

GREATER MANCHESTER INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY**REPORT FOR INFORMATION**

COMMITTEE: Bus Network and GMPTE Services
DATE: 13th November 2009
SUBJECT: Monitoring Of Demand Responsive Services
REPORT OF: Interim Bus and Rail Director, GMPTE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of monitoring results for demand responsive 'Local Link' services and to propose a series of actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report
- Note the actions being taken to improve patronage on specific services

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Report to Transport Network Committee 22 May 2009: Monitoring of Demand Responsive Services

Report to Transport Network Committee 20 February 2009: Renewal of Demand Responsive Transport Services Contracts

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Overall, quarterly DRT patronage has decreased by 7.5% compared to the same quarter in 2008, comprising a decline in dedicated bus schemes of 7% and in shared taxi schemes of 9%. This is equivalent to a new annual total of 351,812 trips. This mirrors the period of slowdown in the economic climate which is likely to explain at least some of the decline. Employment is the second highest journey purpose for bus based services, so higher unemployment will affect patronage (see Appendix B). Additionally, last year, shopping, employment and leisure comprised reasonably equal percentages of total trips. Since then, shopping trip numbers have reduced considerably, suggesting a reduction in non-essential shopping trips. Further research will be required to establish if this is due to the current economic climate.
- 1.2 It should also be noted that there was a slight temporary decline during the past quarter as users became used to the expanded and improved call centre facilities.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Demand responsive services, branded Local Link, differ from conventional bus services in that vehicle operations are determined by actual passenger demand. Passengers ring a contact number and specify when and where they wish to travel within a defined area. They are then picked up at their specified location and time. While the service offered to the passenger is similar, operation falls into two categories: dedicated minibus or people carrier, and taxi operating under shared taxi legislation. The latter often utilise people carriers or cars during their down time from normal taxi work.
- 2.2 Fares are slightly higher than bus fares, but lower than taxi fares. The services are carefully designed to complement, not compete with, existing conventional bus services in their areas of operation. A report on DRT fares was submitted and approved at the April meeting of the Policy Committee.
- 2.3 Local Link services are booked, scheduled and trip details despatched to the vehicle either through the GMPTE booking centre or the operators' own facilities. These vary from sophisticated computerised systems to manual systems with radio control.

3. LOCAL LINK SERVICES

- 3.1 Thirty five Local Link services on twenty eight contracts comprising seventeen dedicated bus and eleven shared taxi Local Link contracts are currently in operation, funded either by the Authority or from external funding sources. A list of the dedicated bus schemes, including the latest available patronage data is shown in the table below.

Table 1 Dedicated Bus Schemes

Dedicated Bus Scheme	July - Sept 2008	Apr-Jun 2009	July – Sept 2009	Difference
Airport Nightlink	507	741	686	35.31%
Deeplish	1005	888	1019	1.39%
East Bolton	4422	4440	5460	23.47%
East Manchester	6109	5800	5203	-14.83%
Hattersley	2449	2401	2524	3.06%
Heywood	4409	3550*	3750*	-14.95%
Hindley	5272	4931	4963	-5.86%
Hulme	2133	1865	1764	-17.30%
Middleton	3789	3514	3762	-0.71%
North Manchester	4180	4173	4312	3.16%
Offerton	n/a	160	542	
Oldham Shopping	3178	3230	3254	2.39%
Partington	6983	6223	5548	-20.55%
Rochdale Shopping	n/a	728	790	
Salford	3350	3797	2919	-12.87%
Uppermill and Mossley	11046	9977	10086	-8.69%
Wythenshawe	12289	10844	9514	-22.58%
Total	71121	67262	66096	-7.07%

*Estimate – incomplete data

- 3.2 Overall patronage on dedicated bus schemes is slowly decreasing from 71,121 in July to September last year to 66,096 this year, a 7% decrease. The graph at Appendix A shows details for individual services. It should be noted that Deeplish figures include the new Kingsway service and that Wythenshawe figures have included Heald Green since November 2008. Additionally Salford figures include Clifton and Moorside. Uppermill and Mossley includes Denshaw and Pennine Meadows while Wythenshawe includes Heald Green and Timperley.
- 3.3 Six services, East Manchester, Hulme, Partington, Salford, Uppermill/Mossley and Wythenshawe have declined significantly since the 2008 report. All losses in patronage are being carefully monitored in co-operation with the operators. Marketing is already taking place in Salford through a poster campaign and liaison with community groups. Household delivery is due to take place in Wythenshawe and similar work is planned for Uppermill and Mossley. East Manchester and Hulme have just received a leaflet campaign and outreach is planned in both areas.
- 3.4 More positively, the relatively new shopping link service introduced in Rochdale is steadily growing in patronage. In addition it can be seen that the new Offerton service serving Stepping Hill hospital is increasing each month.

