

**GREATER MANCHESTER TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
BUS SERVICES SUB COMMITTEE**

Date: 12th March 2021

Subject: Ring and Ride Performance Report

Report of: Alison Chew, Interim Head of Bus Services, TfGM

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To note progress in relation to the delivery of Ring and Ride services by Greater Manchester Accessible Transport Ltd (GMATL), particularly regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are asked to note the contents of this 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 – see paragraph 2 and Part B report

Financial Consequences – Capital – n/a

Number of attachments included in the report: main report only

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

- 1.1 The Ring and Ride service provides door to door, demand responsive transport to residents of Greater Manchester who find it difficult to use conventional public transport due to disability or mobility issues.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Ring and Ride service is operated by Greater Manchester Accessible Transport Ltd. (GMATL) and grant funded by TfGM.
- 2.2 The grant is awarded subject to GMATL's compliance with a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which details key service performance standards that must be delivered to ensure the service's social inclusion objectives.
- 2.3 In 2019/20 the grant to GMATL to fund Ring and Ride services was increased by £0.3 million to £4.6 million to part fund the replacement of up to 31 fleet vehicles. Despite this, significant pressures still exist within the GMATL budget and further efficiency savings and income generation options, including increases in fares, are being considered on an ongoing basis to retain the service at current levels.
- 2.4 In April 2016, GMATL introduced the following eligibility criteria on Ring and Ride. Passengers can now only use the service if they:
 1. hold a TfGM Concessionary Plus Pass (available to those with the following: Severe walking difficulties; registered partially sighted; profoundly or severely deaf; or have been/would be refused driver's license for medical reasons); or
 2. hold a TfGM Concessionary Disabled Person Pass (available to the following: registered blind; profoundly deaf and cannot speak/limited speech that is difficult to understand; learning difficulties; cannot use both arms; cannot talk; ex-serviceman or woman with serious walking difficulties as a result of losing a leg (BLESMA); or would be refused driving license as a result of severe and long-term mental health problems); or
 3. are 70 years old or over, have mobility issues and hold a TfGM Older Person's Concessionary Pass; or
 4. are a TfGM Travel Voucher user; or
 5. are an ex-serviceman or woman with serious walking difficulties as a result of losing a leg (BLESMA).

3. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE RING AND RIDE SERVICE

- 3.1 Due to Covid-19 Ring and Ride experienced a high rate of cancellations with a steep drop in demand of around 90-95% in March 2020. From 24th March services were suspended alongside similar services across the country. During April 2020 GMATL supported Manchester City Council in moving several hundred homeless people across Greater Manchester to various hotel accommodation. GMATL used their taxi contract provision to provide some journeys to support this initiative.
- 3.2 A limited service resumed on 18th May which was aimed at essential journeys and hospital trips. Initial usage of the service was around 2% of pre-covid levels and by the end of July the level of usage had risen to around 11%.
- 3.3 As normal service for passengers travelling in wheelchairs and those requiring physical assistance resumed from 1st September Ring and Ride did see a notable increase in requests from registered customers who had previously been unable to travel with trips at around 22% of pre-covid levels. In October as Greater Manchester went into Tier 3 restrictions the level of trips dropped to around 17% of pre-covid levels but the level of trips gradually increased by early December. Currently, due to further Government restrictions, the level of trips has fallen to around 14% of pre-covid levels. Overall Ring and Ride has been subject to a greater impact on service than the General Network with patronage down by 82.5% between August 20 to January 21 compared to 50.1% on the General Network.
- 3.4 Since the beginning of the vaccination roll out in January Ring and Ride has provided an alternative transport option providing trips to the Etihad Stadium and to the various centres across Greater Manchester. To assist patronage Ring and Ride relaxed their booking parameters to allow passengers under 70 years of age with a concessionary travel pass to access vaccination centres on a temporary basis. Journey miles were also relaxed from 6 miles to up to 10 miles. During January there have been 201 vaccination booking trips where 23 of those trips were wheelchair users. The number of trips to vaccination centres has decreased each week but is forecast to increase for the second dose of the vaccinations.

4. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 As of 31st January 21, there were a total of 13,729 people registered with the Ring and Ride service which included 1,261 wheelchair users. Compared to the end of January 2020 the total number of people registered had increased by 5% and wheelchair users also increased by 5% (see Figure 1 below).
- 4.2 During the period from August 20 to January 21 there were **43,241** trip requests and **35,688** trips performed. Compared to the same period the previous year trips were down by 83% which included **249,788** trip requests and **205,788** trips operated. Most of the trips not performed related to cancellations by passengers after the trip was offered and scheduled on the service.

- 4.3 In the last 6 months wheelchair users accounted for 2,489 trips. Compared to the same period the previous year wheelchair users accounted for 13,177 trips which is a drop of 81%.
- 4.4 Social was the main reason provided for travel at 29% of total bookings with leisure next at 25% (Shopping 24%, Health 11%, Education 5%, Employment 3%). Also, the age group that made the most trips was 81-90 at 26% of total bookings and with 31-60 at 24%.
- 4.5 From August 20 to Jan 21 most completed passenger journeys were performed in the Manchester District – **5,546** trips down by 83% compared to August 19 to January 20 - **2,849** trips (see Figure 2 overleaf for breakdown on all Districts).

Figure 1: Number of Registered Passengers (31st January 2021)

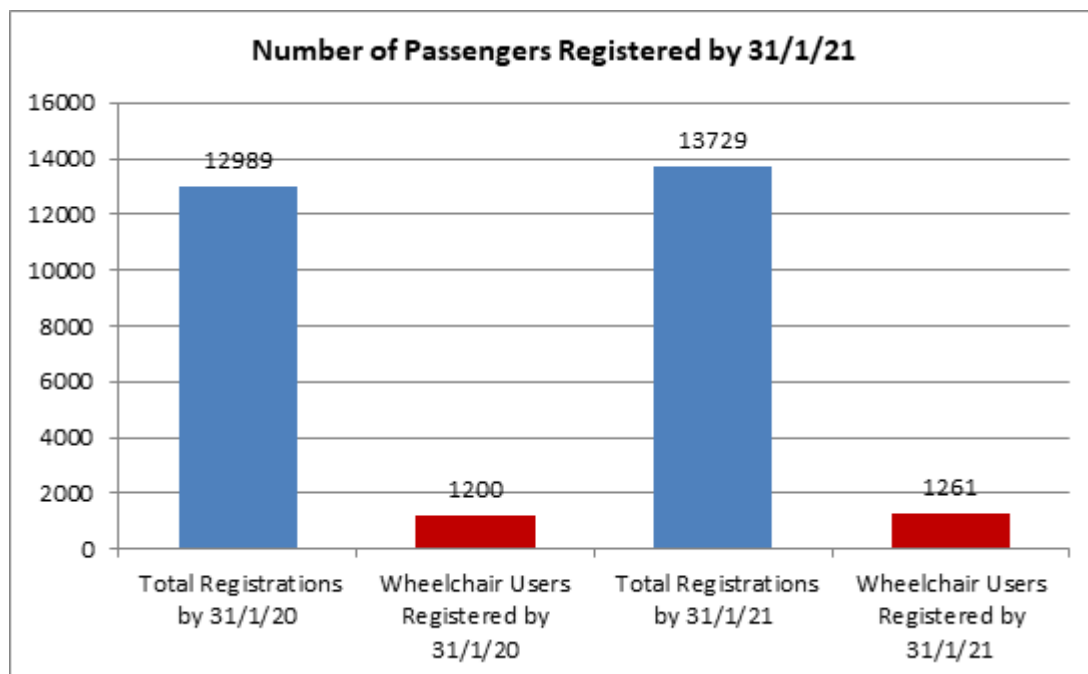
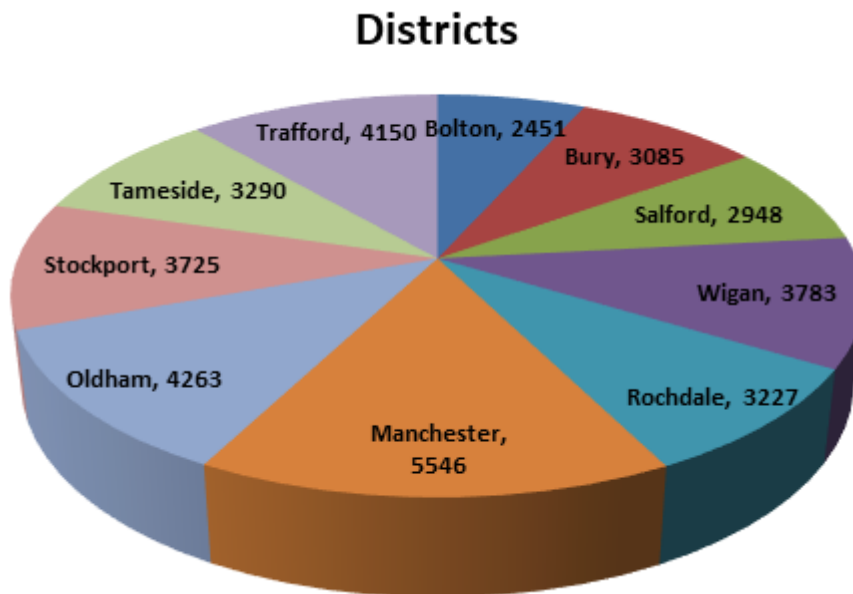


