

**MINUTES OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2023 AT MANCHESTER TOWN HALL**

PRESENT:

Wigan	Mark Aldred (Chair)
GM Mayor	Andy Burnham
Bolton	Stuart Haslam
Bolton	Mohammed Ayub
Bury	Eamonn O'Brien
Bury	Kevin Peel
Bury	Jo Lancaster
Manchester	Tracey Rawlins
Manchester	Tommy Judge
Oldham	George Hulme
Oldham	Howard Sykes
Rochdale	Phil Burke
Salford	Damien Bailey
Stockport	Angie Clarke
Stockport	David Meller
Tameside	Doreen Dickinson
Tameside	Warren Bray
Trafford	Aidan Williams
Trafford	Linda Blackburn
Wigan	John Vickers

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

GMCA	Gwynne Williams
GMCA	Ninoshka Martins
TfGM	Simon Warburton
TfGM	Steven Rhodes
TfGM	Alex Cropper
TfGM	Anne Marie Purcell
TfGM	James Baldwin

TfGM

Simon Elliott

TfGM

Steve Warrener

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Avanti

Nick Smith

Transpennine Express

Darren Higgins

Graham Meiklejohn

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and noted from Councillors Dzidra Noor, Naeem Hassan, Roger Jones and Aasim Rashid.

2. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

RESOLVED /-

1. That the appointment of Councillor Eamonn O'Brien to the GM Transport Committee for the remainder of the 2022/2023 municipal year be noted.
2. That the appointment of Councillor Eamonn O'Brien to the Active Travel Sub Committee be noted.
3. That it be noted that an urgent item in relation to the stabilisation of the Bus Network would be considered as a separate item that has been included on the agenda as item 6 – Bus Network Stabilisation Update.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 09 DECEMBER 2022

That the minutes of the GM Transport Committee meeting held on 09 December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

5. MINUTES OF THE SUB COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- Metrolink & Rail Sub Committee held on 13 January 2023

RESOLVED /-

1. That the minutes of the Metrolink & Rail Sub Committee held on 13 January 2023 be noted.

- Bus Services Sub Committee held on 20 January 2023

In relation to the 583 and 132 service, minute reference GMTBSC 05/23A, it was raised that the requested information had not been received. Officers therefore agreed to provide a response following the meeting.

In relation to 755 service, it was agreed that a response would be provided following the meeting.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the minutes of the Bus Services Sub Committee held on 20 January 2023 be noted.
2. That TfGM would provide details of the revisions to services 583 and 132 directly to Councillor Vickers.
3. That TfGM would pick up the concerns of Cllr Blackburn in relation to service 755 not including Altrincham Girls Grammar School outside of the meeting.

- Active Travel Sub Committee held on 27 January 2023

RESOLVED /-

1. That the minutes of the Active Travel Sub Committee held on 27 January 2023 be noted.

6. BUS NETWORK STABILISATION UPDATE

Stephen Rhodes, Director of Bus, TfGM, introduced the report and informed Members of the approach that TfGM was taking to stabilise the network in the light of on-going uncertainty around Government recovery funding and in advance of franchising.

Members were advised that TfGM had been notified of a number of service changes planned for April 2023 by Diamond and Vision bus operators. With Diamond Bus North West registering the withdrawal of all commercial journeys on six routes, and frequency reductions on five other routes. In addition, Vision Bus had de-registered all remaining commercial journeys on one route.

It was noted that these were substantial changes that would significantly impact on both the stability of the bus network and the communities they serve. Therefore, in order to stabilise the network, replacement services had been sought (including in one case where the replacement service would be restored at every 15 minutes rather the current 12-minute service, for consistency) for a 5-month period from 16th April 2023 to 23rd September 2023 to the start of Tranche 1.

Members were advised that the procurement process had been concluded and that the next meeting of the Bus Services Sub Committee was not due to take place until 10th March, a request was therefore put forward for authority to be delegated to the GMCA/TfGM Chief Executive, in consultation with the GMTCC Chair, to approve the associated service changes on this occasion. This would enable replacement services to register ahead of the deadline of 3rd March and would allow operators to make necessary preparations ahead of starting contracted operations on 16th April.

Members welcomed the report and thanked officers for ensuring that these essential services were retained. It was noted that the move towards bus franchising was evidently essential to ensure better control over the network.

With regards to reduced services, members questioned whether any replacement services would be added to the network. It was clarified that due to associated costs no further action would be taken in respect of the services that had been reduced in frequency, as even with the reductions, the services affected would still operate to the minimum (4 services per hour) frequencies set when the network stabilisation review was carried out.

Members sought to understand what provisions were in place to ensure an improved experience for bus users. It was reported that a franchised approach would see a stringent and detailed performance management of service providers. A franchised network would also allow better quality of data to be collected which would enable better management of services.

