

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

**COMMITTEE:** Bus Network and GMPTE Services  
**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
**SUBJECT:** Metroshuttle Patronage and Performance  
**REPORT OF:** Interim Bus & Rail Director, GMPTE

---

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform Members of the Metroshuttle bus network patronage and performance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members of the Committee are recommended to note the contents of this report.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

'Metroshuttle Patronage and Service Performance Monitoring' report to the 22nd May 2009 Transport Network Committee.

**CONTACT OFFICERS**

Michael Renshaw	0161 244 1026	michael.renshaw@gmpte.gov.uk
Melanie Watson	0161 244 1433	melanie.watson@gmpte.gov.uk
Geoff Prysor-Jones	0161 244 1684	geoffrey.prysor-jones@gmpte.gov.uk

## **1 Introduction & Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Metroshuttle bus network patronage and performance.
- 1.2 There are currently five Metroshuttle routes in operation in Greater Manchester – three in Manchester city centre, one in Bolton town centre and one in Stockport.
- 1.3 Patronage is measured each day by the bus operators, mostly using electronic ticket machines on the buses. The performance of the services is also regularly monitored by GMPTE as part of the monitoring programme for bus that recommenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.
- 1.4 There have been significant increases in patronage on the Metroshuttles with the Manchester route 3 achieving 30% growth during the last 5 months.
- 1.5 Although major road works continue to affect the performance of the Manchester Metroshuttle services, increased supervision by First has enabled all but service 3 to perform within DfT standards. The performance of the Stockport service was also a concern during Quarter 1 but new buses and a re-launch of the service has improved matters.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Metroshuttle free bus network was launched in Manchester city centre on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2002, with services 1 and 2 linking its principal rail stations and its commercial and tourism centres. Both services initially operated at frequent intervals between 7am and 7pm, Mondays to Saturdays but service 1 was extended from 21<sup>st</sup> July 2009 to run every 10 minutes from 7pm until 9pm. Both run between 10am and 6pm on Sundays. Service 3 was introduced on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2005 linking Piccadilly and Salford Central Rail Stations with the Spinningfields business district. This service also operates at frequent intervals between 7am and 7pm Mondays to Saturdays only.
- 2.2 The Manchester services are operated by First Manchester through a contract with GMPTE, and supported by ongoing funding from GMITA, Manchester City Council, NCP Manchester and, from 2004, Allied London Properties.
- 2.3 The Bolton Metroshuttle (service 500) was introduced on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008. It is operated by Bluebird through a contract with GMPTE and supported by funding from GMITA and Bolton Council. Service 500 links the bus and rail stations with the shops and markets in the town. It runs at frequent intervals from 0730 until 1800, Mondays to Fridays, and from 0830 until 1730 on Saturdays.
- 2.4 The Stockport Metroshuttle (service 300) was introduced on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2008, initially marketed as the 'Stockport Town Centre Shuttle' it adopted the Metroshuttle brand in August 2009. The service is operated by Solutions SK through a contract from Stockport Council, and supported financially by a 25% contribution from GMITA. Service 300 links Stockport Rail Station with the bus station, shops and leisure facilities in the town centre and runs every 12 minutes from 0800 until 1800, Mondays to Saturdays, and from 1024 until 1700 on Sundays.

### 3 Patronage

- 3.1 Patronage data is provided to GMPTe by First and Bluebird from information entered onto their Electronic Ticket Machines by the Metroshuttle bus drivers.
- 3.2 The tables below summarises the patronage and cost per passenger on the Manchester Metroshuttle contract by route.

**Table 1 Annual Patronage & Cost Trends**

Service	2006/07 (Apr-Mar)	2007/08 (Apr-Mar)	2008/09 (Apr-Mar)	% Change
<b>Manchester 1</b>	1,093,658	1,110,633	1,239,728	12%
<b>Manchester 2</b>	663,236	671,242	752,244	12%
<b>Manchester 3</b>	430,226	520,074	632,595	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,187,120</b>	<b>2,301,948</b>	<b>2,624,567</b>	<b>14%</b>
<i>Annual Cost</i>	<i>£1,253,358</i>	<i>£1,284,470</i>	<i>£1,397,278</i>	<i>8.78%</i>
<i>Cost Per Passenger</i>	<i>£0.57</i>	<i>£0.55</i>	<i>£0.53</i>	<i>(3.63%)</i>

- 3.3 Table 1 shows the annual growth in patronage and costs across the last three years.
- 3.4 Patronage on the Manchester Metroshuttle's showed an annual increase of 14% for the year ending March 2009. The cost per passenger decreased to £0.53 in 2009.

