

Nottingham City Council

Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held remotely via Zoom and live-streamed on YouTube on Tuesday 9 March 2021 from 2:03pm to 3:00pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Adele Williams (Chair)
Councillor Jim Creamer
Councillor Kate Foale
Councillor Samuel Gardiner
Councillor Phil Jackson
Councillor Dave Liversidge
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor AJ Matsiko

Absent

Councillor Eric Kerry
Councillor Phil Rostance

NET User Representatives in attendance:

Roger Bacon	(Travel Watch East Midlands)
Justin Donne	(Nottingham Federation of Small Businesses)
Helen Hemstock	(RideWise)
✓ Hugh McClintock	(Pedals)
Chris Roy	(Nottingham Trent University)
✓ Lorraine Salt-Pulford	(Nottingham City Disability Involvement Group)
✓ Jim Thomas	(Nottinghamshire Better Transport)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Andrew Holdstock	- Senior NET Project Engineer, Nottingham City Council
Kate Knight	- Assistant NET Project Manager, Nottingham City Council
Mike Mabey	- Head of Operations, Nottingham Trams
Adrian Mann	- Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council
Stephanie Moss-Pearce	- Marketing Manager, Tramlink Nottingham

19 Changes to Membership

The Committee noted that Councillor Kate Foale has replaced Councillor Parry Tsimbirdis on the Committee as a member from Nottinghamshire County Council, and that Lorraine Salt-Pulford has joined the Committee as the representative of the Nottingham City Disability Involvement Group.

20 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Phil Rostance
Roger Bacon
Chris Roy

21 Declarations of Interests

None.

22 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020 as a correct record, and they were signed by the Chair.

23 NET Operational Performance and Progress Update

Mike Mabey, Head of Operations at Nottingham Trams, presented a report on operational performance and progress from the start of November 2020 to the end of January 2021. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the reliability and punctuality rates of the tram service were 96.4% and 95.5%, respectively. The latest lockdown, beginning on 5 January 2021, required that people stay at home and only undertake essential travel. As such, most users of the tram in the period were key workers. Customers should maintain social distancing on trams and at tram stops and wear a face covering at all times, unless exempt. Tickets can be purchased through the NETGO! app, and the latest travel information and guidance is available through the NET website and social media channel. The NET Travel Centre has had to remain closed during lockdown;
- (b) a full tram service operated up until 21 January. However, following the identification of a new, more transmissible strain of Coronavirus, there was a significant increase in the number of confirmed Coronavirus cases and self-isolations amongst NET employees. At the peak, 89 staff were absent, of which 53 were drivers. The shortage of drivers initiated a step-down to a Sunday timetable from 22 January, and this created a significant challenge for delivering a robust service. However, the situation has now improved greatly, with many staff returning to work after recovering from the virus or ending their self-isolation, in time for the reopening of schools and colleges from 8 March – and a full weekday timetable has operated from this date;
- (c) currently, tram usage is around 11% of the pre-Coronavirus levels. Much of the messaging from Government during the pandemic has been to avoid public transport, so a great deal of work is required to reassure the public that the network is safe. To protect customers, the trams are cleaned frequently and deep-cleaned every time they return to the depot. Patronage will increase as the schools return, and when more shops begin to open from 12 April. The return of students to university in September 2020 gave rise to some significant challenges – particularly in the period of the 10:00pm curfew, which meant that a large number of people sought to use the network at the same time. Planning is underway for the future return of students, which should be carried out in a staggered way. The Committee recommended that early discussions are held with the local universities, as part of the planning process;
- (d) in response to the new Coronavirus strain, additional protective measures have been implemented at the depot, including staff wearing face masks when working in the depot, the requirement for all staff who can to work from home to do so, and the introduction of COVID Marshalls. In January, the NHS Advisory Unit audited the safety measures that have been put in place in the depot and around the network, and considered that they were of a good standard and reflected best

practice in multiple areas. Staff out on the network are provided with hand sanitiser and face masks, and as many measures as possible are in place to ensure the safety of staff as the usage of the tram increases due to the easing of lockdown restrictions;

