

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER TRANSPORT BUS SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD ON FRIDAY 10 MARCH 2023 AT THE GMCA OFFICE, CHURCHGATE HOUSE, MANCHESTER

PRESENT:

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Inspector Stephen Griffin	Greater Manchester Police Transport Unit
Stephen Rhodes	Director of Bus, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)
Nick Roberts	Head of Services & Commercial Development, TfGM
Alison Chew	Deputy Director of Bus, TfGM
Kate Green	TravelSafe Partnership Manager, TfGM
Lucy Kennon	Head of Resilience and Business Continuity, TfGM
Elaine Mottershead	Governance & Scrutiny Team

OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Alistair Nuttall	Arriva
Tom Calderbank	Diamond
Paul Townley	First Bus
Simon Williams	Go North West
Mark Mageean	Stagecoach
James McCollom	Trans Dev
Gary Nolan	One Bus

GMTBSC 12/23 APOLOGIES

RESOLVED /-

That apologies be received and noted from Councillors John Vickers (Wigan), Jo Lancaster (Bury) and Howard Sykes (Oldham).

GMTBSC 13/23 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no Chair's announcements or items of urgent business.

GMTBSC 14/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any item on the agenda.

GMTBSC 15/23 MINUTES OF THE BUS SERVICES SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED /-

That the minutes of the Bus Services Sub Committee meeting held on 20 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

GMTBSC 16/23 CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK AND REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES BUDGET

Nick Roberts, Head of Services and Commercial Development from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) introduced a report detailing the changes to the network. The report also included a report submitted to the GM Transport Committee held on 17 February 2023, noting that authority had been delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, GMCA and TfGM, in consultation with the GMTC Chair, to agree replacement bus services to commence on 16 April 2023.

Members were asked to consider the changes detailed in the report, some of which were in direct response to discussions at the previous meeting regarding the outcome of bus franchise arrangements. Members commented as follows:

- Thanks were expressed to TfGM and Go Northwest for retaining the 163 route.
- Thanks were also expressed to Stagecoach who had provided a solution on the 309/310 routes which would benefit residents. Clarification was given that the “20/40” reference to Demmings Road (Annex C) meant the service was scheduled to run at 20 minutes and 40 minutes past the hour.
- The Chair thanked officers and operators for all their hard work and co-operation in addressing the concerns which had been raised at the last meeting.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the changes to the commercial network, as set out in Annex A, be noted.
2. That no action is taken in respect of changes or de-registered commercial services, as set out in Annex A.
3. That the action in respect of service change, as set out in Annex B, be agreed.
4. That the proposed changes to general subsidised services, as set out in Annex C, be approved.

5. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, TfGM and GMCA, in consultation with the GMTCC Chair and Manchester City Council, to approve changes to the Manchester City Centre Free Bus Services to commence on 16 April 2023.

GMTBSC 17/23 BUS PERFORMANCE REPORT

Alison Chew, Deputy Director of Bus Services at Transport for Greater Manchester, presented performance information for the bus network in the period July to December 2022.

Members were made aware that increased patronage had continued, noting that the cap on fares had been a contributory factor. There were still further challenges to be faced, including a national driver shortage coupled with highways and congestion issues.

The statistical information provided in the report had been provided by TfGM's monitoring system, ITO World Transit Hub (Discover) regarding punctuality, reliability and regularity measures across the network, including school services. It was noted that the system provided overall network statistics and not specific operator analysis.

There was discussion about how the data from the TfGM monitoring system compared with data collected by individual bus operators. Members requested that TfGM and bus operators continue to share statistical intelligence, as appropriate, to ensure the most accurate performance data would be available for the Sub-Committee to consider going forward.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That officers from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and the relevant operators continue to share statistical intelligence, as appropriate, to ensure the most accurate performance analysis is made available to the Sub-Committee.

