

GREATER MANCHESTER INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

REPORT FOR RESOLUTION

COMMITTEE: Emergency

DATE: 21st May 2010

SUBJECT: North Manchester Metrolink Stops Package

REPORT OF: Metrolink Director, GMPTE

Finance and Corporate Services Director, GMPTE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members in relation to proposals for Metrolink stops to the north of Victoria Station on the Bury Line

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- (i) note the contents of the report;
- (ii) agree that the Chief Executive, the Finance and Corporate Services Director and the Metrolink Director of GMPTE should progress the commercial and contractual arrangements for the works described in this report to construct a new Metrolink stop at Abraham Moss;
- (iii) agree that the formal closure procedure for the Woodlands Road stop should be commenced; and
- (iv) note that work is on-going to develop funding proposals for the proposed Queens Road stop.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Woodlands Road Metrolink Stop – Closure Appraisal

CONTACT OFFICERS

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report includes proposals for two new stops, Abraham Moss and Queens Road, which are north of Victoria Station on the Bury line and the discontinuance of services to and the closure of the existing Woodlands Road stop.
- 1.2 The new stops would serve a major regeneration area designated for significant housing growth, and also serve key existing and proposed retail and education destinations. For example, Abraham Moss provides improved access to local residents and directly serves the Abraham Moss Centre where a masterplan for regeneration is currently being developed, and Queens Road where growth and new jobs are anticipated and which will also serve the Collyhurst Housing Regeneration Area and the proposed Irish World Heritage Centre and hotel.
- 1.3 The arrangements for the procurement and funding of the works involved are set out in the separate report which can be found in Part B on the Agenda due to the commercially confidential nature of the information set out therein. In order to ensure that the programme, and other conditions included within the grant award are satisfied, construction is programmed to commence on the Abraham Moss stop in September 2010, and the stop is due to open in Spring 2011.
- 1.4 It is proposed to discontinue services to the Woodlands Road stop and to close and demolish the stop once the stop at Abraham Moss is open, provided that approval is obtained through the Railways Act 2005 stop closure process.
- 1.5 Should approval not be obtained for the closure of the Woodlands Road stop; the Woodlands Road stop and the Abraham Moss stop could both be operated. However, there would be significant disbenefits to the majority of users on the line from the net increase in stops and resulting delays.
- 1.6 The construction and demolition works have been included as a tendered option within the existing Phase 3a contract.

2. Proposed Abraham Moss stop

- 2.1 The proposed Abraham Moss stop is located between Crescent Road and Woodlands Road (see location map in Appendix A).
- 2.2 The new stop will provide improved accessibility to the local catchment area; serving a larger local catchment population and offering better station access. The station would benefit from improved access and visual presence from the local roads.

- 2.3 Public transport access to a range of key destinations, including the Abraham Moss centre; the high school (which has approved funding secured for redevelopment); the public library; leisure centre; Further Education College; and local theatre, will be improved. The Abraham Moss centre is an important resource for the local communities of Crumpsall and Cheetham, and, in addition, people from all over Manchester and beyond regularly use the large range of facilities on offer.
- 2.4 The addition of the Abraham Moss stop will deliver improved stop spacing for the section of the Bury Line south of Crumpsall, enhancing overall public transport accessibility.
- 2.5 The stop will assist improved housing developer confidence in the area, including for the smaller scale potential sites within 800 metres of the new station.

3. Proposed Queens Road Stop

- 3.1 The proposed Queens Road stop is adjacent to the current Queens Road depot, bounded by Queens Road and Collyhurst Road, north of the heavy rail line to Oldham and Rochdale, which is currently being converted to Metrolink operations.
- 3.2 This location will better serve existing residential areas, including the high density housing just north of Queens Road, and will also provide high quality public transport accessibility to the major new housing renewal neighbourhood at Collyhurst.
- 3.3 The Queens Road stop would also support the wider community by improving access to local facilities including Manchester Fort Retail Park; the Museum of Transport on Boyle Street off Queens Road; and the proposed new Academy High School, approximately 300 metres to the east at the junction of Rochdale Road and Queen's Road. In addition, efforts to redevelop the Irish World Heritage Centre on Queen's Road, including the related hotel development, would be enhanced through the provision of the stop; providing a degree of certainty to that development in the existing property market.

