

Greater Manchester Transport Committee

Date: 24 March 2022

Subject: Operation and Performance of Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme (GMRAPS)

Report of: Bob Morris, Chief Operating Officer, TfGM

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an overview of GMRAPS and identifies areas where improvements can be made to ensure compliance with permit conditions, consistent reporting of road work activities and enhancement of information provided to transport operators to ensure minimal disruption to the GM highway network.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are asked to:

- Support the development of GMRAPS to ensure a successful Lane Rental scheme can be developed and introduced; and,
- Note the interventions and commitments detailed in section three of this report.

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BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

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: 1

Appendix: Performance and congestion charts

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No

GMTC

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

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1 OVERVIEW

- 1.1. The Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme (GMRAPS) commenced on 29 April 2013. Permit schemes provide a way to reduce the disruption caused by roadworks through introducing increased levels of control over activities, providing a lever to influence how works are carried out, and demonstrates whether there is parity amongst all works promoters either local authority or statutory undertakers. The scheme is administered by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and operated by all ten Greater Manchester Local Highway Authorities (LHAs).
- 1.2. Roads are vital to transportation, they provide a means to travel for all users, however, it is essential that they are adequately maintained. They also carry essential services including water, gas, electricity and telecommunications. Roadworks in the main are either carried out by the local authority or utility companies (Promoters).
- 1.3. Within Greater Manchester (GM) promoters of works must obtain a GMRAPS permit prior to undertaking their works. LHAs cannot stop utility works being undertaken but, unless they are urgent or an emergency (e.g. gas leak, loss of service), they can direct when they can be done and add reasonable conditions such as the type of traffic management and how long the works are expected to take.
- 1.4. Permit schemes are governed by legislation which is designed to give a balance to both authorities and utility's needs. Other activities such as building works, parked skips, scaffolding and development works are not governed by GMRAPS, however local authorities can licence these works and should co-ordinate them with all other roadworks.
- 1.5. LHAs are under a duty to co-ordinate roadworks on their highway network. The Government considers that well-designed, outcome-focused, and reasonably implemented permit schemes provide the best method of managing road networks and the works that take place in or on the public highway. The main aim of a permit scheme should be to minimise disruption to the network within GM and adjacent networks in neighbouring authorities.

- 1.6. Almost all authorities in England run a permit scheme and the remainder will commence soon. GMRAPS is unique, it is the only multi-authority scheme in the Country. The benefits of this gives a holistic view of roadworks on the network in GM. The approved scheme provides a consistent approach to dealing with permits, and evaluation of the scheme.
- 1.7. The Collaborative Service Centre (CSC), managed by TfGM, currently provides an overview of the GMRAPS process. Permits are received centrally and checked for simple errors, incorrect address, missing information, impact on the Key Route Network (KRN) or the public transport network. This allows the LHA to concentrate on the local co-ordination of permits ensuring duration and method of works are scrutinised and appropriately challenged.
- 1.8. The verified permits are sent on to the individual LHAs for further scrutiny and co-ordination with other planned activities within their individual local authority area. The CSC also provide a central invoicing function on behalf of the LHAs, taking the burden away from each LHA of chasing works promoters for payment and allowing for a more efficient permit scheme operation.
- 1.9. In GM for the year 2020/21 there were 87,238 permit applications from utility companies and 31,676 from GM LHAs. The type of permits range from simple minor works through to major projects. There are also emergency activities that require immediate attention. Applications are also made to vary permits such as amend the start date or to extend the duration due to unforeseen circumstances. In total during 2020/21 TfGM and the GM LHAs dealt with 148,476 permit applications.
- 1.10. For major works, it's not uncommon for authorities to know about proposals before a permit is submitted. Most of the authorities undertake quarterly co-ordination meetings and encourage work promoters to provide information and discuss their upcoming plans at these meetings. This allows for wider co-ordination with other planned activities therefore reducing the risk of additional avoidable disruption. Plans and proposals are also shared at other meetings such as the TfGM Regional Centre Co-ordination Meeting to extend opportunities for co-ordination with the busy regional events calendar.

