TRANSPORT FOR GREATER MANCHESTER COMMITTEE
REPORT FOR INFORMATION

Sub Committee: Bus Networks and TfGM Services
Date: 26 April 2019
Subject: Ring and Ride Performance Update
Report of: Interim Head of Bus Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To note progress in relation to the delivery of Ring and Ride services by Greater Manchester Accessible Transport Ltd. (GMATL).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Ring and Ride Performance and Development Update – Bus Network and TfGM Services Sub-Committee: October 2018.

Ring and Ride Performance and Development Update – Bus Network and TfGM Services Sub-Committee: April 2018.

CONTACT OFFICERS

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Ring and Ride service provides door to door, demand responsive transport to residents of Greater Manchester who find it difficult to use conventional public transport due to disability or mobility issues.

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

1.3 The 2018/19 running costs when the budget was set were forecast to be £5.1 million with grant funding up to £4.3 million provided in the year by TfGM.

1.4 The 2019/20 grant has been increased by £300,000, with this additional funding ring fenced to cover the cost of leasing 20 replacement minibuses as older vehicles reach the end of their lifespan. GMATL has been tasked with identifying further efficiencies to cover the cost of the additional 11 buses required by 2021.

1.5 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.

1.6 The net cost per trip at the end of January 2019 was £9.49, an increase compared to the costs in July 2018 (£8.92) and February 2018 (£8.78), due to the fewer trips performed.

1.7 This report details current performance of the service and identifies areas of concern.

1.8 In April 2016, GMATL introduced the eligibility criteria on Ring and Ride. Passengers can now only use the service if they;

- **hold a TfGM Concessionary Plus Pass** (available to those with the following: Severe walking difficulties; registered partially sighted; profoundly or severely deaf; or have been/would be refused driver’s license for medical reasons); or

- **hold a TfGM Concessionary Disabled Person Pass** (available to the following: registered blind; profoundly deaf and cannot speak/limited speech that is difficult to understand; learning difficulties; cannot use both arms; cannot talk; ex-serviceman or woman with serious walking difficulties are a result of losing a leg (BLESMA); or would be refused driving license as a result of severe and long-term mental health problems); or
- are 70 years old or over, have mobility issues and hold a TfGM Older Person's Concessionary Pass; or
- are a TfGM Travel Voucher user.

1.9 In conjunction with the introduction of the eligibility criteria, the carriage of accompanying passengers and regular bookings were also restricted. Accompanying passengers were restricted to one per registered user and up to two for users with a Concessionary Plus Pass. Regular bookings are available for groups of six or more and subject to a quarterly review. The rationale behind this method was to ensure that casual users have equal access to the service as those on regular bookings.

1.10 From August 2018, Concessionary Plus Pass holders have been charged £1 per journey after previously having free travel. This change was relatively well received. In conjunction with TfGM, GMATL introduced the ability for these users to purchase a 10-journey carnet style product. This was to enable easier travel for customers who may have particular difficulties with a cash transaction and 587 have been sold to date.

2. Service performance

2.1 As of 31 January 2019 there are 10,809 people registered with the Ring and Ride Service, compared to 9,731 in July 2018 and 11,026 in January 2018. Of these registered users 33.60% had used the service in the last three months (November 2018 to January 2019) and 64.57% had used the service in the last twelve months.

2.2 During the period from August 2018 to January 2019 there were 275,531 trips and 216,758 trip requests and 216,758 trips performed. The majority of the trips not performed relate to cancellations by passengers after the trip was offered and scheduled on the service (see below). In addition there were 6,610 trips provided to non-registered passengers accompanying service users. Non-registered user trips accounted for 3% of trips on Ring and Ride during this period.

2.3 Figure 1 overleaf shows how these trips are broken down on a monthly basis with October being the busiest month (39,062 registered user trips) and December the least busy (28,093 trips).
Figure 2 shows the breakdown of trips requested and trips performed between August 2018 and January 2019 compared to the refusal rate. The average refusal rate for this period was 5.87%. This is lower than the 8.76% target and represents a slight decrease from the previous 6 month period when the average refusal rate was 6.00%. Trip refusal levels were comparatively high during September and October 2018 (7.1% and 7.3% respectively), with demand highest in October 2018.
2.5 Figure 3 shows that the refusal rate was highest in Manchester (9.30%) and Oldham (7.76%) and lowest in Salford (2.01%) and Trafford (2.53%).

**Figure 3: Refusal rates, by district (August 2018 to January 2019).**

2.6 Figure 4 shows that cancellations on the Ring and Ride service remain stable between August 2018 and January 2019 with the highest rate in January (21.69%), when there was a high number of cancellations due to poor weather (1,072), and the lowest in August (17.3%).