4. Closure of existing Woodlands Road Stop

- 4.1 The existing Woodlands Road stop on the Bury line is one of the least used Metrolink stops on the system, accounting for approximately 1% of total system revenues. It suffers from very poor local station access, making it unattractive to prospective users. Ease of access between the two platforms varies, reducing the size of catchment area of the stop. The Manchester-bound platform is accessible only from Woodlands Road (stairs or step-free access); whilst the Bury-bound platform is easily accessible from Wigmore Road, although its access

point is at about 80m from Woodlands Road (step-free access only). No park and ride facilities are available at the stop.

- 4.2 The stop is currently in need of refurbishment following recent basic repairs. Costs of in excess of £100,000 for further repairs, access works and scheduled replacement of TVMs and other systems would be avoided if the stop was closed.
- 4.3 The Woodlands Road stop suffers from safety and crime issues, particularly with persons congregating just outside the stop who are associated with drug trafficking. There have been joint operations with Greater Manchester Police to tackle this issue. The other main area of anti-social behaviour is vandalism.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the stop will be closed and demolished. The provisions of service will be maintained by the proposed new stop, 250 metres to the north at Abraham Moss. Discontinuing services to the stop requires approval from DfT and the Office of the Rail Regulator ('ORR') in accordance with the procedure set out in s.25 Railways Act 2005. The first step in this procedure is to undertake, for submission to DfT, an assessment of the proposed closure which meets the closure criteria set out in the relevant DfT guidance. If DfT agree with the proposal, then GMPTE is required to undertake a consultation exercise on the proposal.
- 4.5 The station closures guidance sets out the minimum appraisal of any closure that must be undertaken for closure to be permitted. The appraisal uses the same benefit to cost ratio methodology used for DfT transport investment appraisals. The guidance indicates that where the benefit to cost ratio of retaining a stop exceeds 1.5:1 the closure should not proceed.
- 4.6 The closures guidance sets out the basis on which the appraisal of Woodlands Road stop closure should be undertaken, including the definition of the base case and option scenarios. This requires a comparison of a scenario involving retention of the Woodlands Road stop compared to a scenario in which the stop closes.
- 4.7 The appraisal has now been completed in accordance with the guidance and the Analysis of Monetised Costs and Benefits (AMCB) has indicated a negative benefit cost ratio for retaining the Woodlands Road stop. This is because the time disbenefit to 'through users' as a result of an additional stop if the Woodland Road stop were retained, is greater than the benefits to the small number of users at Woodlands Road.
- 4.8 As described in Section 4.2, there are also potentially significant incremental capital, renewal and operating costs associated with retaining the Woodlands Road stop.

- 4.9 The assessment therefore concludes that, the case for retaining Woodlands Road represents poor value for money and imposes significant disbenefits to large numbers of passengers.
- 4.10 As part of the proposed works, the underpass below the tram line will be filled in and access to the station and the Abraham Moss Centre will all be at track level; and the passageway will be greatly improved in terms of lighting.
- 4.11 The closure will also make Crescent Road more accessible from Woodlands Road, which will reinforce the masterplan links for the area and greatly improve natural surveillance and access.
- 4.12 Schedule 7 of the 2005 Railways Act contains requirements and guidance for the initiation of a stop closure consultation.
- 4.13 The initiation of the consultation would involve a notice, in the prescribed format, being published in two successive weeks in a local newspaper circulating in the area affected by the stop closure proposal and in two national newspapers.
- 4.14 Additionally, specific notification would also be provided to local authorities in whose area there are persons living, working or studying who will be affected by the stop closure proposal. Also, the Rail Passengers' Council i.e. Passenger Focus, every person providing railway services who may be affected and every person providing services in relation to the stop affected will also be notified.
- 4.15 The closures guidance also refers to other organisations that should be considered for consultation, and sets out required contents for the preparation of a consultation document.
- 4.16 GMPTE would also carry out Stakeholder Engagement and Communications activities in line with the normal approach to Metrolink projects - examples of these are issuing regular correspondence to residents affected by the closure; attendance by Metrolink at local community meetings and to run 'drop-in' sessions for affected residents.

