



Transport Delivery Committee

Date: 9 April 2018

Report Title: Accessible Transport Report

Accountable Director: Pete Bond

Accountable employee(s): Richard Mayes

Report Considered by: Cllr Diana Holl-Allen
Lead Member – Safe and Sustainable Travel

Cllr Kath Hartley
Lead Member – Putting Passengers First

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

- To note the report regarding Accessible Transport

Purpose of Report

1. To report matters relating to Accessible Transport in the West Midlands, the performance of the Ring & Ride service, and progress with regard to the Service 89. This report includes:

Section A **Ring & Ride Update**

- Patronage July 2017 – November 2017

Section B **Service 89**

- Progress Update

Section A – Ring and Ride Update

2.1.1 Patronage for Ring and Ride from July 2017 to November 2017 has continued to be steady overall, with the rolling 12-month average number of passengers being around the 850k mark. This is shown on the graph below.

2.1.2 Patronage has remained steady at around 73,000 passengers each month through to November.



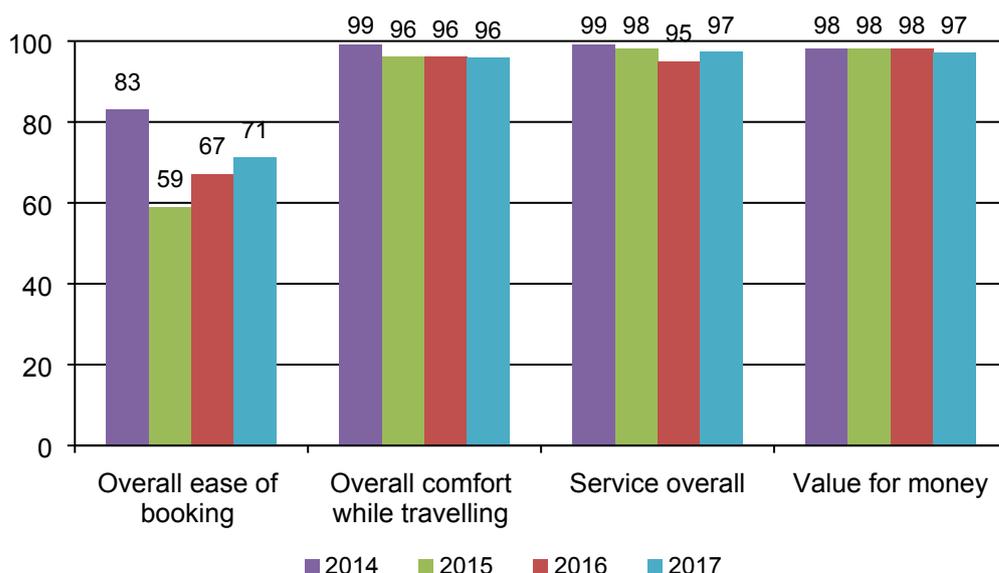
2.1.3 ATG reports that they are continuing with a number of initiatives at present. This includes integrating the Ring and Ride service with Igo bus routes and a trial is underway where passengers in Sandwell are able to connect directly with the 10H service in Quinton, to link with Birmingham City Centre. They are looking to link into services that would assist Ring and Ride service users in reaching hospitals and appointments. ATG is also looking at attracting new customers to the Ring and Ride service through social media, and have been highlighting the service to schools where pupils have Special Educational Needs. Patronage growth has been particularly strong in Sandwell where they have increased trips with extra work from groups such as Age UK, Options for Life and a couple of church groups whose numbers have increased. They have gained this extra work by the local Manager and his staff going out to see various clubs & promotion of the service.

2.1.4 Ring & Ride Satisfaction Survey - 482 interviews were conducted over the survey period a figure just above the anticipated sample, but lower than the 532 conducted last year.

Overall Satisfaction

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the Ring and Ride service overall and with the value for money offered by the service. The results are represented on the Graph below.

