



BEE NETWORK COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, 25th July, 2024

TIME: 2.00 pm

VENUE: The Tootal Buildings - Broadhurst House , 1st Floor, 56
Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU

AGENDA

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

1 - 4

To receive declarations of interest in any item for discussion at the meeting. A blank form for declaring interests has been circulated with the agenda; please ensure that this is returned to the Governance & Scrutiny Officer 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

3. Chair's announcements and Urgent Business

BOLTON	MANCHESTER	ROCHDALE	STOCKPORT	TRAFFORD
BURY	OLDHAM	SALFORD	TAMESIDE	WIGAN

Please note that this meeting will be livestreamed via www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk, please speak to a Governance Officer before the meeting should you not wish to consent to being included in this recording.

- 4. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024** 5 - 12

To consider the approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024.
- 5. Delivering the Bee Network** 13 - 28

A report of Steve Warrener, Managing Director, TfGM.
- 6. Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy** 29 - 108

A report of Martin Lax, Transport Strategy Director, TfGM.
- 7. Bee Network Fares & Ticketing Products** 109 - 116

A report of Fran Wilkinson, Customer and Growth Director, TfGM.
- 8. Transport Infrastructure Pipeline Report**

A report of Chris Barnes, Network Director Infrastructure, TfGM.
- 9. Bee Network Bus Service Improvements - Part A**

A report of Stephen Rhodes, Network Director Bus, TfGM.
- 10. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

That, under section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on business on the grounds that this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as set out in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.
- 11. Bee Network Bus Service Improvements - Part B**

A report of Stephen Rhodes, Network Director Bus, TfGM.

For copies of papers and further information on this meeting please refer to the website
www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk. Alternatively, contact the following

Governance & Scrutiny Officer: Ninoshka Martins

✉ ninoshka.martins@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

This agenda was issued on Wednesday, 17 July 2024 on behalf of Julie Connor, Secretary
to the

Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Broadhurst House, 56 Oxford Street,
Manchester M1 6EU

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Declaration of Councillors' Interests in Items Appearing on the Agenda

Name and Date of Committee.....>

Agenda Item Number	Type of Interest - PERSONAL AND NON PREJUDICIAL Reason for declaration of interest	NON PREJUDICIAL Reason for declaration of interest Type of Interest – PREJUDICIAL Reason for declaration of interest	Type of Interest – DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST Reason for declaration of interest

Please see overleaf for a quick guide to declaring interests at GMCA meetings.

Quick Guide to Declaring Interests at GMCA Meetings

Please Note: should you have a personal interest that is prejudicial in an item on the agenda, you should leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and the voting thereon.

This is a summary of the rules around declaring interests at meetings. It does not replace the Member's Code of Conduct, the full description can be found in the GMCA's constitution Part 7A.

Your personal interests must be registered on the GMCA's Annual Register within 28 days of your appointment onto a GMCA committee and any changes to these interests must notified within 28 days. Personal interests that should be on the register include:

1. Bodies to which you have been appointed by the GMCA
2. Your membership of bodies exercising functions of a public nature, including charities, societies, political parties or trade unions.

You are also legally bound to disclose the following information called Disclosable Personal Interests which includes:

1. You, and your partner's business interests (eg employment, trade, profession, contracts, or any company with which you are associated).
2. You and your partner's wider financial interests (eg trust funds, investments, and assets including land and property).
3. Any sponsorship you receive.

Failure to disclose this information is a criminal offence

Step One: Establish whether you have an interest in the business of the agenda

1. If the answer to that question is 'No' then that is the end of the matter.
2. If the answer is 'Yes' or Very Likely' then you must go on to consider if that personal interest can be construed as being a prejudicial interest.

Step Two: Determining if your interest is prejudicial

A personal interest becomes a prejudicial interest:

1. where the wellbeing, or financial position of you, your partner, members of your family, or people with whom you have a close association (people who are more than just an acquaintance) are likely to be affected by the business of the meeting more than it would affect most people in the area.
2. the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

For a non-prejudicial interest, you must:

1. Notify the governance officer for the meeting as soon as you realise you have an interest.
2. Inform the meeting that you have a personal interest and the nature of the interest.
3. Fill in the declarations of interest form.

To note:

1. You may remain in the room and speak and vote on the matter
If your interest relates to a body to which the GMCA has appointed you to, you only have to inform the meeting of that interest if you speak on the matter.

For prejudicial interests, you must:

1. Notify the governance officer for the meeting as soon as you realise you have a prejudicial interest (before or during the meeting).
2. Inform the meeting that you have a prejudicial interest and the nature of the interest.
3. Fill in the declarations of interest form.
4. Leave the meeting while that item of business is discussed.
5. Make sure the interest is recorded on your annual register of interests form if it relates to you or your partner's business or financial affairs. If it is not on the Register update it within 28 days of the interest becoming apparent.

You must not:

Participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your disclosable pecuniary interest during the meeting participate further in any discussion of the business,
participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

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Agenda Item 4

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BEE NETWORK COMMITTEE HELD THURSDAY, 27TH JUNE 2024 AT BOARDROOM, GMCA OFFICES

PRESENT:

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien (in the Chair)	Bury
Councillor Alan Quinn	Bury
Councillor Josh Charters	Oldham
Councillor Phil Burke	Rochdale
Councillor Grace Baynham	Stockport
Councillor Andrew McClaren	Tameside
Councillor Aidan Williams	Trafford

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Caroline Simpson	GMCA
Melinda Edwards	GMCA
Lee Teasdale	GMCA
Sylvia Welsh	GMCA
Richard Nickson	TfGM
Martin Lax	TfGM
Steve Warrener	TfGM
Chris Barnes	TfGM
James Baldwin	TfGM

BNC/01/24 Appointment of Chair

Nominations were sought for the Chair of the Bee Network Committee for 2024/25. A nomination and seconder were received for Mayor Andy Burnham.

RESOLVED/-

That Mayor Andy Burnham be appointed as Chair of the Bee Network Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

BNC/02/24 Appointment of Vice-Chair

Nominations were sought for the Vice-Chair of the Bee Network Committee for 2024/25. A nomination and seconder were received for Councillor Eamonn O'Brien.

RESOLVED/-

That Councillor Eamonn O'Brien be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Bee Network Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

Note: Due to the unavailability of Mayor Andy Burnham, Councillor Eamonn O'Brien took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

BNC/03/24 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Mayor Andy Burnham (GMCA), Cllr Hamid Khurram (Bolton), Cllr Tracey Rawlins (Manchester), Mayor Paul Dennett (Salford), Cllr Tom Ross (Trafford), Cllr Paul Prescott (Wigan) and Cllr John Vickers (Wigan).

RESOLVED/-

1. That the apologies be noted.

BNC/04/24 Membership for the 2024/25 Municipal Year

The Chair welcomed all present to the Annual General Meeting of the Bee Network Committee. He welcomed Caroline Simpson to her first meeting as the Group Chief Executive for GMCA, TfGM and GMFRS, and expressed congratulations to Danny Vaughan following his appointment as the new Chief Network Officer for TfGM.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the appointment of the Mayor of Greater Manchester to the Bee Network Committee, and Councillor Tom Ross (Trafford) as the substitute member, and the appointment of Councillor Eamonn O'Brien (Bury), as the GMCA representative

and Councillor Neil Emmott (Rochdale) as the substitute member by the GMCA on 14 June 2024 be noted.

2. That the membership of the Committee for the forthcoming year be noted as below:

District	Name	Substitutes
GM Mayor	Andy Burnham (Labour)	Tom Ross (Labour)
GMCA	Eamonn O'Brien (Labour)	Neil Emmott (Labour)
Bolton	Hamid Khurram (Labour)	Sean Fielding (Labour)
Bury	Alan Quinn (Labour)	Gareth Staples- Jones (Labour)
Manchester	Tracey Rawlins (Labour)	TBC
Oldham	Josh Charters (Labour)	Chris Goodwin (Labour & Co- operative)
Rochdale	Phil Burke (Labour)	Aasim Rashid (Labour)
Salford	Paul Dennett (Labour)	Mike McCusker (Labour)
Stockport	Grace Baynham (Liberal Democrat)	Mark Roberts (Liberal Democrat)
Tameside	Laura Boyle (Labour)	Andrew McLaren (Labour)
Trafford	Aiden Williams (Labour)	Steve Adshead (Labour)
Wigan	Paul Prescott (Labour)	John Vickers (Labour)

3. That it be noted that the Mayoral Appointments were to be confirmed.
4. That the Committee welcomes new members Councillors Laura Boyle and Josh Charters.
5. That the Committee record its thanks to Councillor Warren Bray for his many years of valuable service on GM's transport committees.

6. That the Committee welcomes Caroline Simpson to her first meeting of the Committee as Group Chief Executive for GMCA, TfGM & GMFRS.
7. That the Committee record its congratulations to Danny Vaughan following his appointment as the Chief Network Officer of TfGM.

BNC/05/24 Members Code of Conduct

RESOLVED/-

1. That the GMCA Members Code of Conduct be noted.

BNC/06/24 Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure be noted.

BNC/07/24 Appointments to Outside Bodies

RESOLVED/-

1. That Councillors Tracy Rawlins, Phil Burke and Sean Fielding be appointed to the Greater Manchester Accessible Transport Board and that the outstanding two vacancies be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.
2. That Councillor Mike McCusker be appointed to the Green City Region Partnership.
3. That Councillor Josh Charters be appointed to the Vision Zero Advisory & Scrutiny Board

BNC/08/24 Chairs Announcements & Urgent Business

The Chair reflected that this was the first meeting held by the Combined Authority since the news had been announced of the sad passing of Sir Howard Bernstein. Sir Howard had been instrumental in the regeneration of Manchester, not least of which was the contribution to the building of the Metrolink network and support for devolution which would eventually result in the bringing back of buses under public control.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Committee acknowledges the sad passing of Sir Howard Bernstein noting the significant groundwork he laid for the many transport infrastructure improvements seen in the region in recent decades.

BNC/09/24 Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED/-

1. That it be noted that Councillor Phil Burke declared a personal interest in item BNC/11/24 as an employee of Metrolink.

BNC/10/24 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 21 March 2024

Councillor Grace Baynham expressed her concern about the scope of access for all funding, with particular concern highlighted about step free access to stations for residents with mobility issues. It was advised that TfGM had sought explanations from the Department for Transport on why step free access had not been prioritised. Due to the pre-election period a response had not yet been received but when an update was received it would be made available.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the minutes of the meeting of 21st March 2024 be agreed as true and correct record.
2. That Members be advised of the Department for Transport response to concerns raised around lack of step free access funding as part of Access for All.

BNC/11/24 Transport Capital Programme

Chris Barnes (Network Director Infrastructure, TfGM) presented a report that asked members to note the current position on the Greater Manchester Transport Capital Programme and consider a number of recommendations to support the continued development and delivery of the programme. Points highlighted included:

- Work to develop CRSTS1 with partners continued at pace with 55 of the original 60 strategic outline business cases now approved, and 40% of the overall allocation had now been released, which was a strong position at two years into a five-year programme.
- Progress made on the Streets for All Programme was highlighted.
- On Rapid Transit, a draw down of funding was being sought to continue to develop the proposals around the Tram-Train Pathfinder and the Next Generation Vehicles Initiative.
- It was highlighted that £13.8m of the bus franchising capital transition budget would be added to the capital programme for work on bus depots.

Comments and Questions

The Chair welcomed the progress being made and welcomed comments and questions from Members.

- It was asked if there had been any movement in terms of feasibility studies on the proposed station at Slattocks in Middleton. It was advised that the next new station being developed was at Golborne, and following this a number of options were being considered, with priorities likely to be around areas linked to new housing developments.
- Members sought further clarity on what defined a 'tram-train'. It was advised that these were light-rail units that also had the ability to run on heavy rail infrastructure, which would in turn allow for an increase in capacity and depth of fleet. It was also planned that these would have bi-modal power capabilities (electrification and also batteries where required).

- Members commented on how welcome the A56 Phase 2 developments would be to the residents of Trafford – there was a feeling that active travel plans were truly beginning to gather pace across the conurbation.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the current position in relation to CRSTS1 and CRSTS2 be noted.
2. That the CRSTS drawdowns, as approved by the Chief Executive TfGM and GMCA, under delegated authority be noted.
3. That the drawdown and reallocation of CRSTS funding and associated scheme progression be approved as follows:
 - City Centre Bus Strategy Phase 1: £1.25m;
 - Metrolink Next Generation Vehicles / Tram-Train Pathfinder: £1.547m;
 - Tameside: A560 Stockport Road / Hattersley Viaduct Refurbishment and Widening: £0.81m
 - SWANI (Sale West to Altrincham Network Improvements): Full Business Case approval and £0.18m;
 - Stockport: Hempshaw Lane: Full Business Case approval and £1.05m; and endorse the reallocation of £246k from the Stockport: A6/Manchester Road/School Lane scheme to support delivery of the scheme; and
 - Stockport: Woodley to Bredbury Parkway Improvement Scheme (formerly, Bredbury Economic Corridor Improvement (BECI) Package): Full Business Case approval and £0.83m
4. That the drawdown of Active Travel delivery funding be approved as follows:
 - Trafford A56 Phase 2: £2.07m (CRSTS funding through the MCF programme);
 - Manchester Yellow Brick Road: £1.5m (Active Travel Fund Round 4 (ATF4) funding);
 - Stockport Heatons Link Phase 2: £2.7m (ATF4 funding);
 - Stockport Ladybrook Valley Phase 2: £2.3m (ATF4 funding);
 - Stockport Romiley to Stockport: £3.4m (ATF4 funding);
 - E-Cycle Pilot: £0.5m (Revenue Grant); and

- Capability Fund Extension £1.7m (Revenue Grant).
5. That it be noted that £13.8m of the bus franchising capital transition budget has been allocated to fund and deliver ongoing renewal of depot infrastructure and associated assets and that approval for the inclusion in the Capital Programme of the forecast expenditure for renewals works that are anticipated in 2024/25 will be included in the “GMCA 2024/25 Capital Update – Quarter 1” report in July 2024.



Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 25th July 2024

Subject: Delivering the Bee Network

Report of: Steve Warrener, Managing Director, TfGM

Purpose of Report

To update Bee Network Committee on progress implementing the Bee Network: a high-quality, affordable and fully integrated public transport and active travel system which can support sustainable economic growth.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to:

1. Note and comment on delivery of the Bee Network.

Contact Officers

Steve Warrener, Managing Director, TfGM

steve.warrener@tfgm.com

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: Appendix 1 – Franchised Bus Performance

Background Papers

Delivering the Bee Network Update, GMCA, Friday 22nd March 2024

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency? No

Bee Network Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Bee Network is our plan for a high-quality, affordable and fully integrated public transport and active travel system for the people and businesses of Greater Manchester.
- 1.2. The Bee Network will be 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.
- 1.3. Greater Manchester has led the way in reforming and improving its transport network, and we 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. As pioneers of bus franchising, we 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 we 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. This paper reports on recent progress in delivering the Bee Network and looks ahead to further delivery in the coming months.

2. Bus Franchising Delivery and Operation

- 2.1. The Bee Network launched on 24 September 2023 following the successful implementation of bus franchising across Wigan, Bolton and parts of Bury and Salford (Tranche 1).
- 2.2. Passenger numbers remain strong for Tranche 1 services with ridership increasing by 5% over the last 6 months. The week ending 18th May saw the highest weekly patronage to date since franchising commenced with over 849,000 passenger journeys. Passenger revenues for the period from 24th September 2023 to March 31st, 2024, exceeded £20m, c£3m higher than budgeted for the financial year 2023/24. This strong revenue performance has continued into the new financial year with passenger revenues currently exceeding the new 2024/25 budget target by c5%. This strong patronage and revenue performance helps to mitigate wider financial pressures and risks across the bus franchised network and wider transport operations.

- 2.3. The punctuality of services in Tranche 1 is consistently outperforming both the current non-franchised network, and the pre-franchised network in the Tranche 1 area that operated over the same period last year. A further key performance indicator is 'kilometres (km) operated' which measures the actual volume of services delivered compared to what was scheduled. It includes any fully or partially cancelled trips. Overall, across the Tranche 1 area, over 98% of scheduled km has operated with a consistent upward trend in the 6 week period to 22 June 2024.
- 2.4. We are focused on the continuous improvement of service delivery to meet the high standards we have set for the Bee Network through a Network Excellence Plan. This includes moving quickly to introduce an additional twenty vehicles across Tranche 1 during April. This has delivered promising results, including on the popular V1 and V2 Busway services. All except two of the amended bus routes have seen on time punctuality above target levels (80%) during the 4 week period ending 22 June. The punctuality of some routes has significantly exceeded this target and the overall punctuality of Tranche 1 services has significantly increased as a result (see Appendix 1). During the period 28 April to 23 June 2024 the average punctuality of Tranche 1 services overall was 82.9%; a circa 20% / 14% points improvement compared to the same period twelve months ago (68.7%).
- 2.5. We are working closely with operators to address any negative feedback that arises from our Rate Your Journey survey as well as complaints. This covers specific complaints and also any trends that occur and we work to uncover the root cause of the issue and address that, e.g. not accepting a certain type of ticket, because the drivers were not aware of it, would require additional training.
- 2.6. Diamond operates 69 vehicles across 7 small franchises in Tranche 1. Since the start of March, 60 brand new single deck vehicles have been introduced (ADL Enviro 200), many on local routes which have not benefited from new buses for many years. The older interim fleet suffered from a number of reliability issues, with frequent breakdowns in service. Since the new fleet arrived, Diamond's reliability has improved significantly, with over 99.8% of scheduled KMs operated in the 4 week period to 22 June 2024.
- 2.7. Tranche 2 of Bus Franchising commenced in Rochdale, Oldham and parts of Bury on 24th March 2024. Together with Tranche 1 (Wigan, Bolton parts of Bury and Salford), this means that half of the Greater Manchester bus network is now franchised.

- 2.8. The successful implementation of Tranche 2 represented the culmination of months of hard work between TfGM and the Tranche 2 franchise operators Stagecoach, First and Diamond to mobilise the franchise services, and work with the outgoing operators (First, GNW, and Transdev/Rosso) to demobilise and transition depots, services and employees. Depots were acquired in Oldham and Queen's Road, with electrification works carried out at Oldham depot to accommodate a new fleet of zero emission electric buses. New ticket machines, radio and CCTV were installed, and drivers and other new members of staff were recruited and trained. Stagecoach is currently operating franchise services from Middleton Depot under their existing lease arrangement. We have now reached agreement on terms with the landlord and are working toward completion of the lease acquisition by July 2024.
- 2.9. High staff absence levels at the Oldham depot initially affected the performance of some Tranche 2 services, but those initial problems were quickly addressed by Stagecoach and performance continues to improve.
- 2.10. As part of our focus on continuous improvement, work is underway, in partnership with Stagecoach and individual Local Authorities, to assess what interventions are necessary to improve the worst performing routes and mitigate where possible the impact of congestion on bus passengers.
- 2.11. Our original patronage and revenue forecasts for Tranche 2 were increased in light of the positive trends seen in Tranche 1. Actual performance is tracking in line with these revised forecasts. However, it remains relatively early days and we need to observe performance over a longer period of time before reaching any conclusions.
- 2.12. Overall, operated KM across the Tranche 2 franchises is consistently over 98.5%. Further detail on the performance of franchised bus services can be found in Appendix 1.
- 2.13. In addition to the immediate operational changes being made to drive up performance, franchising also allows us to plan the network differently and provides opportunities to introduce new services or make existing services more efficient. Network Reviews of services in Bolton and Wigan are already underway and include engagement with local authorities (including local Bee Network committees), the public, businesses and our partner operators.
- 2.14. At the end of March, 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.

- 2.15. Metrolink has been awarded contracts to operate four of the five large franchises, with Stagecoach awarded the contract to operate the fifth. Diamond Bus has been awarded contracts to run three of the four small franchises and Go North West the remaining one.
- 2.16. Mobilisation has commenced and detailed mobilisation plans have been received from all operators. Metrolink has established a mobilisation office on Hyde Road, near to the bus depot there, as well as a training centre at the Arriva Wythenshawe site. They have commenced recruitment of key mobilisation and operational roles and will shortly launch a campaign to recruit drivers and engineers. Metrolink are working with trade union officials and employees, via the outgoing operators, regarding the TUPE process.
- 2.17. The acquisition of the final Tranche 3 area depot in Sharston is in the final stages and we have commenced the design for the electrification of Hyde Road and Ashton (Tameside) which will be operational ahead of 5th January 2025. Stockport and TfGM officers continue to work closely to deliver the new Zero Emission Bus fleet depot in Stockport.

3. Metrolink Operations

- 3.1. The reliability of Metrolink services has been consistently very good, which has helped to increase passenger numbers to above pre-Covid levels. Passenger satisfaction levels are also high with the most recent surveys showing 91% of passengers are satisfied with the service.
- 3.2. Surveys also show increasing perceptions that Metrolink represents value for money, with 64% of passengers responding positively. Metrolink fares have been frozen since 2020, and the introduction of the Bee Network App now enables the purchase of multi modal bus and tram tickets with a 20% saving, offering even better value for money.
- 3.3. In January, Metrolink increased tram capacity between Piccadilly and the Etihad, in anticipation of the launch of the Coop Live Arena. This increase helped cater for increased demand both for football matches and the busy schedule of concerts and events that are now taking place at the new venue. Additional trams have also been added on the Ashton line to support the evening peak.

- 3.4. In an innovative partnership between TfGM and Co-op Live, Metrolink and shuttle bus travel has been included in the event ticket for the opening season of the venue (to end of July 2024). This has successfully supported the launch of Co-op Live, with over 200,000 passengers carried to and from the Etihad campus for events so far. Feedback from customers and partners has been very positive. Discussions are ongoing with a view to extending this initial integrated ticketing offer for future events.
- 3.5. Following the opening of Co-op Live, a significant number of other major events across GM, and continuing the trend of increasing levels of patronage on the network, Metrolink had its busiest ever month in May, with patronage reaching 4.1 million journeys in the month. Overall Metrolink revenue is showing year on year growth of 17%.
- 3.6. However, Metrolink has not been without some challenges. A track fault earlier this year resulted in a suspension of service between Victoria and Exchange Square, with services through Oldham reduced in frequency. This issue was resolved at the start of May and the 6-minute service restored on the Oldham line.
- 3.7. The most significant issues impacting on Metrolink performance in recent periods were an overhead line issue on the Altrincham Line caused by a construction vehicle near to Old Trafford cricket ground, and a number of road traffic collisions blocking the tracks on the Ashton Line.
- 3.8. Work has commenced to restore the escalator at Bury interchange, which saw a large number of complaints in recent months as flooding resulted in major damage.
- 3.9. A programme of Metrolink renewal and improvement works is planned for the city centre throughout the summer to safeguard the continued good performance and strengthen the resilience of the network.

4. Safety and Security

- 4.1. Tackling network anti-social behaviour, crime and fare evasion remains a key focus. TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers (TSEOs) are now deployed across the franchised bus network, interchanges and bus stations. In May alone TSEOs attended 425 incidents, submitted 62 intelligence reports and dealt with 60 safeguarding incidents. TSEOs boarded almost 4,000 buses, checking over 56,000 passenger tickets.

- 4.2. Further TSEO recruitment is taking place, in advance of franchising arriving in Tranche 3. These staff will supplement existing teams and provide enhanced security and protection in bus interchanges.
- 4.3. Since September 2023, an additional 50 Customer Service Representatives were also recruited on Metrolink, dedicated to tackling fare evasion and providing support to customers. This measure has been extremely effective in driving down fare evasion, which reduced from a post-Covid high of nearly 17% to approximately 10%, and although there is more to do, passengers have greatly appreciated the additional staff presence.
- 4.4. A recent passenger survey on Metrolink has shown an increase in passengers feeling safe on the network. 75% of passengers now feel safe on board trams during hours of darkness (up from 71%) and 73% of passengers feel safe on stops (up from 68%).
- 4.5. These results are welcome, and TfGM will be seeking to improve perceptions further still. In the coming months we will be continuing our programme of joint operations between Operators and GMP, including and “Operation AVRO”, a high profile policing operation, dedicated to the transport, in July.
- 4.6. In May we added GMP Live Chat to the Bee Network app, enabling customers to report any safety concerns and we have plans to promote it and improve its prominence over the coming months.

5. Active Travel

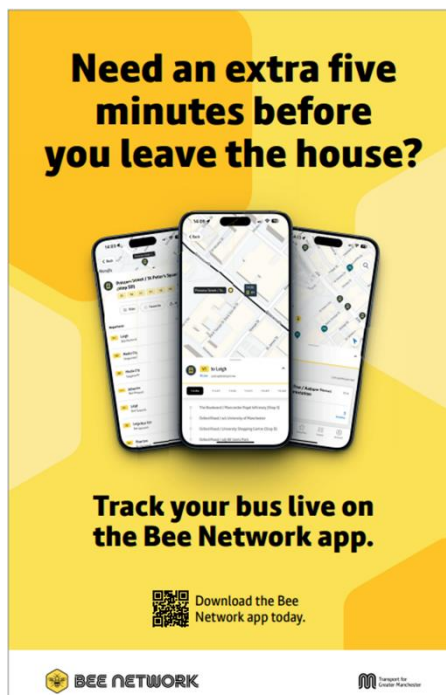
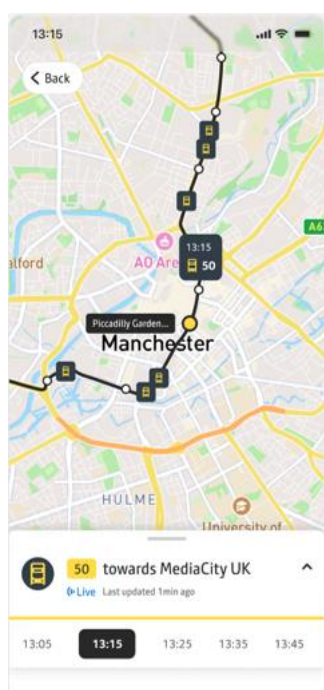
- 5.1. Providing people with the opportunity to walk, wheel or cycle is fundamental to the Bee Network, helping people move around Greater Manchester in different ways, particularly for short trips or giving barrier free access to public transport stops.
- 5.2. Delivery of Bee Active Network schemes across Greater Manchester continues with the third phase of the Bee Network Crossings Programme, which has delivered new and upgraded crossings at 9 sites across Bolton, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford.
- 5.3. Other works include delivery of the Trafford Borough Council’s Talbot Road scheme - a junction upgrade linked to a wider set of improvements for the A56 corridor, which is planned for completion in June 2024; and Manchester City Council ’s

Northern and Eastern Gateway scheme, which is progressing through a phased delivery, with a number of early phases complete.

- 5.4. As well as dedicated active travel schemes, inclusion of active travel in the wider infrastructure programme being delivered is embedded through the Streets for All design guide and the infrastructure design assurance process.
- 5.5. In January Starling Bank were announced as the first sponsor of Greater Manchester's cycle hire scheme. The partnership represented TfGM's biggest commercial sponsorship in its history. The Starling Bank branding continues to be rolled out across the scheme and is nearing completion.
- 5.6. Starling Bank Bikes continues to operate well with over 790,000 rides taking place using the scheme. The recovery plan put in place last year has made excellent progress. Over 1,100 bikes are now regularly available with an average of over 1,400 rides taking place each day. Continuing the delivery of the recovery plan 48 of stations closed during the delivery of the recovery plan have now been re-opened.
- 5.7. 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.
- 5.8. 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.
- 5.9. 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 brought to the Bee Network Committee in the autumn with recommendations on next steps.

6. Wider Bee Network Delivery and Operation

- 6.1. To coincide with the start of Tranche 2 of bus franchising, and following feedback from customers, new functionality was added to the Bee Network app. The new features include journey planning and live bus tracking.
- 6.2. Bus Tracking supports people when waiting for the bus by showing the location of that service on a map using the GPS tracker on the vehicle.