Figure 2: Number of passenger trips for each district between August 20 and January 21.



5. FINANCIAL UPDATE

- 5.1 The current forecast indicates that the TfGM grant support requirement could reduce by £1.121m (£0.991m revenue and £0.130 capital) by the end of the financial year. The contribution to the Vehicle Replacement Reserve is lower than anticipated as a result of reduced Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG) receipts. Savings made during the year will result in the sum of £0.124m available to contribute to reserves.
- 5.2 TfGM alongside GMATL is undertaking a wide scale review of the service to ascertain where further efficiencies could be made without significantly impacting the customer.

6. RECOVERY

- 6.1 Assessing the recovery from Coronavirus and the impact on demand remains challenging as the situation may only gradually improve alongside the roll out of the vaccination programme. With current demand at only around 15% pre-covid levels GMATL anticipate that service output will remain at this level at least until the national lockdown restrictions are reviewed and the subsequent roadmap understood.
- 6.2 GMATL forecast that, if the planned vaccination timetable is rolled out on schedule, 75% of passengers should have received their first vaccination by 15th February therefore with 2 to 3 weeks protection passengers may feel more confident to travel from early March. With the second vaccination scheduled for 12 weeks after the first vaccination demand may then increase mid-May with passengers having more confidence in returning to the service.
- 6.3 A review of resource levels is currently being considered to ensure that there are available resources to meet any potential increase in demand. GMATL propose to retain the fleet at

the current level of 40 vehicles (35 front line and 5 spares). If the pre-covid level of 18 trips per shift was to return this would allow for an increase in demand from the current level of 89,180 to 375,660 trips per year.

- 6.4 As part of the recovery of Ring and Ride, TfGM will work with GMATL to continue to identify further efficiency savings and income generation options for Ring and Ride but at the same time ensure that the agreed levels of service are still delivered.

7. NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 Ring and Ride continues to offer a vital service providing trips to people who would otherwise find accessing services and leading independent lives far more difficult.
- 7.2 TfGM and GMATL continue to review performance targets and delivery to ensure the needs of the vulnerable customer base are being met.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Recommendations are set out at the front of this report.

Alison Chew

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