

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER  
METROLINK AND RAIL SUB COMMITTEE  
HELD ON FRIDAY 11 MARCH 2022  
AT THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, MANCHESTER**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Stuart Haslam	Bolton Council
Councillor Emma Taylor	Manchester City Council
Councillor Howard Sykes	Oldham Council
Councillor Norman Briggs	Oldham Council
Councillor Tom McGee	Stockport MBC
Councillor Doreen Dickinson (Chair)	Tameside Council
Councillor Steve Adshead	Trafford Council
Councillor Angie Clarke	Stockport MBC

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Nicola Ward	Senior Governance Officer, GMCA
Simon Elliott	Head of Rail Programme, TfGM
Danny Vaughan	Head of Metrolink, TfGM
Victoria Mercer	Metrolink Service Delivery Manager, TfGM
Gwynne Williams	Deputy Monitoring Officer, GMCA
Mark Angelucci	Rail Officer, TfGM

**OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Guillaume Chanussot	Keolis Amey Metrolink (KAM)
Lucja Majewski	TransPennine Express (TPE)
Chris Jackson	Northern
Jamie McGowan	British Transport Police

**GMTMRC 10/22 APOLOGIES**

**Resolved /-**

That apologies be noted and received from Councillor's Andrew Western (GMCA), Shah Wazir (Rochdale), Joanne Marshall (Wigan Council), Charlie French (Avanti) and Caroline Whittam (TfGM).

## **GMTMRC 11/22 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS**

### **Resolved /-**

There were no chairs announcements or items of urgent business.

## **GMTMRC 12/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

### **Resolved /-**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **GMTMRC 13/22 MINUTES OF THE GM TRANSPORT METROLINK & RAIL SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 14 JANUARY 2022**

### **Resolved /-**

That the minutes of the GM Transport Metrolink & Rail Sub Committee meeting held 14 January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

## **GMTMRC 14/22 METROLINK SERVICE PERFORMANCE**

Victoria Mercer, Metrolink Service Delivery Manager, TfGM took Members through the latest Metrolink Service Performance Report which covered periods 9-11 from mid November 2021 to early February 2022 and evidenced the significant impact on patronage levels as a result of Government's Plan B restrictions surrounding the Omicron variant. The post-Christmas recovery had been slow, however since the relaxation of these restrictions, patronage had increased to c.41% with the highest levels of c. 65% on special event days in GM. However, alongside this increase in patronage there had also been evidence of some capacity issues, further exasperated by delays and reduced services due to high staff absences.

The performance throughout the period was further impacted by a number of storms, however the level of impact was mitigated through a patrolling contractor promptly responding to fallen trees and other storm related issues on the network. Despite further

performance setbacks as a result of signalling failures and a significantly longer lead time on parts and spares, overall performance had increased through period 11.

There had been some serious incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) throughout this period, including significant damage to shelters in the Failsworth area. Collaborate work with Greater Manchester Police and KAM was underway, especially in relation to targeted restorative justice interventions with young people involved in instances of ASB on the Manchester Airport and Rochdale lines. There had also been some other specialist operations on the network with the TravelSafe Partnership including a high-profile operation at Victoria Station which resulted in two arrests and the identification of three vulnerable children.

As a result of the Safer Streets funding in January 2022, there had been a dedicated resource deployed to the five stops along the Rochdale/Oldham line including Youth Teams and Street Angel Teams to ensure that women and girls specifically feel more confident in travelling on Metrolink. This initiative further supported the overall campaign, the introduction of GMP's Live Chat facility and specific training for KAM staff, had undoubtedly contributed to an increased perception of safety on the network, as per the latest travel survey, however this would continue to be monitored and further campaign communications were planned.

With regards to other passenger groups, KAM were continuing their education programme to schools, specifically focussed on the impact of anti-social behaviour and promoting safe travel for young people. Their restorative justice approach with perpetrators was designed to increase their awareness of the wider impacts of their behaviour, on other passengers, staff and the network as a whole and it was yielding positive results. KAM had also offered sessions at their depot aimed at more vulnerable passengers, to share information with them on the safety of tram travel, especially in relation to increasing their awareness of driver perception.

