Euro emissions standards is to reduce the levels of harmful exhaust emissions, chiefly:

Nitrogen oxides
Carbon monoxide
Hydrocarbons
Particulate matter

- 2.12.1 The first Euro emission standard (Euro 1) was introduced in 1992 and the latest Euro 6 emission standard in 2015.

- It is believed that the EU is planning to introduce a new Euro 7 emission standard in the coming years.

- 2.12.2 A hybrid engine combines a petrol or diesel engine with an electric motor powered by a battery. The battery is charged by capturing energy from braking and, under certain conditions, from the engine.

- 2.13 Figure 3 highlights the observed profile of the network bus fleet, in terms of vehicle age and the engine emissions standard. The vehicle fleet profile for 2019/2020 was based on observations taken on both the frequent and scheduled services via PRMS. The 2020/2021 vehicle fleet profile is based upon the fleet data collated as part of the Clean Air programme as at the 31/03/2021.

Figure 3: Vehicle Fleet Profile

Vehicle Type	2019/2020	2020/2021	Direction Change
Euro IV+	95.40%	94.51%	Stable
Euro VI	24.18%	36.53%	Improving
Hybrid Diesel	17.33%	13.45%	Worsening
Electric Only	N/A	1.83%	
Vehicle Age (Average)	8.6 years	9.2 years	Worsening

- 2.14 In the financial year 2020/2021, 94.51% of the vehicle engines were of an emission standard of 4 and above and 36.53% of these vehicle engines were of an emission standard of 6, an increase compared with the financial year 2019/2020, with the aim of improving air quality. However, the usage of hybrid diesel engines has fallen between financial year 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, from 17.33% to 13.45%.
- 2.15 GM's Clean Air Zone (CAZ) will be introduced from April 2022. In recognition of the need to support operators with upgrading their vehicles to meet the emissions standards and avoid paying CAZ penalties which could threaten the sustainability of the network, TfGM secured funding from central government to enable operators to retrofit their buses to Euro VI standard. The Clean Bus Technology Fund which was available during 2018 and 2019 resulted in 280 vehicles being retrofitted. The Clean Bus Fund which has been live since Nov 2020 enabled all operators to apply for retrofit funding for eligible vehicles. Of the 1007 vehicles identified as being eligible, there have been 874 vehicles accepted for the scheme from 22 different operators and fitment of the retrofit equipment has now started to be fitted.
- 2.16 The average age of the vehicle fleet has increased between financial years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 and now stands at 9.2 years in 2020/2021. The Department of Transport (DfT) most recent annually reported average vehicle fleet age for England was 8.0 years in 2019/2020*, comparable with the TfGM figure for the same period. The England outside London average vehicle age for the same period was 8.7 years*.

