PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform TfGMC of the work undertaken to date in respect of reviewing Greater Manchester Accessible Transport (GMATL) Ring and Ride Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the content of the report and endorse that further work is undertaken in progressing the options identified.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

N/A

CONTACT OFFICERS

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1. Introduction

1.1 As part of this year’s budget setting process and following the scrutiny process it was requested that a review of the Ring & Ride service is carried out in respect of:-

• ensuring that this service is targeted where the need is greatest;
• seeking potential efficiencies from 2018/19; and
• considering its interaction with other social need transport providers, including Local Authorities

2. Background

2.1 The Ring and Ride service provides door to door, demand responsive, accessible transport to residents of Greater Manchester who are unable to use conventional public transport.

2.2 The service is operated by Greater Manchester Accessible Transport Ltd (GMATL) and grant funded by TfGM.

2.3 The annual grant provided for 2016/2017 is up to £4.657 million. The current operating costs are approximately £5.4 million per annum, and the grant is supplemented by service revenues and GMATL reserves.

2.4 The grant is awarded subject to GMATL’s compliance with a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which details key service performance standards that must be delivered in order to ensure the service’s social inclusion objectives.

2.5 In April 2016, GMATL introduced eligibility criteria on Ring and Ride. Passengers are now eligible to use the service if they:

• hold a TfGM Concessionary Plus Pass; or
• hold a TfGM Concessionary Disabled Person Pass; or
• are 70 years old or over, have mobility issues and hold a TfGM Over 60 Concessionary Pass; or
• are a TfGM Travel Voucher user.

2.6 In conjunction with the introduction of eligibility criteria, the carriage of accompanying passengers was also restricted. Regular bookings were also restricted and are now only available for groups of six or more. The purpose of the change to regular bookings is to make the service fairer for those passengers without a regular booking.
3. **Proposals for Consideration**

3.1 To ensure that the Ride & Ride service remains fit for purpose and offers best value for money a review of the services provided has commenced. Full terms of reference for the review are attached under Appendix ‘A’ of this report.

3.2 In addition to those activities detailed in the terms of reference, Board Members of GMATL requested that the views of users were considered. Subsequently, officers attended the Ring & Ride forums during April 2017 to gather opinions on what works well and how the service can be most cost effectively improved. Eleven forums across 10 districts were attended by officers who discussed issues for consideration with users and members of the GMATL team.

3.3 Following initial findings of the review together with feedback provided from the forums, the following areas have been identified as warranting further consideration.

**Eligibility Criteria**

3.4 To ensure that the service should provide for those where the need is the greatest, a revised criteria was introduced in 2016. The change in those eligibility for the service resulted in a 12% fall in patronage and a subsequent reduction in vehicles required to deliver the service.

3.5 To ensure that the service continues to be targeted where the need is greatest, it is recommended that consideration be given to raising the age criteria further. It is considered that further changes to the eligibility criteria are achievable from April 2018, subject to a robust communication being developed. It is also important to note that any change in the criteria would require an Equality Impact Assessment.

**Fares**

3.6 Users of the service, who currently pay a single fare of £1.20, considered the fare levels to be reasonable, to such an extent that if it meant securing of the service an increase is needed this would not be unwelcome.

3.7 Subsequently, one option that should be given further consideration is the increase in the single fare from £1.20 to £1.50. It is estimated that this could raise revenue by £90,000 should demand remain at current levels. Changes to the fares are achievable with minimal dependencies and could feasibly be introduced before April 2018.
Concessionary Plus Pass

3.8 Under existing conditions of carriage, Concessionary Plus pass holders do not have to pay for use of the service. Concessionary Plus pass holders are eligible if they:

- are registered blind;
- are profoundly deaf and cannot speak or have limited speech that is difficult to understand;
- have learning disabilities;
- cannot use both arms;
- cannot talk;
- are an ex-serviceman or ex-servicewoman with serious walking difficulties as a result of losing a leg; or
- would be refused a driving licence as a result of severe and long-term mental-health problems.

3.9 In the first three months of 2017, 41% of Ring & Ride users presented a Concessionary Plus pass and travelled for free. Questions were raised at forums as to why users of the service who hold a Concessionary Plus pass use the service for free, particularly as they receive mobility benefit to support travel options.

3.10 Consideration is being given to removing the free element to this pass for Ring & Ride. Additional fare revenue, based on current numbers, could be in the region of up to £300,000 per annum. Should demand fall, this, in turn, could provide efficiencies by reducing the number of vehicles required to support the service. There could be further savings from the administration of the Concessionary Plus pass scheme.

Social Car Schemes/Travel vouchers

3.11 An initial review of customer data suggests that some users access other services such as social car schemes as a means of travel. It is also evident that some users have access to travel vouchers, a product that materialised prior to buses becoming fully accessible. It is estimated that by removing the travel voucher scheme could save circa £300,000.

