

## GREATER MANCHESTER TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: 9 October 2020

Subject: Our Pass Update Report

Report of: Stephen Rhodes, Customer Director, Transport for Greater Manchester

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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To provide an overview of Our Pass card uptake and bus travel prior to, during, and after the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown; and
- To provide an overview of Our Pass exclusive (i.e. opportunity) provision as part of Greater Manchester's ongoing commitment to young people's development.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note the contents of this report; and
2. Note the next steps and recommendations contained in this report.

### CONTACT OFFICERS:

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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:** None

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** None

<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?		N/A
GM Transport Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
9 October 2020	N/A	

## **1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. Applications for Our Pass opened on 1 July 2019 and continue to be available to eligible individuals on an ongoing basis. For a one-off £10 administration fee, young people in Greater Manchester have been able to access free bus travel and other benefits across the city-region since the start of September 2019.
- 1.2. The purpose of the two-year pilot is to test the outcomes for young people against the strategic objectives of the pilot. The data gathered during the pilot will be used to inform future decisions on investment to support young people with the costs of travel and access to life opportunities.
- 1.3. Young people and community groups were engaged through the Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority to co-create the pilot. This included choosing the name, designing the card and contributing to how the scheme operates.
- 1.4. At 16 years of age, those people face decisions that will shape their lives, but they often also lack the skills they need to travel, explore and navigate the world beyond their doorstep. Our Pass is designed to help rectify that as they start college, apprenticeships, jobs and the transition into adult life. The pilot has the potential to reach c.63,000 young people across Greater Manchester each year.
- 1.5. Since the scheme launched in September of last year, more than 8.7 million bus journeys have been made by Our Pass card holders<sup>1</sup>, with almost 300,000 bus journeys per week being made prior to the introduction of the nationwide coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown in March 2020.
- 1.6. This report sets out the take-up of the scheme and use so far. It also provides an update regarding the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the pilot and the changes to the administration of the Exclusives (previously known as Opportunities) from August 2020.

## **2. ACTIVE CARDS**

- 2.1. Since Our Pass went live in September 2019, there has been strong take-up for the card. As at 31 January 2020, there were c.38,200 active Our Pass cards in circulation. Since that date, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent nationwide lockdown restrictions, demand for Our Pass had fallen, with only c.900 cards being issued in the following six months. As at 31 July 2020, there were c.39,000 active Our Pass cards in circulation out of an eligible population of c.63,000.
- 2.2. Prior to the lockdown, it was expected that there would be c.44,000 active cards compared to the business case estimate of 46,000 in the first year. The business case estimate, upon

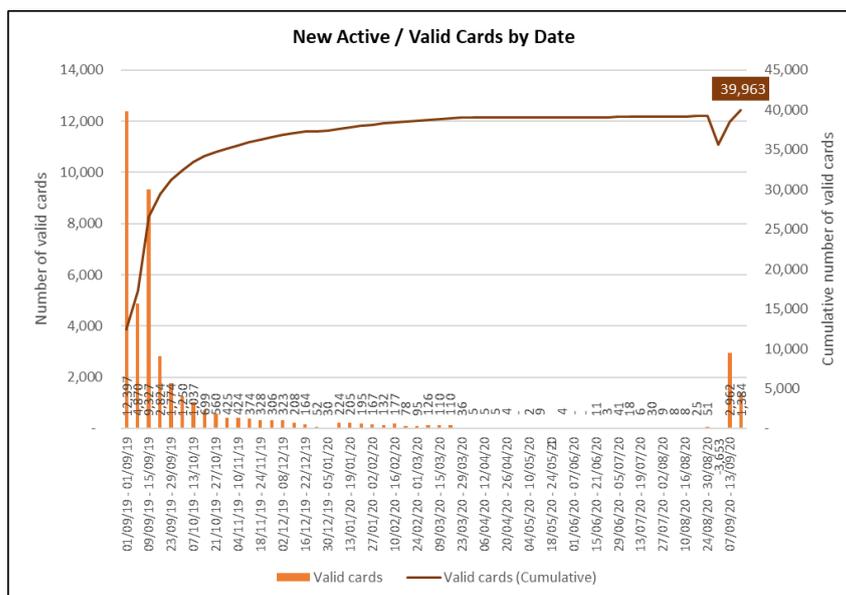
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<sup>1</sup> To 17 September 2020