- 3.5 The Airport Nightlink has a very restricted passenger base and only operates for 2.5 hours a night (0300-0530). Passenger numbers, for this service, tend to be seasonal but have risen since the previous year and there is no long term declining trend for the Airport service.
- 3.6 North Manchester and Middleton are managing to retain their patronage whilst East Bolton and Hattersley are increasing in patronage due to active marketing of these services. Deeplish has shown an increase from a significant decline in the previous quarter.
- 3.7 Whilst Heywood figures are estimated this quarter and figures are not available for the previous quarter, the booking system for this service has now changed and patronage figures will be provided more consistently in the future.
- 3.8 Patronage on the eleven long-running shared taxi Local Link services currently in operation is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Shared Taxi Schemes

Shared Taxi Scheme	July - Sept 2008	Apr – Jun 2009	July - Sept 2009	Difference
Barrow Bridge	992	1058	1163	17.24%
Dane Bank	1551	1512	1650	6.38%
Daubhill and Deane	2258	2066	1807	-19.97%
Hollinwood and Werneth	1209	1207	1169	-3.31%
Horwich	6376	4859	4865	-23.70%
Mottram Tame Valley	5132	4697	4657	-9.26%
Marple and Mellor	266	349	369	38.72%
Standish and Shevington	1361	1228	1081	-20.57%
North Bolton	n/a	n/a	597	
Bury Rural	1642	1210	1469	-10.54%
Wrightington Link	n/a	56	88	
Total	20787	18242	18915	-9.01%

- 3.9 Patronage for these Shared Taxi Schemes has increased slightly over the previous quarter by 3.5% due to new services. Despite these, there is a 9% decrease from the same period in the previous year continuing a steady decline. It should be noted that Deane and Daubhill figures include Hunger Hill and that Mottram Tame Valley figures include Hyde and Gee Cross.
- 3.10 Officers are still working to increase passengers on the Hollinwood and Werneth service. The service has been publicised, creating an improvement since the last quarter. Four other services have declined more marginally, including Horwich and Standish and Shevington which are due for more publicity. The production of leaflets for delivery to all households within the areas is already in progress. All services will be continuously monitored and appropriate remedial action taken should patronage trend downwards over a sustained period following marketing

initiatives. At this point the service area may be modified or if no options were left and costs were repeatedly unacceptable, the service would be reviewed.

- 3.11 Positive news includes Marple/Mellor which has significantly increased under a new operator and a household delivery of leaflets is currently taking place. The recently introduced Wrightington Link service is starting to form a regular passenger base through publicity. The newest service, North Bolton already has a significant passenger base and figures are increasing each month. Services are jointly funded by Bolton PCT and provide journeys to a health centre.
- 3.12 The rebranding of the Summerseat and Tottington service to Bury Rural and expansion of the area, has led to an increase in patronage which will hopefully continue into the next quarter. Barrow Bridge and Dane Bank have shown a slight but sustained increase over the past year.

4 EXTRA DRT SERVICE MONITORING

- 4.1 It is possible to undertake a more detailed analysis of demand responsive transport services where trips are booked through the GMPTE booking centre. The table at Appendix B shows this analysis. It should be noted that there has been a significant decrease in refusals and whilst some of these will be due to the general decline in patronage, the majority is due to the efficiency of the new booking system which allows more trips to be accommodated.

