

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 29th July 2022

Subject: Extension of the Our Pass Pilot Scheme

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, Portfolio Lead for Transport and Eamonn Boylan, Chief Executive Officer, GMCA & TfGM.

Purpose of Report

This report requests GMCA to approve the extension of the Our Pass Pilot scheme which allows free travel on bus for 16 to 18 year olds.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note that budget provision for the extension of the Our Pass Pilot for a further year was included in the Mayoral budget for 2022/23 which was approved by GMCA on 11 February 2022;
2. Approve the proposal to extend the Our Pass Pilot for a further year, to 31 August 2023; and
3. Note that work to evaluate the impact of the Pilot is ongoing and that the extension of the scheme will enable this to be completed. The evaluation is currently scheduled to be completed in Autumn 2022; and
4. Note that any further extension to the Pilot beyond 31 August 2023 will require approval as part of the budget setting process in February 2023.

Contact Officers





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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Equalities Implications:

The Our Pass scheme aligns with the Greater Manchester Strategy Implementation Plan which commits the city region to a diverse range of policies, programmes and reforms designed to improve the education and life chances of young people, in this case by enabling equal access to ‘opportunities’ across the city region through fee bus travel for 16-18 year olds.

Impacts Questionnaire		
Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	
Health	G	
Resilience and Adaptation		
Housing		
Economy	G	
Mobility and Connectivity	G	
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		
Further Assessment(s):	Equalities Impact Assessment and Carbon Assessment	
 Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	 Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	 Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
		 Negative impacts overall.

Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures:

The Our Pass Scheme contributes towards the GMCA’s wider strategic transport objectives, including reduced congestion, improved air quality in supporting young people to choose public transport over cars in the future.

Carbon Assessment

Overall Score				
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation		
New Build residential	N/A			
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A			
New Build Commercial/Industrial	N/A			
Transport				
Active travel and public transport				
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A			
Access to amenities				
Vehicle procurement	N/A			
Land Use				
Land use	N/A			
No associated carbon impacts expected.	High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

Risk Management

The cost risk connected with the scheme is mitigated through the funding strategy originally approved when the pilot was introduced, which includes the use of existing concessionary travel reserves to manage any cost risk in excess of the allowances made in Mayoral budgets.

Legal Considerations

Legal advice was provided when the scheme was introduced which determined that in order to ensure a consistent and transparent application across all local bus services and bus operators in GM and avoid potential legal (including State Aid) challenges, the most appropriate way to implement the Pilot was through a discretionary concessionary scheme ('the Scheme'). GMCA's Local Concessionary Scheme was updated to allow for provision of the pilot scheme.

Financial Considerations - Revenue

The costs of the scheme are being funded from Mayoral budgets. A budget of £16.2m was approved by GMCA in February 2022 as part of the Mayoral budget for 2022/23 which provided sufficient funding to extend the pilot scheme for a further 12 months from September 2022 to August 2023. The original funding strategy for the Pilot agreed by the

GMCA, included use of existing concessionary travel reserves, held by TfGM, to mitigate cost risks in excess of the allowances made in Mayoral budgets.

Any further extension to the Pilot beyond 31 August 2023 will require approval as part of the budget setting process in February 2023.

Financial Considerations – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report:

N/A

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

- 11 February 2022: Mayoral General Budget and Precept Proposals 2022/23
- 29 March 2019: Opportunity Pass including 16-18 Free Bus Travel
- 18 December 2020: Young Person's Guarantee

Tracking/ Process

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

Yes

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. Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2019 GMCA approved a proposal to implement a pilot scheme (the 'Pilot') that would provide a Pass (now called 'Our Pass') to young people (16-18 year olds) in GM. Our Pass provides a number of benefits to those young people, including free bus travel at all times of the day and week.
- 1.2 Our Pass supports the strategy of making GM "the best place to live, work and get on in life" and to make GM a place for young people "to explore, to shape and to build".
- 1.3 Our Pass was also introduced to generate a sustainable increase in bus patronage and reverse an ongoing decline in bus use by young people. Removing barriers to travel for young people enables them to access education, employment, leisure and social activities which, in turn, will support the future prosperity of Greater Manchester.
- 1.4 The Pilot was originally introduced for a period of two years from September 2019, during which period the scheme was due to be evaluated in order to inform a decision on its continuation beyond that date.
- 1.5 From March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted travel across all modes and travel groups, including the Our Pass cohort. This has impacted the ability to evaluate the Pilot to date. As a result, in December 2020, GMCA approved the extension of the Pilot for a further year to 31 August 2022.
- 1.6 Although volumes of Our Pass use have recovered strongly since the lifting of the most recent COVID-19 restrictions a longer period of data is required for a full evaluation of the scheme to take place. This report proposes the extension of the Pilot for a further year for that evaluation work to be completed.

2. Finance and Funding

- 2.1 The Our Pass scheme is funded from the Mayoral Budget from a combination of Precept, reserves and other income. A budget of £16.2m was approved by GMCA as part of the Mayoral budget for 2022/23 which provided sufficient funding to extend the pilot scheme for a further 12 months from September 2022 to August 2023.
- 2.2
- 2.3 The original funding strategy for the pilot agreed by the GMCA included use of existing concessionary travel reserves, held by TfGM, to mitigate cost risks in excess of the

allowances made in Mayoral budgets. As each year since the introduction of the Pilot has been impacted to varying degrees by the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst recovery in patronage for Our Pass since the end of the COVID-19 lockdowns has been much stronger than for other travel groups. a recurring annual cost of the scheme is still uncertain.

- 2.4 The extension of the Pilot will enable the evaluation work and work on estimating the recurring annual cost of the scheme to be completed and will also enable the ongoing funding strategy to be finalised as part of the strategy for the ongoing Mayoral budget.
- 2.5 Any further extension to the Pilot beyond 31 August 2023 will require approval as part of the budget setting process in February 2023.

3. Evaluation

- 3.1 The evaluation work that has been undertaken to date includes baseline surveys, initial evaluation responses, workshops with young people and social media polls however this work has not yet been fully concluded, hampered in particular by the lack of a 'clean' (i.e. not impacted by COVID-19) year's data in order to compare to the pre scheme position. This is currently scheduled to be completed in Autumn 2022, to enable a decision to be made on the scheme as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process in early 2023.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 See front sheet for recommendations.