- (e) NET has worked with the NHS to provide Coronavirus testing and vaccination centres within The Forest park and ride site. Due to the bad weather in January, sub-zero temperatures and significant snowfall made access to the centres difficult, and a snowplough and salt-spreader were deployed to ensure that they could remain open. A new, temporary testing centre has also opened at Phoenix Park;
- (f) the Transport Hub group includes key personnel from Community Protection, the British Transport Police, the Framework Housing Association and East Midlands Railway. It met for the third time in November to establish a formal process for coordinating Police and Community Protection teams in addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues across the entire public transport system in Nottingham. NET provides a regular breakdown of all reported ASB incidents on the tram network to the Hub, to assist with this initiative. Learning and experiences are also being gathered from other cities with tram infrastructure, such as Birmingham, to engage effectively with communities on the appropriate and responsible use of the tram. Currently, it is not intended to reintroduce conductors as a means of addressing ASB, as it is not considered safe for conductors to have to collect and handle cash from customers on the tram, in the current circumstances;
- (g) generally speaking, the perceived level of crime on the network is higher than the amount of actual incidents that take place. However, due to a recorded increase in the number of thefts that take place ahead of Christmas, 'Operation Pickpocket' was implemented in this period. Staff, assisted by both the Police and Community Protection officers, were placed on platforms within the city to provide assurance and to act as a deterrent to pickpocketing, and to remind customers to take care regarding their personal possessions. Community Protection officers continue to operate on the tram network and have conducted 251 individual patrols, both in uniform and in plain clothes, to reinforce the wearing of face coverings and to confiscate alcohol, where appropriate;
- (h) after improvements to the design of the bollards that were put in place at Nottingham railway station in October 2019 to prevent other vehicles from entering and becoming stranded on tram-only sections of the tracks, work has been completed for the installation of new vehicle deterrent measures at Lenton Lane Bridge, the Queen's Medical Centre viaduct and Cator Lane. Following this work, there have been no further vehicle incursions, so far;
- (i) from Sunday 3 January, the temporary NETGO! promotion came to an end and prices for tickets bought through the app were increased to be in line with the prices for tickets bought from the platform ticket machines. The lower price on the app was always intended to be a fixed-term discount, but the promotional period was extended due to the pandemic. Coronavirus has resulted in different patterns of travel, which may continue in the future – so usage will be monitored very carefully going forward, so that the service can be as reactive and flexible to new needs as possible. However, it is not yet clear what future social distancing

requirements will be, or for how long they will be in place, and these do have a substantial impact upon tram passenger capacity. Future ticket price offers could be a means of promoting the use of the tram as lockdown restrictions ease, but this will need to be considered by Tramlink. Although Government grants have fully supported the tram service in remaining operational during the pandemic, with no requirement to furlough staff, Tramlink will need to carry out very careful business planning for the future sustainability of the network;

- (j) more than 30 new toys and gifts were donated by tram staff to the 'Cash for Kids' Christmas campaign, to be distributed to underprivileged children across the East Midlands. A 77-foot tram side advert, plus posters at 15 tram stops, has also been funded by Keolis Nottingham, in support of the Emmanuel House Support Centre homeless charity;
- (k) normally, repair and maintenance works to the tram tracks are planned for August. However, in 2021, to support the reopening of the city centre from 17 May as part of the anticipated easing of lockdown restrictions, the planned replacement of the tracks at the Lace Market will take place between 29 April and 10 May. The lifespan of stretches of straight tram tracks can be up to 15 to 20 years. However, the tracks in the city centre experience greater wear – and as the Lace Market part of the route is both on a hill and on a bend, the tracks here require more regular replacement.

The Committee thanked NET staff for their extremely hard work during the pandemic, and noted the operational performance and progress report.

