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| Briefing | |
| Title | Response to GMPON Feedback - Tameside |
| Date | 15 January 2018 |

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1. *“Free bus pass use – the time restriction of travelling after 9.30am can be a barrier for people as they often tell us they can’t attend sessions or appointments until after 10am due to not being able to use their free bus pass.”*
   1. Central government determines who is eligible and the time of validity for concessionary travel within England in accordance with The Transport Act 2000. The national scheme supports free off-peak travel on all local buses, allowing ENCTP holders to travel between 09:30 and 23:00 Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and public holidays.
   2. Local authorities are able to use discretionary powers to extend the ENCTP scheme or offer additional concessions but any extensions must be funded locally.
   3. In Greater Manchester, the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee (TfGMC) has decided to use its powers to provide free travel on rail and Metrolink for ENCTP holders and has also introduced a concessionary scheme for young people, known as the igo card. In addition, these local extensions provide further concessions to ENCTP customers who hold a pass on the grounds of having a disability, which includes half fare prior to 09:30. Free travel during the morning peak is granted to those with more severe disabilities, who TfGMC feel would have great difficulty in handling money. A Travel Voucher scheme is also in place, providing discounted travel by taxi and private hire vehicles for those with poor mobility and this is also funded entirely by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM).
   4. Due to the limited budget which TfGM has to fund extensions to local concessions, it is likely that in order to include further concessions, for instance free travel for all pass holders prior to 09:30, TfGMC would have to consider removing one of the concessions outlined above. This is because there is a significant cost to concessionary travel as local authorities must reimburse commercial operators for each concessionary journey made.
2. *“Individuals that are able to use public transport, still find it difficult due to not living on a main bus route, resulting in a long walk before being able to access the bus. We have received a number of reports where bus services around estates have either been cut or stopped.”*
   1. In Greater Manchester the bus market is deregulated unlike London. 80% of the network is provided on a commercial basis by privately owned and operated bus companies who are free to determine their own services, routes and fares. In practice, this means that the bus operators serve routes that they believe to be commercially viable.
   2. Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) does provide financial support to provide routes where there is no commercially available service, but have a limited budget to do so.
   3. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has asked Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to explore new opportunities for the reform of the bus market provided to combined mayoral authorities by the Bus Services Act 2017, which was introduced into law last year. This includes preparing an assessment of a proposed franchising scheme (the system used in London and other cities globally), as well as new engaging with bus operators about partnership options. The Act gives the elected Mayor of Greater Manchester the option to reform the bus market, subject to public consultation.
   4. This could bring significant benefits for residents and passengers, allowing for greater local control over routes, frequencies, timetables, fares and quality standards for all buses across the Greater Manchester network.
3. *“Ring and Ride/Community Transport – feels like these services are at the convenience of the transport operator as opposed to the individual. For example, people may spend 1.5 hours on a mini bus to do a relatively short journey (due to multiple pick-ups in different locations) without toilet facilities, which can be an issue for some people.”*
   1. Ring and Ride services are scheduled to allow them to carry as many people as possible. GMATL use (as does TfGM’s Local Link service) a computer system called Trapeze that allows the operator to maximise as many trips as possible. The particular incident of an hour and a half does, however, seem excessive and we would be happy to look into this further if we could be provided with details.
   2. Ring and Ride operates under strict budgetary constraints meaning that it has to carry as many people as possible for the budget available. If we were to limit the maximum journey time, for example to half an hour, that would negatively impact on the number of trips the service can do (and, therefore, the number of people it can carry). It is a delicate balancing act and we accept that occasionally people may travel for longer than they would like. If these instances are reported when they happen, TfGM can investigate further with the operator GMATL.
4. *“Ring and Ride/Community Transport – often runs late and people are given a time slot, but can become agitated whilst waiting, especially if the bus is running late and the person is living with dementia and may be cognitively impaired.”*
   1. TfGM appreciate that a late-running service can cause agitation and disquiet for people with many conditions and especially those with cognitive impairment or dementia. This is, unfortunately, largely caused by traffic congestion which can be extremely difficult to predict. Once a vehicle gets behind schedule (due to congestion) it can be difficult for the driver to make up the time. It would be possible to give drivers more free time in the schedule to counter congestion, but this would have the knock-on effect of increasing the number of people who were refused trips.
5. *“Ring and Ride/Community Transport – can’t be used for hospital appointments as not reliable enough.”*
   1. This is a concern as we recognise the importance of hospital appointments. The reliability of the service is something TfGM are working on to ensure that people can count on the service to get to appointments. TfGM are looking at ways of making Ring and Ride more financially sustainable as well as trying to ensure that it is available for people who need it most.
6. *“Lack of confidence in accessing door to door services, this can be due to mobility, sensory difficulties, physical and mental health. Navigating a booking system can also add an extra complication for some people.”*
   1. TfGM works closely with a disability design reference group (DDRG) to improve the accessibility of its transport facilities and information provision, but we would encourage people to make us aware of any specific problems with the Ring & Ride booking services so that we can work with the operator GMATL to improve access.
7. *“Older people report problems with lighting, parking, seating and road crossings being a barrier to accessing public transport, but their are unsure who or how to report this and lack confidence that something would be done once an issue had been raised”* 
   1. TfGM has developed a design guide for the transport interchanges, park and ride facilities, bus and Metrolink stops that it owns and manages to ensure that when these facilities are built or improved they are designed in a way which makes them accessible to all.
   2. For example, all Metrolink stops have accessibility built-in, with step free access for wheelchair users and features to assist visually impaired people such as boarding points and tactile paving.
   3. TfGM would encourage people to report any problems they experience with the facilities that it manages either directly or perhaps through their local ward councillor if they prefer.