

**GREATER MANCHESTER PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY
REPORT FOR RESOLUTION**

COMMITTEE: Policy and Resources

DATE: 24 July 2009

SUBJECT: Update on Public Consultation and Engagement Procedures

REPORT OF: The Clerk to the Authority and the Interim Director of Communications and Customer Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report the findings of the review of new mechanisms established by the Authority in November 2007 for direct engagement with public transport users in Greater Manchester, and to recommend an approach for engagement going forwards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- 1 Note the increased numbers of people engaging with their local transport operators through the new mechanism;
- 2 Note the increased numbers of people accessing information via the GMITA website;
- 3 Approve the approaches for engagement set out in Section 4 of this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Public Consultation and Engagement, report to Authority, 23 November 2007
Interim Report on Consultation and Engagement Procedures, report to Authority, 19 September 2008

CONTACT OFFICERS

Barbara Greer	0161 234 3338	b.greer@manchester.gov.uk
Stuart Johnson	0161 244 1357	stuart.johnson@gmpte.gov.uk

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Authority has a strong reputation of engagement with a range of stakeholder communities. Following a review in 2007 the Authority agreed to trial a new format of consultation and engagement, which would enable wider contact with the travelling public.
- 1.2 A schedule of 40 Transport Drop-In Sessions was trialled during the period early February 2008 to end of January 2009 at local public transport facilities and other public venues, which resulted in much larger numbers of passengers having their say on public transport services.
- 1.3 This report provides Members with an analysis of the impact of the Drop-Ins following twelve months of trialling this new format; and sets out a proposed approach, combining a range of engagement measures going forward.

2 REVIEW OF TRIALLED ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS

Transport Drop-In Sessions

- 2.1 The format for trialling the new arrangements involved officers and transport operators being available at transport locations and other venues to meet with the travelling public. These venues were chosen as being more convenient to members of the public, ie the place(s) from which they access public transport – bus stations, rail stations and transport interchanges and places where they would naturally go for leisure purposes, shopping malls, libraries etc. This approach was also supported by national groups such as Bus Users UK.
- 2.2 This format provides maximum opportunity for regular travellers to register their comments on public transport services in Greater Manchester with their service providers.
- 2.3 Transport operators responded positively to requests to attend these Drop-In Sessions, with most featuring one person representing each of the main operators, a GMPTE Service Planner (Bus), a Rail or Metrolink contact, the relevant Bus/Rail/Interchange Manager, GMITA Officers and appropriate local authority contacts.

Location of Drop-In Sessions

- 2.4 Four Drop-Ins were trialled in each district at various times of the day, different days of the week and in a variety of locations.
- 2.5 As a result of this, officers concluded the following:
 - Drop-Ins held in the late afternoon peak-time were consistently more effective in encouraging passengers to call in and speak to operators/officers about their public transport services

- The optimal location for a Drop-In is in those more spacious locations that allow for passengers to talk to specific representatives on a one-to-one basis
- A facility which is available cost-free does not necessarily make it the best place in which to hold this type of event, eg Travel Shops. Not all of these facilities are large enough to accommodate the numbers of people (operators/officers) required to service these events and may prevent passengers entering the Travel Shop either for ticket purchases/travel enquiries or could deter other public transport users giving their views/comments to service operators due to them feeling intimidated by the busy environment of some locations
- Use of local shopping centres and malls in town centres during core shopping hours demonstrated that such locations offered good alternatives where appropriate. Management of some locations were happy to allow use of their facilities without charge whereas others applied their normal business rates
- The Authority's objective of attracting more passengers to come and talk about their transport experiences to the people that provide the services has been a success. Hundreds of people have taken the opportunity to speak to officers from GMITA and GMPTE, and with representatives from the operating companies over the 12-month period

Range of Audience

- 2.6 A direct comparison of numbers of people attending the Transport Drop-In Sessions between the beginning February 2008 and end January 2009 to those who previously attended the Local Transport Public Forum (LTPF) meetings, which the Drop-Ins were intended to replace, in Spring and Autumn 2007 is shown in Table 1 on the following page.
- 2.7 As can be seen in Table 1 more than double the number of people who previously came to LTPF meetings are now engaging with operators and service providers at Drop-In Sessions.
- 2.8 It is also worth noting that a significantly lower number of officers are required to attend Drop-Ins, thereby reducing the cost of staff time to the Authority and GMPTE.
- 2.9 Analysis has also shown that transport operators attend the Drop-Ins in greater numbers; thus providing the travelling public of Greater Manchester with more opportunity to air their concerns about transport services with the appropriate people.

