

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 5 November 2024

**Subject:** Update on Public Transport

**Report of:** Strategic Director (Growth and Development)

---

**Summary**

This report provides an update on the current/recent performance of and future plans for public transport in Manchester.

**Recommendation**

The Committee is recommended to:

- Consider and comment on the report.
- 

**Wards Affected:** All

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city	The continued development and enhancement of a public transport network for Greater Manchester will help to reduce transport-related carbon emissions by increasing the share of journeys undertaken by bus, Metrolink and rail, encouraging active travel and reducing journeys by car.
<b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments	The continued development of the public transport network will require continued monitoring and assessment as services develop and change over time to ensure that services are responsive to need, and these interventions enable those with protected characteristics to benefit fully from access to public transport.

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy/Contribution to the Strategy</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Improving public transport and other non-car modes will support the growth of the economy by improving accessibility to jobs and opportunities for all residents
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Excellent public transport connections will allow all residents in the city to access high-quality employment and education opportunities in the city and facilitate growth. Improving infrastructure and unlocking regeneration opportunities will attract investment, in turn boosting the local economy and creating jobs
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Good quality and affordable public transport will facilitate opportunities for communities across the city to make more sustainable travel choices, and open up opportunities for residents and businesses to access employment and education across the city.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	High quality public transport, combined with other sustainable transport measures such as walking, wheeling and cycling can offer residents a viable alternative to the private car, therefore reducing short car journeys and therefore carbon emissions. Reducing dependency on the private car can help to create a more liveable city through reduced traffic congestion, road danger and create a safer, cleaner environment.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	World class infrastructure will attract investment and promote a globally successful city. High quality public transport will make it easier for residents to access high quality jobs, education and leisure opportunities across the city.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

### **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

None as a result of this report.

## **Financial Consequences – Capital**

None as a result of this report.

### **Contact Officers:**

Name: Rebecca Heron  
Position: Strategic Director - Growth and Development  
E-mail: rebecca.heron@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Pat Bartoli  
Position: Director of City Centre Growth and Infrastructure  
Telephone: 0161 234 4821  
E-mail: pat.bartoli@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Hayley Fails  
Position: Assistant Director, Infrastructure & Environment  
E-mail: Hayley.Fails@Manchester.gov.uk

### **Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

- GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee October 2024
- City Centre Transport Strategy (March 2021) CCTS\_Full\_Document.pdf
- GM 2040 Transport Strategy (February 2017, updated January 2021)

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1. This report provides a general update on Public Transport in Greater Manchester, including the current/recent performance of buses, Metrolink and rail, alongside an update of future plans including bus franchising and development of the rail network.
- 1.2. The Committee is asked to comment on the report.

## **2.0 Bee Network: Introduction**

- 2.1. The Bee Network is Transport for Greater Manchester's (TfGM) plan for a high-quality, affordable and fully integrated public transport and active travel system for the people and businesses of Greater Manchester.
- 2.2. The Bee Network is pivotal to delivering sustainable economic growth and the city region's objectives, set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy, by connecting people with education, jobs and opportunity, unlocking development, enabling housing growth, acting as a catalyst for regeneration, reducing carbon emissions and supporting social inclusion and active and healthy lifestyles.
- 2.3. Greater Manchester has led the way in reforming and improving its transport network. As pioneers of bus franchising, TfGM now have local control of our most-used form of public transport, in addition to the largest light rail network in the country – Metrolink, and TfGM are delivering a world-class walking, wheeling and cycling network as part of a wider infrastructure investment programme with an aggregate value of up to ~£3.5bn. Work is also underway to bring eight local commuter train services into the Bee Network by 2028.
- 2.4. They are now in the transition phase with some elements of the Bee Network already starting to change the way in which people travel across the city-region. This paper reports on progress so far and looks ahead to further delivery in the coming months.

## **3.0 Bus Franchising Operation and Implementation**

### **Bus Franchising Operation**

- 3.1. As the most used form of public transport in Greater Manchester, buses are the cornerstone of the Bee Network and since the historic launch of bus franchising a year ago, more than 58 million bus journeys have been made on cheaper, cleaner, more reliable bus services.
- 3.2. Since the launch of bus franchising in Bolton, Wigan and parts of Salford and Bury, in September 2023 followed by Oldham, Rochdale and parts of Bury, Salford and North Manchester in March 2024, nearly seven million more journeys have been made on the city region's buses compared with the previous year (a 5% increase).

