ITEM NO. 5

TRANSPORT FOR GREATER MANCHESTER COMMITTEE
REPORT FOR INFORMATION

Sub Committee: Bus Networks and TfGM Services
Date: 18 November 2016
Subject: Demand Responsive Transport Update
Report of: Head of Bus

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform members of the performance of the demand responsive Local Link services and to update on work undertaken to develop the services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BNTS Sub-Committee 22 April 2016: Demand Responsive Services Update

CONTACT OFFICERS

Nick Roberts 0161 244 1173 nick.roberts@tfgm.com
James Tomkinson 0161 244 1785 james.tomkinson@tfgm.com
1. **Introduction and Background**

1.1 Local Link offers a demand responsive transport service which allows people to travel within defined areas that have a particular gap in the transport provision, such as irregular transport services or low accessibility to employment, education, health and leisure opportunities. There are currently 27 services across Greater Manchester.

1.2 Between April and September 2016, 64% of services were operated on dedicated mini-buses with trips scheduled through TfGM’s Contact Centre, using Trapeze Pass scheduling software. The remaining 36% were operated by private hire operators, using their fleets of saloon cars and their own booking and schedule and dispatch processes.

1.3 Of the 64% of trip requests booked and scheduled using Trapeze, 78% were booked via the TfGM Contact Centre; the remaining 22% were booked via the web booking facility.

2. **Service Performance**

**Patronage**

2.1 Between 1 April 2016 and 30 September 2016, 117,777 passenger trips were made on TfGM’s Local Link services; a decrease of 10% when compared to the previous six months (September 2016 and April 2016). Members are asked to note that the period between April and September is historically quieter due to seasonal patronage increases for worker services.

2.2 Patronage on Wythenshawe, Middleton, Heywood and Partington continues to grow. In June and July Wythenshawe had the record monthly patronages on Local Link services with over 3,600 trips provided.

**Cost Per Trip**

2.3 Between 1 April 2016 and 30 September 2016 the overall cost per trip including external contributions, was £8.47.

2.4 Officers review all services where the cost per trip exceeds £10 and implement measures to address any issues identified. This includes increasing engagement with large employers or community organisations in service areas where usage does not reflect expected demand, or reducing service provision, if high costs indicate that the service is provided where alternative transport provision is available.
New Customers

2.5 Data on newly registered Local Link customers is currently only available for those customers registering for services which use TfGM’s scheduling software. Between April and September 2016, 644 new customers were recorded as registering with the Local Link service.

2.6 This identifies an increase in the number of new customers from the period October 2015 and March 2016 when 599 new users registered for the service.

Trip purpose

2.7 The most common trip purpose requested during the 6 month period was ‘Work’ which made up 40.7% of trip requests. This consistent demand for trips for ‘Work’ purposes reflects the on-going work being undertaken by TfGM officers to change the reputation of the service from its previous position, as a service primarily viewed as serving the elderly, to a distinct service which can be relied upon by all sections of the public to make time critical trips, such as trips to work.

Age profile

2.8 Figure 1 shows the ages of all active users. Between April and September 16, the average age of active users is 59.73. Notwithstanding the growth in proportion of work trips being provided, 41% of users are over the age of 70.

Figure 1: Age of active users (April to September 2016)
3. **Local Link Communications Plan**

3.1 TfGM completed a programme of work funded by the Department for Transport’s Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) to re-brand and promote Local Link as a reliable way to travel to work and interchange with the wider transport network.

3.2 Officers have worked with colleagues in TfGM’s marketing and communications team to develop a new communications strategy to raise awareness of Local Link.

3.3 The first phase of this took place at the end of October 2016 when a number of services changed from being taxi operated to being booked and scheduled by TfGM. This change was made to ensure consistency for customers and to give TfGM access to improved data for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Leaflets were produced and distributed to existing users informing passengers of the upcoming changes. In addition, local papers were informed and adverts placed.

3.4 It remains important that officers are proactive in promoting Local Link services especially those with a high cost per passenger so their continued operation can be justified. Officers would welcome any support from Councillors where it can be identified that targeted publicity could make a difference to patronage levels.

4. **Future Service Development**

**Trapeze**

4.1 TfGM was awarded additional funding as part of the Department for Transport’s Transition Fund to help towards the cost of additional scheduling functionality for Local Link.

4.2 This allows TfGM to change the way we schedule Local Link services. This will not be used on all services, it will be piloted on a number of services and evaluated before it is rolled out on more services. Currently Local Link works as a door to door service. However, in order to increase the efficiency of services passengers will be picked up from TfGM determined “common locations”. This will enable services to carry more passengers and increase scheduling efficiency.

5. **Department for Total Transport Fund**

5.1 TfGM successfully bid for funding under the Department for Transport’s Total Transport Pilot Fund which allows local authorities in England to
investigate new and better ways of delivering joined-up local transport in rural and isolated areas.

