

Transport Focus Special Board meeting	
Date:	12 November 2018
Times:	1400-1600
Location	Piccadilly Gate, Manchester

Attended

Board members:

Jeff Halliwell	JH	Chair
Philip Mendelsohn	PM	Board member for Scotland
Arthur Leathley	AL	Board member
Isabel Liu	IL	Board member
Kate Denham	KD	Board member
Keith Richards	KR	Board member

Management in attendance:

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief executive
David Sidebottom	DS	Director
Mike Hewitson	MH	Head of policy
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Head of strategy
Jon Carter	JC	Head of Board and governance
Ian Wright	IW	Head of innovation and partnerships
Hannah Pearce	HP	Head of communications
Michelle Jackson	MJ	Management assistant

Other attendees:

Simon Warburton	SW	Strategy director, Transport for Greater Manchester
Aline Frantzen	AF	Managing director, Metrolink
Elisabeth Tasker	ET	Managing director, Stagecoach Manchester

Apologies:

William Powell	WP	Board member for Wales
Theo de Pencier	TdP	Board member
Rob Wilson	RW	Board member

Members of the public

Approximately 30 members of the public attended the meeting

Part A: Preliminary

1.0 Chairman's opening remarks; apologies

JH welcomed those present to Transport Focus's special board meeting in public. This meeting would concentrate on transport user issues in and around Greater Manchester. JH welcomed ET, SW and AF.

Part B: Public Affairs

1.0 Simon Warburton, Strategy Director, Transport for Greater Manchester

SW noted that Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) were a traditional PTE first and foremost. However, in 2011 Greater Manchester had gone through a sizable governance review from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. They had looked to reassign some of the elements of transport activity, including principles of subsidiarity.

TfGM had devoted a significant proportion of capital investment into bus interchanges within town centres. They were looking to develop them as part of the overall town centre offer in Greater Manchester, giving TfGM the opportunity for good physical integration between rail or Metrolink and bus. TfGM were also the managers of the on-street infrastructure around 12,000 bus stops and 4,000 bus shelters.

TfGM managed the Combined Authority's concessionary rail travel scheme on its behalf. They continued to undertake several quality monitoring activities. They also played a role in capitalising best on rail assets in Greater Manchester. They had recently reviewed a proposal to play a more direct role in railway station management. TfGM were looking to knit together the concessions role. They were the promoter of the core smart ticketing arrangement in Greater Manchester, Get Me There.

TfGM were now the managers of the urban transport control system in Greater Manchester. They managed the signalised junctions across the principal roads. This enabled common policies.

TfGM had started to develop new corporate models with Highways England. They were starting to manage events better. More of a common capital programme across the motorway and key route networks would be seen. TfGM were taking more of a role in active travel and had taken on the role of promoting one approach across the conurbation.

The 2040 Strategy for transport in Greater Manchester had recently been unveiled. Key points included capitalising on the level of investment in the transport system. Over the last 10 years in Greater Manchester, TfGM had managed to deliver capital investment that dwarfed that seen in the last decade outside of London.

Over time, TfGM would think more about mobility of service. They would try to embed the principles of integration and mobility in the entire transport system. This was critical considering that Greater Manchester was more populated than ever; by the early 2030s, there would be a population of 3 million. There were plans to deliver over 200,000 new homes and 200,000 additional jobs over the next 20 years. TfGM were in need of diverse travel solutions to support residents' needs.

There was greater resilience and the system currently operated 42 million passenger trips per annum. TfGM were on target for 47 million trips per annum by 2020. The left flank of Metrolink would be opened out to the Trafford Centre. There was currently a funded submission from Manchester Airport through to the new terminal development. It would complement the £1 billion transformation programme.

The larger network was more complex. TfGM had recently agreed a new zonal arrangement around the Metrolink system. As they introduced the next fare change in January 2019, the zonal system would come into effect. It would help passengers to better find their way. There would be consultation with passengers and analysis of travel trends.

TfGM also sought to branch out in new directions. One element was the guided busway. There were currently 50,000 to 55,000 passengers per week. TfGM could not introduce new buses fast enough.

SW mentioned challenges in the transport system since the Mayor had assumed office. Several elements had challenged the system and its accountability. TfGM were looking to influence how passengers were dealt with during difficult times. Capacity issues had been a driving force in TfGM making the case for Metrolink investment.

The Mayor was driving a debate around congestion. With the city growing so quickly, more and more jobs had been concentrated in the centre. TfGM needed to make sure congestion did not impede them.