- 3.3. Buses in the first areas to come under local control are consistently more reliable than before franchising, with services in the Tranche 1 areas now consistently above the 80% punctuality target. Between June and August 2024, punctuality of Tranche 1 services was 86.5% compared to 70.5% for the equivalent pre-franchising period. TfGM continues to work closely with operators to continuously improve service performance. In the Tranche 2 area, buses are consistently on time more often than both current non-Bee Network services and when compared with those services in the Tranche 2 area in the same period last year.
- 3.4. More people are travelling by bus, with 58.6 million passenger journeys made on the Bee Network (between 24/9/23 and 14/9/24). Record-breaking patronage figures were set on two consecutive days in September, with 305,000 journeys recorded on a single day (6th September).
- 3.5. The recently launched trial of night buses on the V1 and 36 is proving popular with people working in, and those enjoying, the night-time economy. The pilot is providing 24-hour connectivity for around 135,000 people living within a five-minute walk of the two routes, including students and people working in the hospitality, healthcare and logistics sectors. Over 50,000 journeys were made across the two services, between 22:00 and 07:00 in the first month with over 7,000 journeys made on the additional trips that are now provided (around 14% of over-night journeys).
- 3.6. Revenues from buses in the Tranche 1 of the Bee Network exceeded £20m. That's £3m higher than budgeted (between 24/9/23 and 31/3/24). Franchising is also costing a third less per km than services that were being tendered before franchising began. This strong performance has helped, in part, to mitigate wider financial pressures across transport operations, as the transport sector continues to face structural funding challenges due to residual impact of recent external shocks including lost growth in patronage and revenues as a result of the pandemic and rapid increases in the cost base due to unprecedented levels of inflation.
- 3.7. Jobs are also being created through franchised contracts. Bus operators have hired 179 apprentices and Rochdale firm Mellors is one of three UK manufacturers building Bee Network buses, with orders helping to fund the creation of 15 new apprentice roles there too. TfGM continues to work with the GMCA Skills Team to develop Bee Network Careers pathways, including through the GM MBacc, to provide the future skills and workforce that are integral to the success of the Bee Network.

### **Franchising Implementation**

- 3.8. At the end of March 2024, contracts were awarded to operate the final round of Bee Network bus services in Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and remaining parts of Manchester and Salford from 5 January 2025 – at which point all buses across Greater Manchester will be franchised and under local control.

- 3.9. Metrolink has been awarded contracts to operate four of the five large franchises, Hyde Road, Sharston, and Wythenshawe (all in Manchester), and Tameside, with Stagecoach awarded the contract to operate the fifth, in Stockport. Diamond Bus has been awarded contracts to run three of the four small franchises and Go North West the remaining one. For school services, Diamond Bus (North West) Limited has been awarded 7 contracts and Go North West Limited 2 contracts, covering a total of 37 schools.
- 3.10. Representing approximately half of the GM bus network, the third and final tranche of bus franchising represents the biggest challenge yet. Mobilisation is at an advanced stage to ensure that buses, onboard technology, drivers, engineers, dispatchers, buses and depots are ready for the 5th January 2024

#### **4.0 Metrolink Performance**

- 4.1. Over 44.5 million annual journeys took place across the Metrolink network to the end of September 2024, representing 98% of the total number of journeys carried at the equivalent point in 2019, which was Metrolink's best year for patronage.
- 4.2. In May 2024, 4.1 million people travelled on Metrolink across Greater Manchester, setting a new record for monthly patronage since the network opened in 1992. This was thanks in part to a significant number of events in May including the Great Manchester Run, Manchester City's Premier League title-winning parade and high-profile concerts at the Co-Op Live.
- 4.3. Revenue protection activities continue to reduce fare evasion across the network. Evasion rates have reduced from a high of 16.6% in August 2023 to 10.2% in August 2024, with the additional revenue more than covering the costs of increasing staff numbers to conduct additional enforcement activity across the network.
- 4.4. Several closures took place over the summer for essential track renewal works in and around the city centre and the Rochdale line was partially closed following a land slip at Derker. Despite this, Metrolink revenue is 13% up year on year, helping to mitigate the financial pressures across Bee Network operations.
- 4.5. Further renewal works are planned for next summer with additional engineering work required at Derker in 2025 to strengthen the resilience of the network and safeguard continued good performance.
- 4.6. Work continues to assess options and to propose a recommendation for the future management and maintenance of Metrolink. The current operation and maintenance contract with KeolisAmey Metrolink (KAM) is due to expire in 2027.

## **5.0 Bikes on Metrolink**

- 5.1. The bikes on Metrolink pilot concluded successfully in April following 6 weeks of supervised trials to test whether bikes and non-standard cycles can be taken on trams safely in a variety of operational settings.
- 5.2. The trial took place on off-peak services on different lines, routes and stops across the Metrolink network. Testing included the carriage of adapted bikes used as mobility aids, scooters and a broader range of mobility scooters that are not currently permitted.
- 5.3. Feedback from passengers was recorded as a part of the pilot along with feedback from the volunteers taking part and any other participants involved. A report on the pilot results will be presented to the Bee Network Committee in December 2024 with recommendations on next steps.

