

**Greater Manchester Transport Committee**

Date: 10 July 2020

Subject: Transport Supporting Greater Manchester's Recovery

Report of: Stephen Rhodes, Customer Director, TfGM

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**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides an update on the approach to planning how transport can help Greater Manchester's recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Members are asked to note, comment as appropriate and endorse the approach to recovery planning being undertaken by TfGM.

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Risk Management – not applicable

Legal Considerations – not applicable

Financial Consequences – Revenue – not applicable

Financial Consequences – Capital – not applicable

Number of attachments included in the report: not applicable

**BACKGROUND PAPERS: GMTC 20200710 Transport Network Report**

<b>TRACKING/PROCESS</b>		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?		No
<b>EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN</b>		
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?		None
GMTC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
Not applicable	Not applicable	

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The effects of Covid-19 will be profound; affecting everyone, every community and every business, voluntary organisation and public service in different ways.
- 1.2 Some impacts are apparent now, although their long-term effects are unclear: schooling and education services disrupted for nearly 500,000 children and young people in GM; over half of the city-region's businesses have furloughed staff; travel demand has plummeted. Other social, environmental and economic impacts and their wider effects will emerge over time.
- 1.3 Transport will be central to Greater Manchester's recovery, both in the role public transport plays in moving people around and in the form of long-term transport infrastructure development as a low-carbon economic stimulus.
- 1.4 This report sets out the approach TfGM is taking to plan how transport can support Greater Manchester to not only address the adverse impacts of Covid-19, but to 'build back better' by developing a fairer society, leading to better jobs and greater prosperity for all, and avoiding creating new types of inequality or increasing existing disadvantage.

## **2 GREATER MANCHESTER'S RECOVERY PLAN**

- 2.1 Greater Manchester is developing a Recovery Plan<sup>1</sup>, that looks to bring together all the key public agencies with the business community, social enterprises and local communities in a common endeavour.
- 2.2 The Plan is structured over three broad phases, which run concurrently to begin with, with some estimated timeframes:
  - Release of lockdown (0 - 2 months)
  - Living with Covid (0 - 12 months)
  - Building back better (0 - beyond 12months)
- 2.3 It is recognised that these timeframes will not be discrete from one another, and there will be significant 'blurring' between timescales and phases, and that multiple phases are likely to be operational at once.
- 2.4 There is a key role for transport through all of these phases. This will require the careful co-ordination of a range of transport services to respond to travel demand and provide safe and effective transport in support of the GM recovery. Investment and renewal of transport

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<sup>1</sup> <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MIId=3942&Ver=4>

infrastructure, services and fleets will also be important to recovery, not least in terms of the economic stimulus effects.

### **3 TRANSPORT RECOVERY CHALLENGES**

- 3.1 There are a number of immediate challenges for public transport which will need to be considered and addressed as part of the recovery planning process.
- 3.2 Social distancing restrictions meant that for a significant part of the lockdown period Government guidance was that people should avoid all but essential travel, and where travel was necessary, people should avoid using public transport and consider walking, cycling or driving instead.
- 3.3 Patronage levels on Greater Manchester's trams, trains and buses have plummeted as a result, impacting on the financial sustainability of the network and requiring Government subsidy to protect core services for key workers.
- 3.4 Metrolink patronage, for example, reduced significantly following lockdown and subsequently 'stabilised' at approximately 5% of pre Covid-19 levels. The significantly reduced levels of farebox revenues resulted in monthly deficits (after financing costs) of c.£5.3 million. This deficit has been mitigated, in part, through grants from Department of Transport (DfT), with TfGM required to submit revenue and cost breakdowns, which, subject to review and scrutiny, will then be used to adjust and pay the allocated funding accordingly. This arrangement is in place until 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020.
- 3.5 Metrolink passenger numbers have since increased to c 10% - 15% of pre-Covid levels following the 'easing' of Lockdown restrictions, but intelligence suggests that the pandemic has had an impact on attitudes towards the future use of public transport. According to a recent survey conducted by Transport Focus<sup>2</sup>, 32% of public transport users say that they won't use public transport again for any reason until they feel safe to do so. TfGM's own survey found that half of workers think, once travel restrictions ease, they will change their commute frequency, with train and tram commuter frequency the least likely to return to normal. Only 56% of those who did commute by tram for five or more days a week intend to travel the same way and with the same frequency.
- 3.6 Transport Focus' survey also found that whilst some people were planning to walk (45%) or cycle (26%) for trips they previously made by public transport, others say that in the future they are more likely to drive for such trips.
- 3.7 Ultimately this intelligence suggests it is unlikely that public transport patronage and revenues will return to their pre-Covid-19 levels in the short or medium term, and so there will be a requirement for continuing, likely significant, public sector financial support in GM and elsewhere, from a combination of both local and national funds.
- 3.8 Financial sustainability will be a challenge for all of Greater Manchester's local authorities with the cost of the impact of the virus predicted to rise to c£732m by the end of 2020/21