- 6.3. On average 20,000 people are using the app every day to track their bus and over 6 million buses have been tracked so far.
- 6.4. Improvements have also been made to our real time stops and departures information to make the predicted arrival time of buses more accurate. This, alongside bus tracking, is helping customers with better live travel information.
- 6.5. Journey Planning has also been added supporting new and existing customers wanting to check how to get to a destination using public transport or active travel. This covers bus, tram, train and bike hire alongside park and rides and active travel. Over 1.2m journeys have been planned since launch.
- 6.6. Supporting Greater Manchester's leisure economy and major events is a key focus. A bespoke bus shuttle service for Manchester City FC games went live in February, with usage above expectations, and was well received by match going fans. Discussions are taking place to continue the shuttle service into the 2024/25

season, and several other local clubs wish to explore the potential of providing match day travel for their fans as well.

- 6.7. In addition, Metrolink carried 126,00 people on the day of the Manchester Marathon and Manchester City Parade and shuttle buses and Metrolink supported Parklife festival in June, with event tickets sold on the Bee Network app for the first time to make it simpler for customers. Planning for additional events taking place over the busy summer months is at advanced stages.
- 6.8. There have been some price rises by commercial operators, but TfGM have held the fares across bus and Metrolink.
- 6.9. Stockport's new, state-of-the-art, transport interchange and rooftop park opened to the public in mid-March. The new facility is the first phase of the transformational regeneration of Stockport Town Centre West. The interchange features 18 bus stands allowing up to 164 departures an hour, residential apartments, a two-acre park, recently named as Viaduct Park, a spiral active travel ramp and new walking and cycling links to the railway station and the town centre.

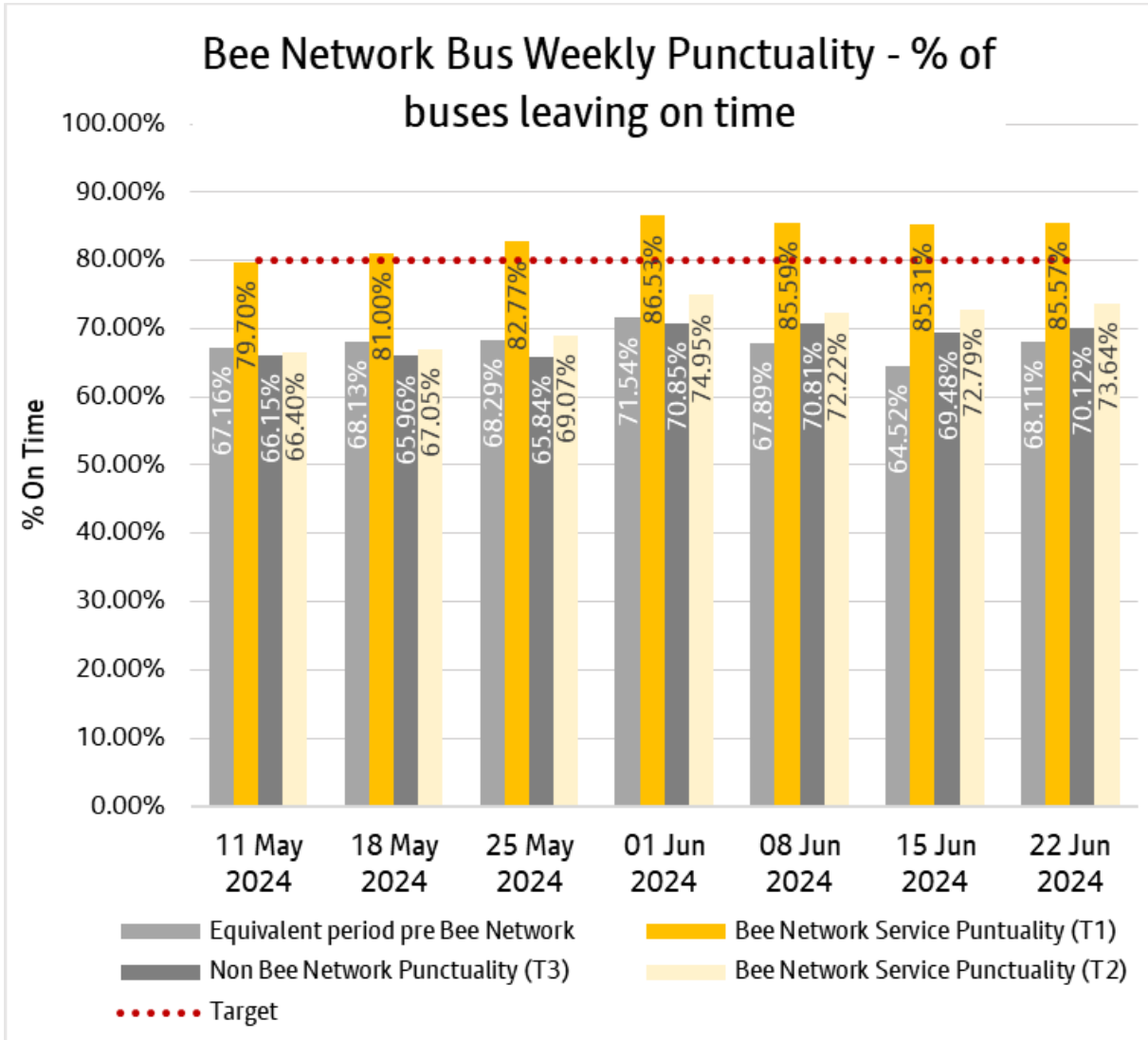
7. Continuing to Deliver

- 7.1. Looking ahead there are a multitude of other schemes and initiatives planned for delivery in the coming months. Highlights include:
 - Development of a refreshed 2040 Transport Strategy – GM's statutory local transport plan;
 - Publication of a draft Rapid Transit Strategy setting out the future of Metrolink and rapid transit in the city region;
 - A roadmap to integrate local rail services into the Bee Network by 2028;
 - Continuation of the work on the six city centre rail stations and Stockport rail station regeneration and development work.
 - Working with the rail industry and central government to deliver a new station in Cheadle as part of the Towns Fund Scheme.
 - Finalising the case for the roll out of the fares and ticket pilot on the Glossop and Stalybridge lines – delivery expected by the end of 2025.
 - Making the case for Greater Manchester's high speed rail ambitions, including the establishment of a Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board;
 - Initiatives to tackle network crime, anti-social behaviour and fare evasion;
 - Further plans for simpler and more affordable fares and ticketing;

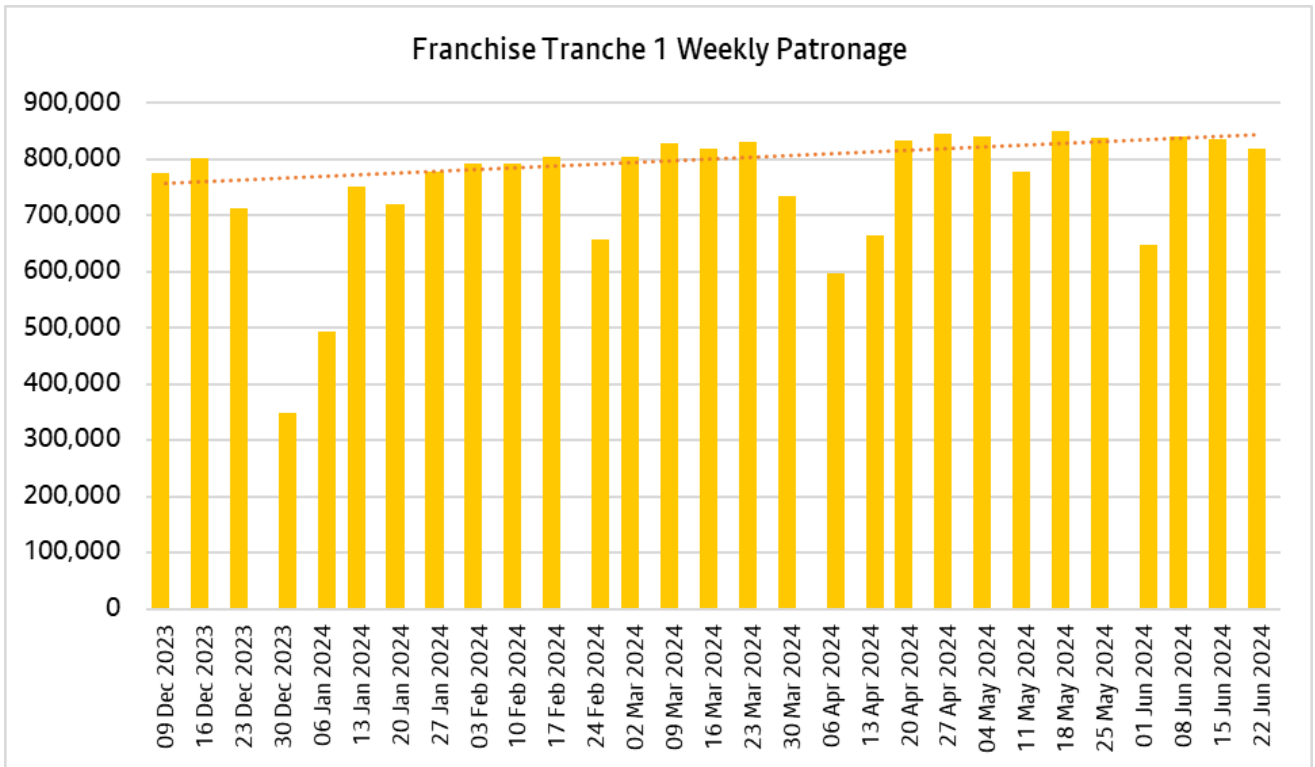
- Further Bee Network app improvements including promotion of active travel options and continuous improvements made to Bus Tracking and Journey Planning features;
- Development of a Vision Zero Action Plan to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on GM roads;
- Highways measures to tackle congestion including red routes, a Roadworks Charter and lane rental scheme;
- Infrastructure delivery, including road and junction improvements, active travel schemes and bus priority measures;
- Submission of planning applications for a new rail station at Golborne and a new southern access for Bury Interchange;
- Completion of the cycle hire recovery plan and looking to extend the cycle hire scheme further in GM;
- Further delivery of the Bee Active Network, including corridors, crossings and junction improvements to support more walking, wheeling, and cycling;
- A plan to deliver School Streets and school crossings to enable more children to walk, wheel or cycle to school; with 100 School Streets to be delivered by 2028;
- Delivery of electric vehicle charging points and a plan for a zero-emission bus fleet;
- Proposals for a 24hr bus pilot - with a view to have a network of night bus services serving all 10 GM local authority areas by 2028;
- Identifying the next steps following the 'Bikes on Metrolink' pilot;
- Network Reviews to integrate and enhance Bee Network services;
- Implementation of the final Tranche (Tranche 3) of bus franchising in Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and remaining parts of Manchester and Salford;
- Delivery of step free access at Daisy Hill and Irlam stations, and Dementia Awareness Training for all frontline staff, to support an accessible and inclusive transport network; and
- Exploration of how the MBacc (Greater Manchester Baccalaureate) – a new technical education pathway can provide a 'Bee Network pathway' for those who want to work in public transport.

Appendix 1 – Franchised Bus Performance Data

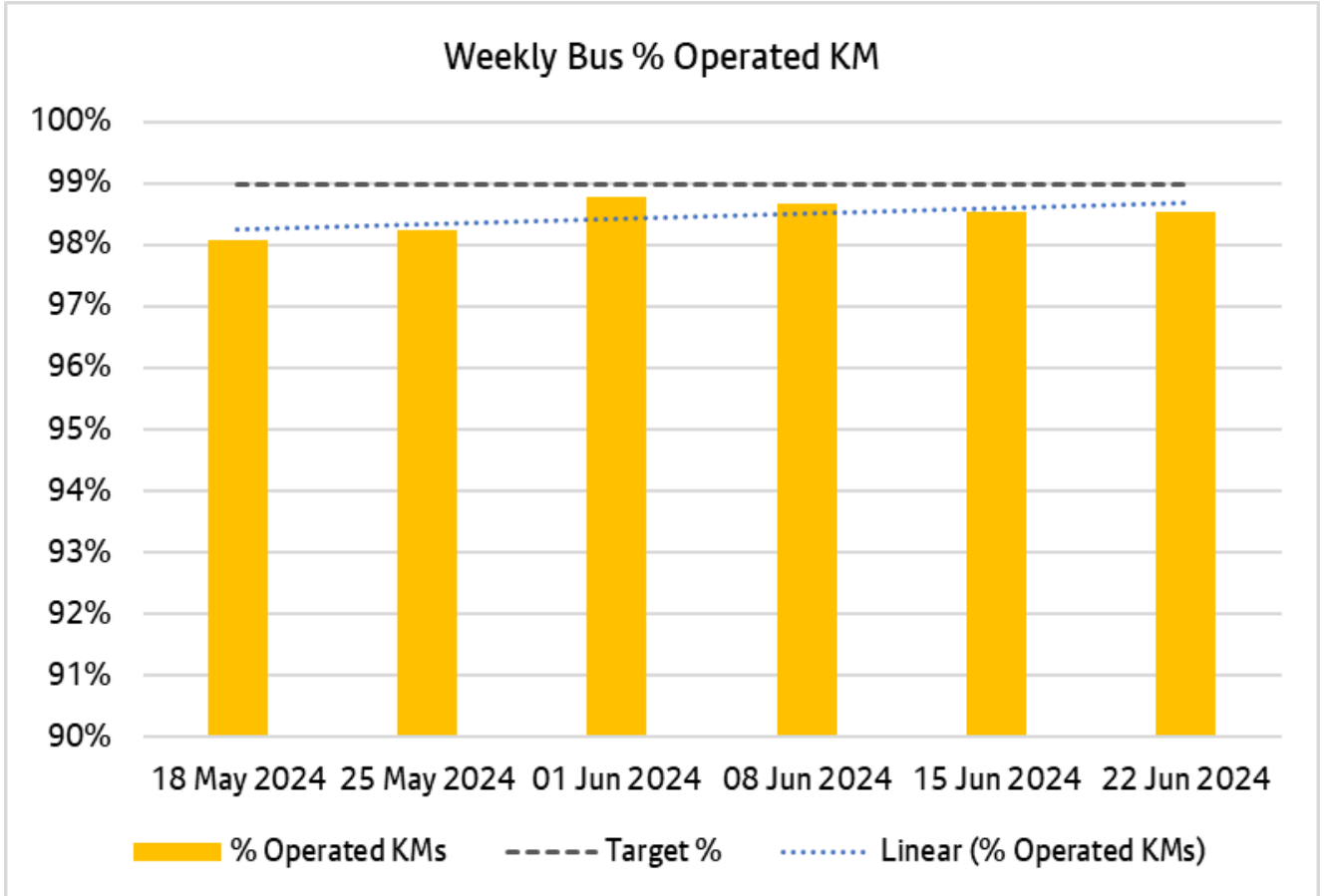
Tranche 1 and 2 – Punctuality



Tranche 1 – Patronage

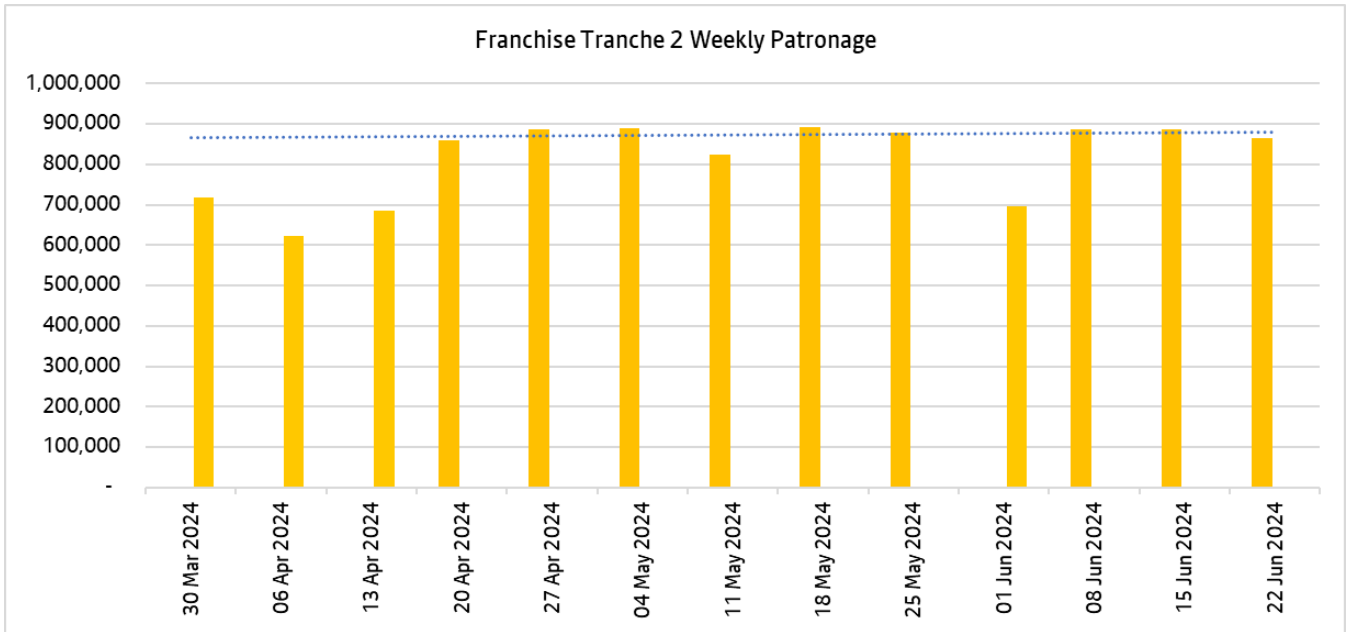


Tranche 1 – Operated KMs*

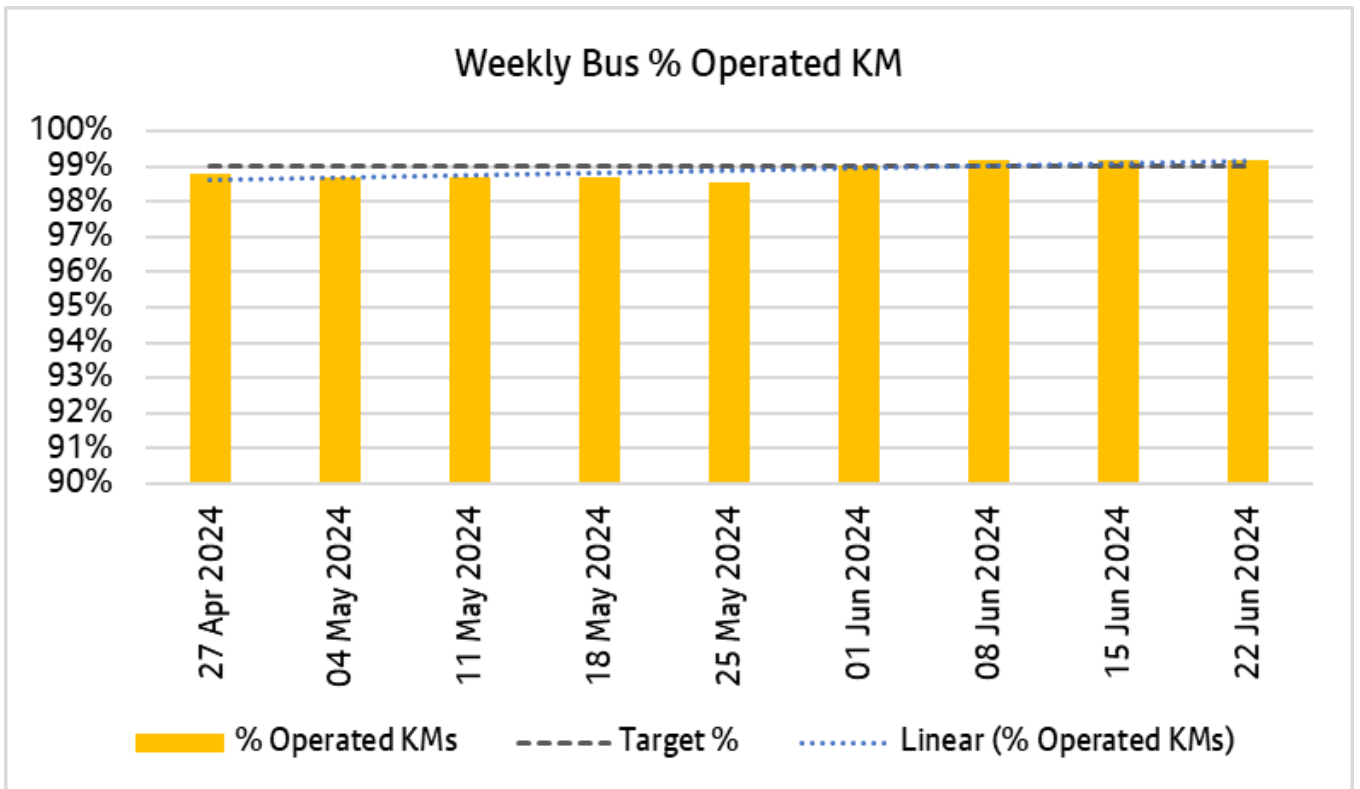


*Operated kilometres are provided by the bus operators

Tranche 2 - Patronage



Tranche 2 - Operated KMs*



*Operated kilometres are provided by the bus operators

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Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 25th July 2024

Subject: Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy –
Trains, Trams, Busways and Beyond for the Bee Network

Report of: Martin Lax, Transport Strategy Director, TfGM

Purpose of Report

This report asks member to note and comment on the draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy, a sub-strategy of the 2040 Transport Strategy, and summarises its contents – including how fast and frequent mass transit will support the integrated Bee Network.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to note and comment on the draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy, approved by GMCA subject to feedback from this committee.

Contact Officers

Martin Lax	Transport Strategy Director, TfGM	Martin.Lax@tfgm.com
Luke Bramwell	Head of Rapid Transit Development, TfGM	Luke.Bramwell@tfgm.com

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The GMCA is requested to, noting the positive impacts for equalities, carbon and sustainability:

1. Approve the draft of the Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy and the commencement of a period of engagement as part of the wider engagement on refreshing our Local Transport Plan.
2. Note any recommendations or feedback from the Bee Network Committee.

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	Includes improving safety & security and their perception (an issue for women and girls esp. at night) and accessibility (an issue for disabled people). Metrolink Phase 3, an exemplar of rapid transit, provided the following >10% door-to-door improvement in public transport access for the following proportions of the GM population: 18.2% for employment (rising 30.5% of the 10% most deprived communities); 18.8% further education (27.7%); 19.8% for healthcare (29.5%). Publishing the draft strategy is intended to allow a period of engagement on its contents (timescales to be set by the wider timescales for preparing the next statutory GM Local Transport Plan). There is not yet a discernible community cohesion aspect.
Health	G	Metrolink Phase 3 was estimated for the financial year 2019/20 to have removed 3.2 million car trips and 38.8 million car kilometres from the roads, equating to the removal of 12.8 tonnes of NOx nitrous oxides. The greatest mode share for accessing rapid transit stops and stations is for walking, wheeling and cycling: rapid transit promotes regular active travel. The draft strategy includes a section on considering how active travel infrastructure and services could be co-delivered with rapid transit. Evidence from the Wythenshawe-specific evaluation showed strong evidence that Metrolink Phase 3 had enhanced the social experiences of residents and Metrolink has had strong off-peak (shopping, leisure) traffic from day one and has Concessionary arrangements in place - all contributing to lessening social isolation. Rapid transit has less relevance than (say) deliveries, local provision, or bus and active travel to access food services. Draft strategy covers reopening disused spaces at stations for community hubs.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	The draft strategy contains sections on asset resilience, safety & security, healthy travel and environmental commitments. Overall, the draft strategy aims at the 2040 'Right Mix' and 2038 carbon neutral target. Whilst the draft strategy has proposals for new and improved infrastructure, which would consider resilience and adaptation in relation to disruption in its design, this would come through at a plan or individual scheme level. Measures on NOx and CO2 for Metrolink Phase 3 are given above in 'Health' and below in 'Carbon, Nature and Environment' respectively. The draft strategy sets out TfGM's commitment to PAS 2080. The draft strategy contains a section on the TravelSafe Partnership and overall safety and security including crime and antisocial behaviour. Whilst green and blue infrastructure would be addressed in plans and individual schemes, the draft strategy has no discernible impact at this stage.
Housing	G	Whilst the strategy emphasises the importance of land use planning and bringing forward residential density around rapid transit stops and stations, there is no discernible impact directly on homelessness at this stage. The draft strategy contains sections on density, and statistics on Metrolink Phase 3's contribution to door-to-door improvements in accessibility have been given in sections above. However, house price increases around rapid transit stops and stations have been recorded. The draft strategy contains a section on community uses for underused rapid transit buildings (e.g. parts of stations) and housing around stops and stations, including a new vehicle to make use of underused rail land, and density targets. The draft strategy contains sections on new stops and stations to serve new-build residential developments including those as part of Places for Everyone.

Economy	G	<p>The draft strategy's core aims and objectives involve improving economic development, including improving transport connectivity to growth locations, and contains many possible options that would lead to direct employment (e.g. construction) and then better access to employment. It is anticipated that any jobs eventually created (particularly in any rapid transit construction) would be 'good jobs' and that better rapid transit would attract 'good jobs'. GM's growth locations themselves embody an industrial strategy regarding innovation, R&D and the knowledge economy. Metrolink is thought to have played a part in inward investment in GM, but as acknowledged by the Phase 3 evaluation, direct evidence / linkages are difficult - statistics on employment and education accessibility have been given above. The draft strategy contains a section on underused land and buildings at stations.</p>
Mobility and Connectivity	G	<p>Whilst the rapid transit network can be used to route digital connectivity trunk cabling, and the draft strategy covers fares and ticketing, the actions here are largely in hand through existing activity including the Bee Network. The draft strategy reflects the Bee Network customer commitment to affordability but is not specific regarding this. The draft strategy's core aims and objectives cover provision of new transport links (Metrolink's statistics regarding removal of car-kilometres from roads have been given above) to improve connectivity (inc. Regional Centre, wider city-region, and growth locations) and provide an attractive alternative to driving in pursuit of the 'Right Mix' vision of accommodating GM's growth with zero net growth in motor vehicle traffic. The draft strategy outlines improving availability and access to trains, trams and busway, with supporting active travel and TfGM's 'Travel Hubs' approach for rapid transit stops and stations which involves wider consideration of the first and last mile including shared transport. Whilst some potential proposals for new/extended/converted rapid transit lines could involve roadspace, the draft strategy places its main emphasis on making better use of existing infrastructure (including extending and joining it), limiting the potential impacts. The draft strategy sets out the aim to develop and procure 'Next Generation Vehicles' for Metrolink, as well as working with the rail industry on de-carbonising rolling stock and replacing the busway fleet with zero emission buses.</p>
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	<p>Metrolink Phase 3 estimates in regard to NOx are given above under the Health section, as an example of what rapid transit expansion can achieve. Rapid transit schemes may produce emissions, run-off, light pollutants, noise pollutants, impacts on natural carbon sinks and visual amenity - but the draft strategy is at a high level and any schemes brought forward would be expected to be designed to relevant environmental standards (and subject to EIA in some cases) to mitigate these impacts. Standards in place for Biodiversity Net Gain mean that the overall impact of any infrastructure schemes that eventually flow from the draft strategy would be expected to be positive. It is anticipated that given the door-to-door public transport accessibility improvements described above for Metrolink Phase 3, that rapid transit proposals would improve the local community's access to greenspace. Measures such as dogs on trams have further improved this situation. Metrolink Phase 3 was estimated for the financial year 2019/20 to have removed 3.2 million car trips and 38.8 million car kilometres from the roads (6,700 tonnes of CO2 equivalent) as an example of rapid transit's potential. The draft strategy sets out TfGM's commitment to PAS 2080.</p>
Consumption and Production	G	<p>Building more rapid transit infrastructure would result in construction waste, however the draft strategy is a not a plan or scheme proposal. No discernible impact at this stage. There are no discernible impacts on current or future reuse or recycling rates at this stage. With regard to resource efficiency, the draft strategy sets out an approach to making the best use of our existing infrastructure and states TfGM's commitment to PAS 2080 (as a proxy). No discernible impact on level of single-use plastics and packaging.</p>

<p>Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target</p>	<p>The draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy has as part of its core aims (see "Our vision for rapid transit" and "Why there's a case for change") both the Right Mix vision and the 2038 Carbon Neutral target itself. The potential for carbon emission reductions achievable by rapid transit is illustrated in statistics given for Metrolink Phase 3 above in 'Carbon, Nature and Environment) - estimated for the financial year 2019/20 to have removed 3.2 million car trips and 38.8 million car kilometres from the roads (6,700 tonnes of CO2 equivalent). The draft strategy acknowledges embodied carbon and sets out TfGM's commitment to PAS 2080. Climate change mitigation measures held in asset plans (i.e. at a plan level rather than the draft strategy level).</p>		
<p>Further Assessment(s):</p>	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment and Carbon Assessment</p>		
<p>G Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.</p>	<p>A Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.</p>	<p>R Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.</p>	<p>RR Negative impacts overall.</p>

<h2>Carbon Assessment</h2>				
<h3>Overall Score</h3>				
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation		
New Build residential	N/A	N/A - the draft strategy contains sections on new stops and stations to serve new-build residential developments (including those as part of Places for Everyone) and a section regarding housing around stops and stations (including a new vehicle to make use of underused rail land, and density targets) - but these are at a high level.		
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A			
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A	The draft strategy contains a section on community uses for underused rapid transit buildings (e.g. parts of stations) - but this is at a high level.		
<h3>Transport</h3>				
Active travel and public transport		See Impacts Questionnaire, particularly the sections 'Health' for active travel in relation to rapid transit and 'Mobility and Connectivity' for public transport and shared transport in relation to rapid transit.		
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A			
Access to amenities		See Impacts Questionnaire, particularly the sections 'Health' for active travel in relation to rapid transit and 'Mobility and Connectivity' for public transport and shared transport in relation to rapid transit.		
Vehicle procurement		The draft strategy sets out the intention to develop and procure Metrolink 'Next Generation Vehicles' with tram-train capability, to work with the rail industry on rolling stock replacement and to replace the busway fleet with zero-emission buses.		
<h3>Land Use</h3>				
Land use	N/A			
No associated carbon impacts expected.	High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

Risk Management

At a strategic level, to not have a published Rapid Transit Strategy would risk constraining the future growth of Greater Manchester by failing to articulate the overall case for investment in the rapid transit system – both to provide adequate capacity for background growth and to stimulate further growth through improved connectivity.