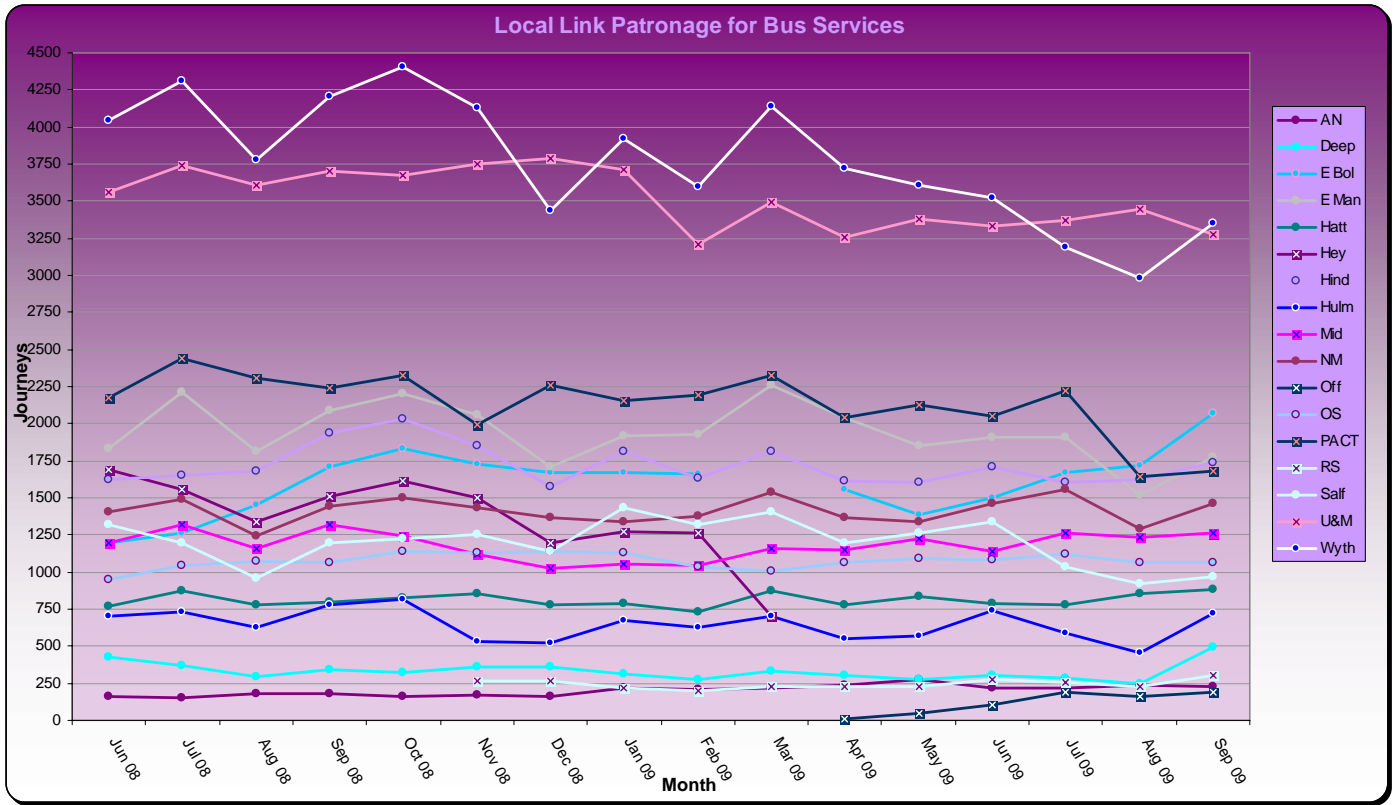
5. COMPARISON OF COSTS

- 5.1 The total net annual operating costs for DRT services at the end of July 2009 have increased, when compared with the same period last year, from £1.833m to £1.849 m (of which £0.52m is externally funded) an increase of less than 1%. This increase reflects improvements to services to cover more areas with low mainstream bus coverage and is good value for the increased area now covered.
- 5.2 When looking at annual totals to this quarter, the average operating cost per passenger journey across all services has increased to £5.26 overall (£3.54 for taxi services; £5.73 for dedicated minibus services) in comparison to £4.82 overall (£2.82 for taxis; £5.46 for dedicated minibuses) for the same time period in 2008, an increase of 8.5%. The cost increase for taxi based services is in part due to new services which have not yet fully developed a patronage base. However the patronage reductions detailed above in this report are also a factor.

