

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER
BUS SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER 2022
AT FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, MANCHESTER**

PRESENT:

Councillor Jo Lancaster	Bury Council
Councillor Tracey Rawlins	Manchester City Council
Councillor George Hulme	Oldham MBC
Councillor Phil Burke	Rochdale Council
Councillor Roger Jones	Salford Council
Councillor Angie Clark	Stockport Council
Councillor David Meller	Stockport Council
Councillor Warren Bray	Tameside Council
Councillor Mark Aldred (Chair)	Wigan Council
Councillor John Vickers	Wigan Council

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicola Ward	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA
Stephen Rhodes	Head of Bus, TfGM
Nick Roberts	Head of Services & Commercial Development, TfGM
James Lewis	Network Development Manager, TfGM

OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mark Mageean	Stagecoach
Matt Rawlinson	Rotala/Diamond
Paul Townley	First
Ian Humphreys	First
Paul Turner	Trans Dev
John Roxwell	Go North West
Alastair Nuttall	Arriva

Resolved /-

That apologies be received and noted from Councillors Howard Sykes and Linda Blackburn.

Apologies were also received from Gary Nolan (One Bus).

GMTBSC 22/22 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

Resolved /-

The Chair welcomed the attendance of bus operators present at the meeting.

GMTBC 23/22 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Resolved /-

That the appointment of Cllr Mark Aldred as Chair and Cllr Warren Bray as Vice Chair for the Bus Services Sub Committee be noted.

GMTBSC 24/22 MEMBERSHIP

Resolved /-

That the membership of the Bus Services Sub Committee for the forthcoming municipal year be noted as below –

Member	Representing
Councillor Tracey Rawlins	Manchester City Council
Councillor George Hulme	Oldham Council
Councillor Phil Burke	Rochdale Council
Councillor Roger Jones	Salford Council
Councillor David Meller	Stockport MBC
Councillor Warren Bray	Tameside MBC
Councillor Mark Aldred	Wigan Council
Councillor John Vickers	Wigan Council

Councillor Jo Lancaster	Bury Council
Councillor Linda Blackburn	Trafford Council
Councillor Howard Sykes	Oldham Council

1.

GMTBSC 25/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved /-

There were no declarations of interest.

**GMTBSC 26/22 MINUTES OF THE GM TRANSPORT BUS SERVICES SUB
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 18 MARCH 2022**

Resolved /-

That the minutes of the GM Transport Bus Services Sub Committee meeting held 18 March 2022 be approved as a correct record.

GMTBSC 27/22 BUS PERFORMANCE REPORT

Stephen Rhodes, Director of Bus TfGM took members through a report which informed them of the performance of the Greater Manchester bus network during the period of February 2022 to July 2022 with a particular focus on the subsidised bus network.

This period had been characterised by the end of a covid lockdown and a national driver shortage but there still had been over 25 million miles run with one fifth being subsidised. Patronage levels continued to recover, with circa 80-90% pre-covid levels. However, there was a marked difference on demand, with an irregular pattern through days, times and services. The reliability of services was concerning, with an overall reduction to circa 96-98% due to issues with congestion, infrastructure works and a continued driver shortfall. Progress towards Euro 6 emission standards had been positive, with 70% of the GM fleet now compliant and of the 877 buses requiring retrofitting, 366 had been completed. Plans for electric buses had been expanded and the current fleet extended and across all engine types, the average vehicle age was now 9 years which was in line with the national average.

With thanks to the Bus Recovery Grant, the subsidised network had been retained at the same level throughout this period, although mileage had declined slightly. This fund had been extended until March 2023; however, officers were closely managing such costs recognising the need for a long-term sustainable bus network. The conclusions of the Network Review had been reached during this period, and the changes were illustrated in the Forthcoming Changes report later on the agenda.

Members raised their concerns regarding the reduction in the V2 service and the impact to passengers who were now required to get two buses from Leigh to Tyldesley Park and Ride and were being charged twice. However, since the introduction of two additional services at the Salford end of the Guided Busway there had been less complaints from passengers. First explained how the market had become difficult to predict as leisure travel had increased and rush hour commuting had reduced. However, following conversations with Local Councillors and TfGM, service patterns had been adjusted to meet the needs of passengers. Officers agreed that the vantage services were a benchmark for service standards across GM and therefore were being monitored on a weekly basis to ensure that the service provision was in line with demand. The ticketing issue should not be happening, so officers committed to work with First to address these issues and make the necessary improvements.