- 1.11. To ensure the GMRAPS scheme is meeting its objectives a report is published every three years detailing overall performance. The latest report was the six-year review, completed in the summer of 2019, and published in 2020 on TfGM's website. The report can be found [here](#). The report concluded that all its objectives were met. However, there was a concern raised around the differences between LHAs own roadworks compared to the utilities works. Some LHAs have low permit applications for their own works and are likely to be undertaking works on the network without any co-ordination checks. Chart 1 in the Appendix highlights the differences between utility and LHAs granted permits for the year 2020/21 and the current year up to and including December 2021. It should be noted that the average England permit proportion is 60/40 based on Utility / LHA.
- 1.12. Future improvements to GMRAPS include enhanced independent scrutiny and challenge of activities that will impact on the KRN. A number of interventions have also been identified that will have a positive impact on the GM highway network and also benefit bus services and are detailed in section three. This is also documented in the Network Management section of the recently published Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), that is awaiting government funding.

2 PERFORMANCE OF GMRAPS

- 2.1 Prior to the pandemic roadworks were the major contributor to delays (52%) on the GM monitored corridors, followed by capacity (17%) and incidents on the Strategic Route network (10%). This is detailed in Chart 2 in the Appendix.
- 2.2 During the pandemic roadworks have remained the major contributor to delays (62%) on the GM monitored corridors, followed by adverse weather (15%) and road traffic collisions and broken-down vehicles (13%). This is detailed in Chart 3 in the Appendix. Events, such as football matches and concerts, disappeared as a cause of delay but are now starting to reappear and incidents on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) make a much lower contribution. This is likely to be due to the reduced use of the SRN throughout the pandemic.
- 2.3 TfGM are working with LHAs to improve the way roadworks are managed across GM including improvements to GMRAPS, the development of the corridor

management function and GM wide network management tools identified in the development of the BSIP.

- 2.4 Some areas of GMRAPS have been challenged at GM Highways Group such as duration of activities, quality of reinstatements, LHA permitting of own works, enforcement and cross boundary coordination being the areas of greatest concern. Compared with utility companies there is evidence of inconsistencies and adherence to the conditions of the permitting scheme within the 10 LHAs.
- 2.5 Given there are still some differences throughout the region in the types of activities where LHA own works require GMRAPS permit, the GM Streetworks Group are reviewing and defining the activities that will require a permit. This will ensure a more consistent approach and a platform for monitoring going forward.
- 2.6 LHAs are always seeking to improve performance of GMRAPS within their individual areas, with some success. TfGM have led on early interventions including the provision of enhanced guidance for permit management to ensure a consistent approach to permitting throughout the region, co-ordination for Highway Operation Teams and the development of action plans for individual LHAs to look at and address the challenges within their locality. Initial indications are that there has been an improvement in some LHAs in the permitting of their own works and the average duration of works being undertaken has reduced because of a greater focus on challenging the proposed duration of works by utility companies.

3 FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO GMRAPS

- 3.1. The GMRAPS service is continuously looking for improvements into how the scheme can benefit all road users. A number of interventions have been identified to be delivered either as part of the BSIP or through the development of permit scheme processes to ensure that a consistent approach is adhered to by each LHA throughout the region.
- 3.2. **Cross boundary co-ordination of permit activity** - Bus operators in the region currently have access to daily information in relation to the activities that will directly impact on a particular bus service and route allowing for appropriate mitigation by the operator. However, a bus service may travel into several different GM LHA areas

and, whilst there may be a level of cross boundary co-ordination of works, services may be severely disrupted by numerous activities along a particular corridor. TfGM are developing a notification on the roadworks co-ordination software, through a clash analysis tool to highlight when multiple works could potentially affect the same bus service. This will mean highway authority works approvers are better informed of potential disruption along a particular corridor and can therefore take the appropriate remedial action.

3.3. **Bus Operator Roadworks Viewer** - This tool complements roadworks information provided on the GMRAPS public website. To assist bus operators in managing the impact of roadworks, TfGM have developed an automated bus operator roadworks notification tool. This tool provides individual bus operators with registered works affecting their individual bus services that is automatically generated daily. To assist operators there is development of an interactive web-based system to allow a more user friendly and visual experience exclusively for bus operators to allow an enhanced forward view of up and coming works by bus service.