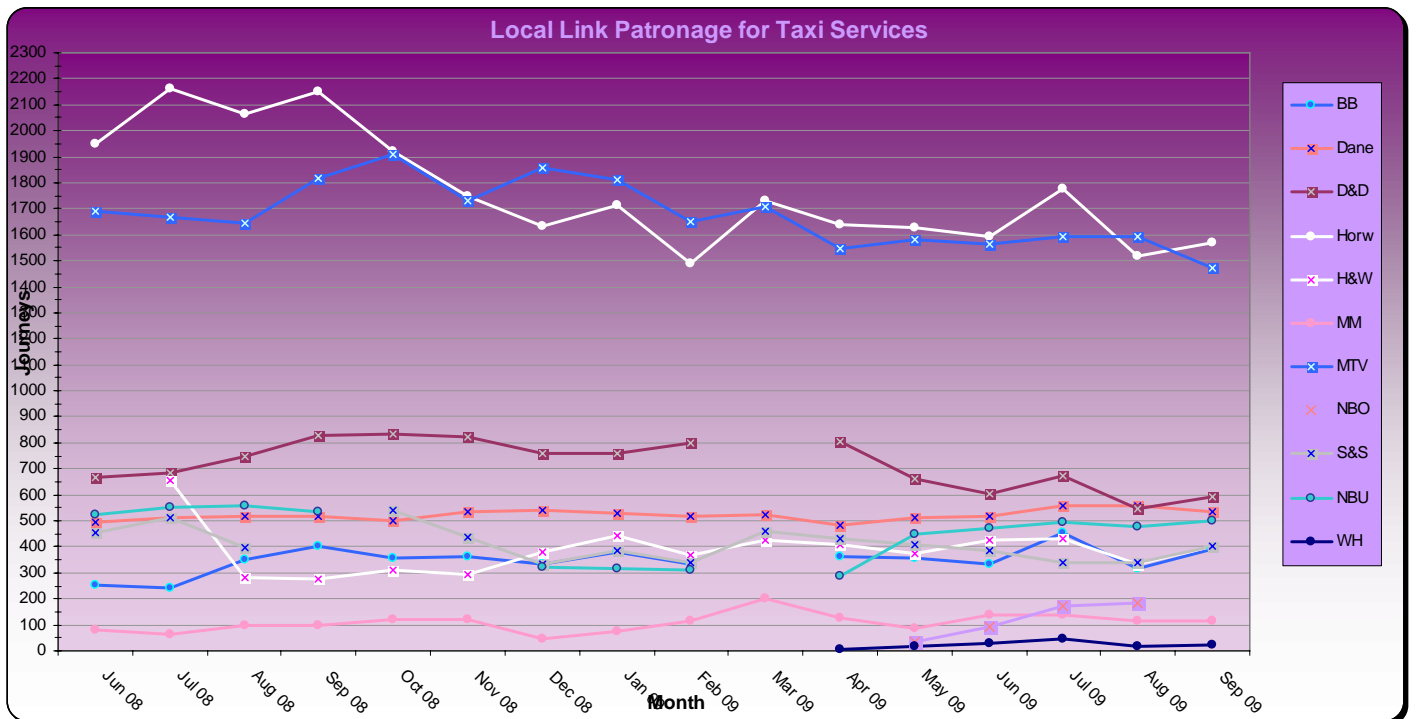
Michael Renshaw
Interim Bus and Rail Director

Summary of Local Link services:

Dedicated Bus Services



Shared Taxi Services



Extra analysis of services booked through GMPTE Booking centre; July - September 2009

APPENDIX B

	Number of trips in quarter	% Daycare	% Education	% Employment	% non specific or to further destination	% Health	% Leisure	% shopping	% of trips refused in Sept ¹	Passengers making at least one trip in those months ²	Current Quarterly Cost of Service
Airport	686	0	0	99.6	0	0	0.4	0	0.004	39	£8,623
Deeplish	1019	0	27	13	0	26	33	26	0.014	40	£7,053
East Manchester	5203	2	4	35	1	15	32	11	0.006	261	£52,375
Hattersley	2524	1	0	11	<1	6	65	17	0.018	99	£3,000
Hindley	4963	<1	0	3	1	7	74	15	0.023	220	£21,549
Hulme	1764	3	3	15	0	9	40	30	0	69	£20,000
Heywood	3750	<1	2	70	1	11	12	4	0.006	128	£26,220
Middleton	3762	0	0	88	1	5	5	1	0.028	92	£3,000
North Manchester	4312	6	<1	7	2	5	57	23	0.029	271	£13,508
Salford	2919	<1	3	4	4	3	53	33	0.004	111	£34,603
Wythenshawe	9514	<1	4	27	3	7	43	16	0.010	373	£63,623
Total or Average	40416	1	3	34	1	8	37	16	0.013	1703	£253,554

¹This is the percentage of trips, as recorded by the booking centre, refused when booking is attempted either because the vehicle is full or the trip is not catered for by the service. This excludes calls not answered.

²This statistic is designed to give a view of the number of individuals who use the service on a regular basis.