

Nottingham City Council

Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Loxley House, Station Street, NG2 3NG, on 25 October 2022 from 2.01 pm - 3.38 pm

Membership (✓ indicates in attendance)

Nottingham City Council

- ✓ Councillor Audra Wynter (Chair)
- Councillor Sam Gardner
- Councillor Rosemary Healy
- Councillor Adele Williams

Nottinghamshire County Council

- ✓ Councillor Jim Creamer
- Councillor Eric Kerry
- ✓ Councillor John Ogle
- Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan
- Councillor Gordon Wheeler
- ✓ Councillor Johnathan Wheeler (Substitute for Cllr Gordon Wheeler)

NET User Representatives

- ✓ Roger Bacon Travelwatch East Midlands
- ✓ Justin Donne Nottingham Federation of Small Businesses
- Helen Hemstock Ridewise
- Chris Roy Nottingham Trent University
- ✓ Lorraine Salt-Pulford Nottingham City Disability Involvement Group
- ✓ Jim Thomas Nottinghamshire Better Transport

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

- Tim Hesketh Chief Executive of Tramlink
- Trevor Stocker Operations Manager, Nottingham Trams
- Martin Williams Major Projects Governance Manager, Nottingham City Council
- Catherine Ziane-Pryor Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council

14 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Adele Williams - other council business
Councillor Samuel Gardiner
Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan - unwell
Councillor Gordon Wheeler - leave (Councillor Johnathan Wheeler substituting)
Helen Hemstock
Andrew Holdstock
Andrew Conroy

15 Declarations of Interests

None.

16 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

17 NET Operational Performance and Progress Update

Trevor Stocker, Operations Manager of Nottingham Trams, presented the performance report for the period from the beginning of June 2022 to the end of September 2022.

The following points were highlighted and responses provided to Committee member's questions:

- (a) this was a challenging period due to the heatwave when the system was tested beyond its specifications. This resulted in a reduced timetable and added to the maintenance backlog;
- (b) track renewal was undertaken at Hyson Green between 25 July and 7 August and is the last planned session for this year;
- (c) Goose Fair ran for 10 days this year with an enhanced timetable for the whole period. The impact on the tram spread beyond the immediate fair area, almost into the city and out to Wilkinson Street and Radford Road, with additional traffic pressures;
- (d) on 30 September 2022 a derailment took place at Highbury Vale junction as result of a track circuitry issue. The tram was travelling at a low speed and although in service, no passengers were on board and nobody was injured;
- (e) a parking enforcement scheme has been implemented to ensure that the Forest Park-and-Ride Site is used by tram passengers only. Parking availability has become difficult at times. It is clear that not all users of the site are passengers of the tram, but parking to visit or work at surrounding premises. Some businesses openly direct customers to the park-and-ride for easy free parking within a short walking distance. This is being addressed on an individual basis. The hospital shuttle bus service, MediLink, has a longstanding arrangement regarding Wilkinson Street, but this may have to be revisited;
- (f) due to the pressures and parking availability, it has been necessary to take enforcement measures for vehicles obstructing parking bays and pedestrian routes, using disabled parking bays without a permit and parking on undesignated areas such as grass verges and pavements. Since enforcement began, 28 vehicles have been clamped and 40 warning notices issued. If a vehicle repeats an obstruction and has already been issued with a warning notice, then it can be clamped;
- (g) partnership and community engagement is taking place with Tramlink to discourage parking on the site if not using the tram and to park responsibly if they are tram passengers. This is an issue which is not apparent at many other park-and-ride sites which are further out of the city, although Wilkinson Street does experience capacity issues at times. Clamping and driver education is a preferred method to towing offending vehicles which would be a last resort;

- (h) there have been occasions when car parking capacity is not an issue with more than 300 empty car parking spaces available at the Forest, but drivers appear to automatically Park on red footpath's and cross hatched areas;
- (i) new and additional signage around the site, including the entrance and at the tram stop have been installed to warn drivers that parking enforcement is operating. A private parking enforcement subcontractor has been engaged with a 24-hour response;
- (j) sometimes it's obvious that some drivers are not parking to use the tram, but generally determining if parkers are passengers is a challenge. As a result NET have been investigating what parking scheme providers can offer, including schemes similar to those applied by some supermarkets whereby validation of a parking slip is required at the tills. Also being considered is a parking season ticket or on-the-day ticket. The biggest challenge is ensuring that people can demonstrate that they are using the tram. Work on this continues;
- (k) at the Light Rail Awards on 5 October 2022, Nottingham received 'the most improved system' award.