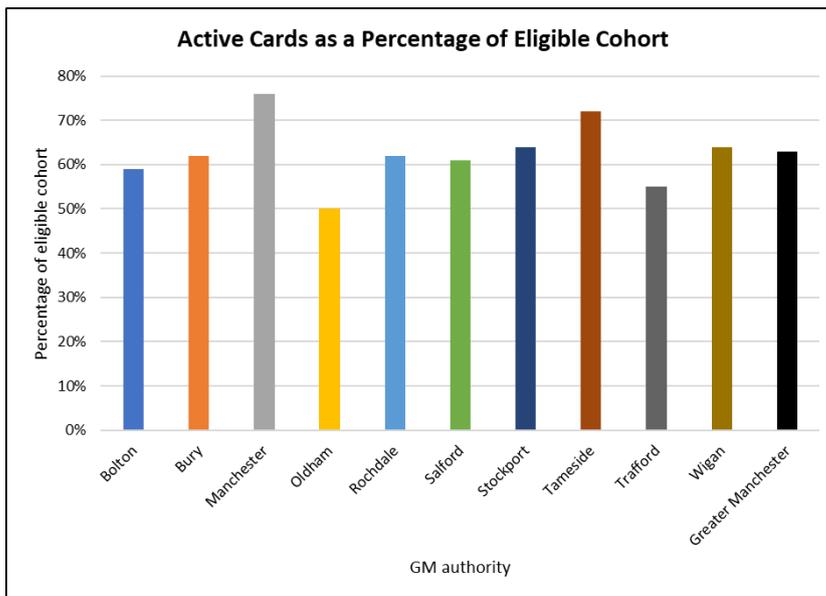
which the initial budget estimates were calculated, was based on the 75% take-up level of a similar scheme in London.

2.3. On 1 July 2020, applications opened to the third eligible cohort. Since that time there has also been strong take-up of the card by those individuals, with c.17,000 cards being issued to 17 September 2020.

2.4. The following chart shows the increase in total active Our Pass cards each week, from 1 September 2019 through to 17 September 2020, as well as the cumulative number of active cards in circulation each week over that period.

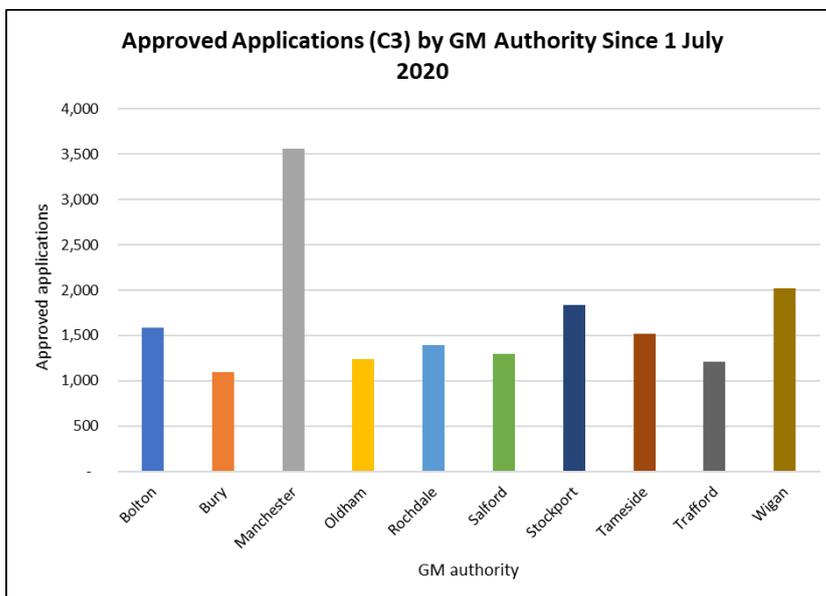


2.5. Regarding card take-up by district, the following chart shows the percentage of eligible 16 to 18-year-olds in each area that had an Our Pass card as at 17 September 2020. At that time, card take-up was above or around the GM average (63%) in seven of the ten districts, with notable exceptions in Oldham (50%) and Trafford (55%).