3.12 Further work is required to understand the other social car schemes/dial-a-ring services that might operate across Greater Manchester their interaction with Ring and Ride services. Similarly, further work is need to understand the potential impacts of removing the travel voucher scheme.
3.13 Analysis of all Ring and Ride passenger trips undertaken between January and March 2017 has identified that patronage is very low on Sunday evenings. However, the cost savings achieved by removing Sunday evenings would be low as the level of service at this time is already minimal. Any changes to service operating hours would require more detailed analysis and an Equality Impact Assessment. At present, the overall cost per journey to TfGM is £6.46p.

3.14 Cancellation of trips/journeys remain high and therefore have an impact on efficiency and creates an additional cost. It is recommended that the introduction of a notifications system (by text or phone call) should be investigated as a means of reducing abortive operating costs.

3.15 There was a mixed response from forum participants to online booking, although it was noted that certain times of the week, specifically Mondays it was difficult to access the telephone booking system.

3.16 From an operational perspective it is considered that benefits could be realised if online booking was introduced, particularly in respect of call centre administration and it is proposed that further work is undertaken in this regard.

4. Next Steps

4.1 The proposals outlined above were presented to the GMATL Board on 16 June 2017. The views of the Board Members were that they:-

- agreed that consideration should be given to increasing fares;
- requested that an intermediate fare should be considered for Concession plus users;
- raised some concerns about increasing the age criteria and the removal of Travel Vouchers; and
- supported the view that the introduction of an on-line booking facility would encourage new users.

4.2 There will also be a further piece of on-going work to consider the future model of Accessibility Transport in Greater Manchester across all the Local Authorities. This will include the Health Transformation and the
Mobility as a Service (MaaS) initiative, which will be presented back later in the year.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report and endorse that further work is undertaken in progressing the options identified.

Howard Hartley
Head of Bus
### Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Accessible Transport Review Group: Terms of Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of the Group</strong></td>
<td>To conduct a review into the provision and funding by TfGM of accessible services – including Ring and Ride, Local Link and Travel Vouchers. From this policy options will be costed with recommendations for consideration.</td>
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| **Attendance** | Chair – Nick Roberts Head of Services & Commercial Development, TfGM  
James Tomkinson – Service Planning Officer, TfGM  
David Daughney – Head of Finance, TfGM  
Mia Crowther – Senior Transport Strategy Officer, TfGM  
Rod Fawcett – Transport Policy Manager, TfGM  
Bernard Rowen – Managing Director, GMATL  
Denise Gillingham – Head of Finance, GMATL |
| **Frequency of Meetings** | Meetings will take place at least on a fortnightly basis between TfGM staff, and GMATL when discussing Ring & Ride issues. |
| **Context** | GM demographic trends over past 20 years and forecasts; note improvements in accessibility across PT network and more generally across public life (DDA impacts, etc); car ownership and low income data; indication of populations with reduced mobility (combined with low income) and predictions; description of wider changes to health and social services provision / location in GM; Total Transport pilot; reduction in general bus subsidy, implications of devolution/franchising. |
| **Outcomes from the review** | • A description of TfGM’s current provision and funding of accessible transport, set within wider context of GM districts’ spend on social needs transport services.  
• Analyse the extent to which Ring and Ride is providing a service to those who most need it including a review of the current eligibility criteria and fares;  
• An informed understanding of current demand patterns of Ring and Ride and Local Link and future trends and needs in Greater Manchester. Helping to address the levels of duplication in TfGM’s funding.  
• Benchmarking Greater Manchester’s accessible transport to other authorities.  
• Explore alternative delivery models for operating accessible transport services including Community Transport and taxi providers.  
• A set of options for reforming TfGM’s approach to accessible transport that can efficiently and effectively support future demand in the context of more restricted budgets and an aging fleet profile on Ring and Ride.  
• An outline proposal seeking support from districts and other partners to develop a more co-ordinated GM approach to wider provision of social needs transport.  
• Develop a long term strategy for Ring and Ride in the context of demand responsive transport within Greater Manchester.  
• Identify key performance indicators to measure the outcomes of TfGM’s Accessible Transport policy. |
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<tr>
<th>Potential Issues</th>
<th>GMATL have an aging fleet and there remains a challenge to ensure that the quality and performance of the fleet is maintained despite financial constraints. Any reductions in service will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Time Frame</td>
<td>Review to be concluded by the end of May 2017 to be presented to TfGMC in June/July.</td>
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<td>Governance</td>
<td>The Ring and Ride steering group will report progress to TfGM's Operations Board monthly and to GMATL's Board</td>
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| Outputs                              | Report to GMATL Board  
Report to TfGM Operations Board  
Report to TfGM Exec Board  
Report to TfGMC                                                                                       |