

Major safety boost for region's Metrolink transport network

November 30, 2020



A raft of high-profile measures, aimed at keeping public transport users even safer and boosting confidence ahead of anticipated increase in travel post-lockdown, will be rolled-out in the coming days, the Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham announced.

The news follows government confirmation that Greater Manchester will be placed into **Tier 3** – the highest level of local restrictions – following the ending of national restrictions on Wednesday 2 December.

All of the new measures are set to roll out from early December onwards and will include ‘trambassadors’ dedicated to helping people travel safely on Metrolink. They will speak to customers about the latest guidance and safety measures, hand-out free face coverings and hand sanitisers and encourage off-peak travel and contactless payment options.

In addition, cleaning of the network’s 120 trams and 99 stops with hospital-grade anti-viral products will be increased by 500 hours a week to coincide with the anticipated increase in passengers. Alongside the enhanced cleaning regime, and to help limit the spread of the virus, new hand-sanitiser dispensers will be installed at the busiest stops.

The enhanced cleaning programme already in place at bus stations and interchanges is also set to be boosted, ensuring common touch points are cleaned every two hours to help limit the spread of the virus.

TfGM has also joined the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme, so bus station and Metrolink staff can offer support to people wearing the sunflower design and give them the confidence to travel safely.

The new interventions are intended to help boost confidence, after data from the latest Transport Focus **'Travel during Covid-19' survey** showed that concerns over safety and cleanliness are preventing a significant number of people from using public transport. Of those surveyed:

- 45% of people avoiding using public transport because they don't think enough passengers are wearing face coverings.
- 58% of people are avoiding public transport because they don't think that it is possible to keep a safe distance from other passengers.
- 43% of people are avoiding public transport because they don't think that it is clean enough.

This package of measures will help to address these concerns and builds on the measures already in place.

Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, said: "Public safety has, and will remain, my absolute priority as we continue to navigate our way out of this pandemic.

"Despite the region still being under restrictions, many people still need to use public transport and will want to get out and give retailers a much-needed boost, and we know concerns over cleanliness and safety can be a real barrier that prevents people from travelling.

"Public transport is safe due to the measures already in place, but these are extra steps we are taking to further boost confidence and limit the spread of the virus – which are vitally important if we are to get ourselves back on track.

"Despite the end of the national lockdown, infection rates across Greater Manchester are still high, so it's important that we continue to work together to stop the spread, as this will ultimately help ease restrictions sooner.

"If you use public transport, please remember the basic rules – such as wearing a face covering and sanitising your hands – when using our buses, trains and trams."

In addition to the enhanced cleaning and ambassadors, the first of 27 new trams, delivered to the Queens Road depot on Saturday 14 November, is due to go into service on the network before the end of the year after undergoing a testing and commissioning process. The second new tram is also due to arrive before the end of 2020 – with a new one arriving every 3 – 4 weeks afterwards.

As well as boosting capacity and frequency in the long-term, this will enable more social distancing on the network and form a crucial part of the region's recovery from the current pandemic.

TfGM is currently working with operators to run as many services as possible and ensuring enhanced cleaning programmes are in place to keep vehicles, stops and stations clean. Metrolink is using all vehicles available to operate two in every three trams as 'doubles', while more than £4.5m in funding has been secured to run almost 300 additional school bus trips a day from the start of term in September until Christmas.

The Greater Manchester TravelSafe Partnership has held and will continue to hold days of action, reminding passengers that, if you're not exempt and don't wear a face covering, transport staff or police could stop you from boarding or can ask you to leave a service. You could also be fined £200

For more information on Metrolink services visit www.tfgm.com, call Metrolink Customer Services on 0161 205 2000 or follow @MCRMetroLink on Twitter for live travel updates.

Photo credit: Transport for Greater Manchester

For today's rail news from railbusinessdaily.com [click here](#).