24 Tramlink Update - Customer Survey Results

Stephanie Moss-Pearce, Marketing Manager at Tramlink Nottingham, gave a presentation on the findings of the latest NET customer survey, carried out during November 2020. The following points were discussed:

- (a) instead of a standard annual survey, a different survey was carried out in November 2020 to gauge the effectiveness of both the communication campaign and operational measures put in place during the Coronavirus pandemic. It also aimed to gather data on why some customers did travel during lockdown, and why others were no longer using the tram. The survey was sent digitally to the people on the NET customer database. It received a strong response of 525 returns, which reflected a good spread of genders and ages. Most of the replies came from residents of NG postcodes;
- (b) on average, customers reported that their number of journeys had decreased by at least 50% during the pandemic. 70% of customers reported being satisfied with the service provided, and 60% would recommend the network to a friend or family member. The majority of travel was related to travel to work or to provide care for another – though 22% of responses said that the purpose of their journey was 'leisure'. 95% of respondents said that they had seen the messaging about safe travel on the tram during the pandemic;
- (c) the largest single reason for not using the tram was due to safety concerns about travelling on it. However, 50% of respondents said that they were not using the

tram due to either working from home or lockdown restrictions on travel. A number of respondents said that they had replaced tram journeys by walking or cycling, rather than using a car, though these kinds of active travel can be weather dependent. 72% of customers who replied that they would not recommend the network to a friend or family member said this was due to concerns that other passengers on the tram were not wearing masks or complying with social distancing requirements;

- (d) as a result of the findings of the survey, a great deal of work is required to reassure citizens that the tram is a safe means of transportation. Going forward, it is intended to carry out surveys at four points during the coming year, to find out how people feel about tram travel and identify ways to build confidence. The November survey was only released electronically to people on the NET customer database, so consideration is being given to how future surveys can be fully inclusive and reach the full range of people who use the network. Work will also be carried out with a broad range of partners (including hospitals and medical centres) for the circulation of the survey, in a range of formats. A great deal of communications and positive messaging will be carried out to provide reassurance and restore trust in the tram network as a safe environment;
- (e) the Committee considered that, in order to ensure a green and sustainable city, the use of public transport and active travel should be encouraged as much as possible. There are a number of active and sustainable travel infrastructure schemes in place in Nottingham, and it is very important that employers help staff by providing the right facilities to support walking or cycling to work. It is also important that the tram network has the right facilities for customers cycling to tram stops, including sheltered and secure cycle storage near to the platforms. Active travel to public transport is a vital element of an overall, holistic plan for sustainable travel, which does need measures in place to alleviate the vehicle congestion that can occur in areas around tram stops and train stations, and the associated problems caused by commuters parking their cars in residential streets to then take public transport into the city centre.

The Committee noted the results of the latest NET customer survey. It requested that the full and detailed survey results are circulated to members for their information and that, when reports are produced on the results of the future surveys, work is carried out to chart the emerging trends in the data.

25 Issues Raised by Committee Members and Citizens

Mike Mabey, Head of Operations at Nottingham Trams, provided an update on the project to change validator heads on platforms to enable contactless payment for tickets. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the relocation of an underused validator from the entrance to the Queen's Medical Centre to a more accessible location outside the Nottingham NHS Treatment Centre has been approved as part of this upgrade plan, following the completion of a feasibility and cost assessment. A date for this relocation has not yet been set, but the Committee will be updated when the work is scheduled.

The Committee noted the update.

26 Work Plan

The Chair presented the Committee's proposed work plan for the 2021/22 municipal year. The following points were discussed:

- (a) with the Nottingham City Disability Involvement Group's participation as a member of the committee, the regular 'Network Safety and Accessibility Update' has been removed from the work plan. Network safety updates will be provided through the regular operations report, and accessibility considerations will be taken into account for every item on the committee's agenda, as an integral part of normal business.

The Committee noted the proposed work plan.

27 Future Meeting Dates (Provisional)

The Committee requested that, in order to gain an initial view on the impact of the lifting of Coronavirus-related controls on the usage of the tram, its next meeting takes place after 21 June 2021, which is the date proposed currently for the ending of restrictions.