

Catherine Pealing
Wigan Town Hall
Hewlett Street
Wigan
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27 May 2020

Dear Catherine Pealing,

School Travel

I would like to share a brief update with you on some of the challenges we face regarding public transport and school and college services, during the coronavirus pandemic and, in light of this, the most up to date guidance regarding travel to schools and colleges.

At the moment in Greater Manchester and nationally there is a lack of public transport capacity due to social distancing measures, which in turn is leading to pressure on the network, especially during the peak. Therefore, as the transport authority in the city-region we are asking people to help protect public transport for those who need it most.

While we understand that some schools and colleges will be returning from early June, and that each will face their own challenges in doing so, demand on services is anticipated to be limited as only select year groups are expected to return.

We want to support young people to travel safely when returning to their educational setting, and the TfGM tendered schools network will be gradually rebuilt to pre-coronavirus levels, but with no current plans to offer bespoke services.

As with all forms of public transport social distancing measures will have to remain in place for a number of months, which will lead to capacity constraints – likely to be between 10-20% of normal capacity depending on the vehicle. Buses will be operating with a significantly reduced capacity to meet social distancing guidelines. Clearly, to protect people's safety – once capacity is reached, additional passengers will not be permitted to board.

If your schools or colleges are returning in June and, in line with government guidance, we ask that you encourage them to help us protect public transport for those who rely on it and that students are encouraged to cycle and walk, where possible.

Clearly this will not be an option for everyone therefore we are asking those who must use school buses, commercial services and wider public transport to adhere to government guidance to keep themselves and others safe. This includes asking them to wear a face covering; keeping their distance; washing their hands regularly and using contactless payment.

Whilst we know that each district will face its own unique challenges, we will look to issue a toolkit next week to local authority colleagues to support these overarching messages.

In considering alternative travel options, there are a number of measures that we know may help alleviate some of the pressure and encourage involvement, including route planning advice, Park and Stride schemes and staggered start times. In addition to this letter, there is a guidance document which, if schools in your district are reopening, may find useful and informative.

Obviously, each school will have a different set of circumstances, but if there is anything further that you or they require then please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of the Sustainable Journeys team at sustainable.journeys@tfgm.com.

Yours sincerely

Anna Collins
Head of Sustainable Journeys