**Department for Transport Annual Bus Statistics for England 2019/2020, Bus Indicator 0605*

3 SUBSIDISED BUS NETWORK PERFORMANCE

Overview

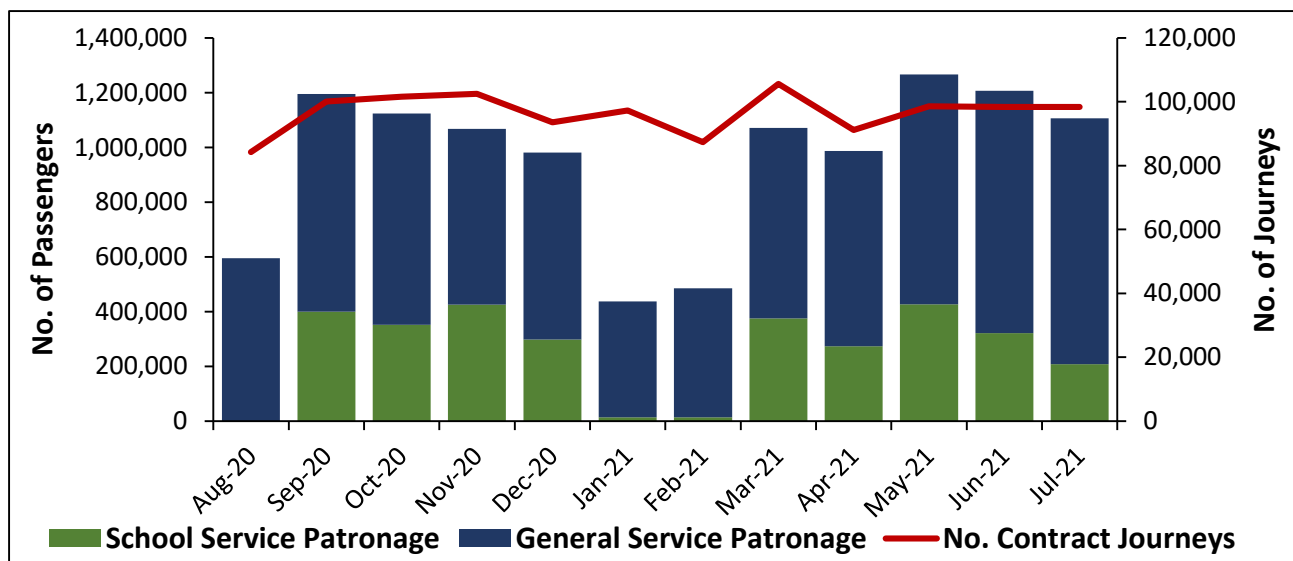
- 3.1 Over the 12-month period August 2020 – July 2021, the total estimated bus network mileage within Greater Manchester was 52,229,774 miles. Commercial services provided 80.85% (42,229,387 miles) of the total estimated bus network mileage and TfGM subsidised the remaining 19.15% (10,000,377 miles), supporting socially necessary and school bus services.
- 3.2 In July 2021, there were 477 subsidised service contracts in operation, compared with 493 in July 2020. In July 2021, there were 298 school subsidised service contracts and 179 general (normal) subsidised service contracts, provided by a total of 21 operators. The largest 3 operators of subsidised service contracts in July 2021 were Stagecoach Manchester (130 contracts/27.25% market share), Vision Bus (59 contracts/12.37% market share) and Belle Vue Coaches (49 contracts/10.27% market share).

- 3.3 In July 2021, subsidised bus mileage was estimated to be 905,320 miles, compared with 639,358 miles in July 2020, an increase of 42%. This increase was attributable to the fact that school services were still largely suspended during July 2020. The largest 3 operators of subsidised bus mileage in July 2021 were Stagecoach Manchester (268,814 miles/29.69% mileage share), Diamond Bus (148,710 miles/16.43% mileage share) and Vision Bus Ltd (105,531 miles/11.66% mileage share).

Patronage

- 3.4 Patronage information is collated and analysed each month to identify trends, increase our understanding of passenger demand across the subsidised bus network and facilitate contract management. Figure 4 presents the monthly patronage profile on subsidised bus services, along with the number of contracted journeys for the August 2020 – July 2021 period.

Figure 4: Subsidised Bus Service Patronage (August 2020 – July 2021)



Please Note: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Figure 4 explained in section 3.8

- 3.5 Overall subsidised service patronage, including the school and general services for August 2020 – July 2021 was 11,524,526, on 1,158,843 journeys, with an average of 10 passengers per journey. The level of patronage has increased by 42% (3,395,048 passengers) compared with the patronage level recorded in 2020/2021 of 8,129,478 passengers and reflects the change and recovery in bus travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of journeys has also increased, by 12%

compared with the number of journeys recorded in 2020/2021 of 1,038,708 journeys. Average passengers per journey in 2020/2021 was 8.

- 3.6 General services subsidised service patronage for August 2020 – July 2021 was 8,416,095. The level of patronage has increased by 35% (2,171,331 passengers) compared with the patronage level recorded in 2020/2021 of 6,244,764 passengers.
- 3.6.1 Between August 2020 – July 2021, the main 3 operators carrying general services subsidised patronage were; Stagecoach Manchester (56.46% and 4,752,085 passengers), Diamond Bus (11.42% and 960, 733 passengers) and Vision Bus Ltd (6.55% and 551,271 passengers).
- 3.7 Schools subsidised service patronage for August 2020 – July 2021 was 3,108,431. This represents an increase of 65% (1,223,717 passengers) on the previous year. This reflects the impact of the school closures and suspended services between April - July 2020 and January – February 2021.
- 3.7.1 Between August 2020 – July 2021, the main 3 operators carrying schools subsidised patronage were: Stagecoach Manchester (23.60% and 733,623 passengers), Belle Vue coaches (18.15% and 564,071 passengers) and Vision Bus Ltd (15.69% and 487,775 passengers)
- 3.8 Subsidised service patronage fell significantly in August 2020, January 2021 and February 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent government measures of national lockdowns, advising where possible for people to work at home, essential travel only messaging and social distancing on buses reducing passenger capacity. Subsidised service patronage is slowly recovering though remains 41% lower compared with the 2019/2020 financial year (19,675,699 passengers).