There were a number of works planned over the coming months, which had been designed to predominately take place during the quietest periods on the network including school holidays. These would see improvements to the Eccles line in February and further works to the Media City line in April. City Centre works would take place between 20-27 March in the Piccadilly Gardens and Piccadilly Station areas. Works in the summer

period were yet to be confirmed but it was hoped to include further work to the Media City – Eccles line in July, followed by points work in Eccles in early Autumn. All of which would be communicated through a range of media channels including the TfGM website, printed displays for stops, audio announcements and face-to-face interactions with staff. Members noted that there had already been significant works undertaken in January, including upgrades to the Trans Pennine line, track works at Victoria and communications renewals on the Altrincham and Bury lines.

With regards to the Safer Streets initiatives, Members asked whether there had been an evaluation as yet from the pilots. It was confirmed that staff were still delivering this, but that initial outputs were being delivered and a review was underway.

The reported increase in anti-social behaviour, particularly denoting the doubling of incidents on the Oldham/Rochdale line since 2019 was of concern to Members, and the wider determinants of this type of activity were often the root cause than needed addressing. Officers reported that these perpetrators often had very complex cases and required significant partnership resource, however bespoke plans were being delivered, recognising that local problem solving was key and that as a result, there would be further increases to safety perception on the network.

Members raised specific concerns that there had been Metrolink works and as a result, reduced services on a recent football derby day in Manchester. Officers agreed that this was not an ideal scenario, however when fixtures are announced with little notice, often works have already been booked with specialist contractors and can not be altered. In this case, further shuttle buses were added and a six-minute service to Bury remained. However, this would always be avoided if possible, in the future.

The report noted that during period 4, Metrolink performance had dropped to a low level of 81% and Members questioned as to the factors which had resulted in this significant poor performance. There were several contributors to this figure, however officers reported that the greatest impact had been as a result of the Omicron variant, whether that be positive cases or isolation, impacting available resources. However, it was pleasing to report that performance had improved over recent months and levels were now in line with performance targets for the current period.

Members reported positive impacts of the Safer Streets pilots, however felt that unless there were an increased number of uniformed officers on the Metrolink network, then prevention of future incidents would be challenging as the current level of resources only allowed for responsive services once an incident had taken place. KAM reported that tackling anti-social behaviour remained a priority for them and their partner organisations and that more innovative work was being undertaken with agencies including YouthZone and Barnabas to creatively inform and advise potential perpetrators as to the damage caused by such behaviours. The increased support from GMP had also been noted, which due to their powers of arrest, was making a significant difference to the number of charges being brought about on the network.

With regards to the future funding of Metrolink and bus services, Members were aware that the current 'recovery' funding from Government was due to finish at the end of March and there was still no confirmation of any future funding. Officers reported that last week there had been an announcement by Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport that there would be a further £150m package for bus and light rail in England, however this would only be for the next six months and after which, there would be no further recovery funding. With regards to patronage predictions, it was difficult to foresee as there were many contributing factors still to be determined. Current levels were c. 65% pre-covid levels and with inflation costs, the cost of running the network would also inevitably increase. As most commuters had only returned to the office 2-3 days per week, there was a mixed and fluctuating picture regarding capacity levels, however peak travel had resurfaced as the busiest time on the network. It was hoped that Greater Manchester would be made aware of its allocation of the Recovery Funding over the next couple of weeks, however Members were concerned that this is too close to the end of the previous funding and offers no opportunity for forward planning.

In relation to planned works on the network, Members were concerned that the TfGM website remained too complex and difficult to navigate and urged that other forms of communications be used to inform residents of the potential impact of works. Officers reported that the TfGM website was currently going through a review process to ensure it was as simple and accessible as possible, however alongside it there were a number of other communications channels used to ensure planned works were effectively promoted, including printed information on stops, press releases, social media channels, signage and face to face contact with staff on the ground.