## **6.0 GM Rail Network**

- 6.1. Section 10 of this report provides an overview of the GM Rail Reform and Integration programme which is taking forward proposals to integrate rail services into the Bee Network.
- 6.2. In the meantime, TfGM continues to work with rail operators and Network Rail to improve GM rail services, the performance of which has been very poor in recent months. Crew availability continues to impact on Northern services, with Northern issuing a number of “Do No Travel” notices on multiple GM routes on consecutive Sundays. Northern are not operating up to 1 in 3 services, with Sundays being the most affected day.
- 6.3. Members of the ASLEF union have voted to accept a multi-year pay offer, ending a two-year dispute at 16 rail companies including Northern and TransPennine Express. However this deal did not address “rest day working” which is why Sundays remain a problem.

## **7.0 Bee Network Fares, Ticketing and Customer Experience**

### **Fares and Ticketing**

- 7.1. Integrated, affordable and simple fares and ticketing products are key to the success of the Bee Network, aimed at supporting more people to travel for less, with back-office systems that do the hard work to make life easier for customers.
- 7.2. Following the implementation of the final phase of bus franchising on 5 January 2025, GMCA will be able to set fares and introduce and amend ticketing products across the Bee Network, without the need to negotiate with commercial operators. Importantly, it also allows GMCA to integrate fares and ticketing so that passengers can move seamlessly between Bee Network buses and trams, with an ambition to integrate cycle hire and GM rail in future.

- 7.3. In July 2024, GMCA approved a reduction to the price of a number of Bee Network bus fares, from 5 January 2025, as follows:
- A reduction to the price of 7-day Bus Travel on Bee Network Services from £21 Adult/£10.50 Child to £20 Adult /£10 Child; and
  - A reduction to the price of 28-day Bus Travel on Bee Network Services from £85.40 Adult/£42.70 Child to £80 Adult /£40 Child.
  - And also approved the introduction of a paper 'Hopper' single ticket for Bee Network bus users.
- 7.4. In September, GMCA approved the introduction of 'pay as you go' (PAYG) contactless ticketing and multi-modal capped fares across bus and Metrolink from March 2025. PAYG will provide greater flexibility for customers who will not need to plan and purchase travel in advance and will simply be able to touch-on / touch in and out (on bus and Metrolink) with their contactless bank card or device and know they will be charged the appropriate capped fare.
- 7.5. PAYG on bus will also include the benefits of the Hopper Fares, so anyone travelling on multiple buses within an hour will only be charged the single Hopper fare, mirroring the paper version that will be introduced in January 2025.
- 7.6. The bus and multi modal PAYG will operate initially with adult fares only (as is the case currently for Metrolink and other schemes, including Transport for London's).
- 7.7. The scheme will be introduced alongside a detailed engagement and training programme, and extensive customer communications to ensure that customers understand how to benefit from this new, easier way to travel.
- 7.8. Further improvements were approved by the GMCA in September 2024 including:
- An Adult Bee Bus Annual ticket, priced at £800, (which equates to the cost of 10, rather than 13, 28 day tickets) will be introduced from January 2025;
  - An innovative scheme with Credit Unions to enable those who may not be able to afford the initial outlay of an annual product to benefit from the value that the annual ticket offers;
  - Extension of the recompense scheme to Tranche 3 passenger to mitigate any negative impact of the transition to Bee Network fares
- 7.9. Work continues with Shadow Great British Railways to develop the first phase of pay-as-you-go contactless payments on the parts of the GM network.

### **Bee Network Customer Experience.**

- 7.10. The Bee Network app has been downloaded 6280k times and has 178k active weekly users. The app allows users to plan their journeys, track buses across Greater Manchester, access live departure times, find their nearest bus or



tram stop and leave feedback via Rate My Journey. Since launch 12.9m buses have been tracked and 1.3m journeys planned.

- 7.11. Work continues to improve the app in response to customer feedback and to incorporate additional functionality.
- 7.12. Satisfaction with fares has jumped from 63% in 2022 to a record high of 82% (based on TfGM fares survey and since the inception of the survey in 2016).
- 7.13. Customer satisfaction overall is at 78% and 'very satisfied' has been steadily rising since franchising. Nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of people think the Bee Network is something to be proud of and 3 in 4 people think that it's run in the interest of the people of Greater Manchester.
- 7.14. A Customer Experience Strategy is currently being developed to encourage more people to use the Bee Network. The Strategy aims to put customers at the heart of everything TfGM do by listening to customers, ensuring that decisions are based on customer need and impact, and by striving for excellence at all points of the customer journey.