GMTBSC 18/23 BUS OPERATORS UPDATE

Bus Operators from across Greater Manchester were invited to provide the Sub-Committee with updates on progress. The following updates were provided:

- Arriva reported that staff recruitment challenges in Bolton had now been resolved. However, there were still some significant driver shortages in Wythenshawe, work was underway to resolve the issues which would result in some improvements shortly.
- First Manchester confirmed that they continued to recruit and plan for the changes associated with franchising. There had been some recent improvements with punctuality, in particular following the roadworks in Oldham, some of which had been pre-planned and some which were unexpected. In addition there still some challenges to address around antisocial behaviour which was impacting services.

Councillor Aldred thanked First Manchester for attendance at a recent meeting regarding the V2 service and requested further regular updates on the service.

- Diamond reported that service delivery had improved. Driver recruitment for Bolton and Eccles had progressed well in the last three months. Patronage had continued to rise and almost at pre-Covid levels in some areas, although there were significant variations across the network. Work had been undertaken in partnership with TfGM, to implement some network changes to improve punctuality in Wigan, Atherton and Leigh. The 21 service was due to have some changes introduced in April. Diamond had also agreed to operate the 527 in Bolton, in advance of operation in September.
- Trans Dev reported an increase in the number of drivers. There had been some challenges with delays in ordering vehicle parts resulting in some maintenance issues. TfGM were thanked for their support in dealing with some traffic congestion issues.
- Go Northwest had launched a new recruitment campaign to recruit additional drivers. There had been an opportunity to operate a number of services that had been at risk, with a view to full operations with effect from 16 April 2023. A review of a number of services was underway with a view to improving network coverage, for example, route 17 which would be expanded to pick up the 162 route.
- Stagecoach reported that patronage was good and slightly higher at weekends. 50 new drivers had started in January and February 2023. Anti-social behaviour issues in Hattersley have improved with the support of TfGM and Greater Manchester Police. Stagecoach had marked International Women's Day with a promotion of

apprenticeships for careers in bus services. 30 brand new buses would be in operation for Summer 2023.

The Chair asked operators for their views on whether the increased patronage levels were related to the £2 fare cap. Operators responded that it was a positive factor but the impact varied for the different routes and the customers that travelled on those routes. Another positive factor was increased patronage amongst routes frequented by younger people which was attributed to the Our Pass scheme.

Members requested information regarding the impact of people working from home, given that some businesses in the service and leisure industry were reporting decreases in sales as a result of hybrid or home working. Councillor Rawlins reported that Manchester City Council were working with a number of businesses in the City Centre on this issue to try and recover some of the pre-Covid levels and/or adapt to new levels. Officers from TfGM reassured members that they remained focussed on boosting patronage to reflect the changes and this included work on rail and active travel modes alongside bus services. There was a focus to maintain services in the short-term rather than make changes too quickly in this period. Reports submitted to the Transport Committee at the last meeting (17 February 2023) and the next meeting (17 March 2023), provided specific details on plans for the evolution of the service and planning for future changes.

- One Bus highlighted operators' concerns about antisocial behaviour and vandalism. They were keen to balance this report with an acknowledgement that incidences had increased, alongside the fact that there had been some successes and there were some solutions available. It was also noted that it was only a small number of individuals that caused the incidences but repairing the damage was often at significant cost to the operators. An operation to tackle anti-social behaviour in Little Hulton was acknowledged as a particular success and specific campaigns usually had a good response. The TravelSafe Partnership initiatives were welcomed but more resources and investment were needed.

The use of "*name and shame*" was discussed as a possible effective method although it needed to be balanced as it could potentially draw unwanted attention to the incidences. TfGM officers responded that they had some success with this type of approach when the offenders were adults but when it involved children and young people, this would not

be appropriate.

A member raised concerns on behalf of young people in Rochdale who had shared their concerns about not feeling safe when travelling from school or college, or at night. Some had given examples of being physically and verbally assaulted on buses and young women in particular felt unsafe with the added experience of enduring misogynistic verbal abuse. It was suggested the use of single deck buses on evening services as their concerns increased if they sat upstairs, away from the view of the driver. It was also suggested that be opportunities for potential for free travel for young people at night be explored.