Contract Cost

- 3.9 Contract payments for the subsidised services totalled £29,858,578.00 for the period of August 2020 – July 2021. This is a 1.39% (£421,082.00) reduction in the expenditure for contract payments in the 2020/2021 financial year (£30,279,660.00).
- 3.10 The cost per passenger for the period of August 2020 – July 2021 was £2.59, a decrease of 30.44% compared with the cost per passenger for the 2020/2021 financial year of £3.72.

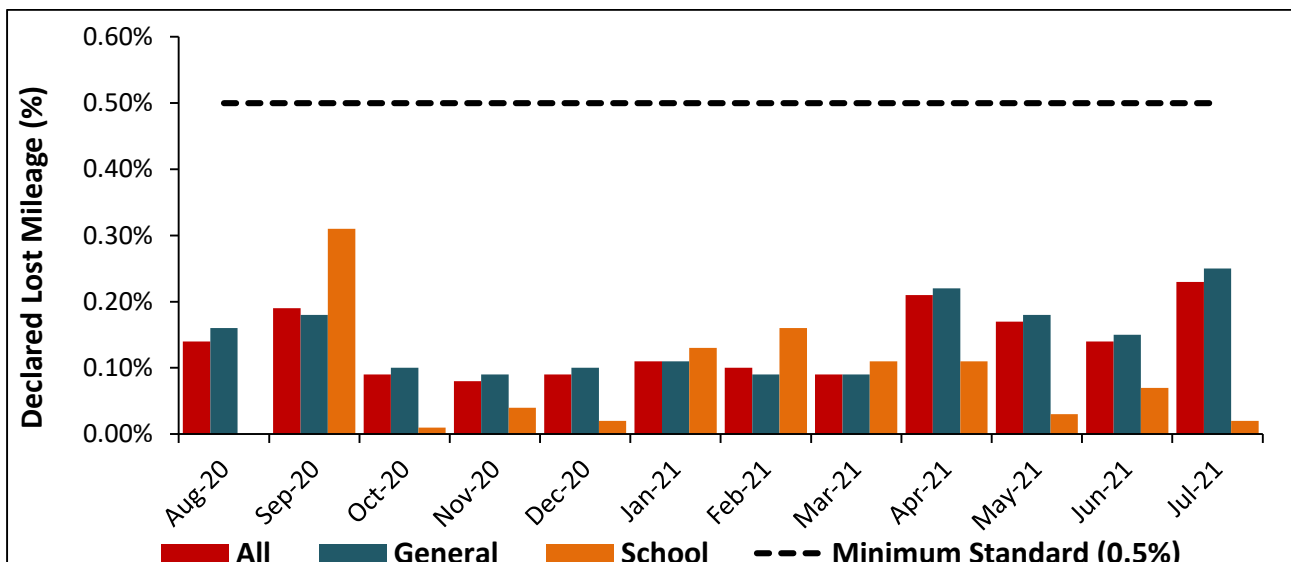
Declared Lost Mileage

- 3.11 Operators are contractually obliged to declare any lost mileage that occurs on TfGM contracts each month and these declarations are subsequently verified through analysis of their electronic ticket machine data. The proportion of declared lost

mileage incurred on the subsidised service network between August 2020 and July 2021, broken down by contract type is presented in Figure 5.