## **8.0 Transport Infrastructure Pipeline**

- 8.1. Based on the indicative allocations advised by the previous Government, the Transport Infrastructure Pipeline has an anticipated aggregate financial value of between £3.5bn and £4bn to the end of the financial year 2031/32. The Pipeline will deliver a wide range of infrastructure schemes to improve the performance, resilience and customer experience of using the Bee Network, including a world-class walking, wheeling and cycling network; expanded cycle hire and loan services, new stations, stops and interchanges; bus priority measures, systems to support integrated ticketing; and asset renewal to maintain and improve network safety and resilience.
- 8.2. Work to develop and deliver transport infrastructure pipeline schemes continues at pace. To date, CRSTS funding has contributed to the delivery of the new Stockport Mixed Use scheme (comprising the Transport Interchange, cycle ramp, bridgescape link to the rail station, 196 residential apartments and a 2 acre public park), zero emission electric buses, customer and ticketing improvements, a range of ongoing active travel improvements and a range of Bus Infrastructure schemes across GM, including over 100 traffic signal and junction upgrades, improvements to pedestrian facilities at 11 locations across GM and a range of minor pinch point schemes and bus stop upgrades to support more reliable bus journeys and better access to bus services.
- 8.3. In addition, CRSTS funding is also playing an important role in sustaining the current network, to ensure that it remains safe, efficient and reliable for customers. This has seen significant highways maintenance work and Metrolink renewals activity in recent months, in particular in Manchester City Centre, and this remains an ongoing programme of work.

- 8.4. Works are also currently on site to deliver a Streets for All scheme in Ancoats, Access for All schemes at Daisy Hill and Irlam rail stations, and further Bus Infrastructure improvements across the city region, including a new red route and red route clearway in Trafford.
- 8.5. Further updates on the Transport Infrastructure Pipeline will be brought to the Committee on a regular basis.

## **9.0 Strategy and Reform**

- 9.1. Delivery of the Bee Network will require ambitious strategy, innovative policy and careful, long-term planning, driven by insight and engagement with key stakeholders.

### **Local Transport Plan Refresh**

- 9.2. The city region's transport ambitions are articulated in our Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040. Working closely with the ten GM authorities, GMCA and other key partners, TfGM is leading a refresh of this important document. The updated LTP will reflect the creation of the Bee Network as an integrated public transport and active travel system, and will reflect its role in supporting wider city region ambitions e.g. in support of Greater Manchester's 2038 net zero carbon target. A draft, refreshed LTP is expected to be completed by Summer 2025.

### **Rapid Transit Strategy**

- 9.3. At its meeting in July 2024, the GMCA approved the draft Rapid Transit Strategy, which sets out how fast and frequent mass transit will support the integrated Bee Network. The Strategy sets out:
- our vision for rapid transit and why there's a case for change;
  - what we need in broad terms, and how we'll seek to deliver it in more detail;
  - the 8 rail corridors to be integrated into the Bee Network by 2028; and
  - c.15 emerging priorities for expansion of the rapid transit system.
- 9.4. The strategy focuses on sustaining, growing and transforming the city region's rapid transit system. Its contents are expected to be formally adopted via the process to create the updated LTP.

### **GM Rail Integration and Reform**

- 9.5. The rail network plays a key role in supporting growth as the most efficient way of moving large numbers of people to and between the city and regional centres.
- 9.6. Having a modern, fit-for-purpose rail network is crucial to delivering economic growth, prosperity and opportunities. By integrating and embedding rail into

the Bee Network, TfGM can make the GM public transport system more than the sum of its parts.

- 9.7. GMCA's 'Trailblazer' deeper devolution deal with central government commits the government to support the development of a new partnership between Greater Manchester and Great British Railways (GBR), "to support the delivery of the Bee Network by 2030, which will see:
- full multi-modal fares and ticketing integration;
  - co-branding and common customer information;
  - 'pay as you go' ticketing;
  - better integration of local stations;
  - identification of opportunities for regeneration and development,
  - greater access to local rail data; and
  - giving GMCA the opportunity to sponsor infrastructure and service enhancement schemes.
- 9.8. In line with the Trailblazer Devolution Deal, TfGM has been working with railway partners to achieve preliminary integration of the '8-priority corridors' into the Bee Network by 2028. This will significantly enhance the current customer rail offering through greater modal integration, accessibility, enhancements in performance, with an ambition to increase annual patronage on eight core Bee Network rail lines by up to 1.2 million journeys within four years, leading to increased revenue and reduced subsidy.
- 9.9. In the long-term Greater Manchester's statutory role remains to be defined and different options will bring different levels of control, flexibility and risk. TfGM is currently developing these options with the Shadow GBR on the basis that statutory powers and, importantly, associated funding is required to specify, commission and deliver railway services.
- 9.10. Following consideration by this Committee in September 2024, GMCA approved further engagement with HMG, rail partners and others to explore and influence legislative and structural options that would achieve GM ambitions for rail integration. TfGM is also in detailed discussions with DfT and GBR regarding the roll out of 'pay as you go' across GM, which would see rail passengers benefit from integration with the Bee Network.