Another key element was air quality. TfGM had published a report showing that by 2021, there would be 150 points on the highway system with unacceptable levels of nitrogen dioxide emissions. TfGM understood that poor air quality caused around 1,200 premature deaths per year in Greater Manchester.

SW mentioned the growth agenda of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF). Greater Manchester was looking to create one spatial plan alongside which TfGM could develop its transport system.

In respect of cycling and walking, Chris Boardman (CB) had been appointed as commissioner. He had already secured £160 million through the transport and cities fund. Sensible measures would ensure better permeability for pedestrians.

Q & A

JH cited GD's involvement in Transport Focus's Strategic Roads User Survey the previous week and asked about satisfaction levels among local users. GD stated that within the Northwest, overall satisfaction was a little below the national average. The survey was potentially adaptable to help TfGM measure satisfaction. SW noted an enthusiastic interest. The key issue was how to capture the level of satisfaction across a key route network.

AS noted that the car park 100 yards from Manchester Piccadilly Station cost around £4.50. SW conceded that this was a real issue. There was a large amount of temporary car parking provision around the city centre, much of which had appeared on the market around 2008. Land had been cleared for development that had not happened. There would not be space for carparks like this once TfGM had finalised their plans with HS2, Network Rail and Transport for the North (TfN). TfGM would continue developing the correct ground transport capacity into Piccadilly and correct bus terminating arrangements around the city centre.

PM mentioned that different local authorities and commercial operators had different sets of priorities. SW indicated that TfGM had been the architects of TfN. It was good for the transport governance system and adhered to the principles of subsidiarity. TfGM's achievements were difficult to plan with debates underway around different forms of transport governance. However, a central point was 200,000 jobs, the majority of which would be created in the regional centre or clustered around Manchester Airport. Without the correct connectivity offer, they could be lost.

NS asked if TfGM had considered an orbital transport route. NS also asked about Greater Manchester's preferred option for the Northern Powerhouse route across the Pennines. SW indicated that TfGM had certainly been considering orbital public transport. TfGM would set out more thinking on the delivery plan in 2019. Regarding Northern Powerhouse Rail, SW would firstly like to see a segregated railway between West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester. Bradford needed to play a role and SW would like to see a fully segregated option for Sheffield.

SH mentioned the possibility of revisiting the congestion charging debate. SW reported that the subject would not be revisited. TfGM were required to look at emissions tariffs so they had to consider whether they should play a role at some point. Emissions tariffs were designed to encourage alternatives.

The issue of TfGM's strategy for accessibility across all modes of transport was raised by a member of the public. There were consistent issues for which TfGM never seemed to take a proactive approach. SW noted two key aspects: infrastructure and the service provided around it. For several years, TfGM had been looking at infrastructure as quickly as capital investment would allow. TfGM were increasingly putting local money into the infrastructure around the rail system.

SW conceded that members of staff across TfGM and partners needed to continue to challenge themselves. SW was working closely with ET, AF and their colleagues to roll out standards training. TfGM had also developed My TfGM for mobility of service. Passengers could tell TfGM there and then what they had experienced. While that sounded reactive, it critically allowed TfGM to continue to refine training mechanisms.

2.0 Aline Frantzen, Managing Director, Metrolink

AF showed an infographic emphasising the company's 850 employees and 42 million passengers to date. They would have 27 additional trams by January 2020.

AF briefly introduced KeolisAmey (KAM), the operators and maintainers of the Metrolink network. Amey made up 40% and Keolis 60%. It was a joint venture with a proven track record.

AF admitted that her talk about Metrolink on 15 July 2017 had featured a very exciting business plan that had not gone to plan. However, an executive summary of Metrolink's first year showed strong performance.

AF introduced insights from 2017 and 2018. In the first week of operation, Metrolink had had to shut down the network due to a communication failure. Metrolink had promised to make sure it never happened again and had worked on that commitment.

Weather had also presented issues. The coldest winter and the hottest summer in 25 years had happened. For a new operator, this had meant good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of network's assets.

AF pointed to the 'strong green shoots' of recovery. Most of Metrolink's KPIs were either better than expected or on track. After 16 months on the network, quite several improvements had been made, creating a stronger network.

Metrolink had looked at qualitative and quantitative customer insights. They had examined the survey by Transport Focus for qualitative insights. They had participated actively in the Disability Design Reference Group (DDRG). The team had also explored new insights, including a Keolis customer satisfaction survey.