In relation to services provided by Rosso, members reported that there were ongoing issues regarding punctuality and service removals. Officers confirmed that there were regular meetings with the operator to address issues as they arise and that they had been conscious of their ability to deliver hence had not tendered for recent contracts so that they could focus on improving their the current services. Throughout September there had been a number of congestion issues that the operator reported were having adverse effects on punctuality, however they had attempted to address these through the splitting of routes and the addition of two extra buses. Officers agreed to meet with Cllr Burke and Rosso to see how these measures had improved the situation and whether any further action was required.

There had been some improvements regarding anti social behaviour on the network, however members were keen to understand how TravelSafe had been operating in the bus stations and specifically whether their enforcement had led to any recent arrests. Officers noted that anti social behaviour was a wider public transport concern and that the reassurance work of the TravelSafe Partnership was vital. Members would be receiving an update at their next

Full Committee meeting on the work of the Partnership over the last six months, including a recent operation, Operation Avro which was held across the Metrolink and Bus network.

A member raised some specific concerns regarding services in the Radcliffe area, including the punctuality of service 98 due to double parking of cars preventing bus access. Go North West offered to work with Cllr Lancaster to find a solution as they were also seeking a safe route for service 98. In the Ainsworth Village buses had been reduced to an hourly service and therefore many elderly and disabled residents were having to use taxi services as the Ring and Ride line was often engaged. Councillors Aldred and Jones offered to report this back to the next meeting of the GMATL Board. With regards to schools' services, there was no direct link for the 3 mile journey between Ainsworth Village and Bolton, resulting in an hour journey and two buses for young people wishing to make that route. Officer agreed to pick this up offline with Cllr Lancaster.

Regarding Ring and Ride, members were concerned that the current fleet did not have the provision for large electric chairs and urged that any new fleet met this accessibility criteria. The Committee recognised that the current electric scooter market was causing some challenges as the weight of these vehicles was not compliant with the lifts on the Ring and Ride fleet, however officers confirmed that such adaptations did feature in the plans for franchising the fleet across GM.

Resolved /-

1. That the performance of the GM Bus Network be noted.
2. That a meeting would be arranged between Cllr John Vickers, TfGM and First to address the concerns raised regarding the V1 and V2 Vantage Bus Services, specifically services capacity, waiting times and ticketing costs.
3. That officers would pick up with Cllr Phil Burke directly concerns regarding the performance of Rosso services in Rochdale.
4. That the Committee would receive an update on the work of the Travel Safe Partnership at the next meeting of the full Committee on the 14 October.

5. That officers and Go North West would speak to Cllr Lancaster outside of the meeting regarding specific issues for the service 98 in Radcliffe and also a school bus service between Ainsworth Village and Bolton.
6. That Cllr Aldred and Cllr Jones would feed back the issue regarding the Ring and Ride line being engaged to the GMATL Board.

GMTBSC 28/22 CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK AND REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES BUDGET

Nick Roberts, Head of Services & Commercial Development, TfGM presented a report which informed Members of the changes which had taken place since the last meeting and sought guidance as to the proposed further actions to be taken by TfGM.

Following the extension of the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) from 4 October, it was made clear that there would be several services which would become unstable. In conjunction with operators, and exercise had taken place to retain as many services as possible through procurement and direct award activities. Delegation was given to the Chief Executive of GMCA & TfGM to meet the registration deadlines and as a result 60 routes were retained.

Annex A to the report details the proposed commercial changes by operators, where officers have assessed the potential impact and deemed that there is no need to intervene.

Annex B details proposed service changes and includes those proposed service changes that TfGM have subsidised to maintain stability across the network until the introduction of the relevant bus franchising phase. Members were asked to note a typographical error in the report and that service 464 had been introduced not reduced.

Annex C includes information relating to the normal tender period and those subsidised services. Any relevant changes had been communicated to ward members in the usual manner.

A member asked for the patronage levels in relation to service X84 so that the reduction in service could be more fully understood, First offered to provide these directly to Cllr Hulme.

In relation to the proposed withdrawal of the Sunday service for route 595 members were concerned as to the implications for residents in Hindley Green, as although some of the route had been replaced by service 583 Monday – Saturday it was felt that this Sunday service reduction would be further detrimental to residents. However, this could be mitigated through a potential route change to the 585 service that officers agreed to discuss further with Cllr Vickers.

Thanks were expressed for the retention of services 199 and 358 through the BRG grant considerations, however a member had a further suggestion regarding the proposed route for service 371 which would be sent over to officers at TfGM for consideration.

Operators echoed the excellent joint working with TfGM regarding those services at risk due to current funding challenges and remarked that the processes for engagement were excellent. Officers explained how contracts were now in place to stabilise the system until the introduction of the franchising phases, however conversations were underway with DfT regarding long term funding for the bus and Metrolink network in order for them to remain sustainable.