Comments from committee members and NET user representatives included:

- (l) the introduction of stronger parking enforcement at the Forest Park and ride site is a welcome deterrent;
- (m) the Clifton and Toton tram Park and Ride Sites need to be better promoted, particularly for large sporting events such as football and cricket. Uptake may be improved if a shuttle bus was provided between the tram stop and the sporting venue. This would also be welcomed by residents of West Bridgford and the Meadows and would provide an improved experience for sports fans;
- (n) congratulations to all staff on achieving the Light Rail Award.

Resolved to note the update and progress report.

18 Safeguarding on the Network Annual Review 2022

Trevor Stocker, Operations Manager of Nottingham Trams, introduced the report which provides an update on the policy for safeguarding vulnerable people on the trams.

Highlighted points included:

- a) following the national rise in drinks spiking, funding has been received from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to address the vulnerability of persons within a night-time economy setting, including promotion of the safety of women at night (SWaN) program;
- b) Tramlink staff have received additional training and the trams are promoted generally as a safe place, particularly with university students, with the opportunity to approach drivers or use help points to call for assistance;
- c) safeguarding activity and issues are monitored on a daily basis and discussed at weekly meetings to ensure that any trends are identified;

- d) information on passenger perception of safety is gauged as part of the quarterly in-person survey;
- e) the overall results of the surveys have shown that that safety perception is high and any concerns raised are thoroughly investigated and addresses as quickly as possible;
- f) the results of the surveys will be brought to a future meeting.

Resolved to note the report.

19 Tramlink Update

In the absence of Andrew Conroy, Tim Hesketh, Chief Executive of Tramlink, provided a verbal update, which included the following points:

- (a) passenger levels remain between 65% and 70% that of pre-Covid ridership;
- (b) the Goose Fair period, so the highest level of passengers since Covid with approximately 350,000 passengers travelling during the week of Goose Fair. Passenger levels have understandably since dropped, but still better than before Goose Fair;
- (c) electricity costs continue to be a concern, particularly as prices rise significantly and are likely to total millions of pounds of additional charges. Help from Central Government is being sought, but even with assistance, electricity costs are likely to be four times last year's total cost;
- (d) there was a small rise in fare prices which did not appear to affect usage;
- (e) it is recognised that many people are now working from home. This has had significant impact on usage and is the biggest cause of the drop in passive patronage across the city. In addition, Monday and Friday morning usage is now quieter, so the timetable across the city is being analysed and may be reviewed;
- (f) season tickets will again be promoted as the cheapest option, even compared to purchasing two one-day tickets a week;
- (g) tram promotion has been active at universities with promotion of student passes at fresher weeks and safety events. As a result of targeted efforts, student patronage has significantly increased by 75-80% on previous years' sales of student season tickets. At an average of approximately 60p per day, this provides excellent value for money;
- (h) Tramlink is working to ensure that there is a direct route into the new development site to the south of Clifton, which starts in January 2023, as one of the developers is paying for some new residents to be provided with annual tram passes as part of the house purchase price. It is hoped that this will ensure that residents develop a habit of using the tram. Whilst the proposal is for 3,000 new homes to be built in the area, there may be further initially discounted travel opportunities for new residents. Tramlink does approach large developers of sites within easy walking access of the tram lines as this sort of arrangement can support the developer's green travel plans as part of the planning application process. Some developers are also able to offer subsidised bus fares, but this is not possible for tram usage, which provides difficult competition.

Unfortunately, there is a perception that people who use trams don't need subsidised travel, which is not necessarily the case;

- (i) it may be possible for Tralink to liaise with other light rail network operators to jointly submit a representation to Central Government regarding this inequality whereby light rail cannot be easily included with bus or train transport regulations and opportunities.

Members of the committee and NET user representatives commented;

- (j) it is a concern that legislation appears to exclude the tram from integrated travel funding opportunities of the urban network when integrated travel needs to be offered across the board, including trams;
- (k) city and county councillors needed to lobby for further support for the trams as they are a key element of the transport strategy;
- (l) it is frustrating that whilst the tram is vital to the city's commerce, it is not part of the disabled/senior citizen tickets concessionary pass. Central Government's view on this is are misguided and without tram access traffic congestion will continue to increase;
- (m) in other countries universities have stronger connections with transport providers, including sponsoring subsidised student tickets. This could further be investigated with universities;
- (n) as devolution progresses, there may be different opportunities regarding which transport may be included within the integrated urban travel network, but it is important not to wait and to lobby Central Government now.