Legal Considerations

There are no legal considerations specifically arising from this Report. In due course, if adopted, the realisation of the Strategy will require detailed proposals to be brought forward, at which time there will be specific legal considerations.

The original Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 was the subject of an Integrated Assessment, covering matters such as Strategic Environmental Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment. It is anticipated that the contents of the draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy will ultimately form part of a refreshed 2040 Transport Strategy and a refreshed Integrated Assessment.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy is not a costed or funded delivery plan. The document contains sections dealing with financial and funding considerations in broad terms. Financial consequences in terms of revenue for the ongoing work programme in support of the draft strategy's aims are managed through annual budgets.

Financial Consequences – Capital

The draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy is not a costed or funded delivery plan. The document contains sections dealing with financial and funding considerations in broad terms. Financial consequences in terms of capital for the ongoing work programme in support of the draft strategy's aims are managed through Transport Capital Programme submissions.

Number of attachments to the report: 1

The draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

The draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy is a sub-strategy to the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 (the 2040 Strategy) and is aligned with our Right Mix vision; Our Five-Year Transport Delivery Plan (2021-26) and other sub-strategies including the Greater Manchester Bus Strategy. It is also closely aligned with the Bee Network vision, the Greater Manchester Strategy and our growth locations.

Tracking / Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

Yes

Exemption from call in

N/A

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Greater Manchester is building the Bee Network, an integrated transport system that will support delivery of sustainable growth across the city-region.
- 1.2 With the buses being brought under local control and into the [Bee Network](#) from September 2023, this first phase of the Bee Network will be complete in 2025. Local train services are then to be brought into the Bee Network in a second phase by 2028. Looking beyond this to 2040, the [Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040](#) sets out how transport is an enabler of sustainable economic and housing growth in support of the [Greater Manchester Strategy](#).
- 1.3 Rapid transit (fast and frequent mass transit, that today in GM includes suburban train services, tram services, and busway services) must play its role alongside other public transport services and active travel as a key part of the Bee Network.
- 1.4 Some scheme development work, including that on prioritisation of expansion options (new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines) is shaped by the draft strategy. Publishing the draft strategy is therefore an important step towards our City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 1 (CRSTS 1) Delivery Plan commitment of “Development of a Powers application for one scheme and pre-Powers development for two schemes” (i.e. 3 schemes proposed to be taken forward, with one of these to Powers, in addition to the tram-train Pathfinder) with CRSTS1 funding allocated for this development activity to March 2027.
- 1.5 As part of the ongoing work to prepare the next statutory GM Local Transport Plan, the draft strategy will also play a key role in shaping the rapid transit elements of the refreshed 2040 Strategy and the next Five Year Delivery Plan (2027-32).
- 1.6 Publishing the draft strategy now therefore provides the strongest foundation to move rapid transit policy, strategy, development and delivery work on forward at pace in line with our statutory commitments for the GM Local Transport Plan and our CRSTS1 Delivery Plan commitments.
- 1.7 Publishing the draft strategy now provides a full and transparent update to a wider audience, with both the progress made to date and the next steps – including engagement on the draft strategy – set out.

2. Structure, purpose and content of the draft strategy

2.1 The structure of the draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit 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;
- c.15 emerging priorities for expansion of the rapid transit system;
- next steps.

2.2 The draft strategy, with its contents ultimately being adopted via the process to create the next statutory GM Local Transport Plan, will support Transport for Greater Manchester in planning its work. This will be achieved by having a document that:

- informs decisions on prioritisation;
- underpins our case to government and external organisations, including those that make up the rail industry;
- can be referred to as part of the planning and policy case when promoting schemes.

2.3 The draft strategy is not a costed or funded delivery plan and its full ambitions would require significant funding to be delivered. Plans will come forward over time to support implementation of the strategy, for example, concerning integration of rail into the Bee Network.

2.4 The draft strategy is built upon the network principles of the 2040 Strategy and our Bee Network Customer Commitments.

2.5 The draft strategy addresses **sustaining**, **integrating** and **improving** rapid transit so that it is:

- well-maintained, resilient and reliable;
- environmentally responsible, healthy and sustainable;
- safe, secure, accessible and inclusive.

This includes steps already in hand as part of the Bee Network to 2025 – including the integration of information, fares, ticketing and operating hours between tram and bus. It also includes interim milestones towards bringing rail into the Bee Network, such as the pay-as-you-go contactless ticketing pilot in 2025.

2.6 **Growing** rapid transit coverage and patronage is described by the draft strategy:

- addressing mounting capacity challenges on Metrolink with a fleet of longer, walkthrough 'next generation vehicles' with tram-train capability;
- working with the rail industry on train and platform lengthening, and remaining responsive to demand on the busway;
- developing and delivering new stops and stations – and improving our existing ones, including with access for all and better first and last mile connections;
- working to improve key links that knit together the existing rapid transit system.

2.7 The draft strategy also looks to a future beyond this by **transforming** rapid transit:

- **Rail integration:** Significant progress is being made on rail integration. To facilitate the delivery of the 8 priority corridors by 2028 (Wigan via Bolton; Wigan via Atherton; Wigan via Golborne; Airport; Alderley Edge and Buxton via Stockport; Glossop, Hadfield and Rose Hill Marple via Guide Bridge; Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge; Rochdale) we have developed with the rail industry a collective understanding of Bee Network rail integration. The proposition for this is included in the draft strategy, to facilitate further detailed implementation plans coming forward.
- **System expansion:** The draft strategy presents a principles-based prioritisation of options for new, extended and converted rapid transit lines, with c.15 emerging priorities identified for rapid transit system expansion. These include the Mayoral Manifesto prioritisation of plans for Heywood, Middleton, Stockport along with building a business case for Bolton working with government, and complementary priorities. These options include introduction of tram-train services to join up the light and heavy rail networks, and potential major new tunnelled capacity.

2.8 All of the above is in support of the current Right Mix vision which anticipates more than doubling rapid transit trips by 2040. This is within a context of 10% population growth in that period, our city-region's commitments to be carbon neutral by 2038 with improved air quality and biodiversity, and the need to transform opportunities for all and respond to our growth locations. Ultimately, the draft strategy's contents are in support of the Greater Manchester Strategy's vision.

3. Engagement

- 3.1 This is a draft strategy, and its further development will benefit from hearing a wide range of opinions on what our future rapid transit network should look like.
- 3.2 A key next step is therefore commencement of wider engagement on the contents of the draft strategy through 2024, including targeted engagement sessions to help shape its final contents. These sessions will be planned in consideration of the wider engagement work on the next GM Local Transport Plan. They will take place:
- with groups of people who could be affected in different ways by the contents of the draft strategy (for example, the Disability Design Reference Group);
 - with business (for example, the Business Transport Advisory Council);
 - with government (for example, the Department for Transport);
- 3.3 This engagement process will continue as our plans evolve in support of the strategy, including consideration of place-based and community approaches.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 Work as part of the CRSTS1 Delivery Plan in support of the draft strategy's aims will continue. Much of this work concerns schemes 'in flight' (such as Golborne Station, Access for All, Bury Interchange Redevelopment and Metrolink Next Generation Vehicles / Tram-Train Pathfinder); these schemes are reflected in the draft strategy and included in wider masterplanning activities.
- 4.2 With regard to **rail integration**, agreeing our long-term partnership with the rail industry which embeds local accountability for our rail network.
- 4.3 With regard to **system expansion**, further detailed prioritisation will take place during 2024 of the c.15 emerging priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines to sequence a potential future expansion programme, alongside ongoing business case development, working with local authorities to space-save for potential future routes in Local Plans, and planning for capacity in the regional centre and network optimisation.



Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy

Trams, trains, busways
and beyond for the
Bee Network



BEE NETWORK



Transport for
Greater Manchester

Contents

Foreword	3
Executive summary	4
A trip on our future rapid transit system	9
Our vision for rapid transit	11
What is rapid transit?	11
Our ambitions.....	12
Why there's a case for change	14
Tackling inequalities.....	14
Delivering opportunities for good growth.....	16
Meeting our environmental commitments	17
Rapid transit – the story so far	19
Complementing rapid transit.....	20
What we need	21
A seamless network	21
Room to grow.....	22
Accountability.....	22
How we'll seek to deliver better rapid transit	24
Sustaining our rapid transit system: well-maintained, resilient and reliable	25
Integrating our rapid transit system: seamless and locally accountable	26
Improving our rapid transit system: environmentally responsible and healthy.....	34
Improving our rapid transit system: safe, secure, accessible and inclusive	36
Growing our rapid transit system: longer vehicles, more vehicles.....	38
Growing our rapid transit system: new stops and stations.....	40
Growing our rapid transit system: key connecting links in the Regional Centre	42
Transforming our rapid transit system: serving major centres away from existing lines	43
Transforming our rapid transit system: serving major centres on existing lines.....	44
Transforming our rapid transit system: a second rapid transit hub around the Airport.....	47
Transforming our rapid transit system: a step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity ..	48
Integrating rail into the Bee Network by 2028	50
Our expansion options	54
Prioritisation.....	54
A principles-based approach.....	54
Emerging priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines	55
Mapping the emerging priorities.....	62
Looking ahead – where we go next	68

Foreword

Greater Manchester is the country's fastest growing city region and has huge potential for further growth. However, like other UK cities, our economy is underperforming compared to our European peers. We need to better connect people, businesses and places to the opportunities that exist throughout Greater Manchester, supporting the future prosperity of the North and the UK.

We are committed to delivering a world-class, integrated transport system for Greater Manchester: the Bee Network. Rapid transit – public transport options like trams, trains and busways that are fast and frequent – form a critical part of this.

Greater Manchester is already a proven leader when it comes to developing and providing rapid transit. Metrolink, our light rail system, is the largest in the country with 99 stops across over 100km of track. Its yellow trams have now become an icon for our city region. The demand for new lines and extensions is testament to this success and reflects how the network has transformed since the very first line opened in 1992, with May 2024 being Metrolink's busiest month on record.

The Leigh–Salford–Manchester Busway is another clear example of our successful approach to rapid transit in action, carrying over two and a half million journeys per year and removing the need for around half a million car journeys.

Our rail network will play an important role in bringing the benefits of rapid transit to more of Greater Manchester and we are committed to bringing local rail services on eight corridors into the Bee Network by 2028. By bringing rail into the Bee Network, we will have a greater ability to improve the customer experience. Through investing in growing patronage we could, in time, reduce the subsidy required to support local rail services – helping to deliver a better service at a lower cost.

This draft strategy sets out our vision for rapid transit and how we'll aim to deliver it – both through sustaining and growing the existing system and transforming our services and infrastructure.

Developing and delivering new rapid transit requires time and significant funding. That will mean considering better use of existing funding, and new forms of funding. This draft strategy will support Transport for Greater Manchester to plan its work, extending rapid transit to more of Greater Manchester and helping create a fairer, greener and more prosperous city region.



Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

Executive summary

Greater Manchester (GM) is building the [Bee Network](#), an integrated transport system that will support sustainable travel across the city-region. With the first buses brought under local control from September 2023, we have now franchised 50% of the bus network. This has yielded ridership growth of 5% in the last 6 months through strongly improved reliability, customer service and fleet. All buses will be franchised, and the first phase of the Bee Network complete, in 2025.

Local train services are then to be brought into the Bee Network in a second phase, with 8 rail corridors integrated by 2028. Looking beyond this to 2040, the [Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040](#) sets out how transport is an enabler of sustainable economic and housing growth in support of the [Greater Manchester Strategy](#).

Purpose and structure

The Draft GM Rapid Transit Strategy sets out how better rapid transit (fast and frequent mass transit) is to play its role for the city-region alongside other public, active and shared modes as part of the Bee Network. As a sub-strategy flowing from the GM Transport Strategy 2040, the draft strategy complements and reinforces other published Bee Network family documents such as the [GM Streets for All Strategy](#) and the [GM Bus Strategy](#).

The draft strategy will help people to understand how the rapid transit system can be sustained and support GM growth to a horizon of 2030, and how the network could continue to be transformed to 2040 and beyond. The draft strategy will support Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) by informing decisions on prioritisation, underpinning our work with government and external organisations – including those that make up the rail industry – and setting out the background to our planning and policy case when promoting schemes.

As we refresh the GM 2040 Transport Strategy, the draft strategy will play a key role in shaping the next Five Year Delivery Plan (2027-32). For that reason – and also to ensure that rapid transit is part of a fully integrated Bee Network approach to refreshing the 2040 Strategy itself – this document is being published in draft so that it can form part of the wider engagement on this activity.

Work as part of our City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 1 (CRSTS1) Delivery Plan in relation to this draft strategy will continue. Much of this work concerns schemes ‘in flight’ – such as Metrolink Renewals, Metrolink Next Generation Vehicles / Tram-Train Pathfinder, Bury Interchange Redevelopment, Golborne Station, Access for All, and integration of 8 rail lines into the Bee Network by 2028. These schemes, and others, are all reflected in the draft strategy.

One key piece of scheme development work in relation to our CRSTS1 Delivery Plan – namely the planning for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines – is shaped by the draft strategy rather than simply being reflected in it. Our principles and emerging priorities for rapid transit network expansion are described.

This draft strategy therefore sets out the following, which are summarised below and overleaf:

- 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)
- integrating rail into the Bee Network by 2030, with 8 priority corridors by 2028
- c.15 emerging priorities for expansion of the rapid transit system
- next steps

Our vision for rapid transit

In GM, rapid transit is defined as a public transport service that is fast, frequent and capable of moving large numbers of people (mass transit). Throughout this draft strategy, 'rail-based rapid transit' includes suburban rail and metro services (today in GM, that means trains and trams) and 'bus-based rapid transit' includes busway services (today in GM, that means the 'V' bus services on the Leigh–Salford–Manchester busway). We also look ahead to a future where tram-train technology and underground technology play a role, by joining up the light and heavy rail networks and providing major new Regional Centre rapid transit capacity, respectively.

Rapid transit offers faster journeys with fewer stops than local buses, and more frequent services than inter-city and regional trains and coaches. However, it shouldn't be thought of as being separate with individual services, information, and fares and ticketing. It needs to be a seamless part of the Bee Network – integrated with other public transport and underpinned by active travel.

This draft strategy sets out the overall policy position for rapid transit as part of the Bee Network including the 'Right Mix' vision – **aiming to more than double rapid transit trips by 2040** – and our ambitions for a greener, fairer and more prosperous city-region in the context of:

- an approximately 10% population increase in that period
- our commitment to be carbon-neutral by 2038, and improved air quality and biodiversity
- transforming opportunities for all, and responding to GM's growth locations

Why there's a case for change

This draft strategy sets out the case for rapid transit playing its part in **tackling inequalities**. The case is made with reference to the Levelling Up White Paper, Centre for Cities research, and the National Infrastructure Assessment – which all show that a lack of infrastructure to get large numbers of people quickly to and from the centres of economic activity is a key factor limiting the productivity of city-regions including GM.

The argument for rapid transit's role in **delivering the opportunities for good growth** across GM is also made in relation to our growth locations – by having enough rapid transit capacity to accommodate growth in Regional Centre and town centre trips, and achieving a step change in connectivity with rapid transit taking a greater share of wider city-region trips.

Meeting our environmental commitments makes up the third part of the case for change, with rapid transit offering an attractive alternative to driving (and therefore tackling congestion and moving us towards the Right Mix vision and our carbon-neutrality target). The challenges and opportunities regarding embodied carbon and operational emissions are considered.

The success story of Metrolink from its opening in 1992 onward, the serious challenges faced by suburban rail in recent years, and the continual evolution of busway services including their integration into the Bee Network in 2023 all form part of the **story so far** for rapid transit.

Rapid transit can play an important role in orbital connectivity, with the **complementary role** of Quality and Express Bus services for some middle distance trips rounding out the case for change.

What we need, and how we'll seek to deliver it

In broad terms, we need three things for rapid transit:

- We need it to be part of a **seamless Bee Network**.
- We need **room to grow** because capacity is the single biggest challenge to our vision.
- We need it to work at its best, which is when it has local **accountability**.

In this draft strategy, we set out how we'll seek to deliver that by:

- **Sustaining, integrating and improving.**
 - Sustaining a well-maintained, resilient and reliable rapid transit system.
 - Integrating our rapid transit system within the Bee Network and the regional and national context, including the rail pay-as-you-go contactless ticketing pilot by 2025.
 - Continually improving our offer to customers in terms of the environment and health, safety and security, and accessibility and inclusion.
- **Growing.**
 - Addressing mounting capacity challenges on Metrolink with a fleet of longer 'next generation vehicles' that have tram-train capability, working with the rail industry on train and platform lengthening, and remaining responsive to demand on the busway.
 - Developing and delivering new rapid transit stops and stations, whilst improving our existing ones with access for all and better first and last mile connections.
 - Working to improve key links that knit together the existing rapid transit system.
- **Transforming.**
 - Integrating rail into the Bee Network by 2030, with 8 priority corridors by 2028.
 - Developing proposals for new, extended and converted rapid transit lines including tram-train technology, the Airport as a hub, and major Regional Centre capacity.

Integrating rail by 2028

Between now and 2028 rail integration delivery will focus on 8 priority corridors across GM. This will bring customer-facing improvements that align rail services with the Bee Network, including consistent branding, information, fares, accessibility, and station enhancements. This will deliver early realisation of customer benefits, create an environment for passenger growth and provide the first step in establishing a single cohesive recognisable 'Bee Network' product that incorporates rail.

Emerging priorities for rapid transit system expansion

The draft strategy presents a principles-based prioritisation of options for new, extended and converted rapid transit lines, with c.15 emerging priorities identified for rapid transit system expansion. These will be taken forward for further detailed prioritisation during 2024, alongside ongoing business case development and supporting activities.

Developing new, extended or converted rapid transit lines requires significant time and funding, so it is vital to prioritise the proposals to achieve our aim of a steady, rolling pipeline that builds up skills and moves them from scheme to scheme – driving efficiency and applying lessons learned.

Prioritising in this way allows us to focus our finite scheme development resources on those that would most effectively move us towards our vision. It also allow us to maintain a proper focus on the other key actions to sustain, grow and transform the rapid transit system that do not involve new, extended or converted rapid transit lines.

The emerging priorities are described in both text and map form, and are shown in the context of the 8 rail lines to be integrated into the Bee Network by 2028 and complementary Quality Bus routes.

Next steps

The draft strategy is not in itself a costed or funded delivery plan, and its fullest ambitions would require significant funding (including considering better use of existing funding, and new forms of funding) and statutory powers to be delivered. It is anticipated that a number of delivery plans (for example, concerning the full integration of rail into the Bee Network) will come forward over time to support implementation of the draft strategy. The main next steps are:

- **Wider engagement** on this draft strategy as part of our Local Transport Plan refresh, which itself starts with refreshing the GM Transport Strategy 2040 and is followed by the creation of the next Five Year Delivery Plan (covering 2027-2032).
- Further work on **future funding** arrangements, including as part of the Single Settlement and for the anticipated City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2 (CRSTS2) period 2027/28 to 2031/32 – with an indicative overall CRSTS2 allocation of £2.5 billion for GM, subject to further engagement and agreement with central government.

- Continued development and delivery of our **existing commitments** including those in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 1 (CRSTS1) Delivery Plan 2022/23 to 2026/27 that will **sustain** and **grow** our rapid transit system.
- Continuing work on **transforming** our rapid transit system:
 - Working with the rail industry to fully integrate rail into the Bee Network, including the key next step of agreeing our long-term partnership with the rail industry to embed local accountability for our rail network.
 - Development of the Metrolink Next Generation Vehicles and Tram-Train Pathfinder, which will be crucial to addressing capacity challenges and developing viable business cases for tram-train schemes on a larger scale respectively – unlocking future expansion of GM’s rapid transit system.
 - Further detailed prioritisation during 2024 of the c.15 emerging priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines, to sequence a potential future expansion programme – this is alongside ongoing business case development, working with local authorities to space-save for potential future routes in Local Plans, and planning for Regional Centre capacity and network optimisation.



A trip on our future rapid transit network

1

More Greater Manchester residents live a short walk from their nearest rapid transit stop or station. Housing developments are often completely integrated with rapid transit, and some developers have invested in the facilities.



2

Rapid transit stops and stations are easy to access for everyone. In particular, rail stations feel like part of the Bee Network, and step-free access to them has been transformed.



3

For those that live close enough, walking, wheeling and cycling are the main way to get to and from the rapid transit stops and stations – and there are excellent facilities to support this active travel. For those that live further away, local bus services and other first and last mile options are fully physically integrated with the stops and stations.



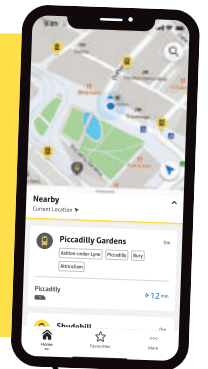
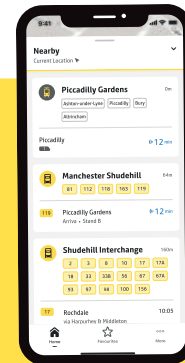
4

Tram and busway services have remained reliable and frequent, and reform has allowed suburban rail services to rise up to meet reliability and frequency standards across the day and week.



5

People can plan the best journey for them in one place – the Bee Network app and other journey planners – without having to think about the different modes of transport involved. They can purchase best value and flexible tickets before boarding.



6

The rapid transit service departs on time and is easy to board for everyone – with level boarding as is already standard on all tram services, and ramps and other devices provided as needed to bridge any gaps on busway and suburban rail services.



Cont. on next page.

A trip on our future rapid transit network

7

The rapid transit service makes swift progress on its route – faster than a local bus service – because it is mainly separated from general traffic, and is given priority at junctions. There is enough capacity for everyone to travel safely and comfortably, without excessive crowding.



8

A trip on a Bee Network rapid transit service feels safe at any time of day or night. Stops and stations are bright and well-lit. Frontline staff, including partnerships with the police, are on hand to help. CCTV and audio-visual announcements mean everyone can use rapid transit with confidence.

Transport for Greater Manchester

10

In the background, the Operational Control Centre is monitoring the network to keep passengers informed, taking decisions to keep tram and busway services on time, and working with partners to achieve the same for suburban rail services.



9

Changing from one rapid transit service to another during the journey is seamless, with the right infrastructure supported by information and signage to help passengers find their way. There are no worries about getting the best-value fare, because tickets are simple and multi-modal.

12

The rapid transit service arrives on time and passengers are able to change seamlessly to other local services - like buses and cycle hire - or walk or wheel to their destination. Using the Bee Network app, customers can rate their journey and provide immediate feedback on their experience.



11

All tram and busway services are zero-emission, and suburban rail is increasingly electrified – using overhead wires and batteries to move away from diesel.



Our vision for rapid transit

GM is building the Bee Network, an integrated transport system that will support sustainable travel across the city-region. Our overall vision is to have “World class connections that support long-term, sustainable economic growth and access to opportunity for all.”

In seeking to achieve our vision, the GM Transport Strategy 2040 sets out our ambition “To extend the benefits of rapid transit to more of GM and provide the capacity and reliability needed to support growth in the economy.” We will strive to deliver an enhanced rapid transit system that enables everyone to travel easily and affordably, that is safe, accessible, reliable and sustainable – and is an integrated and accountable part of the Bee Network.

Improved public transport is essential for increased productivity and economic growth, and better living standards. Here in GM, we need to invest in and expand the capacity and coverage of our rapid transit system to deliver greater access to jobs, education, healthcare, culture and leisure opportunities, to support healthy and active lifestyles, and to reduce carbon emissions.

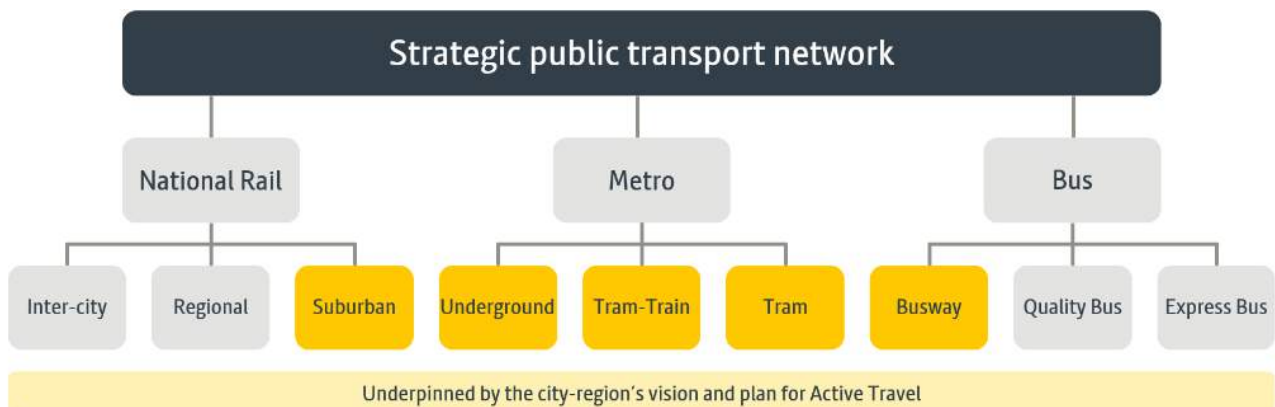
What is rapid transit?

In GM, rapid transit is a public transport service mainly focussed on middle distance trips that is:

- Faster than local bus services. Local bus services with closely spaced stops are good for serving shorter distance trips. For middle distance trips, faster journeys with fewer stops are critical.
- More frequent than city-to-city services. Inter-city and regional trains and coaches are good for serving longer distance trips. For middle distance trips, services need to run more frequently.
- Able to move large numbers of people. Rapid transit uses dedicated routeways, with a high degree of segregation, to serve major passenger flows concentrated on key corridors.

Throughout this draft strategy, we describe ‘rail-based rapid transit’ as including suburban rail and metro services, and ‘bus-based rapid transit’ as including busway services.