TABLE 1

Attendance - Comparison of audience size between previous LTPF Meetings and Transport Drop-In Sessions

LTPF 2007 - 12 MONTH TOTALS

	BOLTON	BURY	MANCHESTER	OLDHAM	ROCHDALE	SALFORD	STOCKPORT	TAMESIDE	TRAFFORD	WIGAN	TOTALS
Members of Public/ Stakeholders	56	26	35	22	30	36	18	14	22	37	296

TRANSPORT DROP-INS 2008/2009 - 12 MONTH TOTALS

	BOLTON	BURY	MANCHESTER	OLDHAM	ROCHDALE	SALFORD	STOCKPORT	TAMESIDE	TRAFFORD	WIGAN	TOTALS
Members of Public/ Stakeholders	114	54	77	58	33	73	59	21	66	68	623

DIFFERENCE - DROP-IN TOTAL COMPARED TO LTPF TOTAL

	BOLTON	BURY	MANCHESTER	OLDHAM	ROCHDALE	SALFORD	STOCKPORT	TAMESIDE	TRAFFORD	WIGAN	TOTALS
	+58	+28	+42	+36	+3	+37	+41	+7	+44	+31	+327

- 2.10 Officers would therefore conclude that a more representative sample of the travelling public across Greater Manchester is now speaking to officers and operators at these Drop-In Sessions. Numbers have increased and engagement with a much wider age range than previously seen at LTPF meetings is encouraging. Operators and officers are now regularly speaking to larger numbers of young people, disabled people and those from ethnic groups.

3 OTHER ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

GMITA Website

- 3.1 The new GMITA website was launched to coincide with the Authority's name change at the beginning of February 2009. The new website has functions which provide members of the public with better access to certain information, for example there are direct email links which allow members of the public to report damage to bus shelters and also to make enquiries about their travel passes and permits. An Events Diary has also been added which allows members of the public and Authority Members to see at a glance when Committees are taking place. Other relevant information, such as the GMITA Handbook and Constitution document are also available as direct links from the homepage.
- 3.2 Usage of the new website has gradually increased from it going live on 9 February. The total number of visits from the launch to the end of June is 12,796 with 8,408 unique visitors. Unfortunately usage around the time of the launch was compromised by ICT problems; these issues are now fully resolved.
- 3.3 The number of website enquiries is higher than the previous year at this same point but the ICT problems will have affected these figures. In the period January – June 2008 there were 134 Website Enquiries and 40 Mail Enquiries whilst the figures for January – June 2009 are 164 and 26 respectively.

Public Engagement with Transport Operators and GMPTA/E Officers

- 3.4 Alongside the Drop-In Sessions, the Authority has also continued to hold periodic GM-wide Forums at appropriate times of the year.
- 3.5 A one-day 'State of Transport' Conference was held on 11 May 2009. The format was to invite keynote speakers to give presentations on their organisations and a Meet the Panel session with bus, tram and train operators, thereby presenting an opportunity for members of the public to question transport managers on policy and operational issues. There was an interactive survey of attendees which many people commented was an informative and interesting form of engagement.
- 3.6 In addition, meetings have taken place between Members and/or officers with a diverse range of transport interest groups to maintain GMITA's engagement with these groups.

4 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 With the Authority's ongoing duty to communicate and publicize its work to all residents in Greater Manchester, officers recommend that the Authority meets this commitment through continued use of the following mechanisms:
- i) Transport Drop-In Sessions in each district, managed by GMPTE
 - ii) Transport Conferences to be held at appropriate times to deal with topical transport issues
 - iii) Periodic meetings with transport interest groups held as appropriate to ensure continued engagement with this sector of local communities
 - iv) Consultation and engagement with members of the public through the GMITA/GMPTE Websites via a wide range of on-line facilities
 - v) One-off meetings and/or consultations to address any unplanned occurrences that might take place requiring a response from GMITA
 - vi) Twice yearly publication of Interchange, the GMITA/GMPTE Newsletter circulated as widely as possible

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 A full set of recommendations appears at the front of this report.

Sir Howard Bernstein
Clerk to the Authority

Dean Nicholson
Interim Director of Communications
and Customer Services