**Resolved /-**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That TfGM provide the outcomes of the Safer Streets pilots at the next meeting of the sub-committee.
3. That it be noted that Greater Manchester's allocation of Light Rail recovery funding from Government between April-October is still to be determined.

**GMTMRC 15/22 METROLINK OPERATOR UPDATE**

Guillaume Chanussot, Managing Director of KAM provided a verbal update to the Committee, which complemented the information already shared in the Metrolink Service Performance Report. The impact of covid still remained in the organisation, with higher-than-average levels of absenteeism, especially in relation to long term absenteeism as a result of long covid or operation wait times.

Anti-social behaviour remains a challenge, however there had been a reduction of incidents as a result of effective partnership working and a stronger presence of officers on the network.

Due to the current situation with Ukraine, further support had been offered to employees affected, alongside additional training on equalities and diversity for all Metrolink staff.

**Resolved /-**

1. That the verbal update from KAM be noted.
2. That all members of the GM Transport Committee be invited to a site visit of Metrolink backstage facilities.

**GMTMRC 16/22 LOCAL RAIL SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Simon Elliott, Head of Rail Programme, TfGM introduced a report which provided performance data across the rail network through periods 9, 10 and 11 (November 2021-February 2022).

There had been a decline in performance across all train operators through this period due to poor conditions (Northern 88 PPM and TPE 90 PPM) and overall levels were lower than 2020.

With regards to patronage, Northern reporting current levels of c. 71% and TPE reporting current levels of 60%. Although these levels were significantly lower than average, there had been some increase in leisure travel, and the Northwest were trending higher than the national average.

Face coverings are no longer mandatory on public transport and since the removal of the regulations compliance levels have been c. 10-15% whereas during Plan B, compliance had reached as high as 75%. Operators continue to pursue a promotional message to encourage passengers to wear a mask on trains and at stations.

There were ongoing industrial relations with regards to rest day working that had impacted some Sunday services, however both Northern and TPE had reached new terms with their employees. Current timetables had been reduced where required to mitigate further cancellations as a result of resourcing shortages.

Planned works on Platforms 13 and 14 at Manchester Piccadilly was due to begin shortly, which would include the refurbishment of lifts and therefore over this period there would additional assistance and temporary measures put in place to assist passengers.

A successful 'Friends of Stations' event had been hosted this week, with over 26 stations represented and 60 people in attendance. Members wished to express their thanks to station volunteers who make a real difference to their local area, and for their willingness to share ideas and support one another through events such as these.

Members expressed their concern over some short forming of East Midlands Rail services and capacity issues as a result. Officers reported that there had been a number of engines in for maintenance (158 units) however these were beginning to be returned to the network and would hopefully address incidents of short forming.

With regards to anti-social behaviour, Members recounted an incident which took place at Clifton on the 4 February, at which a brick was thrown through the driver's window resulting in significant injury. Northern were able to provide an update on this horrific incident, in that the

driver was recovering well, however the hooded perpetrators were yet to be identified. A reward of £1000 had been offered for any information which leads to a conviction and this would be re-communicated again by Northern in light of no current leads.

**Resolved /-**

That the report be noted.

**GMTMRC 17/22      RAIL OPERATOR UPDATE**

Rail operators in attendance were invited to provide a verbal update to the Committee which included –

- TransPennine Express reported an ongoing dispute with RMT which may result in further strike action over the next four Sundays and forthcoming Bank Holiday periods. Discussions remained open, however there was a temporary reduced timetable in place to mitigate any disruptions. Patronage levels had remained consistent over recent weeks at c. 72% of pre-covid levels. There would be limited changes to the proposed May timetable in light of all the above, however it would see the reinstatement of an hourly service from Glasgow to Manchester Airport and the Cleethorpes service reinstated. Timetable changes for December 2022 were currently under discussion and would be communicated to Members in due course. A number of accessibility improvements were also underway, including the provision of tablets for live sign language interpretation at some stations and potentially on the TPE website. Maps were being installed at key stations in conjunction with the Royal National Institute for the Blind to provide strong colour contrasting maps alongside braille directions. In areas where passengers would less likely want to use their hands to read braille (i.e. toilet facilities) there were audio systems being installed which would read aloud signage. Lastly, the contact centre would be opened 24 hours a day to allow passenger assist facilities to be pre-booked at any time.
- Northern reported a recent reduction in the number of cancelled services following the increased flexibility from ASLEF (Trade Union of Train Drivers) over the past six weeks which will continue to be seen over the next couple of weeks as more depots increase their flexible working arrangements. However, throughout these challenges,