In the figure below, current and potential future rapid transit modes are shown highlighted in yellow, in the context of the wider strategic public transport and active travel network.



Our ambitions

Sustainable growth with the 'Right Mix'

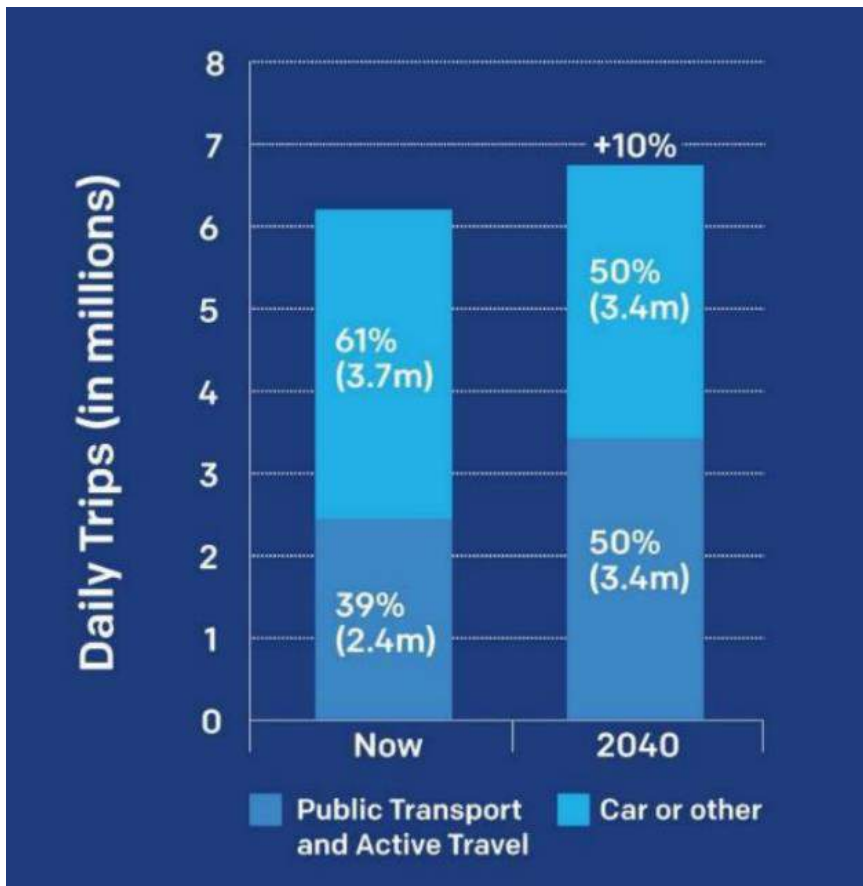
Since 2000, GM's population has grown by 300,000 to 2.8 million – and is expected to exceed 3 million by 2037. We need to accommodate that growth in a sustainable way.

By 2040 we want at least 50% of all journeys in GM to be made by active travel and public transport. That will mean one million more sustainable journeys every day enabling us to deliver a healthier, greener, and more productive city-region. This is our 'Right Mix' transport vision.

The Right Mix vision anticipates a much greater role for rapid transit, supporting a stronger Regional Centre and a step change increase in the use of rapid transit for wider city-region trips, including to and from thriving town centres. That will require the number of trips made by rapid transit to more than double by 2040 – with consequential increases in connecting active travel trips by walking, wheeling and cycling, and connecting public transport trips by bus.

Achieving the Right Mix would enable us to make progress towards reducing carbon emissions, with local authorities across the city-region having declared a Climate Emergency, and the aim being for the city-region to be completely carbon neutral by 2038.

Our Right Mix vision is currently being reviewed in the light of the longer term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial indications are that changes to working patterns may reduce growth in the travel-to-work peak but could also lead to more use of rapid transit for non-work trips.



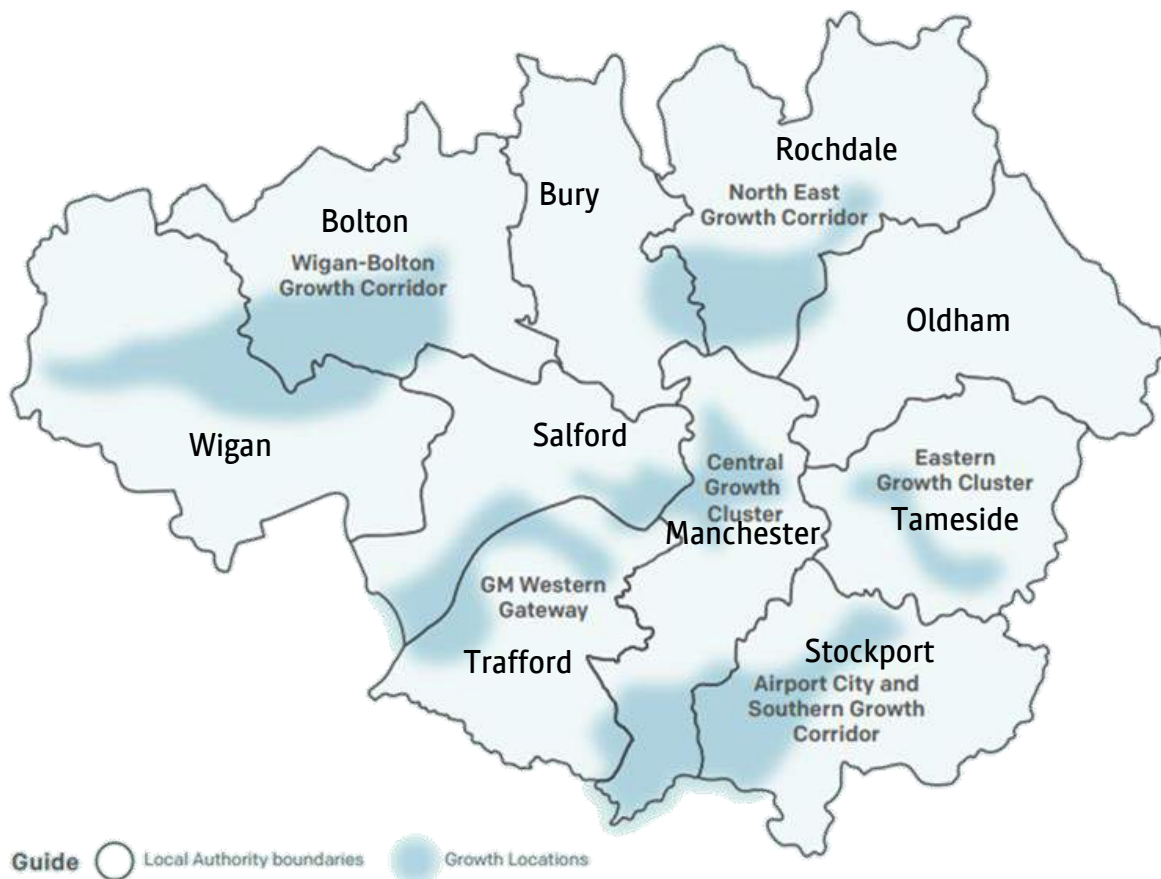
Transforming opportunities

As well as accommodating the sustainable growth of GM’s population, our ambition is for rapid transit to play a key role in transforming opportunities for everyone across our city-region. Over the last 30 years, improvements to our metro, suburban rail and busway services have connected people with jobs, education, healthcare, culture and leisure opportunities.

But there is much more to be done, in line with the Places for Everyone spatial plan and emerging Local Plans. The vast majority of growth will be within the existing urban area. In addition to this, Growth Locations represent opportunities for the whole city-region to bring forward housing and employment development at a scale which can drive the transformational change we want to see. By linking opportunity and need – and connecting investment and development – the growth locations offer a chance to realise improvements for communities and places which may not have benefited previously from economic development and growth, or where there is major scope to drive growth.

GM is a potential catalyst of substantial growth, supporting the future prosperity of the North and the UK. The city-region is home to large clusters of high-value jobs in advanced materials and manufacturing, health innovation, and digital, creative and media. To thrive and grow, these high productivity sectors need to be connected to a large pool of highly skilled labour.

Rapid transit needs to respond to and shape these opportunities, by ensuring that all our residents and communities are able to benefit from the opportunities that growth and increased economic prosperity brings – and ensuring that new development is supported by sustainable transport.



Why there's a case for change

Tackling inequalities

Addressing regional inequalities across the UK is a key priority. The 2022 White Paper, '[Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#)', highlights the role of cities as drivers of productivity. Currently, productivity in the UK's major cities outside of London lags international comparators, and a combination of lower population density and poorer public transport infrastructure are the root causes.

The White Paper set out that "The UK's second cities have generally lower population densities and relatively poor local transport infrastructures. Centre for Cities, for example, found that in Europe, on average, 67% of people can get to their local city centre in 30 minutes using public transport, compared with 40% in Britain. This suggests public transport in UK cities may limit productivity by reducing effective density and, as a result, agglomeration".

In recognition of this weakness, the White Paper sets out a mission that, by 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country and all transport networks in all major urban centres will be significantly closer to the standards of London – with improved services, simpler fares, and integrated ticketing.

'[Greater Manchester's productivity resurgence](#)' published by the Northern Powerhouse Partnership makes the case that "Greater Manchester is experiencing the beginning of a productivity resurgence, with analysis showing the city region's productivity growth outstripping that of comparable Northern cities and closing the gap with London. Evidence shows that income and productivity growth is being felt across Greater Manchester more widely thanks to investment in intracity transport connectivity."

MetroLink Phase 3's [Monitoring and Evaluation Second Report, March 2021](#) showed the power of that investment, achieving a 10%+ improvement in public transport door-to-door access to healthcare, employment (ages 16-75) and further education (ages 16-19) for around 20% of GM's total population. Because the Phase 3 MetroLink lines targeted a number of areas with high deprivation, the 10%+ connectivity improvement was achieved for a greater proportion of people living in the most deprived areas in GM – with 30% of these people seeing the 10%+ improvement in public transport door-to-door access.

National Infrastructure Assessment

The National Infrastructure Commission carries out an overall assessment of the UK's infrastructure requirements – including transport – every five years. The Commission published its second Assessment in October 2023 and published its latest Progress Review in May 2024. The Assessment was guided by objectives to support sustainable economic growth across all regions of the UK, improve competitiveness, improve quality of life, and support climate resilience and transition to net zero carbon emissions.

The Assessment emphasises that better transport networks can support economic growth across regions, with cities being the main engines of economic growth. It also notes that there has been underinvestment in transport systems in regional English cities. The proposed solution is better public transport and active travel – noting that these are much more space efficient than cars.

The Assessment recommends that “Government should invest £22 billion [between 2028 and 2045] to improve public transport in the largest regional English cities to unlock economic growth. Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, and Manchester are important economic hubs within their wider regions but face the biggest transport capacity constraints. They should be the... initial priorities for investment in mass transit systems.” This recommendation is restated in the Progress Review. The National Infrastructure Commission sets out some conditions, such as local funding contributions.

The Assessment also stresses the clear need for action to invest in the maintenance and renewal of existing transport infrastructure on both a national and local level.

The GM view

The National Infrastructure Commission’s recommended level of investment, whilst significant, should be seen as a minimum if we are to seek to unlock the scale of economic growth that the largest regional cities have the potential to deliver. But this will also mean considering better use of existing funding, and new forms of funding.

Individual schemes to be promoted for investment would be subject to detailed, bottom-up assessments and appraisals – as is standard practice.



Delivering opportunities for good growth

Core Growth – the Regional Centre and the Central Growth Cluster

Our future rapid transit system must support the development of a well-connected Regional Centre at the heart of the North. At present, more than half of rapid transit trips in the city-region start or finish in the Regional Centre. It is GM's principal hub for rapid transit services due to its high concentration of employment, education, health, culture and leisure trip attractors – and its role as the city-region's central hub for inter-city connections. Its economy depends on people being able to travel in and out of it, and without rapid transit there would be significantly increased congestion.

As a result, radial links connecting the city-region into and across the Regional Centre represent the principal markets for rapid transit. These will continue to be a main driver of the case for further investment – noting that combining radial links facilitates cross-city journeys, and some radial links can also make a strong contribution to orbital and semi-orbital journeys between town centres.

We want to support the continuing growth of the Regional Centre and the Central Growth Cluster. We aim to do this without increasing car travel, meaning that the volume of Regional Centre trips made by rapid transit will need to double by 2040. That requires attractive rapid transit services with sufficient connectivity, capacity, and reliability – and increased development densities around rapid transit stops and stations.

Town centres

As well as the doubling of Regional Centre trips, our Right Mix vision includes a step change increase in the use of rapid transit for wider city-region trips. Many of those wider city-region trips will be to, from, or passing through our key town centres. Rapid transit therefore has an important role to play in supporting the growth of our key town centres. Whilst at the time of writing the Right Mix does not have explicit targets for these town centre trips, it is anticipated that these will be developed. With its emphasis on fast and frequent services, rapid transit can create opportunities for travel between town centres (whether on orbital or semi-orbital links, or via the Regional Centre).

Boosting northern competitiveness – from west to east

Beyond the Regional Centre, rapid transit needs to play a much greater role in serving other centres of employment, education, health, culture and leisure. By serving a wider range of origins and destinations, rapid transit can spread prosperity more widely in GM.

In the north of the city-region, this includes responding to the emerging growth locations spanning from west Salford and the Western Gateway, to the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor, the North East Growth Corridor (including the Atom Valley cluster across Bury, Rochdale and Oldham) and the Eastern Growth Cluster in Tameside. Ensuring that residents across the north of the city-region can access the established major employment centres in the Regional Centre, at Trafford Park and at Manchester Airport is also important. Traffic congestion on the highway network and some slow public transport links mean that many of these trips are difficult at present, especially at peak times.

Sustaining southern competitiveness – Airport and southern gateway

Our overall spatial strategy seeks to spread prosperity to all parts of the city-region. This is balanced with the need to ensure that the existing competitiveness of the southern areas is sustained, and the potential is realised of key assets such as Manchester Airport and the town centres of Altrincham, Wythenshawe and Stockport. Further development of rapid transit can play a vital role in supporting the objectives of the development of the Airport and Southern Growth Corridor.

Manchester Airport is our 'Global Gateway'. The Greater Manchester Strategy notes that "the international connectivity afforded through the airport, Airport City, and development of the wider integrated transport system connecting the airport to all parts of Greater Manchester and the wider North will be important in... rebalancing both the local and national economy".

In the longer term, the jobs growth in this area means that the Airport has the potential to become a second hub for rapid transit in GM. In the nearer term, the cancellation of the northern sections of High Speed 2 means that Stockport's role as GM's southern gateway is more important than ever.



Meeting our environmental commitments

In 2019 Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the GM Local Authorities declared a Climate Emergency and stressed that urgent action is needed to put GM on a path to carbon neutrality by 2038, 12 years ahead of the Government's net zero target of 2050. In March 2022, GMCA also declared a Biodiversity Emergency, and GM leaders signed the Edinburgh Declaration – a statement of intent calling for local, national, and international action to reverse devastating biodiversity loss.

Transport currently accounts for around a third of carbon emissions in GM. The Bee Network is critical to enable people to travel in a different way – increasing the use of active travel and public transport will help us to tackle our most pressing economic, environmental, and quality of life challenges, and address environmental concerns around carbon, climate change, noise pollution and biodiversity.

To achieve this, GM needs more people to choose to travel by these more sustainable forms of transport. Rapid transit, supporting a stronger Regional Centre and a step change increase in the use of rapid transit for wider city-region trips, will help give everyone travelling in GM an attractive alternative to driving. This will move us toward achieving the Right Mix and enable us to make progress towards reducing carbon emissions.

Where we invest in rapid transit we will not consider that investment in isolation. Instead, we will examine how it can also better support walking, cycling, wheeling and bus trips as part of overall sustainable journeys – and how investment in these modes can grow the rapid transit market.

TfGM will incorporate the nationally recognised standard for managing carbon in infrastructure into our development and delivery process to ensure that carbon is considered throughout the scheme lifecycle. Known as PAS 2080, the standard aims to reduce carbon and cost through intelligent design, construction and usage decisions.

We also need to make the best use of our existing infrastructure (including the potential of tram-train technology to join up existing light rail and heavy rail infrastructure with new rapid transit services) as a way of mitigating carbon emissions – and seek reductions in the carbon intensity of the rapid transit trips themselves, for example with further electrification of rapid transit services.



Rapid transit – the story so far

Rapid transit shouldn't be thought of as being separate – with individual services, information, and fares and ticketing. It needs to be a seamless part of GM's Bee Network. But to describe the story so far, a quick description of metro, suburban rail and busway in the GM context follows below.

Metro

These are tram, tram-train, and underground train services that call at stops in the heart of the city centre. Customers can 'turn up and go' without checking a timetable first, because they run frequently. A large proportion of their routes operate on their own dedicated tracks, which are owned and maintained locally. In GM, Metrolink is our metro system.

Metrolink has grown from two lines to Bury and Altrincham in 1992 to eight lines today. The number of trips people took more than doubled between 2010 and 2020, and before the COVID-19 pandemic there were over 45 million tram trips each year. The increase in trips has not just a result of opening new lines, though. As with National Rail, Metrolink has seen strong growth on existing lines. Metrolink passenger numbers have now exceeded pre-pandemic levels during most weekday peaks, and significantly exceeded them on weekends. It saw its busiest month in its 32 year history in May 2024, with 4.1 million tram trips. Capacity is once again a challenge.

One of Metrolink's particular strengths from day one has been the growth in off-peak travel for shopping and leisure purposes, encouraged by a service that is easy to use for all.

Suburban Rail

These are train services that call at stations on the edge of the city centre. They might run often enough that people can 'turn up and go' without checking a timetable first, but this is not always the case. Services run on tracks that form part of the National Rail network, owned and maintained by Network Rail – so they often need to be timetabled around inter-city, regional and freight services, which make their own important contribution to GM, the North and the UK. The rail line through east Manchester and across the boundary to Hadfield and Glossop is an example of suburban rail.

On the National Rail network, trips to (and through) the Regional Centre during the morning peak increased by 72% between 2002 and 2017. Some of those additional trips were carried by the suburban rail services that form part of GM's rapid transit system. Despite this significant growth, investment in capacity of the network has not kept pace. Rail passenger numbers have also shown a strong recovery, with a similar pattern to Metrolink of greater weekend use.

In attempting to squeeze more out of available capacity, the over-ambitious May 2018 rail timetable was an example of an insufficiently robust approach to development and delivery. As a result of over-stretching Victorian infrastructure and a failure to deliver required enhancements in time for the timetable change, customers suffered major disruption. Since then, recovering reliability has been at the expense of the loss of services in the December 2022 timetable. Greater investment and joined up development and delivery will be essential to provide benefits to passenger and freight customers, and avoid constraining the growth potential of GM, the North and the UK.

Busway

By this, we mean buses that are highly segregated from general traffic (with a good degree of continuity of that segregation) and more widely spaced stops than is usual. This allows higher frequencies, increased speeds and reduced journey times. Segregation can be achieved either with bus lanes, bus-only streets or a guideway, as shown in GM by the Leigh–Salford–Manchester busway. Busways offer more flexibility than suburban rail or metro because they can use the existing highway when they need to, without the need for tracks or signalling.

Since 2016, the Leigh-Salford-Manchester busway has formed an important part of our rapid transit system. The 7km of guideway from Leigh, and the bus lanes and priority measures between Ellenbrook and the Regional Centre, make it a particularly effective service.

Patronage on the busway services grew from 2.1 million annual trips in its first year of operation to over 3 million trips prior to the pandemic. Like most public transport services, patronage is still recovering, but in 2023/24 over 2.6 million trips were made on the busway – an increase of over 300,000 from the previous year. Growth in passenger demand for busway services brought capacity challenges, and it is expected that demand will continue to recover and grow. Busway services became part of our Bee Network in September 2023 as part of the first phase of taking local control of GM's bus services (due to be complete by January 2025). Frequencies have increased, and more buses deployed.

Complementing rapid transit

Where passenger flows are not great enough to justify the significant investment in rapid transit, there are two particular types of bus service that also form a critical part of our city-region's strategic public transport network and complement rapid transit. Whilst Quality Bus and Express Bus are part of the [GM Bus Strategy](#), the features that they share with rapid transit – and the need to plan GM's Bee Network as a seamless whole – mean that they are outlined here. They play a particularly important role on orbital and semi-orbital routes, where these routes are not served by rapid transit.

Quality Bus

We want all Bee Network journeys to be high quality, regardless of transport mode. Quality Bus refers specifically to whole route upgrades on key corridors – with bus priority to achieve reliable services, attractive waiting environments integrated with the public realm, and sometimes an even higher quality of vehicles than would be the norm. Quality Bus proposals can have features in common with rapid transit including higher frequencies, faster speeds and reduced journey times.

Express Bus

Limited stop services that enable people to make middle distance trips due to the faster journey times they achieve. GM examples include cross-boundary services to Rawtenstall, Burnley, and Accrington. In seeking to maximise the service offer to passengers, Express Bus services can be aligned with complementary Quality Bus whole route upgrades on key corridors.

What we need

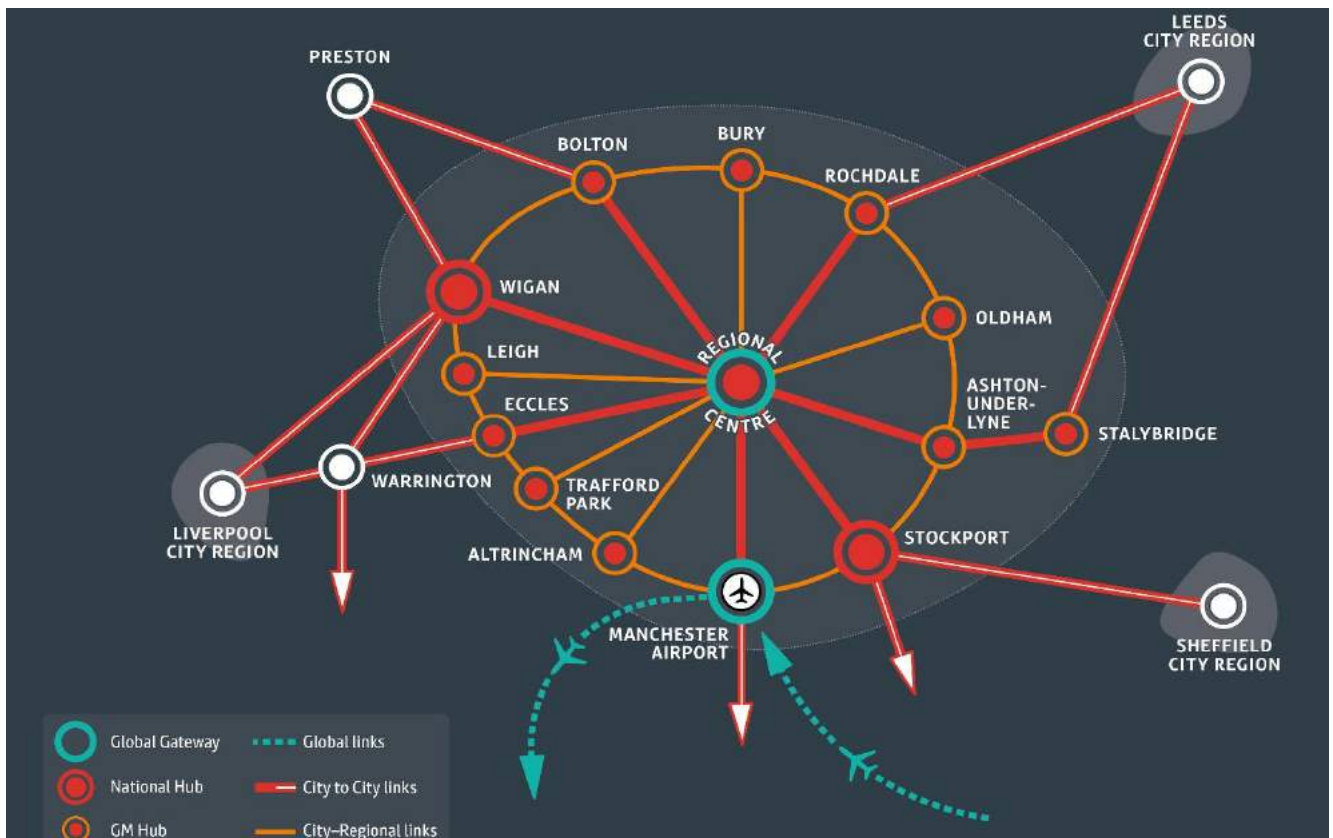
A seamless network

Our GM 2040 Transport Strategy was developed around spatial themes so that we can implement the most appropriate interventions for different parts of the city-region and for different journeys.

Our strategic public transport network connects GM hubs (the key town centres of Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Ashton-under-Lyne, Stalybridge, Altrincham, Eccles, and Leigh, plus Trafford Park), National Hubs (the Regional Centre, Stockport, and Wigan), and our Global Gateway at Manchester Airport.

The aim is not for direct rapid transit links between all of these hubs, but for seamless overall journeys as part of the Bee Network. A network approach will enable us to meet a wider range of travel needs, facilitating easier interchange at key nodes on our transport network. This includes enabling people to make cross-city and orbital journeys around the city-region much more easily.

Our vision for a seamless Bee Network includes the integration of all forms of rapid transit across the city-region, underpinned by integration with a wide range of other public transport, active travel and shared mobility modes to provide for the first and last mile of journeys. Effortless connections are to be facilitated at network hubs across the city-region. A seamless customer experience will see high quality services at high quality stops, stations and interchanges that are accessible to all (especially by walking, wheeling and cycling) and have joined up, simplified, and affordable fares and ticketing.



Room to grow

Capacity on our rapid transit system poses the most significant challenge to our vision for supporting sustainable growth across GM. Over the past three decades, our city-region has seen extraordinary growth in the number of customers using rapid transit services.

Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel in recent years, demand has quickly returned close to (or exceeded) the levels seen before – and growth is expected to continue. Whilst travel patterns and the nature of trips on our networks may have changed, the critical issue of capacity remains.

In the past, crowding on the Metrolink network was addressed by deploying additional trams in 'double' formations. However, the contract for procuring more of our current fleet of M5000 trams has now come to an end – limiting our ability to address crowding in this way. Progressing the development and procurement of the next generation of Metrolink vehicles will therefore be vital.

In the longer term, however, network capacity constraints are expected to become critical, with the focus on Manchester city centre on which all Metrolink lines converge. Network capacity is limited by street running in Manchester city centre, and achieving a step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity is considered later in this draft strategy.

Whilst returning crowding issues on the National Rail network can be addressed to an extent through investment to provide longer trains on existing services, capacity on the network to accommodate the additional services that are needed is significantly constrained. There are longstanding capacity issues on the Castlefield Corridor in central Manchester and emerging capacity issues in and around Stockport.

On the busway, we can remain responsive to demand by deploying buses as needed.

Accountability

Transport works best when it is seamless and locally accountable. GM's busway and other franchised bus services, Metrolink and Starling Bank bike hire services offer compelling evidence for that – where decisions have been and continue to be made on behalf of GM by elected members through the GMCA and the Bee Network Committee, supported and delivered by TfGM.

We are radically improving the accountability and integration of GM's bus services by finishing the job of bringing them under local control as part of the Bee Network by 2025. But suburban rail is also a critical part of the vision: it needs to be more accountable and more integrated, with 8 priority corridors to be part of the Bee Network by 2028 and full integration of rail by 2030.