- 3.12 Between August 2020 and July 2021, the declared lost mileage for all subsidised services was 12,961 miles, which represented 0.14% of the subsidised scheduled mileage. This is comparable with the 2020/2021 financial year declared lost mileage for all subsidised services of 12,732 miles, representing 0.14% of the subsidised scheduled mileage. Declared lost mileage continues to be below the industry standard of 0.5%.
- 3.13 General subsidised declared lost mileage for the period between August 2020 and July 2021 was 12,193 miles, representing 0.14% of the general subsidised scheduled mileage. This is comparable with the 2020/2021 financial year declared lost mileage for general subsidised services of 11,941 miles, representing 0.15% of the general subsidised scheduled mileage. Declared lost mileage continues to be below the industry standard of 0.5%.
- 3.14 Schools subsidised declared lost mileage for the period between August 2020 and July 2021 was 768 miles, representing 0.09% of the school subsidised scheduled mileage. This is comparable with the 2020/2021 financial year declared lost mileage for schools subsidised services of 793 miles, representing 0.10% of the schools subsidised scheduled mileage. Declared lost mileage continues to be below the industry standard of 0.5%.

Figure 5: Declared Lost Mileage (August 2020 – July 2021)



- 3.15 The main 3 reasons for declared lost mileage for all subsidised services as identified by operators during the period between August 2020 and July 2021 were: vehicle (bus) breakdowns (36.21% affecting 4,693 miles), traffic congestion and

enforcement (20.96% affecting 2,716 miles) and other reasons – not specified (16.90% affecting 2,190 miles).

Operational Performance

Figure 6: Subsidised Bus Network Operational Performance

		2019/20		2020/21		
Indicator	Standard	Number of Observations	%	Number of Observations	%	Direction Change
Scheduled Services						
Reliability	97.00%	14, 197	97.72%	13, 290	98.73%	↑
Start Point Punctuality	90.00%	10, 616	88.27%	10, 271	91.63%	↑
Mid-Point Punctuality	70.00%	3, 581	75.76%	3, 019	87.54%	↑
Overall Punctuality	80.00%	14, 197	85.11%	13, 290	90.70%	↑

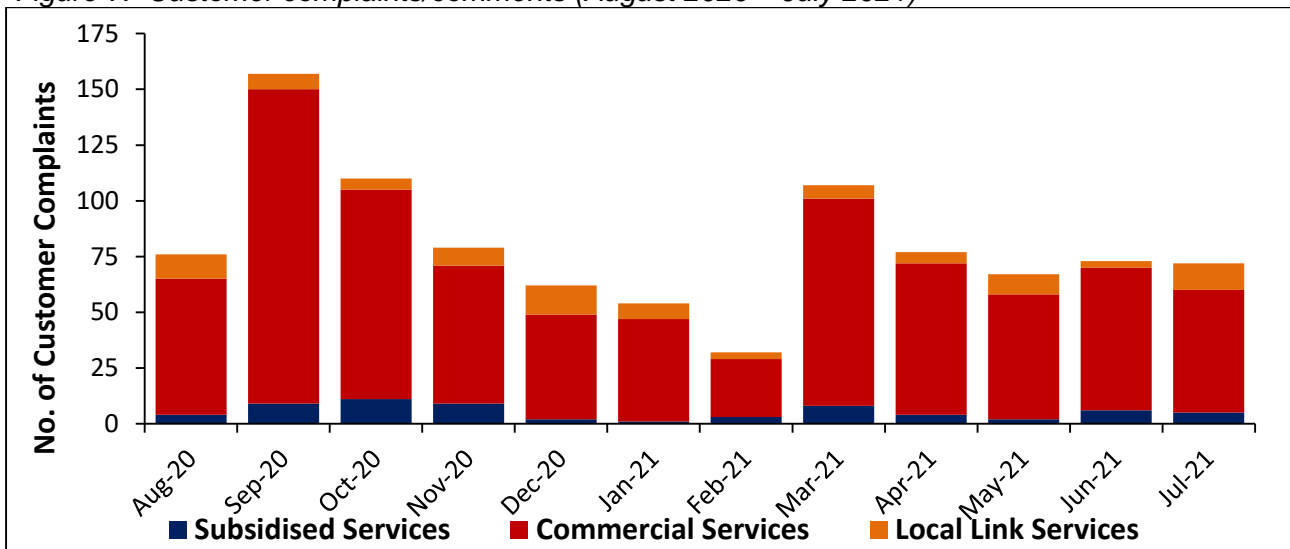
- 3.16 PRMS manual observations were suspended between April 2020 and September 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Estimates for these months have been generated using the previous 3 years of data (17/18, 18/18 and 19/20) for reliability and punctuality. The 2020/2021 figures include these estimates along with actual survey observations for the period of October 2020 – March 2021.
- 3.17 The reliability of subsidised scheduled services (Figure 6) was 98.73% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing an improvement from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (97.72%). The level of performance remains above the required standard of 97.00%.
- 3.18 The start-point punctuality of subsidised scheduled services (Figure 6) was 91.63% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing an improvement from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (89.27%). The level of performance is also above the anticipated minimum standard of 90.00%.
- 3.19 The mid-point punctuality of subsidised scheduled services (Figure 6) was 87.54% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing an improvement in performance from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (75.76%). This is above the level of performance remains above the expected minimum standard of 70.00%.
- 3.20 Overall punctuality for subsidised scheduled services (Figure 6) was 90.70% for the 2020/2021 financial year, representing an improvement from the level achieved in the 2019/2020 financial year (85.11%).
- 3.21 Performance of the key bus services operational performance indicators have improved in the 2020/2021 financial year which are the result of the COVID-19