For quantitative insights, Metrolink had looked at customer contacts and customer feedback. Metrolink had also asked Keolis to help with benchmarking performance and identifying a number of international networks to twin with. Keolis had facilitated the construction of an analysis based on three data points: Transport Focus, Keolis and internal complaints.

In terms of data-driven insights, AF reported that Metrolink, the second-largest light rail network, was also the fastest at an average commercial speed of 16.4 miles per hour. It was

also the most reliable at +99.6%. It was one of the most punctual networks. It was also the safest.

Internal benchmarking on customer insights was being run. Metrolink were working on the survey to achieve better insight into potential improvements. Metrolink had reduced overcrowding complaints and had grown in patronage by around 8% over the last year. They were focusing on value for money. Waiting times on lines were at an average of 6 minutes, although this was not consistent. Positives for Metrolink included the on-board environment and comfort.

In the Keolis survey, Metrolink had registered middling scores across most questions. Key issues included the perception of reliability. Positives included value for money.

Metrolink had gone above and beyond their contract on creating capacity. The action plan included better frequency and additional capacity. An integrated solution in the future would deal with the current issue with peaks on either side.

Many ticketing issues had related to people breaking into TVM. There were issues with the blue tag and tapping in. Zonal and contactless payments would be introduced in the first part of 2019. AF also mentioned stronger bylaws.

AF reported a joint three-year business plan currently being designed between TfGM and KAM for Metrolink. The TfGM and KAM Boards still needed to sign off on the draft.

Q & A

IL asked what focusing on bylaw offences meant for fare evasion. AF stated that there was a strong correlation between fare evasion and antisocial behaviour. Metrolink had designed a three-year fare evasion plan and had identified the need to communicate what bylaw offences were. In order to reduce antisocial behaviour, Metrolink would take a much tougher approach. There would be a fine of up to £1,000. Metrolink did not have the warranty power to arrest anyone; they relied on the Greater Manchester Police.

AS enquired as to winners and losers of the zonal fare system. AS also enquired about 'early bird' fares, noting that research showed people remained remarkably stubborn about when they travelled. SW noted that 'early bird' fares were expected to have some impact. There would be a relatively short trial. TfGM were aware that there was a degree of criticism regarding the complexity of the offer. TfGM would produce a full evaluation report, which SM offered to share in 2019. SW contended that the winners would outweigh the losers in the zonal fare offer. The fares regime had been overcomplicated. Simplicity would offer a significant benefit to the vast majority.

JH mentioned the analysis of the tram passenger survey and its peaks. There was substantially lower satisfaction during the peak. For example, value for money was 69% among those not commuting and only 52% among those commuting.

A member of the public reported that on routes, ticket machines and elsewhere, there were route letters. However, they were never actually on the trams. AF replied that some preferred route names. It was a live subject within TfGM. SW noted that the lines came together in the centre, so a more traditional model had never felt appropriate.

IW asked if there had been any new passenger input into new trams. AF reported on the Bombardier contract to get the trams on the network as quickly as possible. They had made a number of changes to the design but it had remained relatively consistent. There had not been a significant backlash from customers for the M5000. SW indicated that when TfGM had undertaken the original procurement for the T-68 trams, TfGM had taken on board comments to evolve that model.

3.0 Elisabeth Tasker, Managing Director, Stagecoach Manchester

ET reported that Stagecoach Manchester operated in all 10 districts within Greater Manchester. Stagecoach Manchester provided over 200 varied services. Around 800 vehicles travelled 29 million miles across the network every year. Stagecoach carried approximately 11 million passengers per year.

Stagecoach were a major employer in Manchester. Their terms and conditions were superior to many competitors. Over 20% of their staff enjoyed specific working arrangements to fit their lifestyles. Stagecoach were mindful of the fact that they needed to keep turnover down.

Stagecoach were mindful of Brexit because over 25% of their staff were European (non-UK) nationals. Staff were considering whether they wanted to work in the UK in the future; the conditions in some of their home countries had improved. There may be a shortage of drivers in the future.

Reliability was a key issue for Stagecoach's passengers. Despite congestion, it remained high. In Manchester there were 76,000 more cars on the road than five years previously.

Stagecoach Manchester had the lowest fares of all major operators in the UK. They had a weekly ticket that allowed travel for £2 per day. Stagecoach Manchester had achieved one of the best customer value for money scores in the previous year's Transport Focus survey. They had been second in the UK and had seen a 4% increase on the previous year.

