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 2017

Ring and Ride Performance and Development Update – Bus Network and TfGM Services Sub-Committee: March 2017

CONTACT OFFICERS

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1. **Introduction and background**

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 2017/18 running costs when the budget was set were forecast to be £5.5 million with grant funding up to £4.657 million provided in the year by TfGM.

1.4 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.

1.5 The net cost per trip at the end of February 2018 was £8.87 (£8.78 TfGM cost), an increase compared to the costs reported in October 2017 (£8.51 per passenger trip (£8.31 TfGM cost)) and March 2017 (£8.22 per passenger trip (£7.77 TfGM cost).

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

1.7 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.

1.8 In conjunction with the introduction of the eligibility criteria, the carriage of accompanying passengers and regular bookings was 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.

2. **Service performance**

2.1 As of 31 January 2018 there are 11,026 people registered with the Ring and Ride Service. Of these registered users 38.07% used the service in the last three months (November 2017 – January 2018) and 73.87% had used the service in the last twelve months.

2.2 During the period from August 2017 to January 2018 there were 315,951 trip requests and 249,338 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 7,034 trips provided to non-registered passengers accompanying service users. Non-registered user trips accounted for 2.84% of trips on Ring and Ride during this period.

2.3 Figure 1 shows how these trips are broken down on a monthly basis with November being the busiest month (45,272 trips) and December the least busy (32,685 trips).

![Figure 1: Trips requested and performed (August 2017 – January 2018)](image)

2.4 As has been reported previously to this sub-committee, patronage targets are no longer included in the SLA as prioritising the provision of trips for those with the most need is considered more important than providing as many trips as possible.

2.5 To ensure the service continues to offer trips to those who require it a trip refusal target of a maximum of 8.76% of requested trips was introduced in
2016/17. This followed on from a scheduling exercise related to the introduction of eligibility criteria.

2.6 Figure 2 shows the breakdown of trips requested and trips performed between August 2017 and January 2018 compared to the refusal rate. The average refusal rate for this period was 6.20%. This is lower than the 8.76% target however it does represent an increase from the previous 6 month period when the average refusal rate was 4.13%. Trip refusal levels were comparatively high during October (8.01%) and November 2017 (7.19%), as demand increased.

![Figure 2: Refusal rates (August 2017 – January 2018)](image)

2.7 Overall the refusal rate has been higher than the previous 6 months. Figure 3 shows that the refusal rate was highest in Stockport (9.71%) and Rochdale (9.71%) and lowest in Wigan at 3.48% and Trafford (3.73%).
Figure 3: Refusal rates, by district (August 2017 – January 2018)

2.8 Figure 4 shows that cancellations on the Ring and Ride service have remained relatively high between August 2017 and January 2018 with the highest rate in December (22.02%) and the lowest in November (17.22%).

Figure 4: Cancellation rates (August 2017 – January 2018)

2.9 Figure 5 shows that cancellation rates are not equal across all districts with the cancellation rate being highest in Manchester (20.83%) and Rochdale (20.44%).
2.10 Ongoing work continues into exploring possibilities to try and reduce the cancellation rate. This includes developing the booking software to enable it to send automated trip notifications to users, to remind them when they have trips booked and to ask that they cancel in advance if they no longer require the trip.

2.11 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.

Figure 5: Cancellation rates, by district (August 2017 – January 2018)

Figure 6: Number of shifts operated compared to the target
Table 1 shows the lowest and highest districts by shifts operated over the 6 month period. It should be noted that Bolton performed the lowest percentage of shifts compared to target during every month between August and December 2017 and Wigan performed the highest, exceeding the target between August and November 2017 and during January 2018. GMATL have advised that this can be explained by a moratorium on vacancies across the districts to achieve efficiency savings and long term staff sickness which has impacted on the Bolton depot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lowest district</th>
<th>Highest district</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug-17</td>
<td>Bolton (74.48%)</td>
<td>Wigan (101.21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-17</td>
<td>Bolton (76.55%)</td>
<td>Wigan (103.85%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct-17</td>
<td>Bolton (76.82%)</td>
<td>Wigan (102.47%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov-17</td>
<td>Bolton (79.57%)</td>
<td>Wigan (102.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-17</td>
<td>Bolton (71.83%)</td>
<td>Wigan (97.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-18</td>
<td>Bolton (74.35%)</td>
<td>Wigan (101.27%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1: Lowest and highest performing districts in term of meeting the shifts operated target (August 2017 – January 2018)

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 2017 and January 2018, GMATL received 4,458 calls on the enquiry line and 95,484 calls on the booking line. 96% of enquiry calls were answered and 95% of booking calls were answered before the caller abandoned the call, positively exceeding the target.

4. Vehicles

4.1 GMATL has had to withdraw 5 ten year old vehicles and reduce its vehicle resources from 62 to 58 vehicles to provide the service. There are concerns about the age and long term reliability of a number of these vehicles.

4.2 GMATL funded the purchase of eight new vehicles which have now been introduced into operation. In addition a borrowing facility has been arranged to enable the purchase of a further nine vehicles, six of which are being prepared to enter service in April and three more are expected to enter service in July 2018.
4.3 The primary concern for the short and medium term operation of the Ring and Ride service is the ageing fleet and ensuring that investment in fleet replacement is achieved, reflecting their longer term fleet requirements.

4.4 TfGM is working with GMATL to consider how to best address further vehicle replacements as a further 20 vehicles are due for withdrawal from August 2018 onwards. The requirement will be reviewed in line with the outcome of TfGM’s Accessibility Review, a piece of work that has been requested by the Scrutiny Panel to ensure that accessible services across Greater Manchester are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.

4.5 Dialogue continues between officers of GMATL and TfGM to explore how to optimise the use of vehicles and facilitate the withdrawal of further life expired vehicles to reduce the impact on the service provided.

5. Fares Changes

5.1 The 2017/18 operating costs when the budget was set were forecast to be £5.5million; consisting of a TfGM grant of up to £4.657million, with the shortfall being covered by the revenue that the service generates.

5.2 The on-going Accessibility Review being conducted by TfGM has reviewed the sustainability of this funding model and subsequently recommended an increase to the standard single fare from £1.20 to £1.50 and the introduction of a £1 fare for Concessionary Plus Pass holders.

5.3 This recommendation followed a consultation exercise which found a high proportion of users considered Ring and Ride good value for money and would be happy to pay higher fares to protect the service.

5.5 To support the Concessionary Plus Pass holders who are not used to having to pay a fare a SMART ticketing option is being reviewed to ease the implementation of payments. Following TfGMC’s endorsement of this recommendation TfGM are now working with GMATL to develop a Comms plan in advance of the introduction of the fares changes on 1 June 2018.

6. Conclusions and Proposed Way Forward

6.1 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.

6.2 TfGM and GMATL are continuing to review performance targets and delivery to ensure the needs of the vulnerable customer base are being met.
6.3 Over recent years, service developments have been introduced (including the introduction of eligibility criteria and restrictions on regular bookings) in order to protect the service in light of ongoing budget constraints.

6.4 Further service developments are due to be implemented to protect the sustainability of the service. These include a new fares structure and the development of the trip booking software.

6.5 TfGM are continuing the Accessibility Review in order to identify additional developments which can improve and protect the service.

7. Recommendations

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

Alison Chew
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