pandemic and subsequent government measures of national lockdowns, advising where possible for people to work at home and essential travel only messaging, positively impacting traffic conditions.

Customer Comments

- 3.22 There were 64 subsidised bus service comments/complaints received by TfGM during the period of August 2020 to July 2021, which were within the operators control and their responsibility. This is an increase of 3% in the number of comments/complaints received during the 2020/2021 financial year of 62, which were also deemed within the operators control and their responsibility.
- 3.23 There were 89 local link comments/complaints received by TfGM during the period of August 2020 to July 2021. This is an increase of 13% in the number of comments/complaints received during the 2020/2021 financial year of 79.

Figure 7: Customer complaints/comments (August 2020 – July 2021)



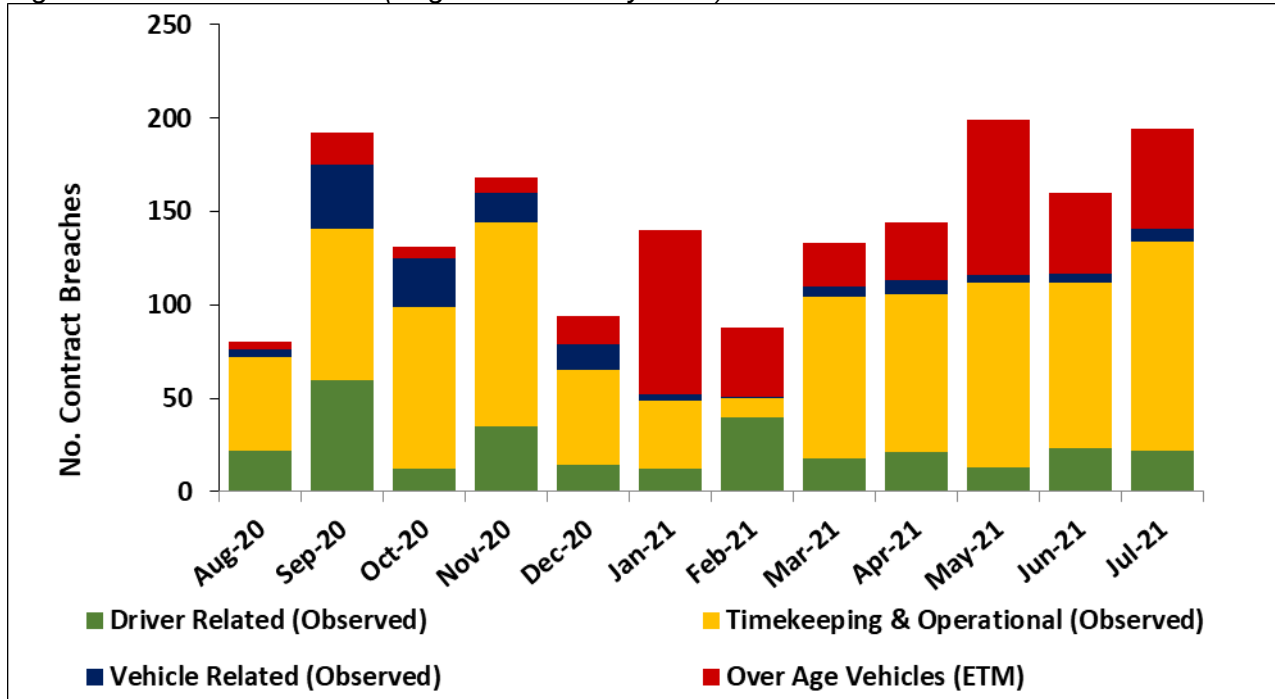
Contract Breaches

- 3.24 Contract breaches are reported failures to deliver a subsidised service in accordance with the contract specification and result in a financial deduction being made from the operator's monthly payment. The level of financial penalty is dependent on the number and composition of breach types. Figure 8 shows the monthly number of contract breaches by type and source for the period of August 2020 – July 2021.
- 3.25 There was a total of 1,723 contract breaches (observed and via the Electronic Ticket Machine (ETM)) between August 2020 and September 2021. This is an

increase of 34.18% in the number of contract breaches identified during the 2020/2021 financial year of 1,134 contract breaches.

- 3.26 52.00% of contract breaches between August 2020 and September 2021 were attributed to timekeeping and operational breaches (896), 23.68% were due to over age vehicles (408), 16.95% were driver related (292) and 7.37% were vehicle related (127).

Figure 8: Contract Breaches (August 2020 – July 2021)



Vehicle Profile

- 3.27 An average of 1,718 vehicles were deployed each month on the Greater Manchester subsidised bus network during the period of August 2020 – September 2021.
- 3.28 In July 2021, the average age of the vehicle fleet used on the subsidised network was 9.01 years. When compared by contract type, the average age of the vehicle fleet used on general services was 8.82 years and on the school network was 11.24 years. The average age of the vehicle fleet overall and on both the general and schools network remains below TfGM tendered age limit of 15 years.

