

Motorists encouraged to be “tram aware” in new campaign

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As traffic levels start to increase, motorists are being encouraged to be “tram aware” in a new campaign from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM).

There were 122 road traffic collisions involving motorists (77), cyclists (10) or pedestrians (35) on the Metrolink network between April 2019 and March 2021.

While the number of collisions remains very small compared to the number of trips made each day on Greater Manchester’s roads, incidents can cause serious injury, have a major impact on service levels and adversely affect customers trying to make journeys.

Most of the collisions involving motorists were because of motorist error (70%), with almost one in 10 resulting in injuries and the new campaign uses footage of actual incidents to demonstrate the impact of poor driving habits.

In 2019, road traffic collisions led to £250k having to be spent repairing just five trams, which were out of service for six months.

TfGM Head of Metrolink, Danny Vaughan, said: “As the country continues to emerge from lockdown and more vehicles inevitably return to the road, its vital that motorists remain vigilant and attentive when driving close to the Metrolink network – particularly in those areas where our trams run on the highway.

“Our M-5000 trams weigh almost 40 tonnes and have the potential to cause significant injury and damage if they are involved in a collision, so please take extra care when driving.

“Most collisions are down to motorist error, and by launching this campaign we are hoping to not only reduce the number of collisions between road vehicles and trams – and therefore reduce the risk of people getting injured – but also the additional consequences, such as the financial cost and the disruption caused to our customers.”

On average, trams clock-up about 23.5k miles serving Greater Manchester’s communities every day, with KeolisAmey Metrolink (KAM) drivers undergoing a rigorous theoretical and practical training programme.

Ben Kershaw, KAM’s Health, Safety, Quality and Environmental (HSQE) Director, said: “KAM follows a stringent driver selection and training process, including psychometric testing, drug and alcohol screening, health and fitness checks and more than 300 hours of both theoretical and practical training before being approved to drive trams.

“As part of their initial and ongoing training and development, drivers undergo hazard perception testing, using a bespoke tram simulator to assess vigilance and awareness of the risks associated with driving in shared road space, including the unpredictable nature of motorists and pedestrians.”

TfGM and KAM are also working to prevent incidents at ‘hotspot’ locations.

Working with Oldham Council, the layout of a ‘hotspot’ junction between Oldham Central and Oldham Mumps has recently been altered after tram drivers reported a number of ‘near misses’ with other road users at that location. Other work in other areas is continuing.

Photo credit: Transport for Greater Manchester