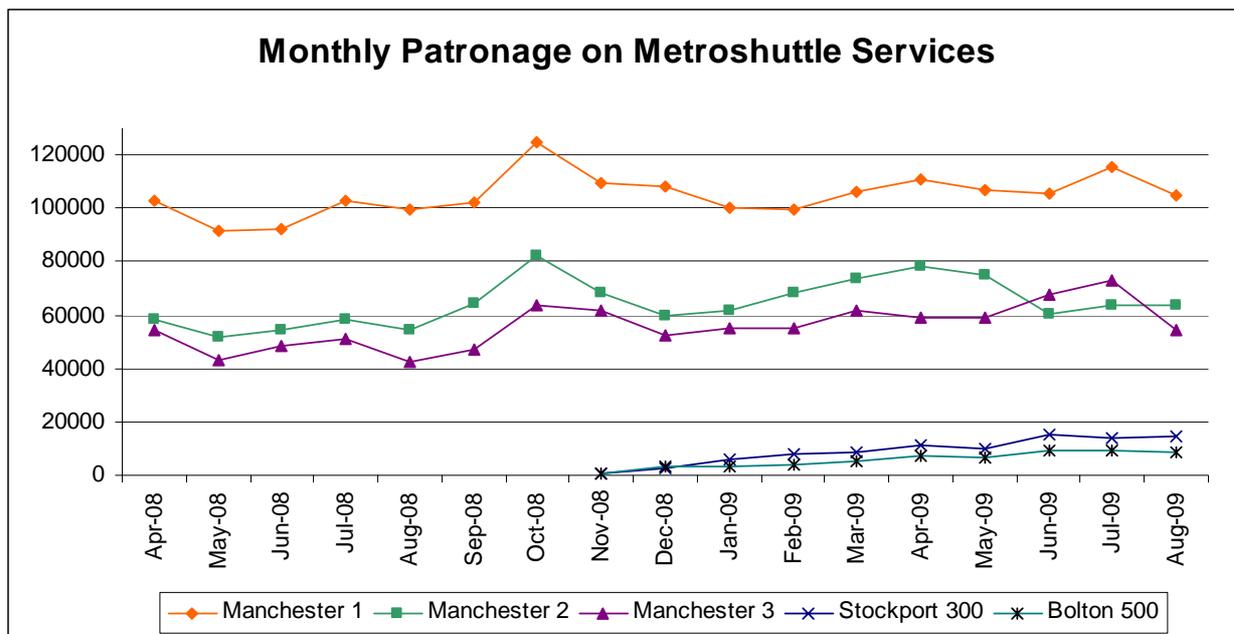
**Table 2 Year to August Patronage & Cost Trends**

Service	2008/09 (Apr-Aug)	2009/10 (Apr-Aug)	% Change
<b>Manchester 1</b>	488,668	542,943	11%
<b>Manchester 2</b>	276,803	340,601	23%
<b>Manchester 3</b>	239,717	311,889	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,005,188</b>	<b>1,195,433</b>	<b>19%</b>
<i>Annual Cost</i>	<i>£571,482</i>	<i>£609,354</i>	<i>6.63%</i>
<i>Cost Per Passenger</i>	<i>£0.57</i>	<i>£0.51</i>	<i>(10.34%)</i>

- 3.5 The cost per passenger for the period April to August in 2008/2009 (£0.57) was higher than the annual total (£0.53). This is due to an increase in average weekly patronage from August onwards (18.6%).
- 3.6 Patronage on the three services increased between April and August 2009 by 19% in comparison to the same period in 2008. Metroshuttle 1 increased by 11% to an average of 27,147 passengers a week (an extra 3 per trip); Metroshuttle 2 rose by 23% to an average of 17,030 per week (an extra 6 per trip); and Metroshuttle 3 by 30% to 15,595 per week (an extra 7 per trip). This is

a tremendous result, given the disruption to services that have arisen as a result of the water main replacement works taking place in the city. The cost per passenger decreased to £0.51 during this period, despite the 6.63% increase in cost associated with introducing the evening journeys on Metroshuttle 1 in July. The contract was due for renewal in September but has been extended for a further 6 months until March 2010.

3.7 The charts below show the monthly patronage for all five Metroshuttle services.



3.8 Patronage on the Bolton Metroshuttle has increased from an average of 1,300 per week in March to an average of 2,119 a week (5 per trip) in August. The cost per passenger is £1.44 (down £1.53 on the previous 5 months). The contract for this service has been extended by two months until 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2010.

3.9 Data provided by Stockport Council suggests patronage on the Stockport service has risen sharply during the last 5 months from an average of 2,438 per week in May to 3,618 per week (9 per trip) during August when the new buses and branding were introduced. The cost per passenger is £2.51.

## 4 Performance

4.1 GMPTE monitored the performance of the five Metroshuttle services as part of the Punctuality & Reliability Monitoring System (PRMS), which re-commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.

4.2 Observations are undertaken at St Mary's Gate (Marks & Spencer), Spinningfields, Deansgate and Shudehill Interchange in Manchester; as well as Deansgate in Bolton and at Stockport Bus Station. Services are sampled during specific time bands throughout the day and over 3 days during the quarter.