5.2 TfGM was awarded £82,000 to assess transport in Saddleworth and put together a proposal for a transport trial in the area.

5.3 The Total Transport project is aimed at improving:

- Integration – better integration of transport services to provide a better service to passengers and better integration of existing transport resources (Special Educational Needs transport, Ring & Ride, general and supported bus network, Local Link etc.)

- Efficiency – the DfT believes the total transport model can provide a more efficient service – both in terms of value for money and in terms of making better use of existing fleet capacity.

- Innovation – the DfT is looking for innovative approaches to transport in rural areas that, by taking new approaches to commissioning, cross-stakeholder working and operation, that can improve transport provision in rural areas.

5.4 Transport surveys and focus groups, in Saddleworth, are currently underway to identify what local people require from their transport network, what they identify as barriers/drawbacks and suggest what improvements they would like to see.

5.5 The Total Transport project aims to develop a model for rural transport that can be trialled in Saddleworth before rolling out successful elements of the project in other areas of Greater Manchester. The trial will bring together a range of stakeholders (including TfGM, Oldham Council, operators, health providers etc.) and will be used to inform future development of rural transport. We anticipate using the partnership model in future projects.

6. Recommendations

6.1 See front sheet for recommendations.

Howard Hartley

Head of Bus
Appendix A: Individual Performance Statistics for Local Link Services

Service- East Manchester

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Mar 2004
Patronage (April – September 16): 5,629
Patronage previous 6 months (October – March 16): 7,506
Cost per trip: £11.39

East Manchester was revised in April 16 following retender. Due to an increase in contract costs, TfGM reduced the vehicle capacity at less busy times of day. The times and days of operation were unchanged.

Officers are investigating ways to publicise the service with Manchester Royal Infirmary and North Manchester General Hospital to increase patronage.

Dane Bank Local Link service which operates Mondays to Sundays 6.30pm – 10.30pm will be incorporated into East Manchester Local Link from October 2016. Dane Bank averages around 50 passengers a month at a period when demand is low.
Service- Hattersley

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Jul 2004
Patronage (April-September 16): 6,866
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 7,256
Cost per trip: £9.62

Hattersley Local Link was enhanced by LSTF funding in 2013. Usage of the service has declined over the previous 6 months by 5%.

Officers have explored the option of combining Hattersley and Tame Valley Local Link services due to the commonality of areas served and the destinations visited by users. A proposal has been submitted in the Forthcoming Changes to the Bus Network.
**Service- Heywood**

**Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel**

Service commenced: Jul 2005  
Patronage (April-September 16): 7,027  
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 7,614  
Cost per trip: £8.00

Heywood’s patronage has continued to grow over the past year and has increased by 10% compared to the previous 12 months. The number of work trips has increased due to work done by TfGM to encourage workers at Pilsworth Industrial estate to use the service. There are a significant amount of seasonal demand on this service.

From October 2016 one vehicle on Middleton and Heywood will now be shared with no impact on passengers based on the current usage.
Service- Hindley

Operator- Wigan Community Transport

Service commenced: Oct 2006
Patronage (April-September 16): 6,436
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 6,349
Cost per trip: £5.79

The usage of Hindley Local Link has consistently been around a 1,000 per month. The contract has been extended for a further two years.
Service- Hulme and Moss Side

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Jun 2003
Patronage (April-September 16): 2,610
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 4,020
Cost per trip: £10.31

Due to an increase in contract costs officers reduced the vehicle capacity at less busy times of day. The times and days of operation were unchanged.

The service continues to be reviewed as the cost per passenger rising above £10 per passenger. Contributing factors are that over 70% of active passengers are over the age of 60 and Hulme is also well served by a number of high frequency bus services.
Service- Kingsway, Newbold, Deeplish and Rochdale Evening

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Sept 2008
Patronage (April-September 16): 10,077
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 11,408
Cost per trip: £8.20
Kingsway Local Link covers four different Local Link operations (Kingsway, Rochdale Evening, Deeplish and Newbold). October and November are the busiest months for the service with over 2,000 passenger trips being performed at this time last year. This is due to the employment of a high number of seasonal staff at Kingsway Business Park.
Service- Logistics North

Operator- Telecars

Logistics North

Service commenced: April 2016
Patronage (April-September 16): 493
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): n/a

The service started in April 2016, only one business (Aldi) has opened at the business park at this time. Initial uptake on the service has been slower than expected. Extensive work has been carried out to publicise the Local Link to new businesses who are planning to move to the business park and incentives have been offered to staff.
Service- Middleton

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Jul 2005
Patronage (April-September 16): 8,616
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 8,982
Cost per trip: £10.85

Service performance has been over 1,300 trips for the past 12 months, this is an increase of 8% compared to the previous 12 months.