Resolved /-

1. That the changes to the commercial network set out in Annex A be noted by Members.
2. That the proposals that no action is taken in respect of changes or de-registered commercial services set out in Annex A be agreed by Members.
3. That the action taken in respect of the service change set out in Annex B be noted by Members.
4. That the typo in relation to service 464 be amended from 'reduced' to 'introduced'.
5. That thanks be expressed to officers at TfGM for the work to address the significant number of potential service changes and withdrawals.
6. That the proposed changes to general subsidised services set out in Annex C be

agreed by Members.

7. That it be noted that First would provide patronage figures regarding service X84 to Cllr George Hulme to illustrate the trend of decline.
8. That officers would meet with Cllr John Vickers to discuss the withdrawal of service 595 and consider other options that could include a route change for service 583.
9. That Cllr David Meller would submit a suggested route amendment for service 371 to officers at TfGM to consider.

GMTBSC 29/22 BUS OPERATOR UPDATE

The Chair invited all bus operators present to update on the current challenges, issues and achievements across the network.

First were currently carrying c.85% pre-covid patronage, with vantage services slightly lower. 100% of the fleet were now Euro6 compliant.

Arriva had experienced some issues regarding industrial action at the Wythenshawe depot over the summer period, resulting in resource challenges. Patronage before this activity had grown to over 100% but had since reduced to 87-89%. There were some issues regarding recruitment but measures were in place to address. Lost mileage from the Wythenshawe depot was generally improving, however there were issues along the A56 in Trafford which were causing delays and impacting punctuality.

Staff turnover was higher than normal for Go North West but recruitment was manageable. Patronage had returned in line with pre-covid levels and the flat fare arrangements from September had been well received by passengers and drivers alike. This feedback will be monitored alongside patronage data. Congestion was beginning to cause concern, especially in the centre of Rochdale where the mileage on six routes had been increased as a result.

TransDev had noted that concessionary fare travel had not recovered as well as fare paying passengers, although patronage had increased overall. All GM bus retrofits had been

completed, with only ten cross-boundary vehicles not being fully compliant, although these would be replaced by next year.

Diamond reported that patronage levels remain varied, however concessions trips were markedly lower. Of 26 routes, 25 were currently affected by significant roadworks which was having an impact on punctuality. The average fleet age was reported as 6 years, with a small number yet to be retrofitted to meet the Euro6 standards. Levels of anti-social behaviour had reduced; however, plans were needed to ensure that there was not a significant spike in the spring.

Stagecoach were currently working on driver recruitment with over 95% of vacancies filled, enabling 98% of mileage to be covered. In September there had been a pay increase negotiated that did not result in any industrial action, and over the coming weeks there would be a celebration for 100 staff with over 20 years service further evidencing successful retention rates. Mileage levels were currently at circa 93-94% and patronage was stable at c82% of pre-covid levels with weekend travel seeing the most significant increase. Across the summer Stagecoach held a campaign focussed on increasing the number of young people and families who use bus services, and in October there was a further campaign planned focussing on concessionary passengers.

Resolved /-

That the verbal updates provided by operators be noted.

GMTBSC 30/22 WORK PROGRAMME

Members were asked to consider the current Work Programme for the GM Transport Committee and its Sub Committees.

Members questioned the criteria around concessionary passes and whether this would be relaxed as state pension age was continually increasing. The glitches around the application and validation processes were also highlighted as a barrier for passengers and potential passengers. It was suggested that the future report on Customer Information scheduled for the December meeting includes the information requested by the Committee.

In relation to retrofitting of the bus fleet, members asked that at the next meeting all bus operators could provide an update on their progress.

Resolved / -

1. That the proposed work programme for the GM Transport Committee and its Sub Committees be noted.
2. That a future report on concessionary travel with a focus on the current concession pass criteria, the processes by which residents can obtain the required passes and the processes by which passes can be renewed be programmed for consideration by the full committee.
3. That operators be asked to provide an update on the compliance of their fleet with regards to Euro 6 standards at the next meeting of the Bus Services Sub Committee.

GMBSC 31/22 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

That future dates for the Bus Services Sub Committee be noted as below –

Friday 18 November 2022

Friday 20 January 2023

Friday 10 March 2023

GMBSC 32/22 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That, under section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on business on the grounds that this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as set out in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

GMTBSC 33/22 CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK AND REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES BUDGET

Resolved /-

That the financial implications of forthcoming changes to the bus network be noted.