Another member echoed these concerns from some work undertaken in secondary schools where young people provided examples of not using after school provision and activities due to feeling unsafe using public transport at later times. Similarly, young females had significant safety concerns and did not feel able to approach the driver for support.

One member suggested the use of facial recognition on public transport, similar to that used at the airport. TfGM reported that CCTV often gave clear images but that facial recognition was not currently available.

TfGM officers updated members on work around safety and anti-social behaviour, reporting on a "*Better than That*" campaign, which used prominent social media influencers to encourage young people to think about their behaviour on public transport. There was also the GMP live chat available if someone did not feel safe on transport however, it was acknowledged that this needs to be publicised better and there were plans to roll out associated QR codes.

TfGM have an extensive programme of education which reached most Year 6 classes across the region and was timed ahead of them travelling more independently when they went to secondary school. TfGM welcomed the opportunity to talk to schools about safety on transport as they acknowledged that there was often a large gap between actual safety versus perception of safety.

Following the success of an operation in Little Hulton, there were plans for specific youth engagement in Rochdale in Summer 2023 with TfGM working in partnership with Foundation 92.

TfGM confirmed that anti-social behaviour statistics took account of vandalism in bus shelters in addition to confirming a slight uplift in the number of those incidences, focussed more geographically, rather than the previous trend for sporadic acts of vandalism. This had made it easier for resources to be targeted effectively.

A member asked whether the anti-social behaviour statistics still took account of seasonal trends, for example, incidences had traditionally increased in Winter. TfGM officers confirmed the use of information to target specific campaigns. For example, the "*Better than That*" campaign was scheduled to be targeted for wider publicity in advance of Easter holidays as incidences caused by young people often spiked outside of term-time.

There was a discussion about Operation AVRO. Greater Manchester Police operated this force-wide initiative in a different district each month to tackle specific problems in a geographical area. It was clarified that transport had been identified as the "*11th District*" for Operation AVRO which would therefore provide an additional thematic, rather than a geographical, operation in the planned cycle. This was welcomed by members suggesting an increase in such operations with more resources.

Inspector Griffin mentioned the weekly meeting that involved the GMP Transport Unit, bus and Metrolink operators, and TfGM officers. Operators were invited to attend if they did not already. This meeting looked at hotspots, shared intelligence and targeted resources as appropriate. GMP had plans for officers to eventually work in TfGM offices, directly alongside transport colleagues, and this meeting could then be a daily briefing.

TfGM officers clarified the role of the TravelSafe Partnership which was not operated as a specific separate team but was a partnership approach led by TfGM with GMP and operators. It was acknowledged that joint working arrangements had provided some success particularly when they had provided a visible tactical presence in places such

as train stations. TfGM also stated that whilst AVRO operations were widely publicised, smaller targeted operations continued each week, sometimes with plain-clothes officers, and these were intentionally not visible or publicised.

The Chair noted that a report on TravelSafe was scheduled to be discussed at the Transport Committee on Friday 17 March 2023 and operators were encouraged to attend as observers. Members agreed to raise their concerns with GMCA, TfGM and the Transport Committee about the need for further resources to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The GMP Transport Unit, TfGM and operators were thanked by members for all their efforts in tackling antisocial behaviour.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the Sub-Committee record its thanks to bus operators for their verbal updates, and their contents noted.
2. That First Bus be requested to continue to keep Councillor Aldred informed on the V2 service and provide regular statistics.
3. That bus operators be encouraged to attend the weekly meeting led by the GMP Transport Unit.
4. That it be noted that a TravelSafe Partnership report was due to be discussed at the Greater Manchester Transport Committee scheduled on Friday 17 March 2023.
5. That members should raise their concerns with GMCA, TfGM and the Transport Committee about the need for further resources to tackle anti-social behaviour

GMTBSC 19/23 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED /-

That the proposed Work Programme for the GM Transport Committee and its Sub Committees be noted.

GMBS 20/23 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 21/23 CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK AND REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED
BUS SERVICES BUDGET**

Clerk's Note: This item was considered in support of the report considered in Part A of the agenda (GMTBSC 16/23).

RESOLVED /-

That the contents of the report be noted.