As this service is operating at close to £10 per trip, officers have reviewed the service and have identified cost savings that can be achieved by reducing the hours of operation on one vehicle. In addition, the one vehicle which currently operates as a demand responsive Local Link service to Kingsway Business Park will now become a semi fixed route service from Middleton Bus Station to Kingsway Business Park. During the times when this service is not operating as a fixed route service it will operate as an additional vehicle on Heywood Local Link.
Service- Partington

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Apr 2002
Patronage (April-September 16): 10,077
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 11,408
Cost per trip: £10.41

The service continues to develop, patronage over the past 12 months has grown 8% compared to the previous 12 months. However the cost per trip remains above £10 per passenger. Officers are investigating potential changes to the service.
Service- Salford

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Aug 03
Patronage (April-September 16): 3,320
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 5,544
Cost per trip: £6.34

Patronage had been declining on the service for a number of years and the cost per trip was above £10. A review of the service identified that the services hours and vehicle requirements would reduce the current contract cost by 62%.

As shown above patronage has dropped 39% compared to the same period in the previous 12 months. The changes also caused a spike in refusals and cancellations due to there being less capacity on the service.
Service- Tame Valley, Gee Cross and Glossop

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Jan 00
Patronage (April-September 16): 1,835
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 2,396
Cost per trip: £20.07

For the past 6 months the service has been booked and scheduled by TfGM, previously to this the service was operated by a fleet of taxis. Officers have reviewed the service in conjunction with the neighbouring Hattersley Local Link service. Officers have negotiated with the current operator to merge the two services and introduce a new combined service which reflects the current passenger demand.
Service- Wythenshawe (includes Timperley and Heald Green)

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Feb 2003
Patronage (April-September 16): 20,844
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 19,084
Cost per trip: £9.52

Patronage has grown by 7% in the past 12 months and in June and July 2016 the service had over 3,600 trips the highest monthly patronage on any Local Link service. Amazon has just opened a new distribution warehouse at Airport City, officers have engaged partners to publicise the availability of Local Link in the area.
Current Taxi operations; contracts will no longer operate on this model from October 2016

For the following contracts TfGM do not have data on cancelled and refused journeys, journey purpose and user demographics.

Service- Dane Bank and North Reddish

Operator- Radio Cabs/Eco Travel

Service commenced: Oct 2006
Patronage (April-September 16): 341
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 438
Cost per trip: £25.22

Officers have reviewed the service and due to the close proximity to the East Manchester Local Link service area it can be incorporated into the contract at no additional cost to TfGM. Officers will monitor service performance once the service is booked and scheduled through Trapeze.
Service - East Bolton (North Bolton and Daubhill and Deane)

Operator - Telecars

Service commenced: Jan 06
Patronage (April-September 16): 8,544
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 9,158
Cost per trip: £8.06

Daubhill and Deane and North Bolton Local Link service were added to the East Bolton Local Link contract from 03 April 2016. Despite this patronage has declined. The service was retendered due to the previous contract expiring on the 30 October 2016. The service is now being booked and scheduled by TfGM. Officers are better able to monitor usage when services are booked and scheduled by TfGM.
Service- Hollinwood and Werneth

Operator- Five Star Private Hire

Service commenced: Dec 2004
Patronage (April-September 16):
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16):
Cost per trip: £7.30

Patronage dropped by 36% compared to the previous 12 months. Following retender the costs had increased and made the service unsustainable and the service was withdrawn from 30 October 2016.
Service- Horwich

Operator- Horwich Private Hire

Service commenced: Sept 2001
Patronage (April-September 16): 4,589
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 5,737
Cost per trip: £3.05

The current contract is due to expire in January 2017. Therefore officers have reviewed the service and tendered a number of different options aimed to achieve a cost effective service. However bids received increased the current costs significantly, were we to award the contract the cost per passenger would rise to £12.42. The service will not be renewed. Further details are included in the Forthcoming Changes to Bus Services Part A on 16 November 2016.
Service- Ramsbottom and Tottington

Operator- Elton Bullitt

Service commenced: Jan 2000
Patronage (April-September 16): 2,543
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 4,486
Cost per trip: £7.47

Patronage has declined by 40% compared to the previous 12 months. The service was retendered due to the previous contract expiring on the 30 October 2016. Despite the service now being booked and scheduled by TfGM the price received to operate the service actually reduced therefore no changes to the service were proposed. Officers are better able to monitor usage.
Service commenced: Jul 2004
Patronage (April-September 16): 15,816
Patronage Previous 6 months (October-March 16): 17,012
Cost per trip: £5.28

From 30 October 2016 the service is now being booked and scheduled by TfGM after the contract was changed to the new Conditions of Contract. Officers are better able to monitor usage when services are booked and scheduled by TfGM.