- *Value for money (97%) and overall comfort while travelling (97%)* were highly rated.
- Satisfaction with the *service overall* also rated highly at 96%.
- Perhaps unsurprisingly *overall ease of booking* was lowest rated at 71%, however this had improved significantly on figures reported last year.



Satisfaction With Ring And Ride Booking Process:

- Satisfaction with the booking of journeys continues to remain one of the lowest rated aspects of Ring and Ride, albeit there were some signs of improvement this year, especially with helpfulness and courtesy of booking staff (85%). This is up from 77% in the previous year.
- However time taken for call to be answered (64%) and ability to book journey wanted (65%) remain lowly rated.
- Reasons for dissatisfaction were general complaints about lack of information/staff knowledge (40%) or cannot get the ride I want (39%) or difficult to get through/take a long time to get through (36%).

Satisfaction with Ring and Ride journey:

- Helpfulness and courtesy of the driver was highly rated at 99% as was the directness of route taken (90%).
- Of more concern the bus arriving at the time expected shows signs of yearly decline since 2012 (from 95% to 78%, and 84% last year).
- The main reasons for dissatisfaction was bus late/waited a long time (61%).

Satisfaction with vehicle used:

- All vehicle attributes rated at 90% and above, with the exception of amount of space for bags/wheelchairs/leg room (87%).
- Highest rated was the standard of driving (99%), followed by security on the vehicle (99%).
- Cleanliness (95%) and ease of use were slightly more lowly rated (90%).
- Reasons for dissatisfaction were the steps were too steep (42%), followed by buses are too small/not enough space on board (38%).

Satisfaction with information:

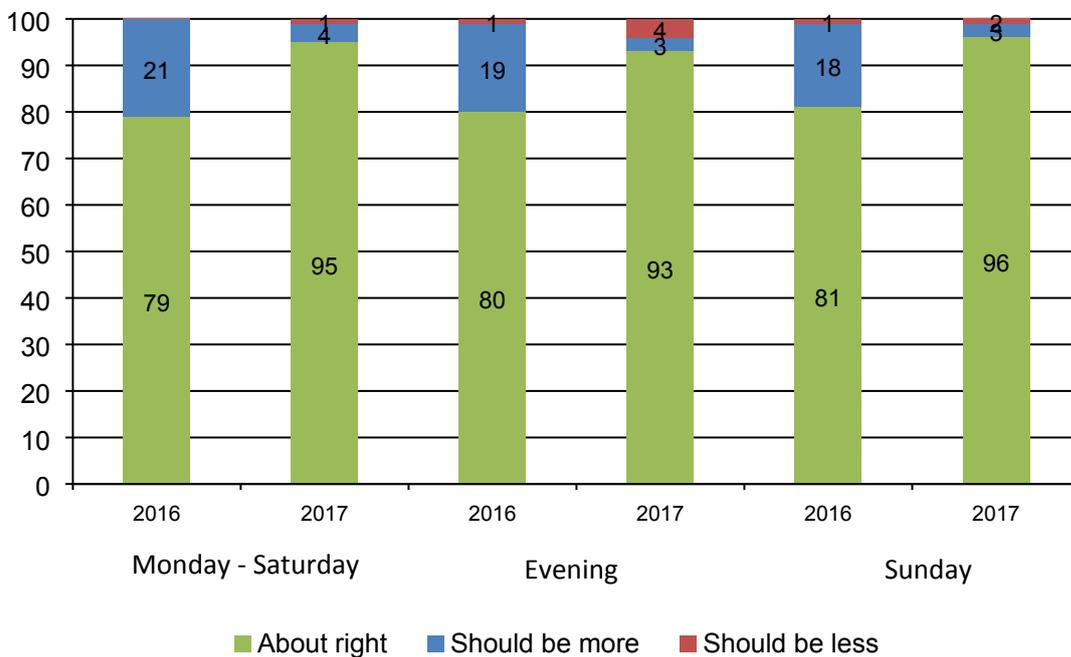
- There were some significant improvements with information provision with helpfulness of staff improving to 89% (from 78% last year) and ease of understanding rising to 88% (from 79% last year).
- The main reason for dissatisfaction was unrealistic with route planning/circuitous routing (33%).