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/travel-during-covid-19-survey-week-8>

alone. This is made up of the additional cost of £236m to respond to the crisis together with lost revenues of £496m<sup>3</sup>.

#### **4 PHASES ONE AND TWO – RELEASE OF LOCKDOWN AND LIVING WITH COVID**

- 4.1 The easing of lockdown restrictions is already underway with some children returning to school and non-essential retail allowed to open from the 15<sup>th</sup> June. From the 4<sup>th</sup> July sectors including pubs, restaurants, hairdressers, and hotels will also be allowed to open, subject to social distancing and 'Covid-secure' practices. Looking ahead, the start of the academic year is likely to induce further travel demand as children and students return to education, allowing parents and carers to return to work.
- 4.2 TfGM has been working with businesses, local authorities, schools and other sectors to manage the demand as Greater Manchester 're-opens' and to help inform operational planning. The Transport Network Report, also to be considered by this meeting of the GM Transport Committee, sets out some of the immediate operational activity to respond to the rise in travel demand.
- 4.3 Given how social distancing policies have reduced the volumes that public transport can safely carry, it is important that we also consider how broader policies can be implemented to support and enable changes in working patterns, home working and flexible working.
- 4.4 Work is therefore already underway to develop a range of travel demand initiatives and the new Metrolink [Clipper card](#) was launched in June to support more flexible working and travel.
- 4.5 TfGM's recent Covid-19 Travel Survey indicates that many workers are already intending to change their pre-Covid commuting habits once travel restrictions ease, with many intending to commute less and work from home more.
- 4.6 Due to limited resources, adopting an intelligence led approach to decision making is more important than ever. Not only is travel behaviour likely to change, the needs and requirements will be different by people and place and that will need to be reflected in our approach.
- 4.7 TfGM is continuing to work collaboratively with partners including the GM Chamber of Commerce, other business groups, agencies and citizens to effectively manage supply and demand and develop wrap around mobility solutions to support places to function and people to get to where they need to be.

#### **5 PHASE 3 – BUILDING BACK BETTER**

- 5.1 Greater Manchester had embarked on an ambitious journey to transform transport for the city-region in the interests of the environment, economy and development of GM. Whilst

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<sup>3</sup> <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=4054&Ver=4>

Covid-19 will result in new challenges for GM, it will also exacerbate many existing chronic stresses and may, in the longer term, threaten to disrupt progress in achieving existing local objectives, such as Clean Air and our 2038 carbon neutral mission.

- 5.2 Whilst we need to consider our proposals in light of new circumstances, this does not mean we need to go back to the drawing board. Key objectives like clean air and a decarbonised transport system still need to be achieved, arguably more quickly than ever. But others will require reflection in light of the impacts of Covid-19. This is not just about getting our transport network back to how it was pre-Covid, but to build back better across the whole system.
- 5.3 To do this, we need to make sure we have an integrated programme of activity, not just across the transport network but across the GM economy – so transport supports the wider recovery effort.

