

## School Guidance: Safe travel to and from schools and colleges

### Purpose of the note

This note outlines the current position in Greater Manchester (GM) in relation to public transport and how it relates to Government guidance around social distancing.

It is intended to help schools and colleges to plan and advise children and young people and their parents and carers how to travel safely.

It will also outline different options for pupils and students to travel to and from schools and colleges and how to access various tools and resources.

### National and GM transport challenges

As a result of the measures in place to reduce the infection risk of coronavirus (COVID-19), social distancing has affected public transport capacity. Public transport capacity is currently limited to approximately 23% of full capacity on Metrolink, 45% on rail, and 50% on bus. It is expected that this reduction in capacity will have the greatest impact on people's journeys during the peak travel times between 07:00 and 09:00 and 16:00 and 19:00 (Monday to Friday).

Given that approximately one third of GM households do not have access to a car, it is important that we try to keep public transport available for those who rely on it.

The latest [Government guidance](#)<sup>1</sup> for local authorities sets out guidance on managing the capacity of, and demand for, public transport, and increasing capacity of both public and dedicated home to school or college services, so that children can travel safely to and from school or college. The guidance provides advice on what proportionate safeguards should be put in place to further minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) by those responsible for the provision of dedicated schools transport services. TfGM and districts will alert schools and colleges to any changes in advice or service provision.

### Key messages for parents and pupils

- Please [cycle and walk](#) to school / college if possible as a safe, healthy and reliable way of getting around;
- If you do need to travel by public transport, capacity will be limited on many services due to social distancing;

---

<sup>1</sup> Published 11 August 2020

- Yellow School Buses will run without a pass system and services may therefore be busier than usual;
- Some bus operators have introduced an 'exact change only' policy. We would encourage children to buy prepaid tickets or use contactless payment where possible. Bus operators have a range of smart products readily available that remove the need for cash handling on public transport. Please visit [tfgm.com/bus](https://tfgm.com/bus) for more information;
- Buses that have reached capacity will operate on a one-off, one-on basis. This means that you might have to wait for the next bus if the one you plan to get on is already full. The capacity status may be indicated on the front of the bus, but this will vary by operator;
- In order to minimise the impact on your journey, you should plan ahead, set off earlier, avoid the busiest times and routes if possible, check timetables and apply in advance for any passes you need;
- Remember that you need an [igo](#) card to buy many bus tickets and you must have one from age 11 to travel for child fares. You can also use it to buy season tickets online, in advance, for travelling by tram;
- Please be respectful of others, including public transport staff, and help to keep everyone safe by:
  - wearing a face covering if you are aged 11 or over, unless you are exempt;
  - keeping your distance;
  - washing your hands regularly; and
  - using exact change or contactless payment, buying tickets online or using mobile ticketing apps.
- If you need to drive, please switch off your engine when waiting outside schools and colleges and consider parking further away and walking the last part of your journey.

### **General travel guidance for schools and colleges**

- With many children and young people set to return to education in September there is an immediate need to encourage parents to cycle or walk to school / college where possible to ensure there is enough capacity on public transport;
- The Government have relaxed social distancing rules on dedicated school transport services and TfGM are expecting Yellow School Bus and other school bus services to run at capacity. Social distancing measures remain in place on all other forms of

public transport which will result in significantly reduced capacity on commercial services. This may impact young people who use commercial bus services, trams or trains to access education;

- [A Government guide](#) is available to help people understand how to travel safely. This advice applies to pupils and students returning to school or college in September;
- It is recommended that you:
  - consider staggering start and end times between year groups by a short period. This can help to spread out demand for public transport and avoid peak travel times;
  - ensure parents and carers are aware of recommendations on transport to and from school; and
  - use signage to guide parents and carers about where and when to drop off and pick up their children.
- It is recommended that children aged 16 and under who rely on public transport obtain [igo](#) cards at the earliest opportunity if they do not already have one. The cards can be used as proof of age when travelling on public transport. Igo cards allow children to buy Metrolink tickets online, in advance, at [getmethere.com](https://www.getmethere.com). Some bus tickets are only available to buy using igo as a smart card, even for those under 11, as tickets are loaded onto the igo card instead of giving a paper ticket. The card costs £10 and is valid until 31 August after the child's 16th birthday;
- It is recommended that eligible young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who rely on public transport to travel to school or college apply for an Our Pass at the earliest opportunity. Our Pass provides the holder with free bus travel and discounted Metrolink travel as well as access to exclusive opportunities. The card costs £10 and is valid until 31 August after the young person's 18th birthday.

