

Councillor Howard Sykes

Our ref: 0720-8V8F9Q-01351

Your ref: 4353

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Dear Councillor Sykes

RE: Face Coverings on Metrolink

Thank you for contacting Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) regarding the use and enforcement of face coverings on Metrolink services.

As you are aware, from Monday 15 June Government made the use of face coverings mandatory on public transport services. To support this, TfGM is running a safer travel awareness campaign to remind passengers of their collective responsibility to follow Government guidance, which continues to be developed by the Department for Transport (DfT). The campaign includes printed material at key locations as well as digital advertising, social media and announcements on board vehicles and at transport hubs and Metrolink stops throughout Greater Manchester. It is each passenger's responsibility to have access to a face covering and it can be a simple scarf or bandana. However, to encourage best practices, passengers can collect disposable face covering from TfGM Travelshops and ticket offices at bus stations and interchanges, several of which are on the Metrolink network.

Whilst face coverings on public transport are mandatory, there are a number of exemptions. For those that have a genuine reason not to wear a face covering, TfGM has developed an exemption scheme; whilst this will empower and support those who are exempt, the scheme also provides an efficient way for staff enforcing the national guidance to identify those who are exempt.

It is worth noting that Metrolink's Conditions of Carriage have been updated to support the national guidance regarding face coverings. Officers from the Greater Manchester Police Transport Unit, British Transport Police and TravelSafe officers can issue a £100 fine to any passenger who does not have a justifiable reason not to be wearing a face covering and who then refuses to comply. In addition to this, Metrolink staff have been refusing travel and challenging customers who are not following the guidance.

However, as I am sure you can appreciate, staff have shown some sensitivity to enforcing the use of face coverings due to some troubling instances of anti-social behaviour that have taken place elsewhere in response to face covering enforcement. Whilst I appreciate that a conductor on every tram could provide further support to this activity, and has been a suggestion we have had in the past, it is unfortunately not a viable option due to the associated cost, which was the case prior to the coronavirus pandemic and is certainly the case after the significant loss in revenue we have seen.

With that said, the emphasis has been on engaging with people and encouraging appropriate behaviour, only resorting to enforcement as a last resort. We have seen reasonably good compliance, which does admittedly drop somewhat in the evenings and some lines have seen a better level of compliance than others – the Oldham and Rochdale line has unfortunately had a low level of compliance compared to other lines across the network.

However, following concerns raised by operators and members of the public – and to reflect a change in approach nationally – TfGM and partners, under the TravelSafe Partnership, have stepped up engagement, specifically by undertaking a ‘Week of Action’ with much more high profile and visible patrolling. This is in line with activity being undertaken by other city regions who face similar problems.

In addition to the above, more bespoke and targeted messaging is being developed for areas where we have seen a poor uptake in the use of face coverings and feedback that highlights where improvements can be made is welcome.

Thank you for contacting me regarding this matter and I trust that the above information assures you that TfGM is doing all within its power to support a safe transport network, for both customers and staff, during this unprecedented and troubling time.

Yours sincerely



Daniel Vaughan
Head of Metrolink