## 6 SCENARIO PLANNING

- 6.1 TfGM’s medium to longer term transport recovery planning, both in terms of *living with Covid* and *building back better*, is informed by intelligence and research on future travel behaviour and planning for a range of scenarios. TfGM has developed a framework and process for recovery activity to identify and prioritise medium to longer term key issues, to consider the impact of Covid-19 on travel supply and demand, using scenario planning as a tool.
- 6.2 The four scenarios currently informing the planning process are summarised as follows:
- Scenario 1: Back towards normality – stronger economic recovery, little change in public attitudes
  - Scenario 2: New travel demand – stronger economic recovery, big changes in public attitudes
  - Scenario 3: Car travel dominant – weaker economic recovery, little change in public attitudes
  - Scenario 4: Poorer and more local – weaker economic recovery, big changes in public attitudes.
- 6.3 This set of future scenarios has been developed to assess the various potential impacts of Covid-19 on travel in the future. These scenarios are being used to determine how GM will respond to the key issues relating to Covid-19 across all aspects of transport including strategic programmes such as Infrastructure Investment Plans, Bus Reform and Clean Air.
- 6.4 To support the scenario planning, TfGM is gathering intelligence around how travel demand is changing as lockdown is released. This will continue to allow the variables that drive demand to be understood (e.g. pace of economic recovery, government policy, consumer confidence, attitudes to technology, environment and travel modes), and where possible, influence.

- 6.5 This Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 is a 'vision-led adaptive planning approach' to transport decision-making. It replaces the traditional transport planning approach of 'predict and provide' with one that aims to shape travel to support the type of city-region that people want to live and work in. Greater Manchester's transport vision – the 2040 Right Mix - entails zero net growth in motor vehicle traffic in Greater Manchester between 2017 and 2040 and a reduction in the car mode share of trips from 61% to no more than 50%. Scenario planning will be used to inform decisions on how the pathway to the 2040 Right Mix may need to be adjusted in a post-Covid-19 world, and on the robustness of interventions in the draft Delivery Plan to the new post-Covid-19 situation.

## **7 IMPACT ON GREATER MANCHESTER'S STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PRIORITIES**

- 7.1 A number of Greater Manchester's key transport programmes have been delayed or impacted by Covid-19 and the need to focus resource on responding to immediate challenges in what has been and continues to be a dynamic and fast changing environment. There is also a need to review and re-evaluate Greater Manchester's strategic transport priorities in light of the new circumstances in which we find ourselves.

### **Greater Manchester Transport Strategy Delivery Plan**

- 7.2 The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 is accompanied by a series of 5-year delivery plans, which set out the city-region's short, medium and long term transport delivery priorities.
- 7.3 A new five-year Delivery Plan (2020–2025) will be published later this year, alongside the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. It will include an appended Local Implementation Plan for each Greater Manchester Local Authority, summarising the key priorities, interventions and desired outcomes for each district.
- 7.4 The refreshed document will also reference more recent developments, including: Clean Air Plan proposals, the Mayor's Our Network vision for a more integrated, sustainable transport network and details of Streets for All schemes, including updates on supporting public transport and Active Travel provision. The interventions within the Delivery Plan are also being refined to deliver local economic stimulus and support the wider GM recovery plan, forming a prioritised pipeline of transport schemes to secure national support in future funding opportunities. These will also undergo a carbon assessment to ensure their consistency with the objectives of the GM Environment Plan.

### **Bus Reform**

- 7.5 A public consultation on a proposed bus franchising scheme for Greater Manchester ran from 14 October 2019 to 8 January 2020. In total over 8,500 people and organisations from across GM and beyond took part.

- 7.6 TfGM and independent research agency Ipsos MORI have reviewed, analysed and summarised all responses to the consultation in two reports. Ipsos MORI have also analysed the responses from focus groups of public transport users, non-users, residents and businesses. The GMCA noted the contents of these reports at its meeting on Friday 26 June.
- 7.7 The coronavirus pandemic has had a widespread impact on the bus market, including changes to services and passenger numbers, attitudes to public transport and financial and wider economic issues. Before any final decision on franchising may reasonably be taken, consideration needs to be given to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the bus market in GM.
- 7.8 Further work is now being undertaken by TfGM to consider the potential impact and effects of Covid-19 on the bus market and in due course, a report detailing this work will be prepared by TfGM. This report will be submitted to GMCA so that these impacts can be considered, along with the next steps in the bus reform process.