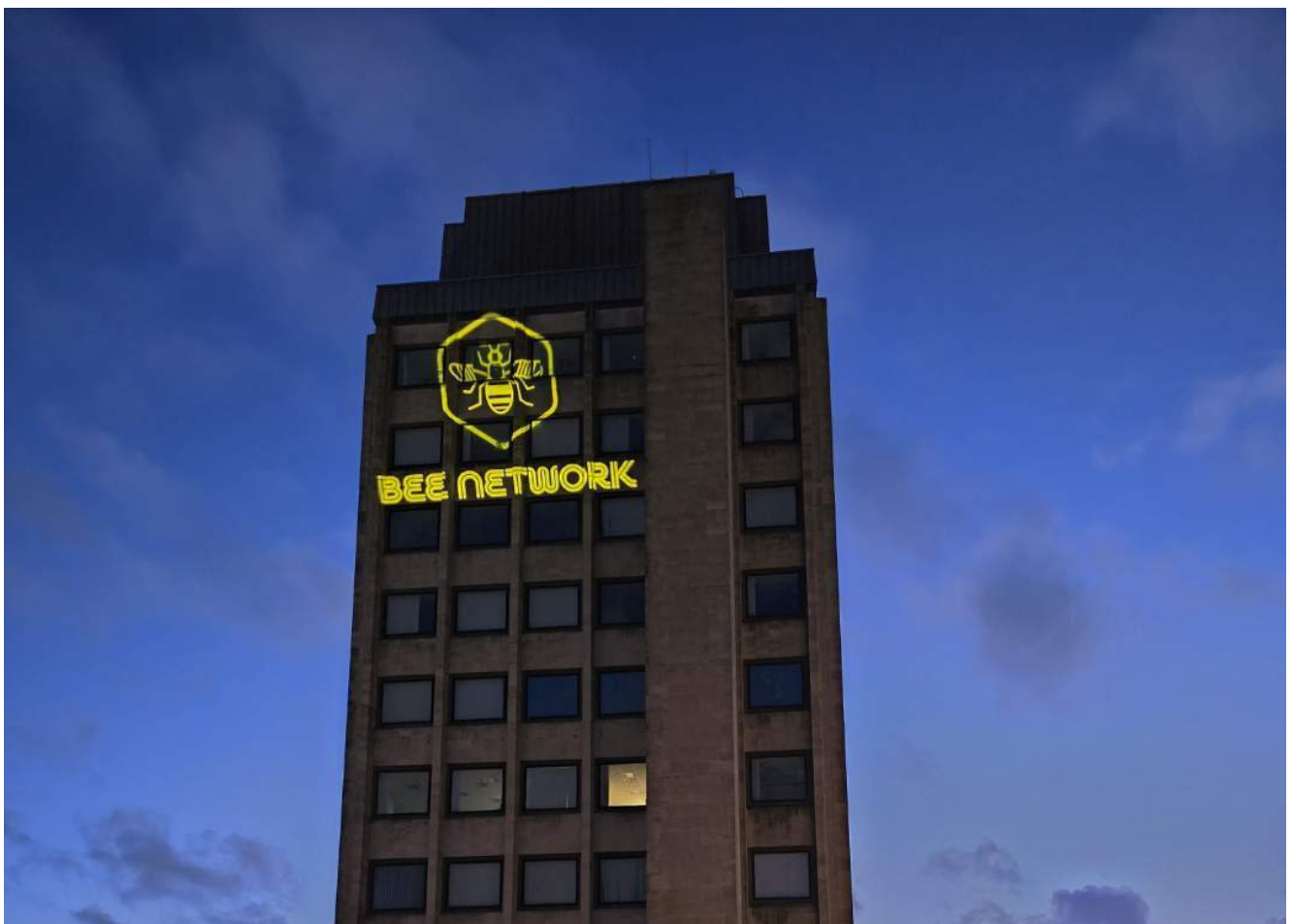
To this end, in March 2023 the GMCA agreed a '[Trailblazer](#)' [deeper devolution deal](#) with central government. This commits the government to support the development of a new partnership with Great British Railways: "to support the delivery of the Bee Network by 2030, which will see full multi-modal fares and ticketing integration, co-branding and common customer information, 'pay as

you go' ticketing pilots, 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."

The Greater Manchester Rail Board has been established under the Trailblazer deal. Guided by the GM 2040 Transport Strategy, and on behalf of the Mayor and Leaders of the 10 districts of GM, it:

- Contributes local insight supporting the joined up planning and delivery of all existing major rail infrastructure and rail service projects and programmes affecting the economy, people and businesses of GM.
- Leads and monitors delivery of the Trailblazer deal commitments.
- Brings local expertise together to inform the prioritisation and business case development of future rail infrastructure and service delivery projects affecting GM.
- Champions regular joined up public communication of a coherent delivery plan for improving rail services in GM.

The Board is designed to streamline the need for multiple forums and it provides a single place to plan and monitor the delivery of rail elements for the Trailblazer deal – as well as helping to ensure that the needs of the people and economy of GM are properly considered in railway industry decision making at a time of major change.



How we'll seek to deliver better rapid transit

This section of the draft GM Rapid Transit Strategy sets out how, subject in some cases to funding and statutory powers, we will seek to deliver improvements across all aspects of rapid transit in GM. It is structured around the seven network principles of the GM Transport Strategy 2040 and our six Bee Network customer commitments.



Our six commitments to you



The Bee Network is our bold vision to deliver a joined-up transport system that works for you. We commit to delivering a Bee Network that is:

 Safe <small>We will create a safe and secure network.</small>	 Accessible <small>Everyone can use us.</small>	 Reliable <small>We will deliver a reliable network.</small>
 Affordable <small>We will keep the cost of travel as low as possible.</small>	 Accountable <small>We will use your feedback to shape the Bee Network.</small>	 Sustainable <small>We will take the lead in creating a greener, healthier Greater Manchester.</small>

If we are to achieve our vision of more than doubling rapid transit trips by 2040, we need to make the best use of the rapid transit infrastructure we already have and build on its strengths, as well as expanding it with new, extended and converted lines (which take a long time to plan and build).

This section is split into **sustaining**, **integrating**, **improving** and **growing** – with a focus on our system to a horizon of 2030 – and **transforming**, with a focus on our system to 2040 and beyond.

Whilst this section of the draft strategy sets out the ways in which we intend to act to achieve our vision for rapid transit and gives examples, it does not set out exactly what specific interventions we intend to deliver. The draft strategy is not in itself a costed or funded delivery plan, and its fullest ambitions would require significant funding (including considering better use of existing funding, and new forms of funding) and statutory powers to be delivered.

Wider engagement on this draft strategy will take place as part of our Local Transport Plan refresh, which starts with refreshing the GM Transport Strategy 2040 and is followed by the creation of the next Five Year Delivery Plan covering the years 2027-2032.

We also anticipate a number of specific plans coming forward to support implementation of this draft strategy (for example, concerning the full integration of rail into the Bee Network).

Sustaining our rapid transit system: well-maintained, resilient and reliable

Rapid transit services that turn up on time – and get to their destination at the expected speed – allow our customers to plan more effectively and have confidence that their journey will take the same amount of time every day. That will make them more likely to use rapid transit again.

We will:

- **01: Maintain and renew Metrolink, and continue to have robust operating procedures for planned and unplanned disruption.** This includes paying particular attention to the assets that are critical to the operation of the entire network such as the supervisory and control system. In some cases, it may be necessary to 'over-specify' to deliberately build in some spare capacity or extra resilience. Minimising inconvenience to customers will be at the forefront of our thinking, and high quality and reliable alternative transport will be provided where necessary.
- **02: Work with the rail industry to support development and delivery of infrastructure and service planning in pursuit of a well-maintained, resilient and reliable railway.** Some parts of GM's rail network are heavily congested, and the May 2018 timetable illustrated the disastrous effect on reliability of attempting to squeeze more services in. Whilst longer term strategic infrastructure investment is required to expand capacity and connectivity, some tactical steps can be taken in the nearer term. These include the new turnback facilities either side of Manchester Victoria and a third platform at Salford Crescent that are being delivered by the rail industry as part of the Manchester Task Force workstream, with an expected completion in 2026.
- **03: Work with the rail industry to influence rolling stock improvements** including replacing older trains with newer ones that have better performance characteristics such as faster acceleration and deceleration and better layouts to speed up passenger boarding and alighting. Northern are currently starting procurement for a standard vehicle for their services (up to 450 new trains) and this could bring opportunities to improve services across GM.
- **04: Explore additional capacity that may be required at critical parts of the Metrolink network.** This will become increasingly important as passenger growth continues and pressures on the network increase. A particular focus will be placed on the critical trunk section of the network between Cornbrook and St Peter's Square.
- **05: Protect and seek to enhance rapid transit's on-highway priority over general traffic,** so that Metrolink and the busway can provide a fast and reliable service. This will involve regular review of journey time performance, with a particular focus on monitoring the performance at junctions. An equitable balance with other modes does however need to be struck. For the busway in particular, its potential now that it is part of the Bee Network should be fully exploited – including consideration of services (routes, frequencies and stopping patterns) as part of the structured, transparent, area-based 'Network Reviews' that are set out in the [GM Bus Strategy](#).



Integrating our rapid transit system: seamless and locally accountable

This section of the draft GM Rapid Transit Strategy describes how we will build on our existing arrangements with those newly created through the Trailblazer deeper devolution deal and the partnership with Great British Railways to ensure that metro, suburban rail and busway services are seamless and locally accountable as part of the Bee Network.

An exemplar of the integration we want to see is the proposed Bury Interchange redevelopment. Building on the Stockport Interchange redevelopment and the second tranche of bus franchising (delivered in March 2024), and subject to government approval and funding, the £81m project would see the current site (which is over 40 years old) transformed into GM's first operationally carbon neutral interchange. The project would provide better links between trams and buses, improved facilities for customers who are walking, wheeling or cycling, and a new link to the southern end of a refurbished Metrolink stop. The redevelopment would also deliver a safe, secure, sustainable and accessible gateway into Bury town centre, supporting its wider regeneration.

Rail is the last piece of the jigsaw which needs to be fully integrated with the Bee Network, to deliver seamless integration and local accountability.

Further information on the 8 rail corridors to be prioritised for delivery is given later in this draft strategy in 'Integrating rail by 2028'.

Operating hours and service pattern integration

Our customers need operating hours and service patterns that are integrated, so that they can trust in connections between different modes of transport and depend on rapid transit to be running when they need it across the day, week and year.

We will:

- **06: Continue to align bus timetables with tram and train timetables** through the roll-out of bus franchising to 2025 and network reviews, particularly with first and last tram and train times.
- **07: Consider night-time services on the busway** and wider bus network. This is in line with the GM Bus Strategy's commitment that TfGM will explore "providing services to major town and employment centres during the night, albeit on a less frequent basis than during the day" and the GM Night-Time Economy Strategy's commitment to developing a business case in 2024 for a pilot of later night transport services.
- **08: Explore opportunities to align tram services with demand later at night and earlier in the day.** Later services have been reintroduced from September 2023. Initially, services are running every 24 minutes between midnight and 1am on Fridays and Saturdays. Understanding the impact of these services is critical to assessing any further changes to first and last tram times.
- **09: Work with the rail industry to seek enhanced hours of operation on the suburban rail network with a '7-day railway'** that fills in the gaps in train services – particularly evening and weekends – to support shift work, the night-time economy and the weekend economy.



Digital and physical integration

Our customers need to experience the Bee Network as a seamless whole – both in terms of how they find out information and plan journeys, and how they make their ‘first and last mile’ of a trip involving rapid transit.

We will:

- **10: Seek to improve the integration of rail stations as part of completing the Bee Network, with 8 rail lines to be integrated by 2028.** Our stations need to look and feel like they are part of an integrated Bee Network. Many stations are tired and have seen little investment in decades. As set out in the ‘Trailblazer’ deal, a crucial step is the introduction of Bee Network co-branding by 2027, including wayfinding to and from the stations, signage and information provision. Improving the accessibility of our stations is covered later in this draft strategy in a separate item due to its importance.
- **11: Integrate the existing rapid transit network with the growing Bee Active Network and Starling Bank bike hire scheme.** The planned Bee Active Network would put 95% of the GM population within 400m of an active travel route built to Bee Network standards – and a focus for potential future expansion of the Starling Bank bike hire is suggested to be integration with public transport. Meaningful integration with this strategic walking, wheeling and cycling plan will provide our customers with high quality options for active travel to and from rapid transit.
- **12: Apply TfGM’s ‘Travel Hubs’ approach to our customers’ journeys to and from rapid transit stops and stations.** Walking, wheeling and cycling are seen as the main way to get to and from rapid transit. However, recognising that some people live beyond an active travel catchment, the ‘Travel Hubs’ approach seeks to provide an attractive alternative to driving all the way that is broader than our traditional park and ride solution for that issue. It involves integrating rapid transit with local bus services, demand-responsive and shared transport, and pick-up and drop-off provision. Facilities that benefit customers and could also generate net revenue for TfGM such as electric charging infrastructure, delivery lockers and convenience shops will also be investigated. The rapid transit ‘Travel Hubs’ approach is in line with the [GM Streets for All Strategy](#) and the [GM Bus Strategy](#), which (as an example) committed to explore the relocation of bus stops to better serve rapid transit stops and stations.
- **13: Continue to explore how stops and stations can become community assets that support local sustainable economic growth and wellbeing,** both as a welcoming gateway to rapid transit and as places in their own right. A particular focus will be working with the rail industry to identify and bring back into use disused buildings at stations, for both community and commercial uses.



Fares and ticketing integration

Our customers need simpler fares and integrated ticketing to make their journeys seamless. The Metrolink zonal fares and 'touch-in, touch-out' ticketing system provides a model for this. A further step towards simplification and integration has been made with the Bee AnyBus + Tram tickets introduced in 2023, which have made combined bus and tram journeys 20% cheaper. Further simplification and integration would make a significant difference for our customers.

We will:

- **14: Introduce a contactless pay-as-you-go system that will automatically cap all travel made across bus and tram in 2025 as part the Bee Network.** This could attract more customers who are beyond walking distance of tram stops.
- **15: Work with the Great British Railways Transition Team and the Department for Transport on the first pay-as-you-go contactless ticketing pilot on rail services in GM.** Due to be launched by 2025, the pilot is to cover services between Stalybridge and Victoria, and between Glossop and Piccadilly (subject to DfT business case approval). The vision is to deliver an effortless 'tap in, tap out' system that provides simpler fares and the best value on the day for rail travel, encouraging more people to use the rail network and improving customer satisfaction.
- **16: Work towards full pay-as-you-go contactless ticketing roll-out across the GM rail network and multi-modal fares and ticketing integration across bus, tram and train by 2030 – with 8 corridors prioritised for 2028.** This will require further work with Great British Railways and the Department for Transport as well as transport operators. We will also focus on finding the best approach to integrating cycle hire into the fares and ticketing regime.

Land use and planning integration

Rapid transit will be most effective in achieving our ambitions if it is integrated with land use planning and the planning system, so that more customers' homes and destinations are close to rapid transit stops and stations. The [Places for Everyone](#) plan sets out ambitions for development across the city-region towards 2040. It contains policies on high densities in the city centre and the Quays, as well as minimum densities within 400m and 800m of rapid transit stops and stations.

We will:

- **17: Continue to work with the GMCA and GM's 10 Local Authorities in support of minimum net residential densities around rapid transit stops and stations.** This includes developing proposals for improvements to services, improvements to stops and stations, and new stops and stations to serve major developments – with third party investment sought as appropriate.
- **18: Work with industry partners to develop a formal vehicle for delivering regeneration and commercial and housing development in and around rail stations.** At present, opportunities on land owned by the rail industry are not being fully realised. In 2023, TfGM and Network Rail announced a new partnership to deliver a joint vision for stations within the Regional Centre. The collaboration agreement, the first of its kind between the two organisations, is a major step forward. Working with key stakeholders, the partnership will establish future regeneration and development opportunities at stations and attract partners for delivery of future projects. Work is now underway to look at opportunities at Stockport, Piccadilly, Victoria, Oxford Road, Deansgate, Salford Central and Salford Crescent.
- **19: Promote a sustainable approach to transport for developments that encourages the fullest use of active travel and public transport, including rapid transit, over traditional road capacity enhancements.** This includes refreshing TfGM's "[Transport for sustainable communities: a guide for developers](#)", published in March 2013. In the case of very major developments that are linked to new, extended or converted rapid transit lines, high quality active travel and other public transport should often come first to prepare the way and build the market. This is because the rapid transit solutions take longer to deliver. Embedding sustainable choices early on relies on walking, wheeling, cycling and bus – with our customers able to transfer to rapid transit services at a later date.



Integration with freight networks

Rail freight is an essential part of a greener, fairer and more prosperous city-region. Many of the goods people purchase will have been moved by container on train for part of their journey, while aggregates trains bring essential construction materials from quarries. Each freight train can remove between 50 and 130 HGVs from our roads, and they help to reduce congestion, carbon, and air quality impacts. Many companies look to use rail freight to improve efficiency – in particular, avoiding congestion on the highway. A shift to rail freight can help to overcome other issues such as driver shortages, and can also help with companies' environmental objectives. Government have set a rail freight target of 75% growth by 2050. Rapid transit often shares corridors with rail freight, and it is important for them to work in harmony if we are to continue to see economic growth in a sustainable way.

We will:

- **20: Encourage the rail industry to electrify the Strategic Freight Network.** A large proportion of freight trains in GM use diesel. At present, the only practical alternative is full electrification – although batteries may support limited operation within freight terminals. Electric freight trains can free up capacity for suburban rail and metro services because they are faster and have better acceleration. In some locations the need for electrification to support rail freight may also improve the case for electrified passenger services.
- **21: Consider the needs of rail freight in capacity planning for rapid transit.** When promoting changes to suburban rail services or the introduction of new metro services, we will consider the capacity needs of freight operations and their future growth requirements. This includes the existing Trafford Park terminals and the planned Port Salford tri-mode freight interchange with access to the rail network, the M60 motorway, and the Manchester Ship Canal.



Integration with new inter-city lines

As described earlier in 'Room to Grow', focussing existing rail lines on rapid transit services can be challenging to achieve in GM. The legacy of two-track railways with heavily congested sections, flat junctions and mixed uses (with rapid transit services often sharing tracks with regional, inter-city and freight services) means that compromises are often needed. New inter-city rail lines could absorb some longer distance trains and release capacity for rapid transit services.

We will:

- **22: Following the cancellation of High Speed 2 infrastructure to Manchester, continue to work together with partners for the best outcome.** There are new challenges arising from the current proposals for High Speed 2 services to run on the existing rail network in the North. Whilst a solution is sought for the missing link between Birmingham and the route of Northern Powerhouse Rail in Cheshire, our ability to plan rapid transit services is impacted – particularly in the Stockport area with its role as GM's southern gateway.
- **23: Continue to work with partners to plan rapid transit services and new inter-city lines holistically, and seek the best Northern Powerhouse Rail outcome.** We will ensure that our input reflects the importance of rapid transit services in their own right – as well as rapid transit services providing sustainable access to new inter-city lines, reducing environmental impacts at key hubs in the Regional Centre and at Manchester Airport. Depending on the Northern Powerhouse Rail solution that is chosen, some railway lines such as Manchester–Warrington–Liverpool (CLC line) – which today has a low frequency that limits its contributions to existing communities and planned development – could see capacity released for better rapid transit services.
- **24: Seek the best solutions where proposed new inter-city lines do not release capacity for rapid transit.** It is anticipated that some existing highly-constrained lines – notably the lines via Bolton, Chat Moss, Calder Valley, Stockport and Manchester Airport – are less likely to experience released capacity from new inter-city lines. They will continue to present challenges in finding a balance between serving inter-city, regional, rapid transit and freight markets. We will continue to work with the rail industry to seek better rapid transit on these lines, including taking advantage of capacity provided by upgrades. For some of these lines, though, the only solution may involve major new capacity through the Regional Centre – which is covered later in this draft strategy.



Collaborate with, and hold central government and the rail industry to account

One of the challenges faced by our city-region is that the national planning for railway schemes does not always fully integrate them into local networks – or even with other national schemes that are progressing in parallel. This is a particular challenge when a long-term programme is phased – intermediate stages can create localised problems in the short term and medium term. There are also critical network capacity issues in central and southern Manchester that present a considerable constraint to growth, as demonstrated by the May 2018 timetable. With key schemes such as the Hope Valley Railway Upgrade, Transpennine Route Upgrade, and Manchester and North West Transformation Programme, we need mechanisms for greater and more meaningful collaboration and for holding central government and the rail industry to account – to ensure the benefits of schemes are realised.

We will:

- **25: Support the GM Rail Board to bring together national, local and rail industry insight, evidence and expertise so that GM is properly represented in railway industry decision-making.** The GM Rail Board streamlines the need for multiple forums and provides a single place to plan and monitor the delivery of the rail elements of the Trailblazer deal, support the joined up planning and delivery of existing schemes, and inform the prioritisation and business case development of future schemes.
- **26: Participate in the North West Regional Business Unit (NWRBU),** which is to be established to support the management of the current Northern and TransPennine Passenger Service Contracts by overseeing these in the north west area and providing one voice for the north west when engaging with Train Operating Companies (TOCs).
- **27: Monitor that scheme commitments are being met and hold central government and the rail industry to account when they are not.** An example going forward is ensuring that the Transpennine Route Upgrade delivers the promised freight capability and that the corresponding capacity constraints in Manchester are resolved.
- **28: Press for urgent investment to tackle the longstanding issue of capacity in the Castlefield Corridor in central Manchester and the emerging issue of capacity in and around Stockport.** Following the 2023 cancellation of Northern Hub 'Package C' (including two new through Platforms 15 & 16 at Piccadilly and a reconstructed four platform station at Oxford Road) and its accompanying Transport and Works Act Order, continuing to mitigate the unacceptable reliability of the May 2018 timetable without investing in new infrastructure would mean fewer trains and worse connections. Infrastructure investment announced in 2023 is a step along the way, and a more comprehensive package that addresses issues that 'Package C' did not address is being developed. Ultimately, the only solution that facilitates growth may involve major new capacity to and through the Regional Centre – covered later in this draft strategy.



Improving our rapid transit system: environmentally responsible and healthy

Metrolink vehicles continue to be zero-emission at the point of use, powered by electricity generated from modern, cleaner, and greener sources. At present, busway services are not yet zero-emission, while suburban rail remains heavily reliant on diesel-powered trains that add to air quality problems and carbon emissions in environmentally sensitive town and city centres.

To achieve a clean and healthy urban environment in support of the Clean Air Plan and carbon targets, high environmental standards will be applied to our rapid transit system where it is in our direct control and promoted where it is not. Active travel will be promoted as a healthy way to access rapid transit.

We will:

- **29: Replace the current low-emission fleet on the busway with a new fleet of zero-emission electric buses** in line with the [GM Bus Strategy](#).
- **30: Advocate for further rail electrification and power supply upgrades.** Around half of the GM rail network is currently electrified at present. Work is underway to electrify the route between Bolton and Wigan – a £78 million upgrade of 13 miles of infrastructure aiming to complete by 2026. The Transpennine Route Upgrade will see electrification of the entire route

via Huddersfield. There are many other strong candidates, though, that we need to see acceleration of. We will work with the rail industry to make the case for further electrification, and for power upgrades on the existing electrified network to support more electric trains.

- **31: Support the introduction of alternative technologies to replace diesel trains.** Many older trains are reaching life expiry and replacement is planned, as described earlier in 'well-maintained, resilient and reliable'. A key priority is to replace the diesel trains which are between 30 and 40 years old and have worse emission outputs than more modern trains. But without widespread electrification at present, alternatives are needed. In the short term, the rail industry may use diesel bi-mode trains, which could help to reduce instances of diesel trains operating on electrified lines and diesel engines idling in our city centre stations. The modular design of these trains supports easy conversion from diesel engines to battery or electric as electrification is extended. As battery technology develops, and with the use of fast-charging or similar technology, there may be scope for some suburban rail lines to use this technology where full electrification cannot be justified.
- **32: Promote active travel as a healthy way and sustainable way to access the rapid transit system, and consider active travel provision in rapid transit schemes.** Whilst the need for integration of rapid transit and active travel has already been described above, active travel has unique and significant benefits for health and the environment. Walking and wheeling is already an essential element of many rapid transit trips – for example, 96% of tram trips in 2022 included some walking or wheeling as part of the trip. New and improved cycle parking has recently been delivered on Metrolink. Moving forward, rapid transit schemes (such as any new stops and stations and any new, extended or converted rapid transit lines) will consider how active travel infrastructure can be delivered as an integral part of the scheme.

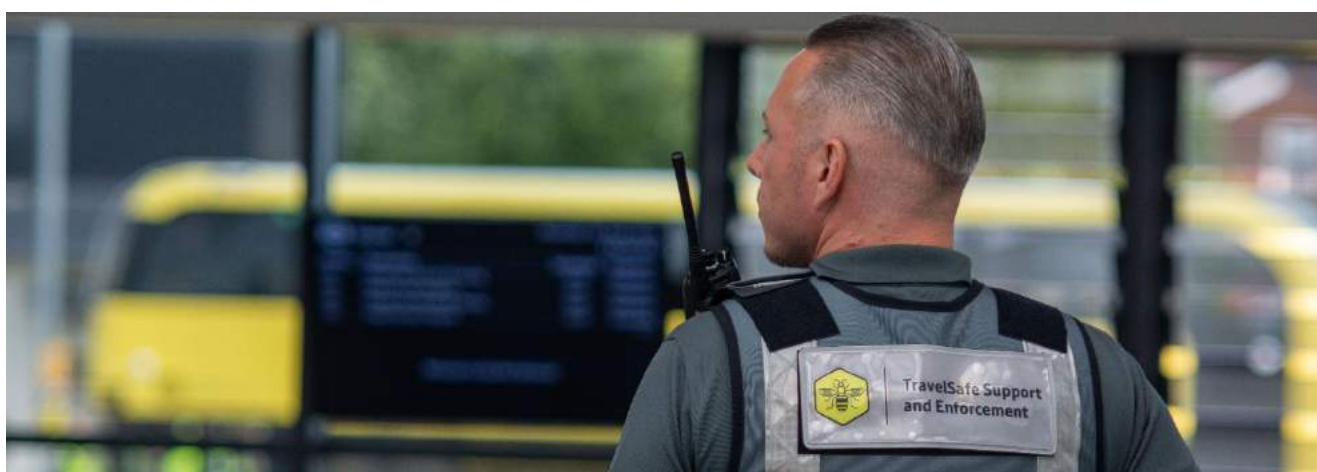


Improving our rapid transit system: safe, secure, accessible and inclusive

Rapid transit, as a major part of GM's Bee Network, needs to work for everyone. However, we know that at present there are barriers that need lowering. Negative perceptions of personal safety and security can be a significant barrier – particularly for women and girls, and people from minority groups. People need to be, and feel, safe and secure at all stages of their journeys. And for our ageing population, the fifth of people who identify as having some form of disability across GM, and those who have other access needs such as a buggy or luggage, accessibility can also present a barrier to using rapid transit. We are determined to tackle safety, security and accessibility to ensure that rapid transit is inclusive.

We will:

- **33: Work continually to improve health and safety and reduce the number of accidents, incidents, and near misses** through performance monitoring, engagement with operator forums, and safety campaigns for customers and staff alike.
- **34: Uphold recommended counter-terrorism and security best practice and other regulatory standards to support the safety and security of customers.**
- **35: Address and deter crime, antisocial behaviour and fare evasion – and encourage ethical travel behaviours – to improve safety and security (and its perception) on rapid transit through the GM TravelSafe Partnership (TSP).** The TSP is jointly led by TfGM and Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and uses a data and intelligence based approach to deploy a wide range of tactics across the network. Tactics include regular patrols (high visibility and/or plain clothes as appropriate) by operator staff, the GMP Transport Unit and other partners such as local authority youth workers. Other prevention methods include infrastructure assessment/remediation (vegetation cut-back, CCTV and lighting), intervention (such as community engagement and education) and deterrence (including penalty fares, prosecutions, restorative justice, removal of passes, exclusion orders and civil injunctions), all accompanied by clear information, campaigns and brand promotion. See: tfgm.com/travelsafe.