Deductions from Operator Payments

- 3.29 Contract deductions are a financial deduction made from the operator's monthly payment. Declared lost mileage and contract breaches, including employing overage vehicles on the network contribute towards the financial deductions made.

- 3.30 Contract deductions for the subsidised services totalled £122,694.00 for the period of August 2020 – September 2021. This is a 10.95% (£15,085.00) decrease on the contract deductions made in the 2020/2021 financial year (£137,779.00).
- 3.31 Contract deductions represented 0.41% of the total contract payments paid (£29,858,578.00) in the period of August 2020 – July 2021, compared with 0.46% of the total contract payments paid (£30,279,660.00) during the financial year of 2020/2021.

4 Covid Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG)

- 4.1 The CBSSG and subsequent CBSSG Restart schemes were introduced by the DfT in recognition of the severe issues caused for bus operators as a result of the Covid 19 measures. The overarching aim of the fund is to ensure that operators remain viable while continuing to provide key services, and that the bus industry is able to support the economic recovery once the crisis has passed.
- 4.2 TfGM has played a more significant role in dispersing these funds to operators than other comparable Authorities and has paid an average of £3m per month to commercial operators in Greater Manchester using funds provided by DfT but managed and calculated by TfGM. Similarly, monthly amounts to tendered service operators have been paid where revenue has been impacted directly by the effects of the pandemic to the value of approximately £140,000 per month.
- 4.3 Under the auspices of the scheme, operators may not make a profit and TfGM is also responsible for the management of a significant reconciliation process to ensure that this is the case.
- 4.4 Operators and LTAs were notified by the DfT of the ending of the CBSSG scheme at the end of August 2021. A new scheme, the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) is now in place with operators due to be financially supported to a lesser extent to recognise the return in some extent to pre Covid patronage and farebox revenue. TfGM will be responsible for the verification of operator's mileage claims and will need to agree in advance on a monthly basis of any significant change to commercial service mileage.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Recommendations are set out at the front of this report

Stephen Rhodes
Interim Head of Bus Services