### **Clean Air**

- 7.9 The coronavirus pandemic has seen air pollution levels drop by 30% and road traffic volumes fall by as much as 52% across Greater Manchester as a result of the lockdown – and at the same time cycling journeys have increased by 42%. However, it is likely that these air pollution levels will rise as restrictions are lifted, so the government have confirmed there is still the need to take action.
- 7.10 To give businesses across the city-region the support they need to prepare for the introduction of a Greater Manchester-wide Clean Air Zone as directed by Government, the Mayor is calling on ministers to financially support the city-region’s plans to rebuild the economy in an environmentally sustainable way.
- 7.11 The financial package would enable Greater Manchester businesses and transport operators to make the shift to cleaner vans, lorries, buses taxis and private hire vehicles.
- 7.12 The ask of ministers is made up of:
- £98m for a Clean Commercial Vehicle Fund for vans, HGVs, coaches and minibuses (increased from £59m).
  - £16m for a Clean Bus Fund to support retrofit of the existing bus fleet. (Greater Manchester is also working with Government on additional funding for the replacement of vehicles that can’t be retrofitted with new, cleaner vehicles.)
  - A £32m Clean Taxi Fund for taxi and private hire drivers and operators to switch to cleaner vehicles.
  - A new £10m hardship fund – dedicated to small businesses and sole traders who could face additional financial concerns to help them switch to compliant vehicles.

- Funding for new electric vehicle charging points, doubling the size of the existing Greater Manchester publicly owned charging network, and for up to 600 electric buses by the mid-2020s. (This investment would come from sources other than Government Clean Air Plan core funding).

7.13 To date the Government has confirmed £41m for clean vehicle funds to award grants or loans to eligible businesses in Greater Manchester (£15.4m for bus retrofit, £10.7m for PHVs, £8m for HGVs, £4.6m for coaches and £2.1m for minibuses). This is out of a total clean vehicles funding request of at least £166m.

7.14 Greater Manchester local authorities intend to consult on proposed taxi and private hire minimum licensing standards alongside the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan consultation, including a roadmap to when taxi and private hire fleets should be zero-emission capable.

7.15 The GMCA announced in May that plans to hold a statutory public consultation on the Clean Air Plan had been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. The consultation will now be held as soon as is feasible. The delay to the consultation also means that the introduction of the Clean Air Zone has been moved back to 2022.

### **Cycling and Walking Programme**

7.16 Greater Manchester has been leading the way with plans to build the largest walking and cycling network in the UK to support a shift to more active, healthy and sustainable travel.

7.17 Since social distancing measures have been in place, walking and cycling have played a bigger role for essential journeys and exercise. Based on comparison with pre-lockdown data, cycling is up by 22% and, together, walking and cycling are estimated to currently account for approximately 33% of GM journeys.

7.18 Active travel is, therefore, at the heart of Greater Manchester's ambition to build back better to secure more walking and cycling as a positive legacy of lockdown and to mitigate against a bounce back to greater reliance on car travel and increases in congestion, poor air quality and carbon emissions.

7.19 In the short term local authorities are also putting in place a number of temporary measures to give pedestrians and cyclists more space to make them safer when travelling as part of Greater Manchester's 'Safe Streets. Save Lives' campaign. £5 million of emergency funding has been made available to local authorities through the Mayor's Challenge Fund to support measures. In addition, the Government has allocated £15,872,000 to GMCA for emergency active travel measures.

7.20 In the longer term, the walking and cycling programme will be assessed for opportunities to accelerate and bring forward interventions to encourage behaviour change and ensure walking and cycling are viewed as viable alternatives to car travel.