5. Residents petition – January 2010

- 5.1 In January 2010, a petition containing over 1,000 signatures was received from residents surrounding the Woodlands Road stop. This outlined their discontent with the proposed closure of Woodlands Road and subsequent relocation of the station to Abraham Moss. The residents suggested that there should be investment in the existing Woodlands Road stop, and they also raise a number of concerns linked to access arrangements of the new Abraham Moss stop. They had no objection, however, to the proposed new stop at Queens Road.

- 5.2 The petitioners' proposal for investment at Woodlands Road included a bridge to link the two platforms together, a lift and a car park.
- 5.3 Woodlands Road is one of the least used stops on the system, accounting for approximately 1% of total system revenues. The overall use ranking of Woodlands Road is lower than similar destination stops. Examples include Broadway and Harbour City where passengers alight for the Lowry Centre and major employment destinations. Three stops, Pomona; Weaste and Ladywell attract a lower footfall than Woodlands Road, although each of these is positioned to benefit from, and contribute to, regeneration in their local area in the future. There is no regeneration activity planned in the immediate vicinity of the Woodlands Road stop. As a result it is difficult to justify any further financial investment at this stop.
- 5.4 By investing in a new stop at Abraham Moss, the area will benefit by making the Metrolink system more accessible to a larger group of users. It would also contribute to the reinvigoration of the Abraham Moss Centre, making the stop a "destination" for Metrolink passengers. The increased footfall would also benefit all users by naturally increasing the level of surveillance.
- 5.5 The petition also suggested that the access arrangements to the new Abraham Moss stop would pose a safety issue for users. However, the petitioners had assumed that access would be facilitated by the existing underpass. The proposals within the preliminary design, which at present has not been shared with the local residents, include for the underpass to be closed in favour of a track level crossing which can be accessed by ramp or stairs. The approach passageway itself will be greatly improved in terms of lighting and, as part of the planning process for the new stop, there will be discussions with the Abraham Moss Centre and the Police to ensure that the design takes appropriate account of crime and security issues.

6 Transport Objectives

- 6.1 The proposals represent an opportunity for transport improvements to support the delivery and sustainability of the city's priority housing renewal area. The area is characterised by very low levels of car ownership, and therefore many people are reliant on public transport accessibility to access to employment opportunities. Public transport improvements will help to attract new residents to these areas whilst improving the quality of life and opportunities for existing residents.
- 6.2 Key Transport Objectives are:
- to support improved access to key job and leisure opportunities;
 - to support the sustainable regeneration of North Manchester by promoting modal shift and sustainable travel; and

- to provide improved public transport accessibility to an area of high deprivation;

7 Transport Appraisal

- 7.1 The benefits outlined above underpin a very strong transport appraisal performance. The proposals deliver a BCR of between 3.53:1 and 3.75:1
- 7.2 The scheme provides improved transport accessibility to some of the most deprived areas in the UK; improved safety and security; and contributes to improving the local environment.
- 7.3. Other benefits, as set out in Section 4, will be delivered if the Woodlands Road stop is closed and demolished.

8 Operational implications

- 8.1 The speed of Metrolink is one of its key attributes, and this underlies the economic case for the network. The addition of new stops would normally carry an “economic penalty” for the existing passengers as their journeys would take longer to complete. These proposals provide an opportunity to significantly improve the accessibility of the area without increasing passenger journey time.
- 8.2 Abraham Moss would replace the existing stop at Woodlands Road, and therefore there would be no adverse impact on journey times for passengers on the Bury Line. If approval to close the Woodland Road stop is not secured, the service patterns would be reviewed.
- 8.3 The staff halt at Queens Road Network Management Centre, situated adjacent to the Metrolink depot, is located about 50 metres south of Queens Road in the area where the Queens Road Metrolink stop would be located. This is the base of operations and signing on point for Metrolink drivers. The staff halt consists of two small platforms that cannot be used for passenger services. These would be replaced by the fully accessible full length platforms of the new stop.
- 8.4 The working timetable for the Bury Line makes provision for a call at the staff halt and the majority of services do call here. Therefore, a passenger stop could be introduced without adversely affecting the service provision. The staff halt would be replaced by a new stop at Queens Road with no impact on passengers or staff operations.

9. Recommendations

See front sheet of report for recommendations.

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Appendix A

**Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority and
Passenger Transport Executive**

Location Map