- **36: Maintain, renew and improve customer-facing assets (such as CCTV, information, lighting, shelters, stairs, ramps, lifts, escalators, and walking, wheeling and cycling facilities) at tram and busway stops** to support safety, security, accessibility and inclusivity. There will be a particular focus on the oldest Metrolink Bury line stops that originally formed part of the British Rail network, where standards of these customer-facing assets may be lower than elsewhere. This includes maintenance attention to the assets at Bury Interchange in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the site.
- **37: Working together with the rail industry, deliver accessible and inclusive stations.** Many National Rail stations within GM are not fit for purpose in these terms. Almost half of stations have no step-free access, having only steps or non-compliant ramps – and there are often many other deficiencies in the customer-facing assets. Together with the introduction of Bee Network co-branding by 2027, we will work with the rail industry to agree minimum standards and bring forward a plan to develop and deliver a programme of improvements – making all of our rail stations accessible by 2040, with a significant increase by 2028.
- **38: Examine the scope for the carriage of bicycles, non-standard cycles and mobility devices as we develop the rapid transit network (and consider future vehicles and infrastructure).** The trial of allowing pet dogs on trams in 2022 ultimately led to a permanent change in 2023 that removed a specific barrier to using part of the rapid transit system. In 2024, a guided pilot has taken place to test the safe carriage of bikes, non-standard cycles and mobility on off-peak tram services – involving a range of people, and controlled scenarios. We will consider the results of the pilot and consider how this flexibility could be safely introduced.
- **39: Embed meaningful consideration of equalities in all planning and decision-making,** including representative groups at an early stage to shape future service and infrastructure design. That includes the contents of this draft GM Rapid Transit Strategy, which has been published so that its draft contents can form part of the wider engagement activities undertaken as we refresh our Local Transport Plan.

Growing our rapid transit system: longer vehicles, more vehicles

As described earlier in this draft strategy, capacity poses the most significant challenge to our vision for supporting sustainable growth. Patronage growth is expected to continue, with capacity challenges anticipated in coming years. Whilst the nature of some trips may have changed, the critical issue of providing enough rapid transit capacity remains.

Providing additional capacity by increasing service frequency on Metrolink or suburban rail services is extremely difficult due to limited track capacity, particularly in the city centre. The subject of providing a step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity is tackled later in this draft strategy. In contrast, there is potential to provide additional capacity on the busway by increasing service frequencies.

Growth in demand for rapid transit will therefore be accommodated as far as possible by acquiring longer trams for Metrolink, by promoting the use of longer trains (and platforms) for suburban rail, and by considering frequency on the busway.

We will:

- **40: Progress the development and procurement of Metrolink ‘Next Generation Vehicles’ (NGV).** In the past we have been able to address crowding issues by buying new M5000 trams and coupling them together as ‘doubles’, but the contract for procuring these has come to an end. As the existing fleet ages, there will be a decrease in their reliability and availability. Eventually they will need replacing. Progressing the development and procurement of NGV for Metrolink will therefore be vital to maintain and improve capacity. We expect that they would be walkthrough vehicles making full use of existing Metrolink platforms. In length, they would be much like the current ‘double’ trams – but would eliminate the space occupied by central driver cabs and couplers to provide an increase in carrying capacity. Any contract for procuring them would need to be future-proofed so that more could be ordered for any new or enhanced Metrolink services, including tram-train capability. The supporting systems including power, signalling, depots and stabling would also need to be carefully considered, as would customer features. In the interim, it will be important to maximise the reliability and availability of the existing fleet.
- **41: Promote the use of longer trains (and platforms) for suburban rail.** One of the most straightforward improvements we can seek is to provide longer trains to meet growth in demand and address overcrowding. This will be particularly important if we are to meet our Right Mix vision. Longer trains may need platform lengthening, but can generally be delivered without the need for additional network capacity. We will work with the rail industry to influence service planning with the aim of increasing passenger capacity on services across the network.

- **42: Continue to be responsive to demand on the busway.** Opened in 2016, the Leigh-Salford-Manchester busway has become an established part of our rapid transit system. The success of the busway can be seen in the considerable growth in demand for the service. On becoming part of our Bee Network in September 2023, frequencies were increased and more buses deployed. We will continue to be responsive to demand on the busway as part of the structured, transparent, area-based 'Network Reviews' that are set out in the [GM Bus Strategy](#).



Growing our rapid transit system: new stops and stations

Major population or employment centres located near to existing rapid transit lines could benefit from improved access to public transport by delivering new stops and stations, with third party investment as appropriate. It is easy to underestimate the costs of additional stops and stations – including the journey time impacts for existing services making extra calls. Lack of network capacity on a constrained network to accommodate those extra calls can also make new stations particularly difficult to deliver for suburban rail, and it may only be with investment in transforming the network infrastructure (see later in this draft strategy) that they become possible.

We will:

- **43: Bring forward new stops and stations.** The following proposals are currently in different stages of development and delivery, in some cases working with the rail industry:
 - **Cop Road** on the Oldham & Rochdale Metrolink line, serving the Beal Valley and Broadbent Moss developments in Oldham that comprise approximately 1,900 homes and 22,000 square metres of employment space.
 - **Elton Reservoir** on the Bury Metrolink line, serving the Elton Reservoir development in Bury that comprises approximately 3,500 homes, three schools and two local centres.
 - **Sandhills** on the Bury and Oldham & Rochdale Metrolink lines, serving the Victoria North development in Manchester that comprises approximately 15,000 homes and other amenities.
 - **Mosley Common** on the busway, serving the North of Mosley Common development in Wigan that comprises approximately 1,100 homes.
 - **Golborne** rail station on the West Coast Main Line, five miles south of Wigan North Western station and one mile north of Golborne Junction – near to the site of the previous Golborne Station.
 - **Cheadle** rail station on the Mid Cheshire Line connecting Cheadle into the regional public transport network, transforming accessibility to Stockport Town Centre and beyond.
- **44: Undertake further work with partners to identify suitable locations for new stops and stations** that have a strong business case and that support GM's ongoing growth. Again, only major centres are likely to be able to present a compelling business case that secures the necessary funding for them, and network capacity needs to be considered.

- Rail and station (existing)
- Tram and stop (existing)
Note: not all stops are named on this map
- Busway (existing)
Note: not all stops are shown on this map
- Proposed rail station
- Proposed Metrolink stop
- Proposed busway stop
- Bus franchising



Growing our rapid transit system: **key connecting links in the Regional Centre**

Inner Salford (including The Quays and MediaCityUK), Piccadilly and Manchester Airport are areas to which rapid transit links already exist, and that need to continue their major jobs growth whilst keeping us on a pathway to the 'Right Mix'.

At present, accessing Salford Quays and MediaCityUK from many parts of GM requires an interchange from bus or train onto a tram in the Regional Centre, or an interchange from a train onto a bus at Salford Crescent. The Bee Network is expected to make these multi-modal trips seamless for our customers. However, our customers' journeys could still benefit from faster rapid transit journeys to this major growth area.

From much of the north of GM, access to Piccadilly and its connections to Manchester Airport is poor. A change is required at either Victoria or Salford Crescent onto services that are both crowded at peak times and of limited frequency.

Key connecting links in the Regional Centre could be improved. **We will:**

- **45: Seek options for improved links to Inner Salford (including The Quays and MediaCityUK).** This will be undertaken in the round, considering a multi-modal approach and taking into account proposed rail industry improvements such as the addition of a third platform at Salford Crescent. Improving links here could provide faster journeys for many of our customers, and assist with relieving the congested central area of the rapid transit system.
- **46: Seek options for improved links between Victoria and Piccadilly.** On the Metrolink network, there are currently only 5 trams an hour on this link, all of which come from the Bury line. This represents the lowest frequency connection between stops within the city centre and acts as a constraint to customer journeys to Piccadilly and onward to Manchester Airport. Whilst interchange is a natural feature of a high frequency rapid transit network, the low frequency on this key connecting link means that journeys from Metrolink's Oldham & Rochdale line require an interchange with a relatively long waiting time. This issue applies also to train services that only call at Victoria, such as those that come from the Atherton corridor. Increasing the Metrolink frequency between Victoria and Piccadilly is not possible within the current network design. On the rail network, at present only one train per hour uses the Ordsall Chord which enables direct services to run between the key transport hubs at Victoria and Piccadilly – enabling through journeys from across the wider network. The rail industry investment in the Ordsall Chord is currently underutilised due to wider capacity constraints, and proposals have been developed by the rail industry's Manchester Task Force for achieving two trains per hour. We will continue to press for infrastructure investment to realise the full potential of the Ordsall Chord.

Ultimately, the only solution that facilitates a seriously improved link between Victoria and Piccadilly may involve major new capacity to and through the Regional Centre.



Transforming our rapid transit system: serving major centres away from existing lines

Improved connectivity for population and employment centres that are located away from the existing rapid transit system will be achieved in the first instance by 'first and last mile' interventions through multi-modal integration as part of the Bee Network (which has been described earlier in this draft strategy). This can help build the market for future rapid transit lines. For major centres that are away from existing rapid transit lines, there may be a case for new lines or extensions.

We will:

47: Ensure that any proposals for new or extended rapid transit lines facilitate services that are frequent and fast – running on mainly segregated alignments – and provide excellent access to and/or through the major demand drivers for rapid transit (the Regional Centre today, and Manchester Airport in the future) as well as connecting our major town centres. Experience from the Metrolink network – and from rapid transit systems elsewhere – shows that services that achieve a good degree of financial independence by covering more of their running costs need to do this. It allows them to attract high volumes of the middle distance trips for which rapid transit is best suited, and to generate greater revenue. The higher speed and reliability of current and former rail corridors allow them to provide the excellent access that is attractive to our customers, enabling these lines to make a more positive contribution to network finances. The lower speed and reliability of street-running lines can cause them to be less attractive to our customers and make a less positive contribution.

48: Prioritise proposals for new or extended rapid transit lines, develop business cases for those that have nearer term potential, and reserve space for those that have longer term potential. Our Five Year Transport Delivery Plan 2021-26 contains over 30 proposals for potential new, extended and converted rapid transit lines to expand the system. It is vital now to prioritise these options to facilitate the development and delivery of new phases of rapid transit system expansion across GM. Our aim is a steady, rolling pipeline that builds up development and delivery skills and moves them from scheme to scheme, driving efficiency and applying lessons learned. Where schemes are considered longer term prospects, space-saving of the corridors will be recommended. This is an approach historically used in GM to set out rapid transit routes in Local Plans, and seek to reserve space for their potential future delivery when relevant planning applications along the route arise.

Further details are given later in this draft strategy in 'Our expansion options'.

Transforming our rapid transit system: serving major centres on existing lines

The National Rail network in GM is an intensively used mixed-use railway with a legacy of two-track alignments. Services interact with each other at flat junctions, and these contribute greatly to capacity limitations and performance issues. There are also key capacity constraints, including the longstanding issues on the Castlefield Corridor in central Manchester and emerging issues in and around Stockport. These issues lead to infrequent and unreliable suburban rail services on some existing lines.

Despite increasing patronage, in recent years several suburban rail lines have seen service reductions. This is partly due to competition for track capacity with inter-city services, which generate a greater financial return to the rail industry and central government. The focus on revenue does not take sufficient account of the wider benefits that suburban rail services can bring to local communities, and this is one of the issues that the GM Rail Board seeks to address.

Another legacy feature is that the Regional Centre stations – Piccadilly, Oxford Road, Deansgate, Victoria, Salford Central and Salford Crescent – are at the periphery and do not provide excellent access to the heart of the city centre. In contrast, the Metrolink network does achieve excellent access for passengers to much of the city centre. But track capacity in the city centre means that there is a limit on additional Metrolink services that can run through the core.

We will:

- **49: Promote suburban rail frequency enhancements, working with the rail industry.** There are several stations with a sizeable population catchment that are served only by hourly trains or less. Whilst limited network capacity in the central area may be a constraint to improving service frequencies (in this case, there are other options – see item 50 immediately below) the potential benefits and associated trade-offs should be explored, and we will work closely with the rail

industry to make the case for the necessary improvements to infrastructure and services. In practice, a minimum service level of two trains per hour will help to make suburban rail a viable alternative to the car. An improvement to at least four trains per hour will provide a turn-up-and-go service. The significant increase in capacity needed to achieve our Right Mix vision will require this sort of improvement.

As one clear example, Mossley and Greenfield stations have high demand potential which is not realised due to low service frequencies – an hourly service in the off-peak, with limited extra services in the peak. The Transpennine Route Upgrade will increase capacity and reduce journey times along the line through Mossley and Greenfield. We will use new mechanisms as part of the ‘Trailblazer’ devolution deal to work with the rail industry to influence the programme to improve services at these stations.

- **50: Examine de-coupling rapid transit lines from their constraints using tram-train technology and underground technology.** The scope for full conversion of suburban rail lines to tram-only operation – as was achieved by Metrolink with the Bury and Altrincham lines in the 1990s and the Oldham and Rochdale line in the 2010s – is now probably exhausted. The two main options to release the suburban rail constraints described above are use of tram-train technology (so that services can run onto the central area Metrolink network) and use of underground technology (so that services can run into a tunnel in the central area).

The most obvious example for tram-train technology is extending existing Metrolink services that run through the city centre and terminate at Piccadilly out towards Glossop, Hadfield, and Marple. With appropriate infrastructure, this would take trains off key junctions on the approach to Piccadilly and out of the surface platforms there – freeing up capacity for other services. It would also make better use of trams that currently terminate at Piccadilly by carrying passengers from the Glossop, Hadfield and Marple lines to and through the city centre without the need for interchange. For other lines, the opportunities to connect into the central area Metrolink network are less clear cut, and underground technology might be the best approach to improve services (including for existing Metrolink lines). Depending on the approach that is pursued, there are opportunities to:

- release capacity for wider regional, inter-city, and freight services;
- provide more attractive ‘turn up and go’ rapid transit service levels;
- provide the opportunity for customers to travel between a suburban station and a city centre stop in a single journey, and make cross-city trips;
- add new stops to serve major population and employment centres.

The use of tram-train technology has a further advantage by making maximum use of existing light rail and heavy rail infrastructure by joining it together without major new construction such as a tunnel – convenient for our customers whilst also being cost-efficient and carbon-conscious.

51: Develop a tram-train Pathfinder to unlock future schemes. Whilst tram-train technology has successfully been implemented in the UK and around the world, it has not been done in GM. Recognising this, TfGM have planned a phased approach that seeks to mitigate risks. This is by developing an initial Pathfinder project as a proof-of-concept that is designed to maximise the learning for larger scale and longer term projects.

Three potential schemes were identified within Our Five Year Transport Delivery Plan 2021-26. Following detailed consideration, the Pathfinder North scheme was identified as the preferred option to be progressed. This comprises an extension of the existing Metrolink Oldham and Rochdale line, joining the National Rail network for the section between Rochdale and Castleton, and connecting onwards to Heywood and Bury via the East Lancashire Railway heritage corridor.

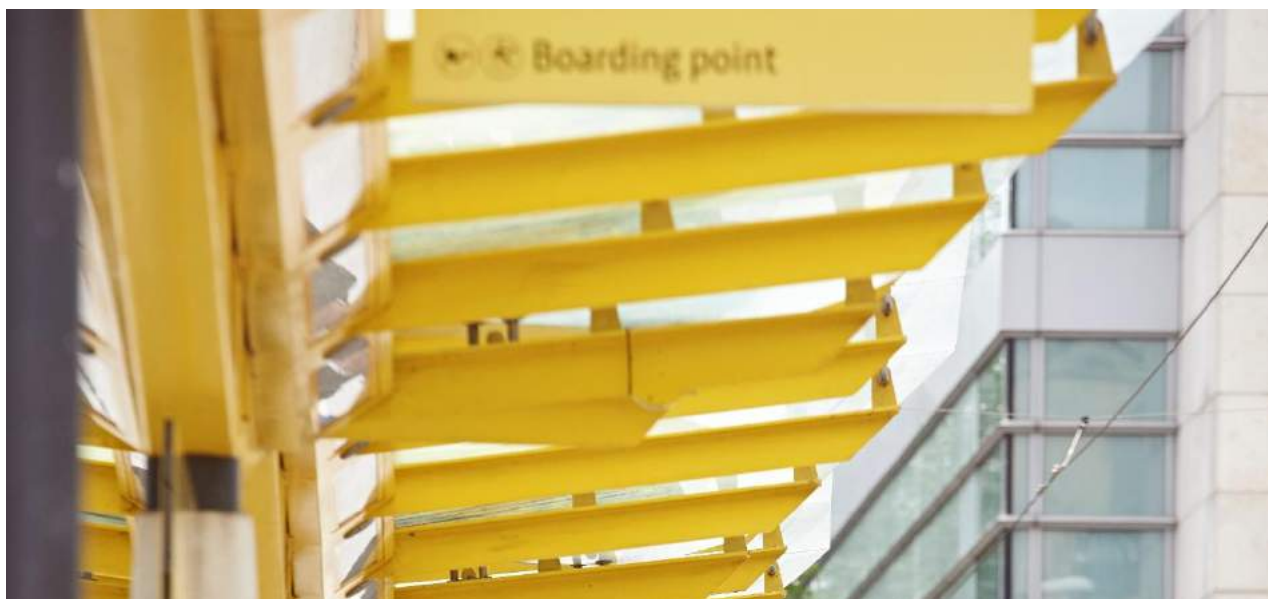
The scheme would require new and upgraded Pathfinder Infrastructure on both the heavy rail and light rail networks, and new tram-trains – along with the careful planning that would allow the new service to run across both networks. The Metrolink ‘Next Generation Vehicles’ described earlier in this draft strategy would be procured with tram-train capability to serve the scheme.

Our Five Year Delivery Plan 2021-26 sets out an aim to complete a business case for early delivery as far as Heywood, and a commitment to develop options for the next phase to Bury. Following the announcement of a funding allocation within the Department for Transport’s City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), TfGM is developing an integrated business case for the proposed Pathfinder infrastructure and the ‘Next Generation Vehicles’ needed for the route. The business case will need to be agreed with the Department for Transport.

- **52: Prioritise proposals for rapid transit line conversions to use tram-train and underground technology, develop business cases for those that have nearer term potential, and reserve space for those that have longer term potential.**

The actions here are the same as in item 48.

Further details are given later in this draft strategy in ‘Our expansion options’.



Transforming our rapid transit system: a second rapid transit hub around the Airport

The growth of the Manchester Airport area is expected to make it a second main demand driver for rapid transit in Greater Manchester (the first being the Regional Centre).

There are more than 20,000 jobs at Manchester Airport, which puts it at the same scale as the larger Greater Manchester town centres. The proportion of middle distance trips to work – to which rapid transit is well-suited – is much higher than to our town centres. Manchester Airports Group envisions a future in which 59,000 jobs are located at the Airport. Wider development envisaged in the area – including up to 10,000 jobs at Airport City North and further jobs growth around Wythenshawe Hospital and Medipark – will further increase travel demand.

A large increase in the number of trips to Manchester Airport and the immediate surrounding area is therefore expected by 2040. Achieving the Airport's growth targets will require significant increases in public transport mode share for staff and passengers for social and environmental reasons, and also for purely economic reasons in relation to avoiding congestion and slow journey times. Rapid transit will need to play its part in this.

As well as supporting proposed improvements to the existing Manchester Airport station, **we will:**

- **53: Continue to maintain the powers for the 'Western Leg' of the Metrolink Airport line and seek modifications where needed.** Originally planned as the western part of the full Metrolink Airport line, this scheme had a Transport and Works Act Order granted in 1997 and statutory powers required for its construction and operation remain in place. Recent work has focussed on integrating the route with the proposed Manchester Airport High Speed Station as part of High Speed 2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, and we secured the inclusion of proposed amendments to the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill in the government's second 'Additional Provision', deposited in Parliament in July 2023. Clearly, whilst the cancellation of the northern sections of HS2 introduces much uncertainty into years of strategic transport planning, Greater Manchester's ambition remains a new Manchester Airport High Speed Station that accommodates Northern Powerhouse Rail and a multimodal interchange including with Metrolink. The 'Western Leg' powers will be considered in that context, working with partners.
- **54: Develop complementary rapid transit options to facilitate expected growth in and around the Airport.** New rail-based rapid transit lines to the Airport would tend to focus on using existing rail infrastructure, with bus-based rapid transit tending to focus on locations more distant from existing rail infrastructure. A range of ambitions for new rapid transit services to the Airport are proposed. Some offer alternative ways of serving the same trips, and so it will be necessary to make choices between these alternatives – and care has to be taken that the markets served would see a genuine improvement. For some longer distances it will be as quick or quicker, if using public transport, to travel via the Regional Centre and connect with trains to the Airport (today) or to use Northern Powerhouse Rail (in future).



Transforming our rapid transit system: a step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity

There is a serious possibility that the rapid transit system in the Regional Centre will not have sufficient capacity to accommodate expected 2040 demand, driven by continued population and economic growth – and the need for non-car modes to accommodate a higher proportion of that increased travel demand in line with our Right Mix vision for a doubling of rapid transit trips.

Work undertaken over a number of years by TfGM suggests that this problem will exist even after the measures to lengthen trains and trams described earlier in this draft strategy are taken up, and will be particularly acute on the south-west to north-east axis via the Metrolink core, and the north-west to south-east axis via the Castlefield Corridor.

A major increase in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity could accommodate a substantial increase in travel demand, while facilitating more conversion of suburban rail services than would be possible by tram-train extensions of existing Metrolink services alone. In turn, that could release capacity on the National Rail network to create room for growth on remaining services. And it could allow increased capacity on existing Metrolink lines through frequency uplifts.

This would not just be about capacity for trips to and from the Regional Centre though – it would be about connectivity, allowing faster and more frequent cross-city trips through the Regional Centre, joining up the city-region with new direct and indirect services to create new journey opportunities.

We will:

- **55: Explore tunnelled options to enable faster, more frequent and higher-capacity rapid transit services to, from and through the Regional Centre – working with the rail industry.** Previous work on additional surface-level routes, running mainly on-street, has shown that these would only be capable of delivering modest and uncertain improvements in capacity, and could be disruptive during construction. Early work to explore tunnelled options has considered the various connections that could be made between existing rapid transit lines to enable through-running of services across the Regional Centre and beyond. These could be 'Regional Metro' style solutions – similar to the Paris RER, the Munich S-Bahn and London's Elizabeth line – with some longer distance versions being similar to Thameslink, which spans London and the South East.

Clearly, the capital cost of any of the tunnelled solutions described above would be multi-billion. Whilst it would be expected to be lower in cost than the longer tunnel required for the Elizabeth line (which contains several very large underground stations) it is recognised that there is much work to do to on the business case for any such investment. Options that interact with existing National Rail lines also need to be developed working with the rail industry and – as described earlier in this draft strategy – with an integrated approach to new inter-city lines. However, finding a long-term solution to Regional Centre rapid transit capacity is crucial for the continued economic growth of GM, the North and the UK.



Integrating rail into the Bee Network by 2028

The Bee Network is already a reality with Metrolink and the Starling Bank bike hire scheme joined by the first buses brought under local control from September 2023. We have now franchised 50% of the bus network. This has yielded ridership growth of 5% in the last 6 months through strongly improved reliability, customer service and fleet. All buses will be franchised, and the first phase of the Bee Network complete, in 2025.

Building on the 'Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal with central government, we are collaborating with the rail industry to integrate rail services into the Bee Network by 2030. As part of the second phase of the Bee Network, 8 suburban rail corridors have been prioritised for integration by 2028. Numbered clockwise from north, they are:

1. Rochdale stopping services
2. Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge
3. Glossop, Hadfield and Rose Hill Marple via Guide Bridge
4. Alderley Edge and Buxton via Stockport
5. Airport stopping services
6. Wigan via Golborne
7. Wigan via Atherton*
8. Wigan via Bolton*

* continuing to Southport

The integration of these rail lines is a significant milestone in seamlessly connecting rail services within the Bee Network. This integration will enhance convenience, offer more choices, and promote a low-carbon lifestyle made possible by integrated land use and transport planning.

Delivery Plan:

Bee Network integration by 2028 and beyond

Between now and 2028 rail integration delivery will focus on 8 priority corridors across GM. This will bring customer-facing improvements that align rail services with the Bee Network, including consistent branding, information, fares, accessibility, and station enhancements. This will deliver early realisation of customer benefits, create an environment for passenger growth and provide the first step in establishing a single cohesive recognisable 'Bee Network' product that incorporates rail.

Building on work undertaken as part of the GM Rail Integration Case for Change, we have developed a GM Rail Integration Proposition, which is based five Customer Integration Pillars (overleaf).

The GM Rail Integration Proposition and five Customer Pillars will be the focus areas of Bee Network Rail Integration, and will form the basis of our approach to integrate the rail network into the Bee Network at pace by 2028, followed by ongoing, wider rollout thereafter.

While progress is being made towards rail integration, it's essential to lay the groundwork for a lasting partnership with both the rail industry and government that extends beyond 2028. This partnership will serve as a catalyst for economic growth, providing access to opportunities, boosting ridership, and ultimately decreasing the need for financial subsidies.

There is a compelling case that local accountability will deliver value, efficiencies and return benefits locally, regionally and nationally. This can only be achieved through a meaningful and accountable partnership with the rail industry and government. This means GM needs to work directly with Great British Railways (GBR), being the Co-Client for rail outputs, taking a lead role in the specification of fares, services, and customer standards in the GM and North West area.

It's vital that developing such a relationship ensures mutual benefits for both the government and GM, and results in:

- Driving growth and attracting investments into the rail and public transport systems.
- Ensuring local accountability, empowering authorities to tailor services to meet specific customer needs, leading to a more efficient utilisation of resources.
- Enhancing performance and reliability, instilling trust and confidence among customers in the public transport system.
- Improving accessibility to homes and job opportunities, thereby enhancing overall connectivity and economic potential for residents.
- Supporting decarbonisation efforts by encouraging public transport usage over private vehicles, consequently reducing congestion and environmental impact.
- Encouraging private sector investments, further stimulating economic growth and development across the region.



The rail industry proposal delivered by 2028

To facilitate the delivery of the 8 priority corridors by 2028, we have developed a collective understanding of what Bee Network Rail Integration means. This is known as the GM Rail Integration Proposition and takes a strategic approach through five Customer Integration Pillars.

Bee Network Development

Network and service enhancements across all local GM routes, with minimum frequencies of at least 2 trains per hour (tph) at all stations, with 4 tph where demand warrants (many stations only have 1 tph).

New, environmentally friendly rolling stock serving GM local services, with improved on-board facilities and step-free boarding. Due to start rolling out from 2027.



Station Facilities, Accessibility

By 2028 majority of routes and journeys on GM local services to be fully accessible.

By 2028 significant increase in number of GM stations that are fully accessible.

By 2040 all stations fully accessible, including modal interchanges and step-free boarding.



Customer Experience, Information, Branding

Bee Network branding across all trains and stations.

Bee Network customer service standards fully implemented across all parts of the multi-modal network.

Fully integrated digital proposition for the Bee network that provides a seamless customer experience (e.g. Multi-Modal info at stations and on trains, Bee Network App, frontline, customer facing staff).



Fares & Ticketing

PAYG across eight priority corridors by 2028, with full roll out by 2030.

Launch of integrated fares within Bee Network cap.

Multi-Modal Fares simplification across GM and wider travel to work area by 2030.