- 4.3 The measures used by the Department for Transport and the bus industry to assess bus service performance depend on whether the service is meant to run at frequent intervals (every 10 minutes or greater) or is a timed service running less frequently.
- 4.4 Frequent interval services are measured in terms of Excess Wait Time (EWT). This is the time passengers have to wait in excess of half the service interval. The DfT's minimum standard EWT is 1.25 minutes, meaning that the average Actual Wait Time (AWT) for customers of a 10 minute service should be no more than 6.25 minutes.
- 4.5 The table below provides a summary of the average Excess Wait Time for the high frequency Metroshuttle services during Quarter 1 (April – June) 2009: With the exception of service 3 in Manchester, all four had an overall EWT well within the minimum standard.

High Frequency Metroshuttle Services	Observation Point	Excess Wait Time
Manchester 1	St Mary's Gate	0.62
Manchester 2	Shudehill	0.93
Manchester 3	Spinningfields	1.89
Bolton 500	Deansgate	0.19
		<b>1.01</b>

Source: GMPTE PRMS Monitoring. Note: Figures assume a minimum frequency of 10 minute intervals. Service 1 is contracted to provide a higher (6 minute) frequency on weekdays and service 3 is contracted to run at 8 minute intervals in the morning peak. EWT for both routes should therefore always be substantially less than 1.25.

- 4.6 Service 3, which is the "Purple" route, linking Piccadilly with Oxford Road and Deansgate Stations, has been adversely affected by the water mains replacement works on Deansgate and their diversion routes have often resulted in increased mileage and journey times. First have been actively managing Metroshuttle 1 and 3 from Piccadilly to ensure any gaps are kept to a minimum and, although the company has reported gaps of up to 15 minutes on some days, our monitoring observed an average Actual Wait Time of 8 minutes in the afternoon peak and 7 minutes overall.
- 4.7 Although service 1 performed well in the morning, it failed to meet the standard in the afternoon, despite its higher contractual frequency. This was due to multiple road works along the route, including other utility works on its diversion routes. Despite this the average Actual Wait Time was 8.49 minutes.
- 4.8 Service 2 performed well but was outside the standard on Saturdays, this was again due to traffic, the utility works along Deansgate and works to repair the bollards on St Mary's Gate, which affected their Saturday result in particular.
- 4.9 The Bolton Metroshuttle comfortably met the standard throughout.
- 4.10 Less frequent timed services, such as the Stockport Metroshuttle, which is scheduled to operate every 12 minutes, are measured by their reliability and punctuality. Reliability of services is an indication of the number of journeys that do not run and are not therefore observed and punctuality is the number of journeys that ran on time within a window of tolerance of no more than 1 minute early and 5 minutes late.

- 4.11 The Traffic Commissioner's standard for timed services is a punctuality result within the scale of no less than 70% at an intermediate timing point and 95% at a start point. There is no minimum standard for reliability but a result greater than 95% is considered by many in the industry to be acceptable.
- 4.12 The table below shows the performance results for the Stockport service during Quarter 1 (April to June) 2009:

Timed Metroshuttle Services	Observation Point	Reliability	Punctuality
Stockport 300	Stockport Bus Station	80.35%	68.21%

Source: GMPTE PRMS Monitoring

- 4.13 As can be seen from the table above, the Stockport service achieved a very poor result in Quarter 1, and was performing below the Traffic Commissioner's minimum standard. As this contract is managed by Stockport Council, GMPTE cannot impose penalties on the contractor for non performance. Stockport Council has indicated that performance has improved in recent months as a result of three new buses being introduced and the re-launch of the service in August. GMPTE officers are in discussion with officers from Stockport council to review performance.

## 5 Customer Comments

- 5.1 GMPTE received 33 comments from customers about the Manchester Metroshuttles between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009 (up 3 on the previous 6 months and 7 on the same period last year).
- 5.2 22 of the 33 comments (66%) related to the performance of the service, 9 about the conduct of the driver (27%, and down 9% on the previous 6 months), 1 regarding overcrowding and 1 about litter on the buses.
- 5.3 9 of the comments about performance related to buses failing to stop (which was the same number as the previous 6 months). The problem appears to arise when buses are bunching on the route, with the second bus not pulling in to pick up passengers if another bus is already loading at the stop. There were also 6 complaints about the reliability of the services.
- 5.4 GMPTE meets with First every 6 weeks to discuss performance and action has been taken by the company to address the concerns that have been raised in order to ensure that Metroshuttle remains a quality service.
- 5.5 Four complaints were received about the Bolton service between April and August – all 4 were about driver conduct. Action has been taken by Bluebird to address the concerns that were raised.
- 5.6 No comments have been received by GMPTE in relation to the Stockport services.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Recommendations appear at the front of this report.

**Michael Renshaw**  
**Interim Bus & Rail Director**