additional bus replacement services have been put in place and there had been general content amongst passengers. The current timetable was in line with the current patronage levels of around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of pre-pandemic levels, however there were plans for some changes within the May timetable that would be shared with Members as soon as possible. The consultation outcomes in relation to the December 2022 timetable changes were also being reviewed and Northern would be responding to them over the next few weeks. There had been a significant amount of activity alongside TfGM with regards to the CP7 bid for Access for All funding for schemes between 2024-2029. Staff absence levels remained stubbornly high, further exasperated by a shortage of Occupational Health practitioners, and consideration was being given as to how to address this contributing factor.

- British Transport Police (BTP) reported a 31% decline in crime rates relating to personal property theft, drugs and cycle theft on the network, however other crimes including violence, common assaults and sexual assaults had remained at previous levels. Although there had been a significant increase in the reporting of sexual assaults as a result of recent campaigns, the fundamental issue remained, that there should be no such crimes on the transport network. One of the most recent hotspot areas in relation to anti-social behaviour was Brinnington, which was a stop on the Sheffield line. Targeted operational activity had taken place including a wide range of organisations along the route, and plans were in place for camera assistance to help identify the offenders. Unfortunately, ASB had seemingly been displaced from the town centre and was also evidently targeting areas where uniform presence was expected. This had been seen at Stockport Interchange recently, where a group of youths had caused significant damage and disturbance. Thankfully they had now been identified and work was underway with the Youth Offending Team to prevent any re-offending. Collaborative approaches such as these had also been successful alongside the Crucial Crew in Bolton, Oldham and Salford, and work was ongoing with the Railway Children organisation. There had been a spike in cable theft on the network, especially relating to products which had not yet been laid, which the Northwest Disruption Team were addressing.

Members questioned as to the current policies for all rail providers with regards to staff who are covid positive, all train operators in attendance confirmed that they would not ask a staff

member who tested positive for covid-19 to attend the workplace, as this would clearly put more people at risk.

In relation to the reported anti-social behaviour in Brinnington, Members reported that this was also further down the line to Bredbury and Romiley with young people travelling ticketless between stations. Incidents had become more frequent and more severe, with staff and members of the public being intimidated by their presence, and no support from GMP. It was suggested that further support from BTP would be welcomed, along with more support for the station staff from Network Rail. The use of pop up cameras in the area was also supported, however Members urged that these needed to be directional rather than fixed as often the perpetrators were aware of the cameras and therefore were able to avoid them. BTP confirmed that the dates and times of these recent incidents would be reviewed and that the directional cameras would be located with advice from the Crime Officer to ensure they had the greatest chance of capturing evidence. Further days of action were planned for this route and patrols would be targeted according to these reports.

Members expressed how anti-social behaviour was an issue for all modes in the south of the conurbation, however in Stockport, further funding was given to the Youth Offending Team to help them to address ASB, particularly around the town centre and bus station. It was clear that preventative measures and education were needed to reduce youth related crimes.

Regarding BTP response times, it was suggested that there should be smaller, part-time offices for officers across the network to reduce travel times to incidents. Officers agreed to look at other potential options in addition to Manchester Piccadilly and Victoria stations.

#### **Resolved /-**

1. That the verbal updates from TransPennine Express, Northern and British Transport Police be noted.
2. That it be noted that operators would share details of the May timetable with members of the Sub-Committee in due course.
3. That it be noted that officers from British Transport Police offered to review the dates and times of recent incidents on the Brinnington/Bredbury/Romiley line and consider how the directional cameras may assist in identifying perpetrators.
4. That local councillors be invited to attend future cross-border meetings in these areas.