Transit Orientated Development and Regeneration

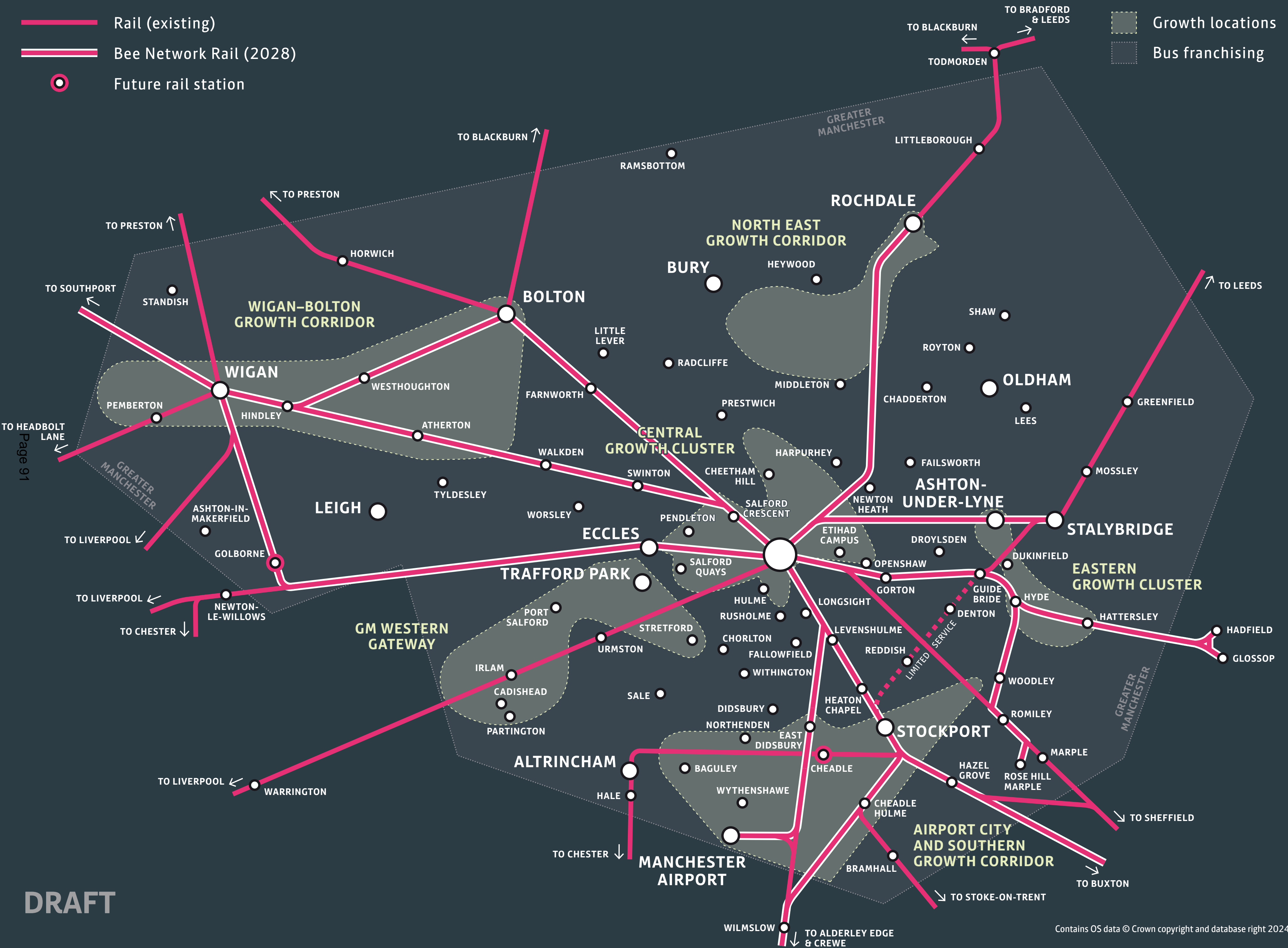
Deliver Golborne and Cheadle new stations by 2026 – 2027.

Urban realm and regen opportunities delivered by 2028 at central Manchester, Salford and Stockport stations, and then wider thereafter.



-  Rail (existing)
-  Bee Network Rail (2028)
-  Future rail station

-  Growth locations
-  Bus franchising



Page 91

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Our expansion options

Prioritisation

The timeframe for opening a new, extended or converted rapid transit line is typically 8 to 10 years, due to the need to make a case, finalise funding, obtain statutory powers, and design, construct and commission the line – and the timeframe is longer if major new central area capacity is needed.

It is therefore vital to prioritise our options for new, extended or converted rapid transit lines, to facilitate the development and delivery of new phases of rapid transit system expansion across Greater Manchester.

This will allow us to focus our finite scheme development resources on those lines that would most effectively move us towards our Right Mix vision – and to understand better the likely future pressures on central area rapid transit capacity.

Prioritising will also allow us to maintain a proper focus on all the other key actions described earlier in this draft strategy that do not involve new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines.

In line with national requirements, we are currently carrying out a refresh of our Local Transport Plan, starting with the GM Transport Strategy 2040 and continuing to creation of the next Five Year Delivery Plan (2027-2032). This draft strategy will play a key role in shaping our priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines within these documents.

A principles-based approach

A principles-based prioritisation has been undertaken to identify c.15 emerging priorities that will go forward for further detailed prioritisation in 2024. Derived from the earlier sections of the rapid transit strategy, the following principles have been applied. These set out that expansion of our future rapid transit system with new, extended and/or converted lines should:

- make best use of existing network infrastructure
- serve major centres, whether on or away from existing lines, and link to jobs in key growth areas
- provide frequent and fast services – running on mainly segregated alignments
- provide excellent access to and/or through the main demand drivers for rapid transit – the Regional Centre today, and Manchester Airport in the future
- consider integration with land use planning, and existing and new inter-city rail services and lines

These principles will also be relevant for taking a view on any proposals for expansion of our rapid transit system that emerge in the future.

Emerging priorities

for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines

The outcomes of the principles-based prioritisation are set out below, including commentary on scheme development work undertaken to date. For some schemes many years of work have shaped the current position, whilst others are at an earlier stage of development.

Moving clockwise around the city-region – the schemes are numbered in this clockwise order, not in any particular priority order – a balanced approach to the potential expansion of the rapid transit system within Greater Manchester can be seen. This provides a strong platform for further detailed prioritisation and scheme development.

At the end of this section, maps are provided that show the rapid transit network as it exists today, the 8 rail lines to be integrated into the Bee Network by 2028, the emerging priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines, complementary Quality Bus routes, and potential options for a step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity.

Northern and Eastern

The North East Growth Corridor – focussed on the Atom Valley developments – is a major new employment opportunity for the city-region, with the potential for over 20,000 new jobs as well as 7,000 new homes. The majority of the new jobs are anticipated to be at the Northern Gateway site, which is of a transformative scale in its own right. With the Kingsway and Stakehill sites also playing important roles, the corridor has the potential to significantly change the economic growth potential of the wider area. Our emerging priorities could connect areas across the Growth Corridor and provide connections to surrounding areas via sustainable public transport infrastructure.

1. Bury – Heywood – Rochdale – Oldham

TfGM is currently using funding allocated in the Department for Transport’s City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) to develop an Outline Business Case for the introduction of a Tram-Train Pathfinder route connecting Bury, Heywood, Rochdale, and Oldham – plus the Metrolink ‘Next Generation Vehicles’ that would be needed to operate the service. The total route length of around 25km already has rails in use by Metrolink, National Rail and the East Lancashire Railway. All existing passenger and freight services must be considered in planning any new service. The scheme could make use of existing network infrastructure, link people to jobs across the key growth area of Atom Valley, and connect the major population centre of Heywood to the wider rail network at Castleton and Rochdale (this has not been the case since 1970). The route as a whole could be mainly segregated and provide a fast orbital journey – as an example, cutting public transport journey times between Rochdale and Bury in the peak from around 40 minutes to around 25 minutes. Lessons learned on Pathfinder will be crucial to developing viable business cases for tram-train schemes on a larger scale, which could unlock the future expansion of Greater Manchester’s rapid transit system.

2. North Manchester to Middleton and Northern Gateway corridor

There is a clear gap in the rapid transit system between the Metrolink Bury line and the National Rail Calder Valley line. In seeking to fill this gap, work to date has identified some challenges for Metrolink to Middleton, including navigating the physical features of any route and achieving a viable business case for investment. However, the significantly increased development coming forward as part of Places for Everyone (as well as potential alternative approaches such as bus-based rapid transit) means that proposals for Metrolink to Middleton continue to be examined as part of a broader study of the transport issues and opportunities in the corridor connecting North Manchester with Middleton, the Northern Gateway development and Heywood. This work is considering also the areas of Victoria North, North Manchester General Hospital and Harpurhey, Blackley and Langley, as well as considering integration with potential future bus services to Northern Gateway from Bury and Oldham. The role of the Calder Valley line is a further consideration at the edge of this corridor.

Eastern

The principles-based prioritisation exercise supports the Eastern Growth Cluster which is proposed to create a significant new employment engine in Tameside by linking key development opportunities there, including investment in the town centres of Ashton-under-Lyne and Hyde, 2,000 new homes around Godley Green Garden Village, and key centres for education and skills.

3. East Manchester to Glossop, Hadfield and Marple corridor

In addition to seeking improvements to the existing suburban rail service as part of bringing these lines into the Bee Network by 2028, the potential introduction of tram-train services on the existing lines to Glossop, Hadfield and Marple (including service options via Hyde) performs well against our prioritisation principles. With appropriate infrastructure investment, conversion to tram-train operation could have potential to raise service frequencies beyond those that could be achieved by suburban rail alone (through bypassing some of the intensively used sections, flat junctions, and central area capacity constraints described earlier in this draft strategy).

These potential services would make use of existing network infrastructure, be fast and frequent by running on mainly segregated alignments, and provide excellent access to and through the Regional Centre for customers. They could make good use of Metrolink services that currently terminate on the city fringe at Piccadilly. Previous study work has suggested that there could be a strong case for investment, but also that these services must be considered holistically – including consideration of improving the existing suburban rail service, the relationship with other rail services, and appropriate phasing and integration of infrastructure with wider transport and land use proposals in the Piccadilly area. That includes proposals for High Speed 2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail – on which, as set out earlier in this draft strategy, we will continue to work together with partners for the best outcome following the cancellation of High Speed 2 infrastructure to Manchester in 2023.

In the nearer term, the corridor to Glossop, Hadfield and Rose Hill Marple is one of the 8 priority corridors for integration into the Bee Network by 2028, as discussed earlier in this draft strategy.

4. Tameside to Stockport via Denton and Reddish

Study work in the mid-2010s showed that tram-train services between Tameside and Stockport, on the line via Denton and Reddish, were likely to have a weak case for investment. More recent Restoring Your Railways study work has shown that the case for train services is also weak. Population density along this route has large gaps to the west at the Audenshaw Reservoirs and to the east at Reddish Vale. Despite this, the important strategic resource of the existing railway line via Denton and Reddish means that further assessment is still recommended as part of a potential wider network of services, so that this route is not precluded from playing its part in the future – for example by linking Tameside with other proposals between Stockport and the Airport.

Southern and Airport

The principles-based prioritisation exercise supports, in addition to the potential for tram-train services on the line to Marple described above, other emerging rapid transit priorities for the Airport and Southern Growth Corridor. This corridor – with the potential for 22,000 new jobs – supports the realisation of Greater Manchester’s international potential, the growth of employment across the Manchester Airport area, and the continued redevelopment of Stockport town centre and Wythenshawe town centre. The cancellation of the northern sections of High Speed 2 means that Stockport’s role as the southern gateway into GM is more important than ever – and any rapid transit expansion needs to take into account the proposed redevelopment of Stockport railway station, which would help to secure this role. Whilst Altrincham town centre lies just outside the Airport and Southern Growth Corridor, its role as a growing business location and prosperous residential area mean that its connections to the Airport also need consideration as part of any rapid transit expansion. Overall, there has been a longstanding desire to achieve sustainable transport routes across the south of the city-region as a counterpart to the highways network. The emerging priorities in this section seek to address this.

5. South Manchester to Stockport / Hazel Grove

Metrolink to Stockport from East Didsbury has a long history of proposals, with an extension having been poised for a Transport and Works Act Order application in the early 2000s. In previous work it consistently showed a business case that was weaker than the other Metrolink Phase 3 extensions that ultimately progressed to construction and operation. However, there are now significant new opportunities to be re-considered, including development within Stockport town centre (with 4,000 new homes where public transport and active travel will be the first option) and wider economic opportunities across the Airport and Southern Growth Corridor. Stockport Council’s ‘Next Stop Stockport’ programme provides a vehicle to bring together partners in pursuit of the economic opportunities and to embed these benefits in the Metrolink business case. Work is in progress and will continue to establish the business case, including potential tram and tram-train options as part of a wider future network to link with services between Stockport and the Airport, between Stockport and Ashton via Denton and Reddish, and to Hazel Grove using the Adswold freight line.

6. Stockport to Airport

For a potential tram-train service between Stockport and the Airport, recent business case work shows promise for making greater use of the Mid Cheshire line via the new station at Cheadle. This service would depend on the prior completion of the Metrolink Airport line 'Western Leg' (described earlier in this draft strategy, and again below). There is also an opportunity to consider a joined up approach with rapid transit services from East Didsbury to Stockport and/or Hazel Grove – these schemes might share infrastructure or become combined services.

Note: To ensure that options are kept open, TfGM and Stockport Council are working with Network Rail on their replacement of the life-expired Greek Street and Stockholm Road bridges. In 2023, a Strategic Outline Business Case to use City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding to safeguard space for potential future tram-train routes at these bridges was approved. Work continues with Network Rail to implement the required options at each of these bridges.

The wider Airport area as a second rapid transit hub

In the longer term, the expected growth of employment and housing in and around Manchester Airport will bring the potential for the area to become a second rapid transit hub in Greater Manchester. Growth targets for the Airport – considering both air passengers and workers accessing jobs in the Airport area – should be achieved with a step change in non-car mode share. With a large catchment area for both air passengers and workers, rapid transit investment is expected to be needed to achieve this for middle distance trips. The following schemes need a holistic approach:

7. Metrolink Airport line Western Leg

Proposals for the completion of the 'Western Leg' of the full Metrolink Airport line have previously been supported by a business case, and some powers required for its construction and operation remain in place. Recent work has focussed on integration with the proposed Manchester Airport High Speed Station, and we secured the inclusion of proposed amendments to the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill in the government's second Additional Provision, deposited in Parliament in July 2023. Greater Manchester's ambition remains a new Manchester Airport High Speed Station that accommodates Northern Powerhouse Rail and a multimodal interchange including with Metrolink, and we will work together with partners towards this.

The Western Leg could serve a number of key growth areas including Wythenshawe Hospital and Medipark, existing and proposed housing at Newall Green and Davenport Green, and the expanded Terminal 2 and Airport City – as well as offering additional services on the Airport line and a substantial reduction in journey times compared to the existing Eastern Leg via Wythenshawe Town Centre. Consideration should therefore be given to phasing of the Western Leg, with the potential for earlier phases to be brought forward whilst proposals for Manchester Airport High Speed Station are resolved. With Metrolink referred to in the mitigations for the Places for Everyone allocation at Davenport Green, there is also potential for this development to make proportionate land or financial contributions.

8. Tram-train services to the north-west, west and south-west of the Airport

The Western Leg is envisaged as a core component of unlocking a network of future services to the Airport zone using tram-train technology. Potential services between the Airport and Stockport have already been described on the previous page. Study work has shown there could be a case for rapid transit services between the Airport and areas to its north-west, west and south-west, particularly for options that directly connect the Metrolink Altrincham line to the Airport via the existing Mid Cheshire line and the proposed Western Leg.

9. Busway corridors to the west and east of the Airport

Busway corridors to the west and east of the Airport could also provide more local connections. From Trafford to the west, this would be through the Davenport Green development to provide a more attractive alternative to the car for journeys between Altrincham and the Airport. From the east, this could enable enhancements to a range of bus routes connecting into Stockport and Cheshire East, including from Bramhall, Cheadle Hulme, Handforth, Hazel Grove, Heald Green, Poynton, Stanley Green, Woodford, and Wilmslow. However, the extent to which these corridors could truly achieve bus rapid transit conditions with segregation from general traffic remains an open question. These bus-based options will also need to be considered against rail-based proposals which could provide alternative forms rapid transit to the Airport.

Western and Central

This section of the principles-based prioritisation exercise supports two key growth locations, the Western Gateway – which could create 25,000 new jobs, capitalising on the unrivalled port connectivity and planned new significant employment, retail and leisure developments – and the western side of the Central Growth Cluster including the Salford Quays and Salford Crescent area.

10. Trafford Park line

A short extension of the existing Metrolink Trafford Park line could effectively serve the major developments at Trafford Waters, Salford Stadium and Port Salford, and could provide a frequent and relatively fast service running to and through the Regional Centre on a mainly segregated alignment. Those factors mean that this proposal performs reasonably well against our prioritisation principles. Whilst previous business case work has not yet identified a strong enough case for investment, proactive reservation of space for potential routes has taken place – and further assessment of the options and business case for this scheme is recommended.

11. Warrington (CLC) line

Introduction of tram-train services on the National Rail route to Warrington (CLC line) performs strongly in the principles-based prioritisation exercise. This corridor has large existing and planned population catchments (Urmston, Irlam, Cadishead, Partington and New Carrington) that are

currently not well-served by rapid transit. However, this route does not have the same advantage that the Glossop, Hadfield and Marple routes enjoy – of potentially being able to extend existing Metrolink services that currently terminate on the city fringe to become tram-train services.

Instead, introducing tram-train services on the Warrington (CLC) line would require additional city centre Metrolink capacity to accommodate any new services. Given the great difficulties of providing this via the on-street Metrolink network, this line also needs to be considered as a candidate for the use of underground technology – either by routeing its services via tunnel as part of a potential step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity (see overleaf) or taking advantage of surface capacity freed up by other routes being routed via tunnel.

Whilst previous work has not to date identified a viable business case for re-use of the former railway between Cadishead, Partington, New Carrington and Timperley, further assessment of a short spur stemming from the Warrington (CLC) line is still recommended when the broader options for that line are considered. In addition to the existing communities at Cadishead and Partington, the New Carrington development anticipates approximately 5,000 homes in total and 350,000 sqm of employment floorspace for industry and warehousing.

12. Salford Quays to Salford Crescent

A short Metrolink extension of less than 1.5km of new construction could connect The Quays and MediaCityUK with the National Rail network at Salford Crescent. The most obvious benefits would be to customers on the rail lines going north-west from Salford Crescent via Bolton and Wigan. However, many cross-city train services also call at Salford Crescent – trains from Rochdale, Ashton, Stalybridge and the Airport call there today, and others could do in future. This short extension could make use of existing network infrastructure, link to jobs in key growth areas, provide a frequent and fast service running mainly on a segregated alignment, and integrate with existing and new inter-city rail services – it therefore performs very well against our prioritisation principles. With customers potentially enjoying a single interchange at Salford Crescent to access The Quays and MediaCityUK, rather than lengthier and slower trips via the city centre, its benefits could be more widespread than they first appear – and it could assist with relieving the congested central area of the rapid transit system. Our Five Year Delivery Plan 2021-26 sets out the aim to complete a business case for early delivery of a Quality Bus route in this area. These two schemes could follow different routes and complement each other, as demand for public transport in this area increases.

13. Further connections between Salford Crescent, Inner Salford, and Manchester city centre

Building on the immediately above, in the longer term there is potential for the introduction of further new Metrolink connections between Salford Crescent, Inner Salford, and Manchester city centre. Whilst there could be some duplication with bus services on the A6, including busway services, transformative proposals for the A6 are proposed as part of local development frameworks at Salford University that bring opportunity for further expansion of the rapid transit system. Considerations include the role that a shorter Metrolink spur from St. Peter's Square to Spinningfields or Salford Central could play, and interfaces with the Atherton line (see overleaf).

Wigan and Bolton

The Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor anticipates the creation of 12,000 new quality homes, employment growth, and health innovation opportunities.

14. Leigh, and Wigan via Atherton considering spurs to Bolton and/or Leigh

The Leigh–Salford–Manchester Busway has proved highly successful since it first opened in 2016, as set out earlier in this draft strategy. With 3 million trips in the year 2019/20 prior to the pandemic and over 2.6 million trips in 2023/24, patronage continues to recover and grow. In the nearer term, the potential of the busway should be fully exploited now that it is part of the Bee Network – including consideration of services (routes, frequencies and stopping patterns) as part of the structured, transparent, area-based ‘Network Reviews’ that are set out in the [GM Bus Strategy](#).

In addition to continuing to ensure the busway is delivering maximum benefits for Leigh and surrounding area, it is intended to consider if there is a case for Leigh as a Metrolink terminus. This work will include assessment of the potential economic and regeneration opportunity for the area along the route, in addition to gaining an understanding of the technical implications of converting any sections of the busway to Metrolink operation.

Further to this, introduction of tram-train services on the National Rail route to Wigan via Atherton performs strongly in the principles-based prioritisation exercise. This corridor has large population catchments that are currently not well-served by rapid transit. However, like the Warrington (CLC) line, it does not have the same advantage that the Glossop, Hadfield and Marple routes enjoy – of potentially being able to extend existing Metrolink services that currently terminate on the city fringe to become tram-train services.

Instead, introducing tram-train services on the Wigan via Atherton line would require additional city centre Metrolink capacity to accommodate any new services. Given the great difficulties of providing this via the on-street Metrolink network, this line also needs to be considered as a candidate for the use of underground technology – either by routeing its services via tunnel as part of a potential step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity (see below) or taking advantage of surface capacity freed up by other routes being routed via tunnel.

When options for tram-train or metro services on the Atherton line are examined, consideration is to be given to spurs toward Bolton and Leigh. Whilst previous work has not to date identified a viable business case for these spurs, the new opportunities brought by the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor merit revisiting this.

In the nearer term, the Atherton line is one of the 8 priority corridors for integration into the Bee Network by 2028, as discussed earlier in this draft strategy.

Complementing this work, options for extending Merseyrail services from Headbolt Lane into the bay platform at Wigan Wallgate could also be investigated in partnership with the Liverpool City Region.

Central and pan-GM

The **Central Growth Cluster** is expected to create over 90,000 new jobs, and rapid transit would need to play a significant role in supporting this growth potential. Meeting our ambitious 'Right Mix' vision will require a step change in capacity at the centre of our rapid transit system – facilitating growth in movements both to and through the heart of the Regional Centre. Early-stage work has explored a range of potential tunnelled options to deliver this step change.

15. A step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity

Emerging findings suggest that the strongest options for capacity and connectivity would be:

- The **north-west to south-east axis** – connecting the Bolton and Wigan (via Atherton) rail lines with the Airport and Stockport rail lines. This could deliver high-frequency, high-capacity services using a longer distance 'Regional Metro' approach similar to the Paris RER, the Munich S-Bahn and London's Elizabeth line. Given the longer distance nature of some of the services on the Bolton, Wigan, Airport and Stockport lines, this could also be seen as similar to Thameslink. It would be expected to release vital capacity on the Castlefield Corridor which acts as a considerable constraint to connections and reliability today.
- The **south-west to north-east axis** – our emerging findings show that even if longer, walkthrough trams were implemented across the Metrolink network as part of a roll-out of Next Generation Vehicles, capacity could still be on the limit or exceeded in 2040. Connecting Metrolink lines (particularly those that have no on-street running i.e. Altrincham, East Didsbury and Bury) using a tunnel could allow even longer vehicles and higher frequencies on these lines, and free up capacity on the remaining Metrolink lines to run higher frequencies and new services. This axis also has potential for wider National Rail connections including the routes to Warrington (CLC) and Rochdale (Calder Valley).

With a view to longer term evolution of a tunnelled system across the Regional Centre, implementation of the options described above would still leave a north-south gap in the rapid transit system. Future work on options development is expected to consider a 'Local Metro' solution – alongside consideration of other non-tunnelled options – for this gap.

Mapping the emerging priorities

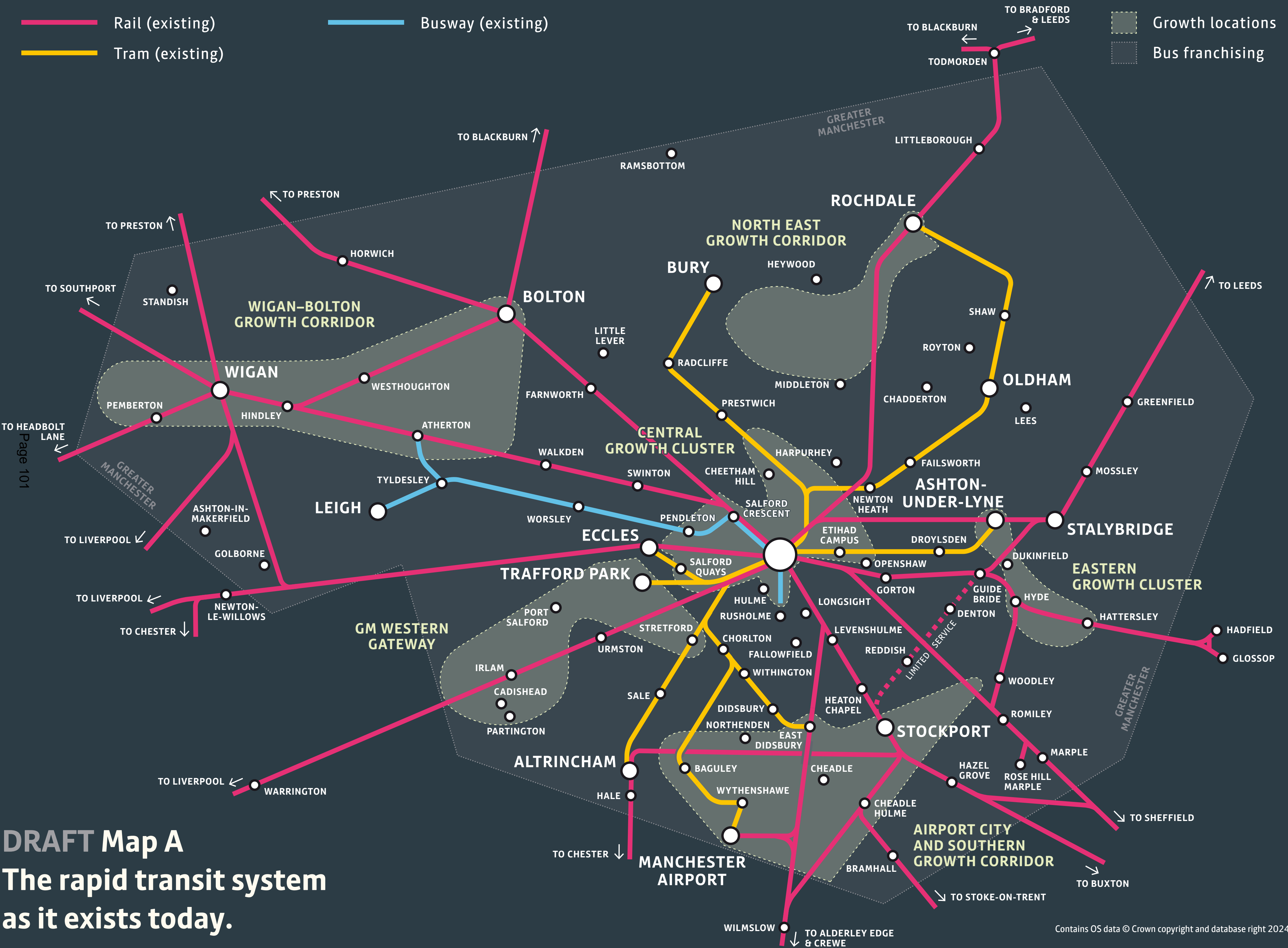
The emerging priorities for rapid transit system expansion following the principles-based prioritisation set out above are summarised overleaf in draft map form:

- **Draft Map A:** The rapid transit system as it exists today.
- **Draft Map B:** Bee Network rail integration – 8 priority corridors by 2028.
- **Draft Map C:** c.15 emerging priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines.
- **Draft Map D:** Complementary Quality Bus routes (selected corridors in relation to rapid transit).
- **Draft Map E:** Emerging options for a step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity.