2.6. Further work is currently being planned at a local level to identify specific issues and possible, future interventions to increase take up.

2.7. The following table shows the number of approved applications for the third eligible cohort (c. 17,000), by district, since 1 July 2020.



### 3. BUS TRAVEL

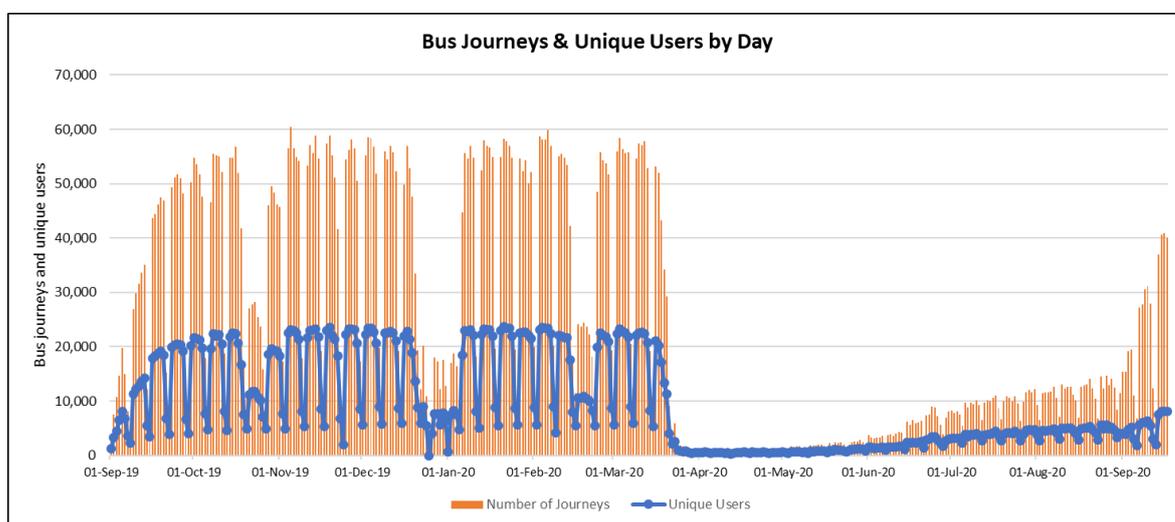
3.1. As one of his central manifesto commitments, the Mayor announced the introduction of Our Pass to help young people with the cost of using public transport and to help to reverse the decline in public transport use amongst the 16-18 age group. The pilot scheme aims to help reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training. At the

same time, one of the key programme aims is to help form lifelong habits of increased public transport use, thereby reducing congestion on Greater Manchester's roads.