3.4. **A Greater Manchester Roadworks Charter** - To reduce the impact of roadworks on bus services and other road users, GM is currently developing a Roadworks Charter. This will include a series of principles and targets which will ensure roadworks are carried out as efficiently and safely as possible, keeping disruption to a minimum and supporting sustainable travel modes. The Charter will include:

- Planning of works - Commit to sharing forward plans to improve collaboration and information to road users;
- During works - Reduce overall duration and disruption to road users during peak periods and commitments regarding provisions for pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities, users of mobility scooters and bus operators / passengers during works; and,
- Post-works – Decreased number of poor reinstatements and improved safety related response times.

3.5 **Lane Rental on the KRN** – Lane Rental is a process that changes the focus on the working arrangements and provides incentives to carry out works outside of traffic

sensitive times. There is an ambition within the region to introduce a Lane Rental scheme, subject to agreement from all ten GM LHAs, to:

- Reduce the length of time that sites are unoccupied;
- Improve the planning and co-ordination of works;
- Carry out more works outside of peak times and reopening at busy times;
- Increase the workforce on site at any one time; to minimise the period of the works and,
- Complete works to the right standard first time.

3.6 **Consistent district permitting** - This proposal provides for a consistent approach to permitting for the LHAs and a focus on the enhanced scrutiny of permits and greater challenge back to both utility companies and LHAs. This is key to support an improved GMRAPS operation and enhance the opportunity to introduce a Lane Rental scheme in the future. This proposal will require the renewal and adoption of common standards and practice throughout the region.

3.7 Independent scrutiny of all permit applications for the KRN will also be carried out. The key focus will be to ensure that LHAs are applying all appropriate checks in a consistent way across the KRN and reasonable challenge is being applied to reduce work durations whenever possible. In addition, it is believed that this approach would enable the management of the more complex cross boundary activity and the impacts of highway activities on a route basis, therefore benefiting the wider highway network.

4 RECOMMENDATION

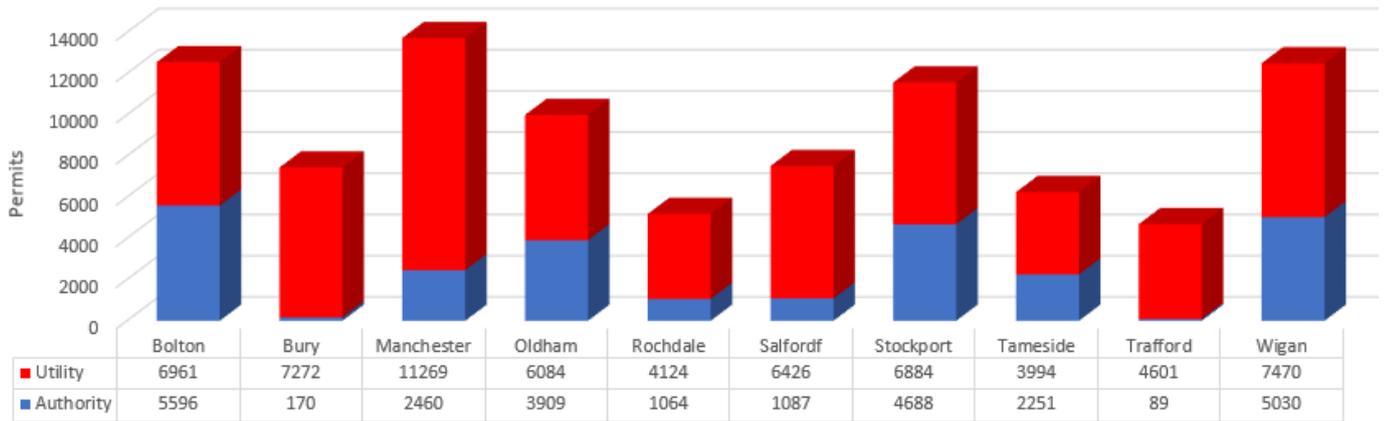
4.1. Members are asked to:

- Support the development of GMRAPS to ensure a successful Lane Rental scheme can be developed and introduced; and,
- Note the interventions and commitments detailed in section three of this report.

Appendix

Chart 1 – Granted GMRAPS permits

Granted GMRAPS Permits April 2020 - March 2021



The average England permit proportion is 60/40 based on Utility / LHA.