— Rail (existing)
— Tram (existing)

— Busway (existing)

■ Growth locations
■ Bus franchising

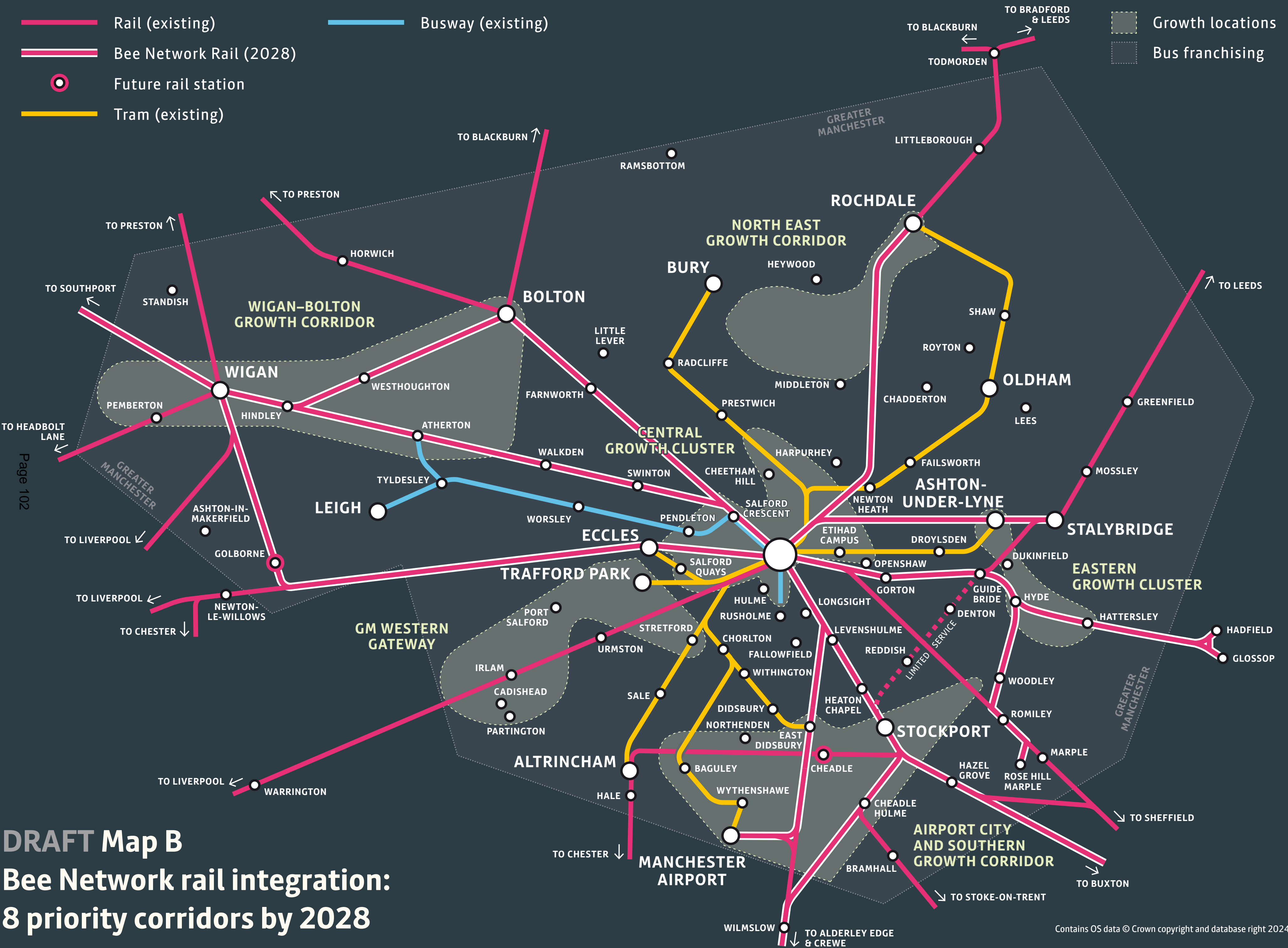


DRAFT Map A

The rapid transit system as it exists today.

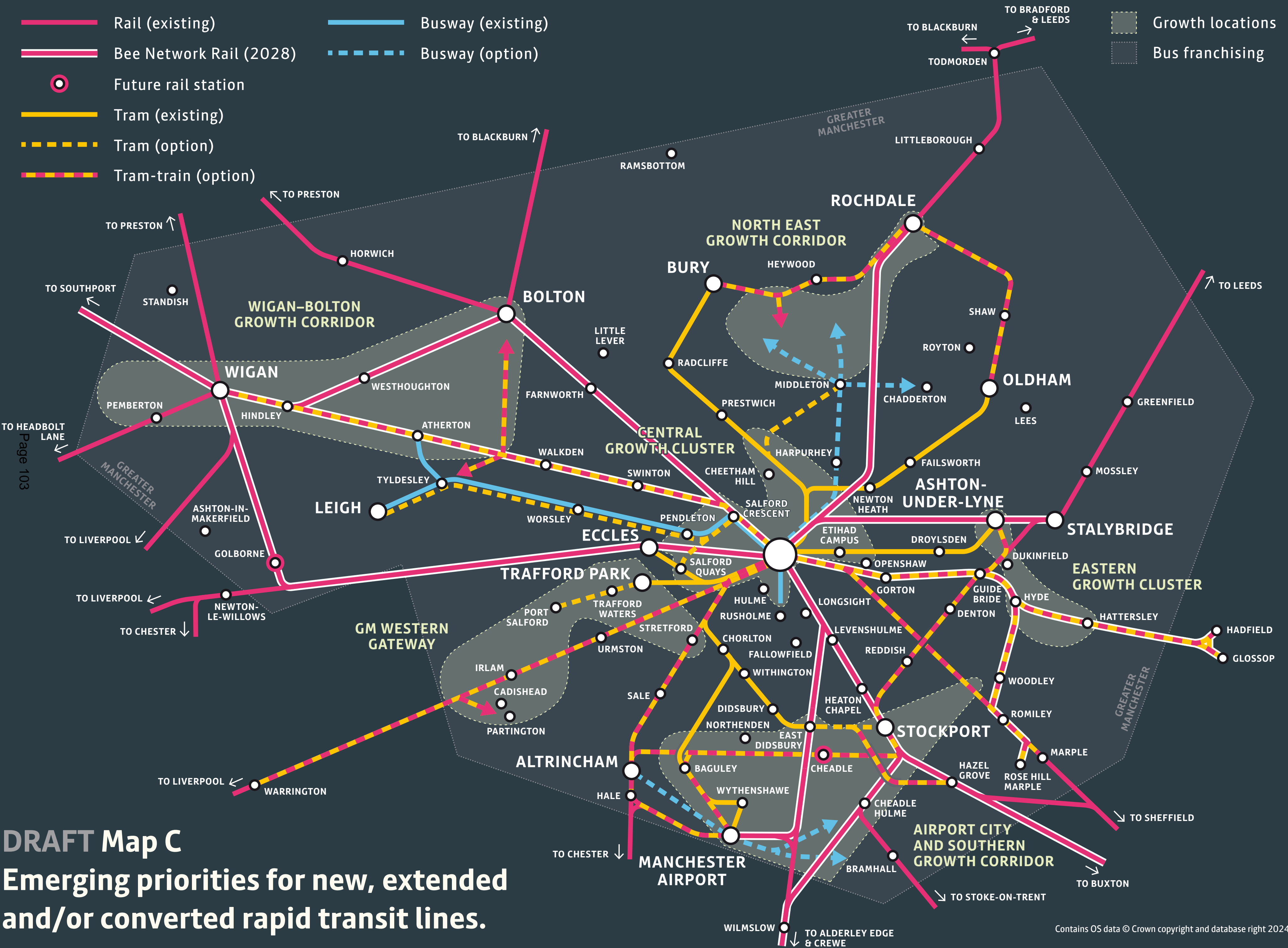
Page 101

- Rail (existing)
- Bee Network Rail (2028)
- Future rail station
- Tram (existing)
- Busway (existing)
- Growth locations
- Bus franchising



DRAFT Map B
Bee Network rail integration:
8 priority corridors by 2028

- Rail (existing)
- Bee Network Rail (2028)
- Future rail station
- Tram (existing)
- Tram (option)
- Tram-train (option)
- Busway (existing)
- Busway (option)
- Growth locations
- Bus franchising



DRAFT Map C
Emerging priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines.

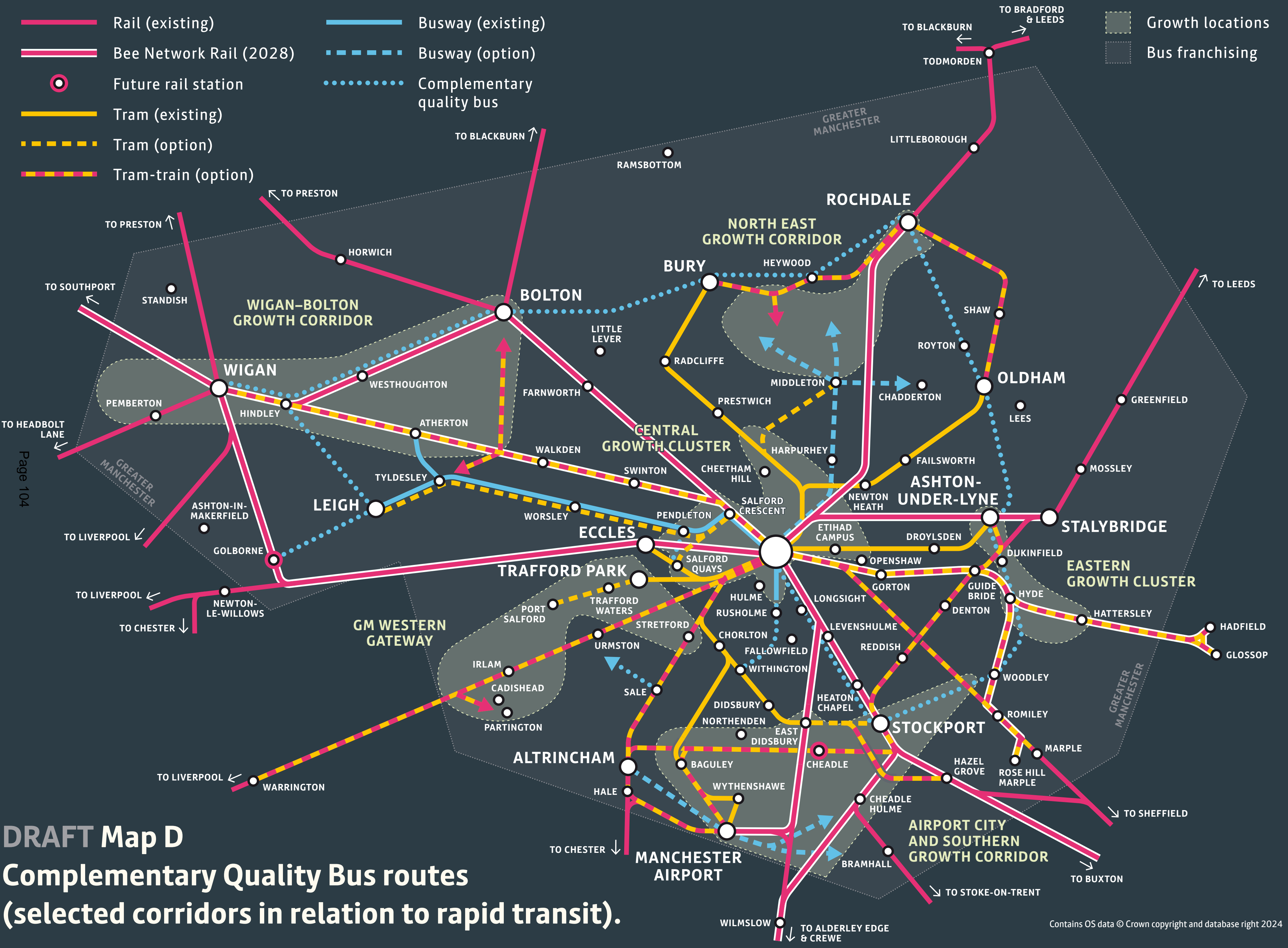
Page 103

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- Rail (existing)
- Bee Network Rail (2028)
- Future rail station
- Tram (existing)
- Tram (option)
- Tram-train (option)

- Busway (existing)
- Busway (option)
- Complementary quality bus

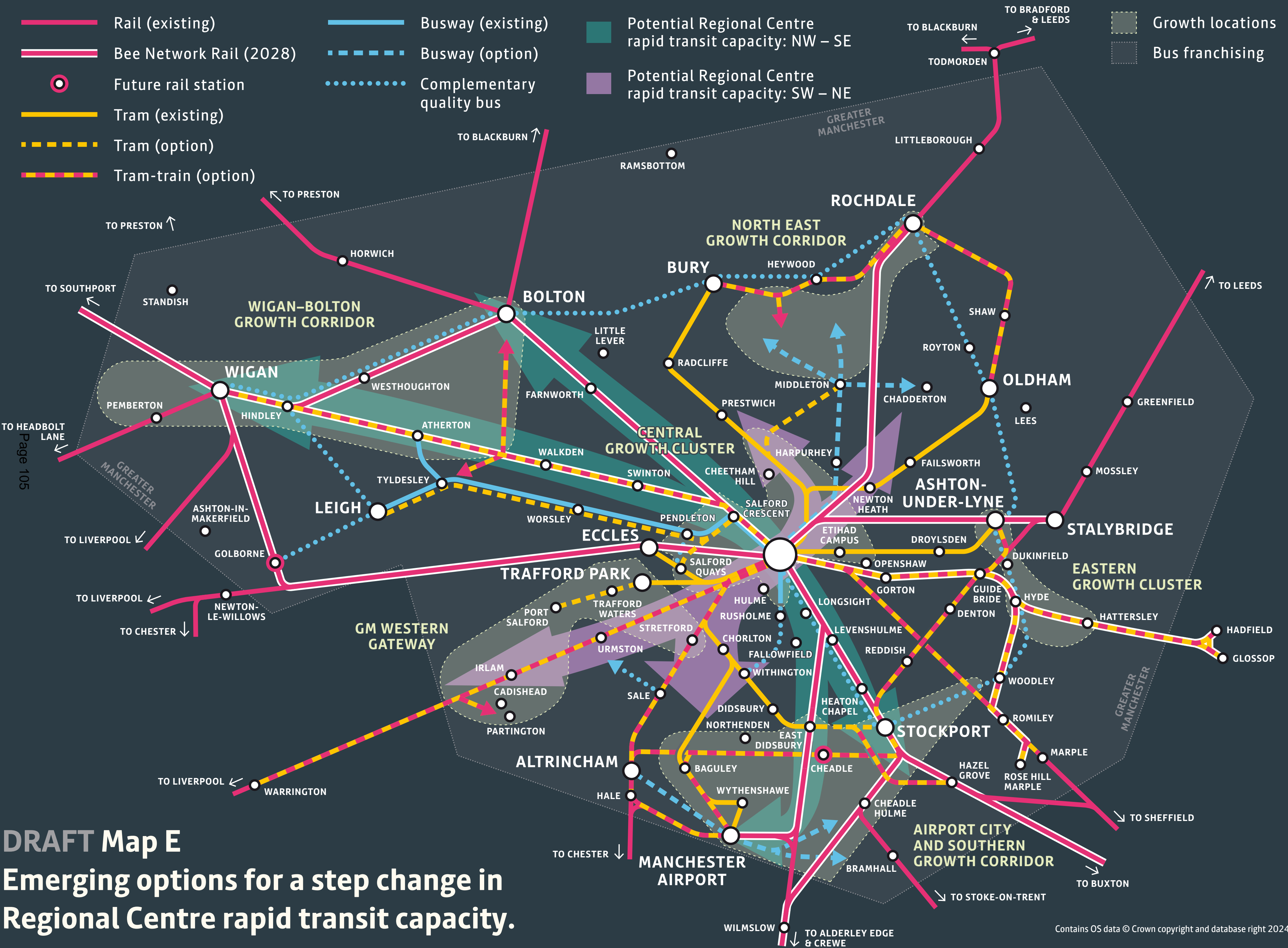
- Growth locations
- Bus franchising



DRAFT Map D
Complementary Quality Bus routes
(selected corridors in relation to rapid transit).

Page 104

- Rail (existing)
- Bee Network Rail (2028)
- Future rail station
- Tram (existing)
- Tram (option)
- Tram-train (option)
- Busway (existing)
- Busway (option)
- Complementary quality bus
- Potential Regional Centre rapid transit capacity: NW – SE
- Potential Regional Centre rapid transit capacity: SW – NE
- Growth locations
- Bus franchising



DRAFT Map E
Emerging options for a step change in
Regional Centre rapid transit capacity.

Looking ahead – where we go next



Whilst this draft strategy has set out the ways in which we intend to act and gives clear examples, its fullest ambitions would require significant funding to be delivered – along with statutory powers for some of the items such as new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines.

It is anticipated that a number of delivery plans – for example, concerning the full integration of rail into the Bee Network – will come forward over time to support implementation of the draft strategy.

The main next steps for the draft strategy itself are:

- **Wider engagement** on the contents of this draft strategy alongside our Local Transport Plan refresh (which starts with refreshing the GM Transport Strategy 2040 and is followed by the creation of the next Five Year Delivery Plan covering the years 2027-2032). A key next step is therefore commencement of targeted engagement sessions through 2024 to hear a wide range of opinions on what our future rapid transit network should look like and help shape the final contents of the strategy. These sessions will be planned:
 - with groups of people who could be affected in different ways by the contents of the draft strategy (for example, the Disability Design Reference Group);
 - with business (for example, the Business Transport Advisory Council);
 - with government (for example, the Department for Transport).

This engagement process will continue as our plans evolve in support of the strategy, including consideration of place-based and community approaches to engagement.

- Further work on **future funding** arrangements, including as part of the Single Settlement and for the anticipated City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2 (CRSTS2) period 2027/28 to 2031/32 – with an indicative overall CRSTS2 allocation of £2.5 billion for GM, subject to further engagement and agreement with central government. This work, which will need to consider better use of existing funding and new forms of funding, will run alongside further work on prioritisation of new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines, which are some of the largest potential schemes in this draft strategy.
- Continued development and delivery of our **existing commitments** including those in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 1 (CRSTS1) Delivery Plan 2022/23 to 2026/27 that will **sustain** and **grow** our rapid transit system, and are a foundation for future success.
- Continuing work on **transforming** our rapid transit system:
 - Working with the rail industry to fully integrate rail into the Bee Network, with 8 priority corridors to be integrated by 2028 and interim milestones of the contactless ticketing pilot by 2025 (Stalybridge to Victoria and Glossop to Piccadilly) and co-branding by 2027. A key next step is agreeing our long-term partnership with the rail industry to embed local accountability for our rail network.
 - Development of the Metrolink Next Generation Vehicles and Tram-Train Pathfinder through their Outline Business Case stage. These will be crucial to addressing capacity challenges and developing viable business cases for tram-train schemes on a larger scale respectively – unlocking future expansion of GM’s rapid transit system.
 - Further detailed prioritisation during 2024 of the c.15 emerging priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines, to sequence a potential future expansion programme – this is alongside ongoing business case development, working with local authorities to space-save for potential future routes in Local Plans, and planning for central area capacity and network optimisation.





Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 25th July 2024
Subject: Bee Network Fares and Ticketing Products
Report of: Fran Wilkinson, Customer and Growth Director, TfGM

Purpose of Report

The report proposes a number of changes to Bee Network fares and ticketing products to increase access to public transport through affordable and simpler fares and ticketing.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to note and comment on changes to Bee Network fares and ticketing products, as approved by GMCA subject to feedback from this committee, as follows:

1. Reduce Bee Network bus fares, from 5th January 2025, as follows:
 - a) Reduce the price of 7-day Bus Travel on Bee Network Services from £21 Adult/£10.50 Child to £20 Adult /£10 Child; and
 - b) Reduce the price of 28-day Bus Travel on Bee Network Services from £85.40 Adult/£42.70 Child to £80 Adult /£40 Child.
2. Introduce a paper 'Hopper' single ticket for Bee Network bus users from 5th January 2025;
3. Introduce a scheme, with local Credit Unions, from January 2025 to improve access to annual bus tickets;
4. Extend the 'recompense scheme' to support the transition from commercial ticketing products to Bee Network products in the Tranche 3 area; and
5. Note the intention to bring a further report on Bee Network fares and ticketing products to Committee in September 2024.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

Legal support is being provided to ensure all contractual arrangements are in place as required.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The net financial impact of the proposals, of up to c.£1.25m in financial year 2024/25, was included in the 2024/25 budgeted risk allowances. The ongoing annual impact, that is estimated at up to c.£4-5m, is included within the medium-term financial plan and will be included in subsequent years' budgets.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Background Papers

[GMCA 20240712 Bee Network Fares and Ticketing Products](#)

[GMCA 20230630 Delivering the Bee Network - Annual Review of Capped Bus Fares](#)

[GMCA 20230728 Delivering the Bee Network - Fares and Products](#)

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

Yes

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency? No

Bee Network Committee

This report will be considered by the Bee Network Committee on Thursday 25th July 2024.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Bee Network is our plan for an integrated 'London-style' transport system for the people and businesses of Greater Manchester. It is a plan for a high-quality, fully integrated public transport and active travel system. Key to this are integrated, affordable and simple fares and ticketing products, aimed at achieving the Bee Network objectives of low fares and high patronage, with back office systems that do the hard work to make life easier for customers.
- 1.2. Greater Manchester has led the way in reforming and improving its transport network. As pioneers of bus franchising, we now have local control of our most-used form of public transport, in addition to the largest light rail network in the country – Metrolink. This means that, following the implementation of the final phase of bus franchising on 5th 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 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.
- 1.3. Customers are already benefiting from Bee Network fares and tickets. The introduction of capped bus fares contributed to an increase in bus use of 12% (from September 2022 to April 2023, compared with the same period the year before). Metrolink fares have been frozen since 2020, and the introduction of the Bee Network App now allows passengers to buy a new range of multi modal bus and tram tickets at a 20% cost saving compared to the cost of separate tickets, offering even better value for money.
- 1.4. This report sets out changes to further improve Bee Network fares and tickets as a further means to ensuring that public transport is an enabler to people accessing education, work, leisure and opportunity. The changes were approved by GMCA on Friday 12th July, subject to feedback from this Committee.

2. Proposals

- 2.1. It is proposed to introduce a number of improvements to Bee Network fares and ticketing products for customers to coincide with the implementation of the final phase of bus franchising in January 2025.

Lower Bus Fares

- 2.2. In September 2022, GMCA introduced a capped bus fares scheme that saw the introduction of the £2/£1 single and £5/£2.50 day cap. This scheme was further extended in January 2023 when agreement was reached with Greater Manchester Travelcard Limited (GMTL) to cap the 7 day Anybus product at £21/£10.50. Since the introduction, these fares have been held at the original price despite price increases by commercial bus operators.
- 2.3. The introduction of the capped bus fares scheme contributed to a 12% increase in bus usage (September 2022 to April 2023 compared with the same period the year before) and a significant saving to the cost of travel for customers across GM.
- 2.4. To support customers, it is proposed to further reduce the price of 7 and 28 day bus travel, which, as well as reducing the cost of travel for existing customers is also expected to further encourage new customers to use Bee Network buses.
- 2.5. The proposed reductions in pricing, from 5th January 2025, are as follows:
 - c) Reduce the price of 7-day Bus Travel on Bee Network Services from £21 Adult/£10.50 Child to £20 Adult /£10 Child; and
 - d) Reduce the price of 28-day Bus Travel on Bee Network Services from £85.40 Adult/£42.70 Child to £80 Adult /£40 Child.
- 2.6. The 1-day bus ticket will be held at the current prices of £5 Adult/£2.50 Child.
- 2.7. It is proposed that the reductions in prices will be introduced from 5th January 2025 in line with the start of the third and final tranche of bus franchising. The tickets will be available for use on all Bee Network buses across Greater Manchester.
- 2.8. We will work closely with Greater Manchester Travelcard Limited (GMTL) to ensure the smooth transition to the new pricing across the region.

Paper Hopper Single

- 2.9. At present in Greater Manchester, bus users who travel on multiple services to make a single journey have to pay a new fare each time they change service. This adds additional cost to journeys where a direct bus service is not available and discourages customers from using the full connectivity of the Bee Network.
- 2.10. It is proposed that a new single 'Hopper' ticket is created that would allow customers to 'hop on' as many Bee Network buses as they like for 60 minutes from

first issue. The price of the 'Hopper ticket' would be the same as the current single tickets i.e. £2 Adults, £1 Child, £1 Concession (pre 9.30am).

- 2.11. This new ticket would be available to purchase on bus and will replace the current Single ticket on Bee Network Services.
- 2.12. The ticket will be available to buy on bus as a paper ticket with a QR code. It is not proposed to make this ticket available on the Bee Network App as the longer-term goal is to encourage adult customers to use pay-as-you-go (PAYG) contactless payment, which will provide the same benefits to customers as a 'hopper'.

Credit Union

- 2.13. As was previously referenced in the *Delivering the Bee Network – Fares and Products* report to the GMCA on 28 July 2023, it is proposed to create a new scheme with local Credit Unions from January 2025. A new, annual bus ticket will be developed and made available at a discounted rate via a Credit Union loan and a regular payment to the Credit Union. This will support those who may not be able to afford the initial outlay of an annual product to benefit from the value it offers.
- 2.14. Further details of the scheme will be provided in a subsequent report to GMCA in September 2024.

3. Transition for Third Phase of Bus Franchising

- 3.1. As was the case for the first two phases of bus franchising (Tranche 1 – Wigan, Bolton and parts of Bury and Salford and Tranche 2 – Rochdale, Oldham and the remaining parts of Bury and Salford), work is underway to identify the fares and ticketing impact on customers as we transition to the final phase (Tranche 3) of bus franchising (the remaining southern parts of Manchester).
- 3.2. Single-operator ticket fare increases that have occurred since the start of Bus Franchising in September 2023 and the reduced fares proposals set out above will minimise any adverse customer impact of transitioning to Bee Network fares.
- 3.3. Where Tranche 3 customers are adversely impacted, the 'Recompense Scheme' (which was offered to Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 customers) will be available.
- 3.4. As the Tranche 3 area has a large student population, discussions are taking place with commercial operators to allow students to purchase Bee Network All Term student tickets for use at the start of the academic year. This will prevent the need for students to transfer from commercial operator All Term Student Tickets in

January 2025, mid-way through the academic year, when the final tranche of bus franchising commences.

4. Benefits

- 4.1. Making transport more affordable supports and enables more people to access education, skills and opportunity. Reducing the cost of bus travel will support further patronage growth on the network, as was previously evidenced by the 12% increase in patronage that followed the September 2022 initial capped bus fares scheme and £2/£1 and £5/£2.50 products, and the further enhancement of the 7 day cap at £21/£10.50 in January 2023. Lower fares will also help those customers already travelling by reducing the price of weekly and monthly travel, saving them money during a cost of living crisis.
- 4.2. The Hopper Fare will open more opportunities to customers to access different areas of the city region and will also offer further, better, value for money. The Hopper fare will help customers when making journeys that require changes to services. Whilst TfGM are exploring further improvements to the interconnectivity of the city region, and proposals to changes to service provision through Network Reviews in the medium term, the Hopper fare will ensure that customers do not have to pay more than a £2/£1 fare for any bus journeys of up to 60 minutes.
- 4.3. The Credit Union annual discounted product is particularly attractive to customers who use transport a lot and who may not be able to afford the initial outlay of an annual product and benefit from the additional value it offers.

5. Affordability

- 5.1. The 2024/25 net (of additional patronage and revenues) budgetary impact of the proposed lower fares and Hopper tickets will only impact the period from when the changes are introduced in January 2025 through to the end of March 2025 and is estimated to reduce 2024/25 franchised bus passenger revenue by up to c.£1.25m. This amount was included in the 2024/25 budgeted risk allowances.
- 5.2. The ongoing annual net (of additional patronage and revenues) impact, that is estimated at up to c.£4-5m, (which represents a circa 2-3% reduction in annual bus passenger revenue) is included within the medium-term financial plan and will be included in subsequent years' budgets.

- 5.3. The forecast budgetary impact of the Credit Union initiative will be included in a further Bee Network fares and ticketing products report to GMCA and BNC in September 2024.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Subject to feedback from this Committee, work will begin to implement the reduced fares and the paper Hopper from the start of the final tranche of bus franchising (Tranche 3) on 5th January 2025. Work will also continue with local Credit Unions to implement a scheme from January 2025.
- 6.2. A further report on Bee Network fares and ticketing products will be brought to Bee Network Committee and GMCA in September with proposals for the introduction of 'pay as you go' (PAYG) contactless ticketing and multi-modal capped fares across bus and Metrolink from March 2025.
- 6.3. Multimodal PAYG will build on the success of PAYG contactless that has been in place on Metrolink since 2019; and will provide greater flexibility and ease for customers who, in future, won't need to plan and purchase travel in advance, they will simply be able to touch in/ touch out and know they will be charged the best value fare.
- 6.4. The introduction of PAYG will be a significant step in delivering our ambition of a fully integrated Bee Network, further improving the ease in which a customer can move between different modes, by removing a key barrier to travel for many customers.