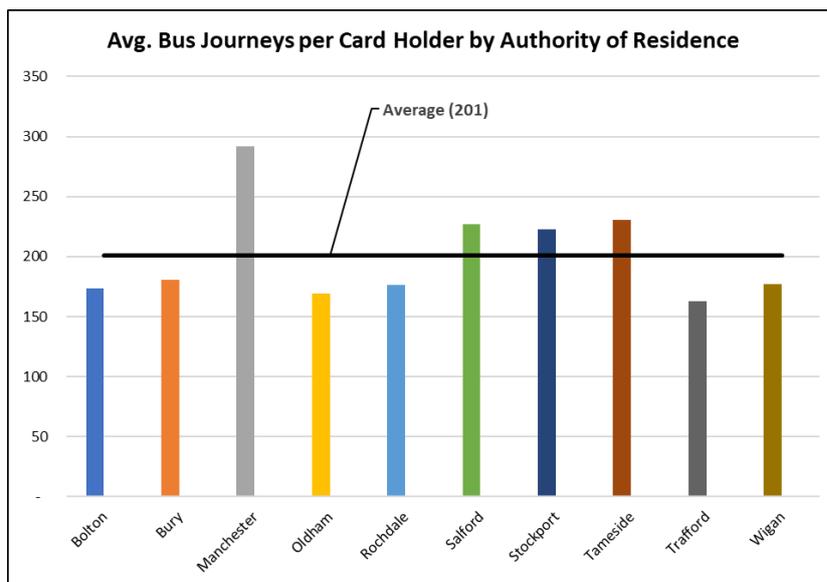
3.2. Free bus travel throughout GM has been available to Our Pass holders since 1 September 2019. From that date through to the end of service on 17 September 2020, over 8.7 million free bus journeys had been made by Our Pass holders.

3.3. Prior to the introduction of Coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown restrictions in March 2020, almost 300,000 weekly journeys were being made using Our Pass cards. However, the widespread closure of schools, businesses and workplaces saw the weekly average fall to around 12,700 journeys between 24 March and 13 June 2020.

3.4. The following chart presents a daily breakdown of the total bus journey numbers and shows the number of unique Our Pass holders making journeys each day.



3.5. The following chart shows an analysis of the average number of bus journeys made per active card holder according to their Local Authority of residence in GM, as at 17 September 2020. The chart also shows that bus use is higher than average amongst Our Pass holders resident in Manchester, Salford, Stockport and Tameside.



#### 4. EXCLUSIVES UPDATE

- 4.1. Between September 2019 and July 2020, a range of Our Pass “opportunities” were made available to cardholders. During that time uptake of those offers was 8,480. The offers available included free access to swimming and leisure centres for all card holders across the ten local authorities. They also included free, sponsored “Our Pass” branded lanyards available to all card holders. In addition, there were discounts and giveaways from Manchester City and Manchester United football clubs, theatre and concert tickets, and a range of careers “tasters” from BBC, ITV and the Royal Exchange Theatre.
- 4.2. A new Our Pass website was launched in early August 2020, with the aim of increasing uptake of those offers; now referred to as “exclusives”. The new website is administered by The Growth Company and it is intended that new exclusives will be added to the site on an ongoing basis. As at 17 September, 5,280 people have registered accounts on the new Our Pass website.
- 4.3. The current exclusives include offers from the Co-op, Vimto, Manchester United and Manchester City, and a variety of restaurant and food offers including e.g. from Dishoom. As a result of the current Government guidance, most exclusives are on hold, including those for leisure centres and theatre tickets. However, all exclusives are under constant review in line with the prescribed guidelines, and the Our Pass team are focusing on food and online discount offers to keep up the interest and the momentum despite the challenges created by the pandemic.

#### 5. FINANCE UPDATE

- 5.1. The GMCA previously approved a budget of £9.3 million to deliver free bus travel in the 2019/20 financial year. The outturn to 31 March 2020 was on budget including both the

costs of reimbursing bus operators for Our Pass journeys made and the additional capacity costs necessitated by the pilot. In addition, the GMCA approved £575,000 to deliver and operate the non-travel (i.e. exclusives) elements of the pilot in 2019/20.

5.2. The budget of £15.9 million to deliver free bus travel in the current financial year (2020/21) is provided by, and 'ringfenced' within, the Mayoral budget, with the risk of higher than budgeted expenditure underwritten, as previously agreed by GMCA, from the Concessionary Travel Reserve.

5.3. The financial impact of the current and forecast future usage of Our Pass is being evaluated and will be reported to GMCA as part of the regular financial update reports.

## **6. NEXT STEPS**

6.1. An evaluation report will be prepared for submission to the GMCA later this year. The report will provide an evaluation of the scheme so far, noting the disruption to the Our Pass pilot during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.