### **Cycling and walking**

- The government is actively encouraging more journeys to be made by active travel, including walking and cycling;
- At a national level:
  - 75% of primary school pupils travel less than 2 miles to school; and
  - 50% of secondary school pupils travel less than 2 miles.
- If we can switch half of the journeys of 2 miles or less to walking and cycling, we can help to make sure there is enough capacity on public transport for those who rely on it;

- To enable children and young people and their parents and carers to walk and cycle to school, you may wish to consider the following:
- **Provide route planning information:**
  - Walking and cycling route planning - <https://my.tfgm.com/#/planner/>
  - Walking and cycling route planning alternative - [www.googlemaps.com](http://www.googlemaps.com)
  - Cycling route planning (including quiet routes) - [www.cylestreets.org](http://www.cylestreets.org)
- **Provide advice on travelling to school by walking or cycling:**
  - Walking and cycling advice - [www.tfgm.com/coronavirus/cycling-walking](http://www.tfgm.com/coronavirus/cycling-walking)
  - Living Streets Family Walk to School kit - [www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/family-walk-to-school-kit](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/family-walk-to-school-kit)
  - Sustrans School Travel Planning Toolkit - <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/2767/2767.pdf>
- **Bespoke mapping for schools:**
  - TfGM's Sustainable Journeys team can create a bespoke two-sided mapping leaflet for schools;
  - One side maps the school and shows the walking and cycling routes around the school - icons can be added to show schools patrol crossing points, park and stride locations etc.;
  - The other side has information on the variety of travel modes, and how to stay safe on them – additionally this side has activities for pupils to do on the way to school, no matter how they travel;
  - If you would like one creating, please email [sustainable.journeys@tfgm.com](mailto:sustainable.journeys@tfgm.com).
- **Start a 'park and stride' scheme for those who cannot walk and cycle:**
  - 'Park and stride' means driving some of the way, but parking further away from school and walking the last ten minutes of the journey;
  - It is a good compromise for those families that may need to use the car but would like to travel more actively;
  - A 'park and stride' scheme can help to reduce congestion and therefore make it easier for people to follow social distancing guidance at the school gate;
  - A school could take a formal approach to setting up a scheme (i.e. agreed with the local supermarket that their car park can be used for these purposes) or ask parents/carers to do this informally;
  - For details on how to set up a 'park and stride' scheme, see [here](#).

## Infrastructure changes outside school

- In response to coronavirus (COVID-19), local authorities have launched the #SafeStreetsSaveLives campaign in GM to support social distancing during lockdown and recovery. This campaign included an allocation of emergency funding from the Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund towards safe cycling and walking projects.
- Additionally, money has been secured through the [Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund](#) to make improvements to walking and cycling facilities in GM. For further details of what is going on in your area to enable active travel see [here](#).

## School buses

- TfGM has been in regular contact with all schools and colleges served by subsidised school bus services. Timetables are currently being finalised and will be shared with schools and colleges and posted on the TfGM website shortly;
- As we understand that many parents will have questions about school bus services a list of FAQs will also be forwarded to schools;
- Yellow School Buses will still be in operation, but there will be no requirement for users to apply for a Yellow School Bus Pass;
- We advise that you communicate to any parents of children who normally use school bus services that they should cycle or walk to school for short journeys if possible;
- If they must use the bus, they should plan ahead, apply for any passes they need now, check timetables in advance and be aware that capacity may be limited;
- When travelling, pupils and students should keep themselves and others safe by:
  - wearing a face covering if aged 11 or over, unless they are exempt;
  - keeping their distance;
  - washing hands regularly; and
  - using exact change or contactless payment, buying tickets online or using mobile ticketing apps.
- If you have a specific query relating to school buses, please email the Operational Service Planning Team at: [OperationalServicePlanning@tfgm.com](mailto:OperationalServicePlanning@tfgm.com).

## Commercial bus services

- Social distancing measures remain in place on the general bus network which will result in significantly reduced capacity on commercial services. This may impact young people who use commercial bus services to access education;
- Only 50% of normal capacity will be available on commercial services. Buses that have reached capacity will operate on a one-off, one-on basis. This means that you might have to wait for the next bus if the one you plan to get on is already full. The capacity status may be indicated on the front of the bus, but this will vary by operator;
- If young people must use commercial bus services, they should plan ahead, apply for any passes they need now, check timetables in advance and be aware that capacity may be limited;
- Some bus operators have introduced an 'exact change only' policy. We would encourage children to buy prepaid tickets or use contactless payment where possible. Bus operators have a range of smart products readily available that remove the need for cash handling on public transport. Please visit [tfgm.com/bus](https://tfgm.com/bus) for more information;
- When travelling, pupils and students should keep themselves and others safe by:
  - wearing a face covering if aged 11 or over, unless they are exempt;
  - keeping their distance;
  - washing hands regularly; and
  - using exact change or contactless payment, buying tickets online or using mobile ticketing apps.

## Metrolink

- Current social distancing guidance means that trams can only carry 23% of their normal capacity;
- We advise that you communicate with any parents of children who normally use trams that they should cycle or walk to school for short journeys if possible;
- If they must use the tram, they should plan ahead, apply for any passes they need now, check timetables in advance and be aware that capacity may be limited;
- When travelling, pupils and students should keep themselves and others safe by:
  - wearing a face covering if 11 or over, unless they are exempt;

- keeping their distance;
- washing hands regularly; and
- using exact change or contactless payment, buying tickets online or using mobile ticketing apps.

### **Further information**

We will continue to work with schools, colleges and Local Authorities over the coming months to ensure that children and young people can access education safely.

If you require further support not covered in this document, please contact:

[sustainable.journeys@tfgm.com](mailto:sustainable.journeys@tfgm.com)