5. That it be noted that officers from British Transport Police would look to further develop their network of temporary satellite offices to enable faster response times to incidents.

## **GMTMRC 18/22      RAIL PROGRAMME AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATE**

Simon Elliott, Head of Rail Programme, TfGM took Members through a report which provided a six-monthly update on the rail infrastructure schemes and initiatives in the Greater Manchester area.

In relation to previously awarded Access for All schemes, both Daisyhill and Irlam would become step-free by the end of 2023 as per their detailed designs. Funding had also been secured for Swinton station, which was planned to be delivered in 2024. Within the CP6 scheme, Department for Transport had awarded funding for small interventions across 22 stations, including Rose Hill and Salford Central, alongside Park & Ride schemes in Mills Hill and Walkden. New rail stations were also planned for Golborne and Cheadle, with the outline business case and modelling currently being developed for Cheadle and the operational challenges currently being considered for Golborne.

With regards to Rail Reform, Members were reminded that they had received a report earlier in the year which outlined the plans for the establishment of Great British rail, and conversations had already begun with their transition team regarding the development of the organisation and its lines of accountability.

In February, the GM Transport Committee received a report which outlined TfGM's proposed submission to the CP7 Access for All scheme, within which 11 stations had been assessed against the agreed criteria and put forward for inclusion. Current assessment of the match funding availability was positive and in line with that available for the previous round. The next steps would be to formally submit the bid on 15 April, alongside which formal letters of support from local councillors and the Metrolink & Rail sub-committee would be welcomed.

Members were informed of the early introduction of CP7 in light of the lessons learnt from the previous round and welcomed the opportunity it presented to fast track the procurement

process ahead of the project start dates. Officers agreed to ensure the Committee were informed of the outcome once the funding had been awarded.

With regards to the Restoring Railways funding, Members queried as to the potential inclusion of the Mid-Cheshire line as it would offer significant benefits to Northenden and Baguley, amongst other areas. Officers reported that the Ashton-Stockport line was being assessed currently, but that the industry had given no indication of further rounds as yet.

A further £80m of funding had been awarded to GM in support of the December 2022 timetable change to undertake the relevant platform extensions, signalling works etc and although positive, this was not a sufficient level of funding for what was needed.

In relation to the map of accessible stations provided within the report, Members were concerned that a large area of south Manchester seemed to be disproportionately disadvantaged. The potential for small 'easy-win' schemes was suggested so that these populations could be better connected quickly. Officers acknowledged that the southeast of the conurbation was disproportionately affected by inaccessible stations, however GM in its scheme criteria had looked not only at footfall and demographics, but also gaps in the network, which was actually contrary to DfT's guidance.

Members urged that other areas along the Ashton-Stockport restoring railways scheme should be considered, including Stalybridge. Officers confirmed that the wider corridor would be considered and that it was recognised that a daily parliamentary service was not sufficient.

Improved platform access was a key objective for Members; however, concerns were raised regarding the compliance of trains that travelled across Greater Manchester. Officers echoed this pertinent point and recognised that accessibility should be about the end-to-end journey, not just siloed elements of a journey. There was currently a hugely varied rolling stock, and whilst the more modern stock was much more accessible, the industry as a whole would like to see more harmonisation, hence its inclusion in the latest Rolling Stock Strategy.

**Resolved /-**

1. That the report be noted.

2. That local councillors would be invited to contribute letters of support to those schemes included in the Access for All CP7 bid.
3. That a further letter of support on behalf of the Metrolink & Rail Sub Committee also be sent by the Chair.

**GMTMRC 19/22      WORK PROGRAMME**

**Resolved /-**

That the GM Transport Committee Work Programme be noted.

**GMTMRC 20/22      DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Resolved /-**

That future meeting dates for the next municipal year of the Committee to be confirmed.