**Figure 4: Cancellation rates (August 2018 to January 2019)**
Figure 5 overleaf shows that cancellation rates across all districts, with the cancellation rate being highest in Manchester (21.33%) and Trafford (21.18%) and the lowest in Bury (15.55%) and Stockport (17.66%).

Figure 5: Cancellation rates, by district (August 2018 to January 2019).

In order to meet budget saving targets GMATL have gradually reduced resources in a manner that has minimal impact on service delivery. Figure 6 shows the number of shifts operated compared to the renewed targets. December had the fewest shifts delivered in relation to the targets (82.87%) due to seasonal variation and the most shifts were performed in January (95.92%) when driver resources were at maximum availability.

Figure 6: Number of shifts operated compared to the target.
Table 1 overleaf shows the lowest and highest districts by shifts operated to target over the 6 month period. Bolton performs the highest shift output for half of the period and Stockport performs the lowest output, also for half of the period due to the impact of long term sickness absence.

Table 1: Lowest and highest performing districts in term of meeting the shifts operated target (August 2018 to January 2019)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lowest district</th>
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<th>Highest district</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug-18</td>
<td>Tameside (85.84%)</td>
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<td>Bolton (96.89%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep-18</td>
<td>Tameside (83.02%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bolton (95.11%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct-18</td>
<td>Stockport (83.54%)</td>
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<td>Rochdale (96.96%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov-18</td>
<td>Wigan (85.45%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bury (97.56%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec-18</td>
<td>Stockport (70.71)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rochdale (91.67%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan-19</td>
<td>Stockport (86.18%)</td>
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<td>Bolton (99.48%)</td>
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3. Booking and scheduling

3.1 The SLA states that GMATL must ensure that on the call booking line, the abandonment rate shall not exceed 10% and on the call enquiry line, the abandonment rate shall not exceed 12%.

3.2 Between August 2018 and January 2019, GMATL received 43,544 calls on the enquiry line and 81,169 calls on the booking line. 95.30% of enquiry calls were answered and 97.22% of booking calls were answered before the caller abandoned the call, positively exceeding the target.
4. **Financial update**

4.1 The cost of operating the service up to January 2019 was £4.26m with projected full year costs of £5.16m.

4.2 Savings have been achieved during the year and it is anticipated that the requirement to draw on the General Reserve will reduce from £0.117m to £0.63m.

5. **Fares Changes**

5.1 The GMATL Board has approved a fare increase from 06 May 2019. All fares will rise by 10p. The standard concessionary fare will rise from £1.50 to £1.60 and the fare for Concessionary Plus Pass holders will rise from £1.00 to £1.10.

5.2 Feedback has previously indicated that a high proportion of users considered Ring and Ride good value for money and would be prepared to pay higher fares to protect the service.

5.3 Concessionary Plus Pass holders will still be able to purchase a pre-paid carnet of 10 trips, to make travel easier for those who may have issues with communication, making it difficult to handle cash.

5.4 The fare change was communicated to users at customer engagement surgeries in March (see below) and users understood the need for the increase. Details of the change will also be communicated to users by the call centre, posters and leaflets on buses, emails to group organisers on GMATL’s contact list from 08 April 2019.

6. **Customer Engagement Surgeries**

6.1 GMATL organised surgeries in all 10 districts throughout March for Ring and Ride users to provide feedback.

6.2 Service users were informed about the 10p fare increase across all fares commencing on 8 May 2019 and given the opportunity to provide feedback about the service.

6.3 Comments were generally positive with praise for the majority of drivers. Users were also understanding about the fare increase. The main issue raised was the difficulty some users experience with getting the trips they wanted at certain times.

7. **Mobile Data Terminal Trial**
7.1 GMATL have begun trialling mobile data terminals (MDTs) on some vehicles to allow drivers to view the trip manifests on a mobile phone. The final aim is to reduce the administrative burden entailed with using printed sheets, upgrade the bus to base radio system and provide satellite navigation for driver training and route guidance.

8. Conclusions and Proposed Way Forward

8.1 Ring and Ride continues to offer a vital service providing trips to people who would otherwise find accessing services and leading independent lives far more difficult.

8.2 TfGM and GMATL are continuing to review performance targets and delivery to ensure the needs of the vulnerable customer base are being met.

8.3 Over recent years, service developments have been introduced (including the introduction of eligibility criteria and restrictions on regular bookings and introducing fares for all those who use the service) in order to protect the service in light of ongoing budget constraints.

8.4 TfGM are continuing the Accessibility Review in order to identify additional developments and analyse if the service is being delivered through the most efficient model.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Recommendations are set out at the front of this report.

Alison Chew
Interim Head of Bus Services