Granted GMRAPS Permits April 2021 - December 2021

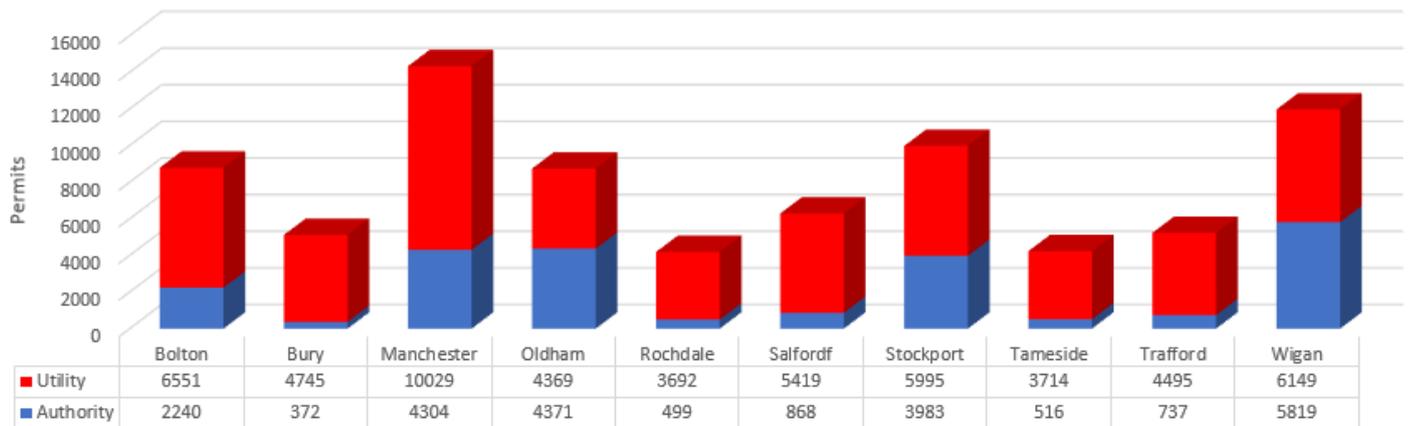


Chart 2 – Causes of delay pre pandemic

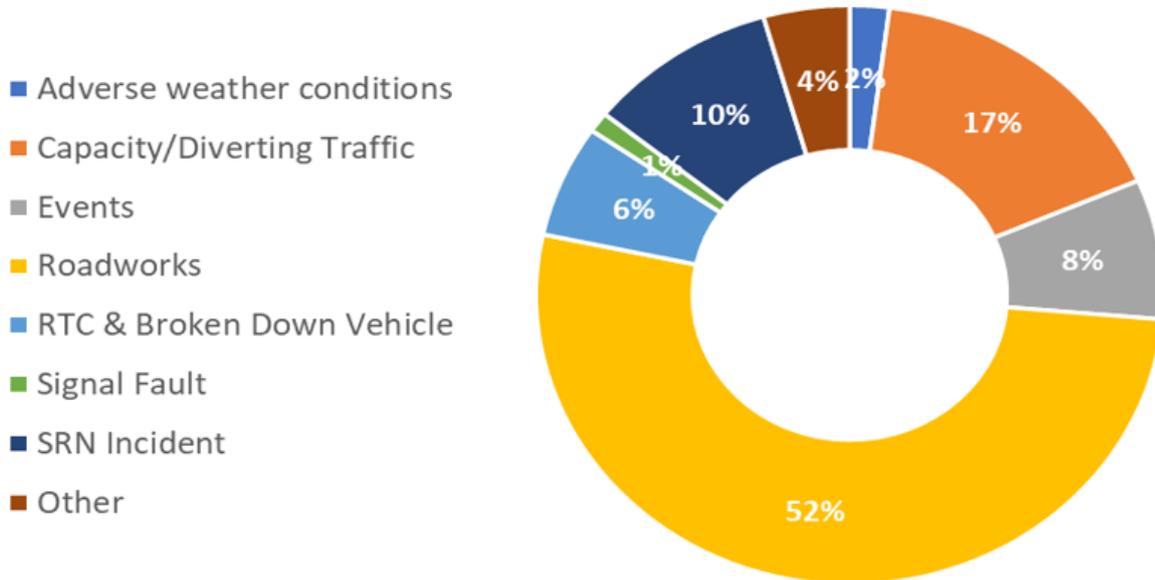


Chart 3 - Causes of delay post pandemic

