

GREATER MANCHESTER INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

REPORT FOR RESOLUTION/INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Rail and Metrolink Networks
DATE: 9th April 2010
SUBJECT: Deployment of Metrolink Travel Safe Officers
REPORT OF: Metrolink Director, GMPTE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the deployment of Travel Safe Officers on the Metrolink system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to consider the report and to note the deployment of Travel Safe Officers on the Metrolink system.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**CONTACT OFFICERS**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The role of the Travel Safe Officer (“TSO”) was introduced to the Metrolink system in July 2008. This report has been prepared to update Members on the activities of the TSOs.

2. Background

- 2.1 Up to and including July 2008, the Metrolink system had a dedicated police unit which was based at Queens Road depot. A decision was made to close the unit in 2008 based on its effectiveness in responding to incidents on the system.

- 2.2 In place of the police unit, the Operator employed TSOs who were charged with 3 key areas of responsibility: revenue protection, security and customer care and further details on these responsibilities are provided in section 3 below.

- 2.3 There are currently 78 TSOs employed by Stagecoach including 12 supervisors.

- 2.3 Greater Manchester Police awarded the Operator accredited status for its TSOs on 27th April 2009, although a condition of the accreditation being awarded was that the new uniform, together with accreditation badge and unique ID number, was worn by the newly accredited officers. As reported previously, the new uniform was introduced in December 2010.

- 2.4 The accredited Operator and therefore accredited TSOs now have additional legal powers to:

- Have access to and share information/intelligence with the Police;
- Issue Fixed Penalty Notices; no such Notices have been issued to date.
- Require people acting in an anti-social manner to provide their names and addresses (it is an offence to refuse to provide this information or provide false information);
- Require the removal of abandoned vehicles;
- Regulate traffic for the purpose of keeping the tram system moving; and
- Confiscate alcohol and cigarettes

- 2.4 To date 36 TSOs have undergone accreditation training. They wear a Community Accreditation Scheme badge and have a different uniform from other TSOs, including the wearing of uniform hats.

2.5 The objective is that all TSOs are accredited by GMP

3. The Role of the TSO

3.1 Whilst the service on the system is operating in normal conditions, with no disruption or particular security threat, TSOs are expected to perform their responsibilities around revenue protection, security and customer care simultaneously.

3.2 During periods of normal service, TSOs will check the tickets of passengers on the system, provide information to passengers and, if required, assist those with disabilities to access and exit the system. If particular passengers are causing a disturbance or being a nuisance to other passengers, then the TSOs will be required to deal with the situation and in extreme circumstances, request the assistance of the police.

3.3 If there is a disruption to the service, then the revenue protection activity will reduce and the TSOs will focus on customer care, ensuring that passengers are provided with information about the disruption and also advise passengers on alternative arrangements for continuing their journeys.

3.4 A good example of the way in which their duties need to be combined is during a special event where TSOs are required to check and sell tickets, advise customers on the services available to and from the venue and ensure that the loading and unloading of trams is performed safely.