Satisfaction overall:

- There was little change in satisfaction with value for money and overall comfort while travelling (97%, each) which continue to be highly rated.
- Satisfaction with the service overall also rated highly at 96%.
- Overall ease of booking was lowest rated at 71%, however it had improved on rating received in the previous 2 years. Last year it was rated at 67%.

Opinion on Fares:

- The majority thought the charge for Ring and Ride services was about right (95%, Mon-Sat; 93% Evening; 96%, Sunday).
- There was a general decrease in the proportion willing to pay more for weekday services (from 21% to 4%), evening services (from 19% to 3%) and Sunday services (from 18% to 3%).



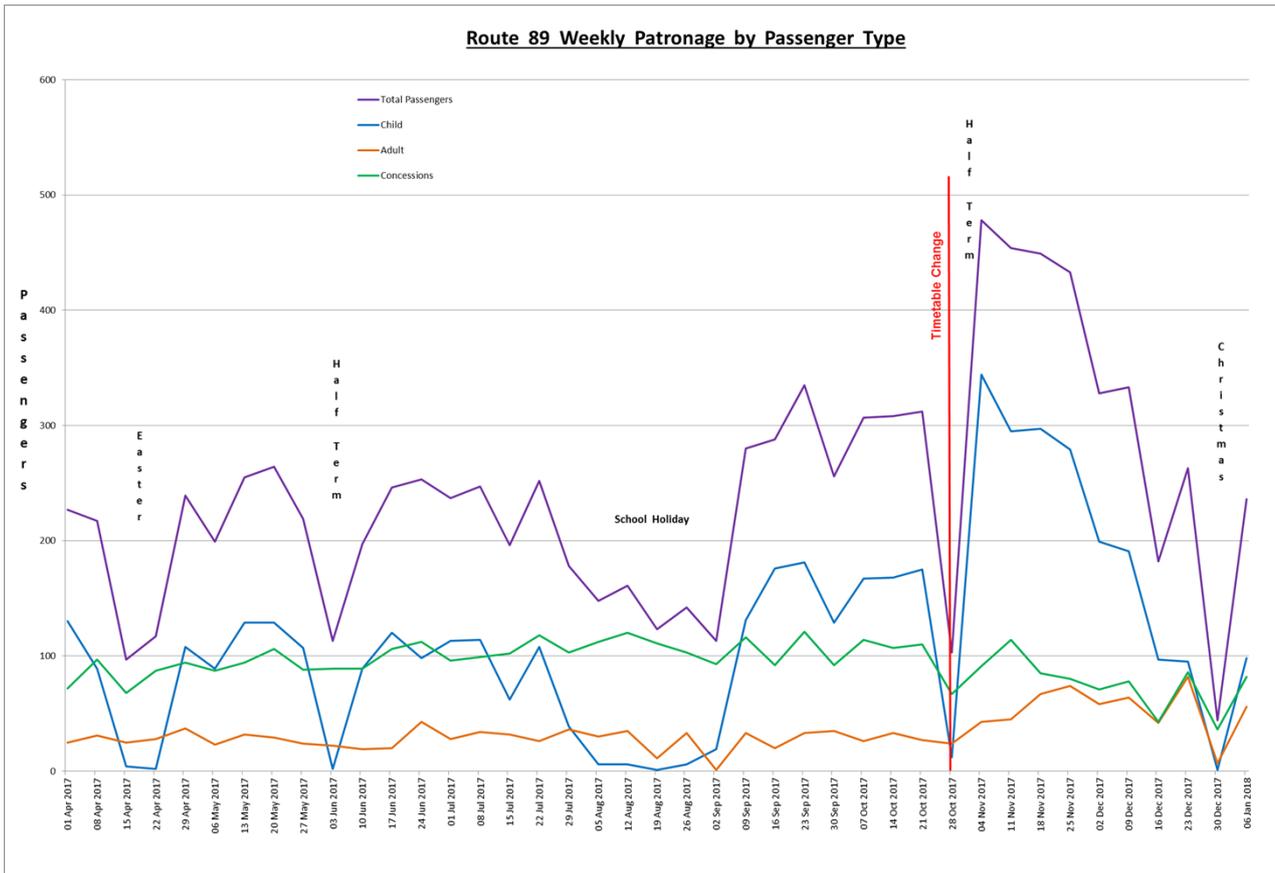
Opinion on service over last 12 months:

- 71% thought that there was no change in the level of service provision over the last 12 months. While 13% thought the service had improved; 16% thought it had got worse. These figures were comparable to last year, being 72%, 10% and 17% respectively.
- The main reasons for thinking the service had got worse focused on the services are unreliable/late (27%) or booking system is poor (22%).

2.1.7 A mid-term review has been undertaken by consultants SYSTRA, on behalf of Transport for West Midlands. This review has provided an independent and impartial examination of the Ring and Ride service, to help ensure that the service is meeting the need, and provides value for money. The review and findings have been shared with ATG and will be shared with Members.

Section B – Service 89

- 3.1.1 The Service 89 replaced the Taxibus in the Heart of England from 5th September 2016, and a revised timetable was introduced from 27th March 2017 based on feedback received. This revision resulted in different Coventry focussed and Solihull focussed timetables on different days of the week, in order to give a range of times for users to spend in each location on the different days.
- 3.1.2 Following engagement with Parish and Ward Councillors in the Heart of England, a further revision to this timetable was introduced on 22nd October 2017, which has reinstated a timetable that is the same Monday – Friday.
- 3.1.3 The annual cost of the 3 year contract in place is £70,000 a year up to 1 September 2018 and then £59,500 for the final year covering 2 September 2018 up to 1 September 2019
- 3.1.4 In addition, a feeder mini-bus is provided three days a week to help ensure that those who cannot reach the Service 89 directly, still have access to public transport. This provides a service between 09:45 to 14:00 on Tuesday and Friday, and 09:00 to 16:00 on Wednesday. It links into the Service 89, other public transport services, and provides local journeys for those who cannot access the Service 89. The funding for the feeder mini-bus is currently in place until 30th March 2019 at a cost of £11,359 a year.
- 3.1.5 The service 89 bus is continuing to operate into two key ‘roaming zones’ in Meriden and Balsall Common, allowing better coverage of these areas and for residents to be collected from or returned to their front door, or closer to their homes, but also now roams to Peel Close, Hampton-in-Arden, following feedback.
- 3.1.5 Following the service change in March 2017 there was a sustained drop in patronage. The adult figures are below those observed before the change, and this was believed to be as a result of the bus operating a different service on different days of the week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday to Solihull, Tuesday and Thursday to Coventry). This revised operation was designed to better meet the users in the area for whom the service was designed, however the expected uptake in concessionary pass usage has not been seen. The child figures reduced significantly, partly through bus operators working with schools to manage school loads across different services, but also due to the change of timetable as some connections that were no longer able to be made.
- 3.1.6 Since October 2017, when the timetable was amended again, both adult and child numbers have been recovering (as shown in the graph below). The operator, ATG is working with schools in the area to further boost the patronage on the journeys that connect with school start and finish times.



Financial Implications

- The Ring and Ride service grant for 2017-18 is £7.3m which based on latest rolling year patronage numbers equates to £8.59 per passenger trip. The Ring and Ride Grant for 2018-19 is £7.1m. Funding for the Service 89, and the feeder bus are accommodated for within the agreed budgets in place for Subsidised Bus and Community Transport provision.

Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this Report.

Equality Implications

- As the report is for information there are no comments from an Equality perspective

Media Implications

- There are no media comments arising from the contents of this Report.