Resolved to note the update.

20 Correspondence from a citizen

Martin Williams, Major Projects Governance Manager (Nottingham City Council), introduced the item regarding a complaint lodged by a citizen, that they had been verbally and physically abused by a platform ticket inspector, the details of which are set out within the report and include the full correspondence with the NET Team, the investigation and conclusion.

As outlined in the appendix to the report, NET officers examined the platform CCTV, identified the complainant and the allegedly abusive ticket inspector and found nothing to suggest that any abuse or hate crime had taken place, but the views of the committee sought in this matter.

Trevor Stocker, Operations Manager for Nottingham Express Transit (NET), informed the committee, that a 'gateway' ticket inspection approach is taken on platforms to enable staff to check that everyone alighting from the tram, or on the platform, has a valid ticket. When citizens refuse to present a valid ticket or walk away, platform CCTV footage can be used to accumulate evidence (especially regarding repeat offenders) with which a penalty fine can be pursued with the support of the Police.

NET maintain a good, mutually beneficial, collaborative working relationship with the Police but Police attendance at ticket inspection sessions is dependent on available resources.

When the Police and Community Protection officers are available to support ticket inspection they are able to take appropriate action where necessary.

The tram is dependent on passenger revenue and fare avoidance is a criminal offence which impacts on the service, so NET do pursue fare evasion which is still an unacceptably high but reducing. It is unfair on other passengers and jeopardises the income for NET.

NET are undertaking a complete review of the ticket inspection process, are proposing to change some methods and are open to continued learning to improve the process.

The following comments from committee members and NET user representatives were made and their questions responded to:

- a) railways operate under different regulations which provide greater passenger control, including the potential intervention of British Transport Police for fare evasion. These regulations do not apply to trams which operate a completely open network;
- b) a penalty fare has not been issued to the complainant, who did not/was unable to present a valid ticket when initially approached nor since, and yet has lodged a complaint. The absence of a valid ticket should negate the complaint and the issuing of a penalty should be considered;
- c) travelling on the tram without a valid ticket is a criminal offence and can only be dealt with as such, not as a civil offence. The majority of penalty fares issued are paid, but those which are not may be pursued via the courts;
- d) other tram cities have similar issues although all operate slightly differently regarding ticketing, and some still have on-board inspectors. NET has trialled pain clothes operations and a whole range of activity to try and reduce fare evasion. NET do benchmark fare evasion against Department for Transport statistics. In addition, other city tram operators, including Manchester, have visited NET to better understand the NET approach. They have learnt from NET and NET have learnt from them. There is a good network of sharing information and learning amongst tram operators;
- e) complaints of this nature are very rare, as is negative customer contact overall. Ticket inspection staff are trained on catching passenger's attention, not presenting themselves in a manner which may alarm people, rather to be defensive than of offensive. If staff encounter aggression they are taught to consider their situation and potentially activate their body cam. Having spoken to the staff member against whom the allegation had been made, he hadn't activated his body cam as at the time as at the time he didn't feel it was necessary;
- f) with the initial withdrawal of on-board conductors and the introduction of off-tram/platform ticketing, fare numbers have increased. This was possibly due to conductors being unable to easily move up and down the tram to collect fares at peak times due to the high number of passengers. The system still needs improvement and fare evasion needs to be addressed, but the current system is more effective than the previous system, and is now to be adopted by the tram operators in Birmingham;
- g) more passengers are using contactless payment, from which it can be identified if tickets are purchased on the tram when inspectors are present rather than before boarding;

- h) the potential to introduce additional validation points on platforms is under constant review for the ease of passengers and the fare collection of NET.
- i) Having considered the complaint, the resulting correspondence, the investigation and outcome, along with the ticket issuing, validating and inspection arrangements, the Committee confirmed that they were satisfied that the presented outcome was appropriate.

Resolved, that the committee is satisfied with the customer complaint investigation and outcome.

21 Work Plan 2022/23

The work plan is noted.

22 Exclusion of the public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

23 Exempt minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.