3.5 Further details on each of the responsibilities is provided below:

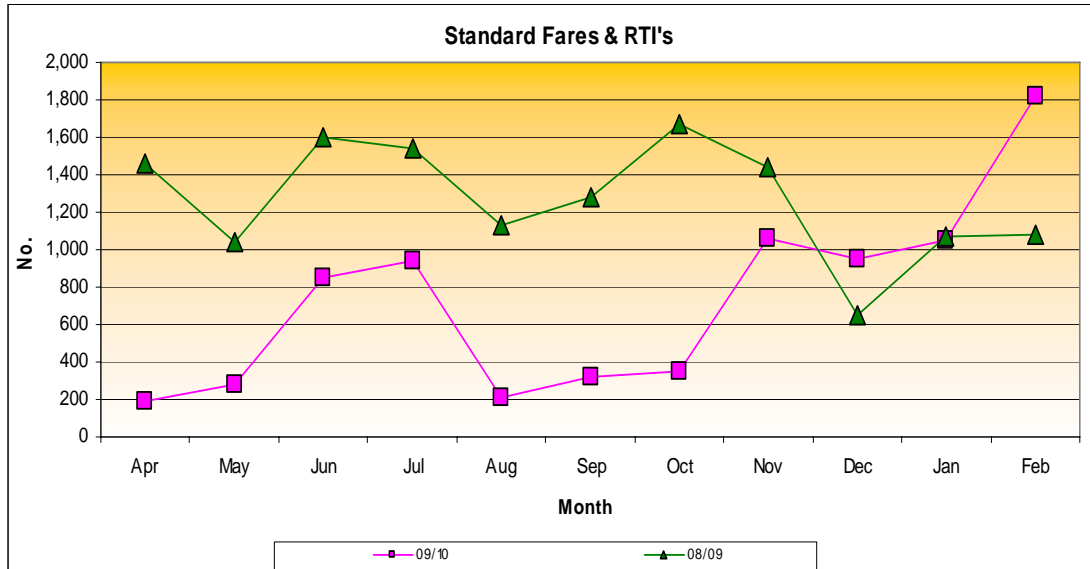
Revenue Protection

3.6 TSOs perform a range of duties around revenue protection including station blocks, mobile operations and ad hoc operations at car parks.

3.7 During a station block, TSOs will be stationed at all entrances and exits to and from the tram stop. A separate team will then board each tram passing through the stop and check tickets.

3.8 Station blocks are proving to be a more effective method of performing revenue protection on the system. The operation is highly visible, acting as a deterrent to other passengers who may consider travelling without a valid ticket, it allows the TSOs to check a high number of passengers in a short space of time and it also reduces the risk of escape from the system.

- 3.9 TSOs also work in mobile teams across the system, boarding trams and checking tickets. Whilst greater coverage of the system is possible, the potential for fare evaders escaping from the system is much higher.
- 3.10 The TSOs also conduct ad hoc operations at Metrolink car parks to ensure that the car parks are only being used by passengers who intend to travel on the system. During such operations, TSOs will ask drivers entering the car park whether they have a valid ticket and if not, the TSOs will sell tickets from hand held ticket machines provided the driver has not decided to drive away.
- 3.11 As reported previously, TSOs are also responsible for selling tickets at special events from hand held ticket machines. The use of these “queue busters” reduces queues at ticket vending machines and facilitates the efficient movement of passengers.
- 3.12 It is important that the resources of the TSOs are prioritised and are concentrated on known fare evasion hotspots. To assist in this process, Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) has been commissioned to develop a methodology to accurately measure fare evasion and to carry out a series of surveys on the system. The surveys identify where fare evasion is highest by location, day of the week and time of the day. The latest SDG surveys indicate that evasion is highest currently on the Altrincham line by route and weekday morning peaks and Saturdays by time and day.
- 3.13 Additionally, the PTE works closely with the Operator to ensure that resources are effectively deployed. Weekly reviews are held where in addition to the SDG surveys, revenue reports are shared with the Operator to highlight particular evasion hotspots. Using this information, weekly and four weekly plans of TSO deployment are developed and agreed. The results of each operation are then reviewed and fed back into the planning process.
- 3.14 In order to support the TSOs in their revenue protection duties, the standard fare was increased to £100 in May 2009 to provide a more effective deterrent to fare evasion. An early payment discount of 50% was also introduced so that if payment is made within 14 days, the amount payable is reduced to £50 to incentivise offenders to make early payment. The following graph demonstrates the number of standard fares issued up to and including 15th March 2010.



3.15 8,915 Standard Fares have been issued from its introduction on 11th May 2009 to 28th February 2010. Of the Standard Fares issued, 25% were £50 payments made within 14 days, a further 2% were £100 payments and 1% are paying by instalments. 20% were warnings as the offenders were juveniles on their first offence. Just under 40% were referred to the Courts to seek prosecution. 5% of the Standard Fares have been withdrawn and in 7% of cases, an appeal has been successfully upheld.