The quality offered had improved considerably; Stagecoach Manchester had scored 91% in a survey the previous year. The driving moderation system gave passengers a better quality of journey. TravelSafe gave a sense of security.

Stagecoach Manchester were a community-led company. Stagecoach had also worked to alleviate homelessness with vehicles containing beds and food. Every single driver had to take a disability awareness course. This was also reinforced by the refresher course.

Stagecoach had made advancements in simplifying journeys. They had introduced the bus app for mobile tickets. Users of the app could buy tickets and follow live updates. The biggest issue was the number of options causing confusion.

Stagecoach Manchester were now taking contactless payments by card or mobile phone. They were also investing in the fleet of vehicles. Stagecoach had been the only major bus operator in the UK to be awarded the Carbon Trust Standard.

However, ET admitted an issue with falling patronage. It was very easy in the current climate to blame high fares. However, that was a simplistic view. A survey of factors local to Manchester by KPMG had showed many influences. Car ownership was increasing at a tremendous pace. The length and variability of bus journeys were also discouraging potential customers.

Congestion was Stagecoach Manchester's largest concern. The average speed had fallen below 10 miles per hour in Manchester and that would continue to be the case unless better priority for buses was given. Congestion added costs of £7 million to £8 million per year.

Potential solutions included priority facilities for buses. The only commercial park and ride site was in Hazel Grove. However, unless the journey time was quicker, passengers would not use it. This was something of a missed opportunity for increasing on-street capacity. The problem was reaching Hazel Grove. ET replied that Stagecoach had to prove the priority of the park and ride site.

ET noted that the bus services and operators grant had been cut and was under review again. It would have an impact on bus services if it was cut. In Manchester, the support for the service network was currently just £27 million. Around £87 million was going to new trams and just £1 million would be put aside for buses. ET had encountered reluctance to invest in a commercially run business and believed this to be an unacceptable excuse. There could be a debate about how commercial operators' profits were invested; however, there should not be a debate about not investing at all.

Cycling and walking would be very important to solving the congestion issue, but ET did not believe Manchester should have a separate cycling system; the money should be pooled. Simply making one mode better than another would not provide the ultimate answer that Stagecoach needed.

ET stated that there could be better financing and local authorities could work better together. They should remember the goal of generating benefits for the local economy.

High streets were changing phenomenally and bus routes and high streets were inextricably linked. Nearly 30% of personal spending in cities was by bus passengers.

ET was concerned about clean air laws prioritising the charging of buses. Stagecoach's first option was to continue to go into those areas and pay the penalties, which they would then pass on to customers. The second was not to go into those areas. If Stagecoach could not take passengers to and from Piccadilly Gardens, they may choose to go elsewhere.

ET noted a chance for Transport Focus to help. There would be a huge amount of debate over the next 12 to 18 months. However, it was very important that there were no fundamental problems in Manchester. People should not criticise public transport unnecessarily. Transport Focus had a key role making sure passengers understood the facts.

Q & A

JH thanked ET and responded briefly by citing some numbers. Transport Focus aimed to do an objective, evidence-based job. He noted an overall satisfaction increase from 82% to 91% on journey time and a value for money satisfaction increase from 71% to 75%. Congestion issues had been tackled with commendable results.

KR noted the real issues around the rapidly aging population. There was a real issue around futureproofing the transport network and services to take account of the rapidly changing demographic. Buses had to be accessible. KR noted that regulations were still framed around an old wheelchair standard. If Stagecoach continued to deliver more of the same, they might become less consistent.

ET noted that there were an increasing number of issues concerning the space allocated for wheelchairs. Stagecoach drivers would be expected to make sure a wheelchair user could enter the vehicle. There was also a bespoke taxi service. ET was not in charge of the design, but it was on the radar. If people contacted Stagecoach, they could also come to the depot with their scooter and test a bus to ensure they could put their scooter on board.

MH mentioned the 30% take-up in contactless payments. ET stated that it had varied by a large amount. In more student-related services, take-up had been brisk and had fallen when students had gone home for the summer. However, Wigan had seen very slow adoption, for example. It was still increasing.

JH thanked all the speakers and those members of the public who attended. There being no further public business, the meeting concluded shortly after 1600 hrs.

Minutes

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:

Jeff Halliwell
Chair, Transport Focus

Date