3.16 Joint initiatives have taken place previously with Court Enforcement Officers at Bury to track offenders on the system and it is the intention that this will continue when the responsibility for the enforcement of Court fines transfers from Bury to Manchester in April 2010.

3.17 The results for 2009/10 show that after introduction in May 2009, there was an increase in standard fares issued to July 2009. The subsequent fall in the numbers issued can be attributed to the August blockade of the Altrincham and Eccles lines in August when the TSOs were deployed exclusively on customer care duties.

3.18 The growth in standard fares issued during September and October was slow because the majority of staff were occupied on customer care duties dealing with residual issues from the blockade. When the City Centre track was re-opened at the beginning of November, the TSOs were able to perform their revenue protection duties as well as their other duties and this is reflected in the subsequent growth in Standard Fares issued.

Security

- 3.19 TSOs also provide an important security presence on the system to deter anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. As an example, the Operator worked closely with Manchester Councils Anti-Social Behaviour Team (ASBAT) to obtain an Anti Social Behaviour Order against one individual who was begging aggressively on the Metrolink system and on public transport in general. This did not deter the individual who re-appeared on the system, begging and being abusive to staff. As a result of this breach, he was sentenced to four months imprisonment.
- 3.20 Operation Utility was a joint police and revenue protection operation carried out at the request of GMP. The operation commenced with a block of Sale tram stop with 56 Standard Fares issued. The next phase of the operation then saw TSOs and police officers working in teams along the Altrincham line during which time, the police made an arrest for the possession of illegal substances. The operation was deemed to be a great success by the Operator and GMP and a number of passengers commented that they felt reassured by the presence of TSOs and the police engaged in such a high profile operation.
- 3.21 Neighbourhood police units are very keen to work closely with the PTE and the Operator and further operations are scheduled to take place in March 2010.
- 3.22 The Metrolink system also continues to enjoy the benefits of the Knife Enabled Crime (KEC) initiative which involves gateway checks at key stops across the network.
- 3.23 The results of such operations will be included in future reports to the Committee.

Customer Care

- 3.21 TSOs are also required to provide customer care on the system. As reported earlier, the level of customer care to be provided will vary depending on whether the service is operating normally, whether there is a disruption to the service or whether there is a special event.
- 3.22 During periods of normal service, the provision of customer care may include the following activities answering customer questions and supporting passengers with disabilities to access and exit trams and stops
- 3.23 During periods of disruption, TSOs are expected to be present at affected tram stops to advise passengers of the nature and duration of a disruption and of alternative arrangements for continuing their journeys

- 3.22 In the event of a lift failure on the system, TSOs will be despatched to the stop in question and help those passengers with push chairs or wheel chairs to access and exit the stop.
- 3.23 The TSOs are also involved in one-off situations that necessitate additional levels of customer care. Recent examples include helping passengers to use the new ticket vending machines that were installed in the City Centre. Additionally, TSOs travelled on the new M5000 trams when they first entered service. Their role was to advise passengers on the features of the tram and also to ensure that any contravention of the Metrolink by-laws was dealt with immediately.
- 3.24 During the run up to Christmas last year, TSOs were involved in a high profile campaign to deter pickpockets who were operating on busy Metrolink City Centre stops. The TSOs handed out leaflets jointly produced by Manchester City Council and GMP and advised passengers to be vigilant and to take care of their belongings.
- 3.25 During the adverse weather in December 2009 and January 2010, TSOs joined other Metrolink employees in an operation to clear stop platforms, stairs and ramps of snow and ice to reduce the risk of passenger injury.
- 3.26 Due to the importance of this aspect of their work, the PTE is working with the Operator and an external expert to devise and introduce customer service standards with appropriate training.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Recommendations appear at the front of this report