In response to a member's query whether previous performance could be considered as part of the bidding process, officers explained that performance data was not available as a number of operators were from outside the GM area hence, legally, prior performance could not be considered to ensure a level playing field for all operators.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the approach that TfGM has taken to stabilise the Greater Manchester bus network since October 2022 and in respect of commercial service registrations submitted by Diamond Bus and Vision Bus due to take effect 16th April 2023, as reported to the Bus Services Sub-Committee on 20th January 2023 be noted.
2. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive GMCA and TfGM, in consultation with the GMTC Chair, to agree replacement bus services to commence on 16th April 2023 be approved.

7. RAIL NETWORK PERFORMANCE UPDATE

TransPennine Express

Darren Higgins, Commercial Directors provided the following update on the plans for addressing the challenges in relation to performance on the network:

- On the 6th of February, a recovery plan had been submitted to the Rail North Partnership and the Department for Transport.
- The plan was an acknowledgement that, since the December 2022 timetable for performance had not been acceptable to customers and stakeholders, this plan was a demonstration of TPE's commitment to improve services.
- Outlined within the plan were a series of highly focused actions aimed improving overall performance. Given the detail in the plan, TPE offered to brief members on a separate occasion around the principal actions that the Recovery Plan would seek to deliver.
- It was noted that a lot of work was still needed to be done to earn the trust and confidence of customers and stakeholders. However, since the submission of the plan a positive impact was felt.
- The challenges impacting services were seen particularly around summer periods and holidays due to crew absences.
- It was reported that further industrial action was expected in the coming weeks that would impact services.

The following comments were raised:

Members expressed their dissatisfaction as promised improvements were not delivered following the launch of the December timetable. In response, it was explained that work was being done to plan and prepare for the Trans-Pennine route upgrade programme, as part of which a number of diversion routes had been planned that needed to be serviced, adding to the already existing pressures. It was also highlighted that challenges impacting services were seen particularly around summer periods and holidays due to crew absences.

Members highlighted that the challenges faced by TPE were not unique and were faced by all train operators however, in comparison TPE's service delivery was at a derogatory level. In response, TPE explained that staff had to be retrained following the introduction of 3 brand new fleets which added to the already existing training backlog. It was highlighted that the organisation had seen a huge loss in staff retention due to the absence of an overtime agreement.

Members raised further concerns regarding cancellations and last-minute service changes and the impact on residents. In response, TPE stated that the plan was to reduce cancellations by at least 40%. However, it was done to make best use of resources and advised that affected customers could claim for delay repay compensation.

In response to a member's query regarding the service between Carlisle to Glasgow, it was explained that due to limited infrastructure capacity the industry retained the operation of Avanti services on this route and due to the closure of the diversion route an element of free bus replacement had been established.

Members were assured improvement over the next couple of months and TPE offered to revisit the Committee to provide an update against progress made on the recovery plan. The Committee requested for future updates to also include plans to increase patronage on the TPE network.

Avanti West Coast

Nick Smith, Regional Growth Manager, Avanti provided the following update on performance since the introduction of the revised timetable:

- On a weekday approximately 93 services were now running between London and Manchester.
- Engineering work at weekends were still causing some pinch-points, due to leave. However, following the introduction of the revised timetable, there has been overall improvement in service levels.

- In terms of overcrowding, this has been significantly reduced as a result of additional services.
- With regards to ticket availability and the very short booking windows, it was reported that a remedial plan had been launched at the beginning of the month now allowing for journey bookings to be made in advance.
- Concerning the removal of the cycle storage facility at Manchester Piccadilly station, it was reported that additional funding had now been received to install 162 storage spaces across 4 locations. These would be deployed once the final risk assessment had been completed.
- On the recruitment campaign it was reported that applications were due to open w/c 20th February and advised on the focus to increase female applications for train driver vacancies and opportunities.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the updates from operators TransPennine Express and Avanti West Coast be noted.
2. That the reassurance from TransPennine Express about their readiness to implement the Recovery Plan as had been submitted to Government be noted.
3. That it be noted that TransPennine Express offered to brief members on the principal actions that the Recovery Plan would seek to deliver.
4. That it be noted that TransPennine Express offered to attend the next meeting to update members against progress made on the delivery plan along with plans to increase patronage and build customer confidence in the service.

8. BEE NETWORK DELIVERY UPDATE: BUS FRANCHISING AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Stephen Rhodes, Director of Bus, TfGM and Anne Marie Purcell, TfGM introduced the report. The discussion was supplemented with a presentation that provided a progress update on the wider delivery of the Bee Network.

This report provided specific updates on the Bus Franchising Programme, as requested by members, including what customers can expect from the Bee Network,

including how the Bee Network would be shaped and informed by the experience of customers.

It was highlighted that certain areas of Wigan suffer from a huge lack of connectivity and members sought to understand whether there would be improvement in routes and timetables in the Wigan area once tranche 1 was live. Officers explained that there was a need to collect data to make good decisions and improve connectivity to essential services. Members were assured that from September 2023 onwards the system would see a level of stability. In addition, the Mayor acknowledged the response and highlighted that the vision of the Bee Network was to connect train stations to towns to ensure best access to opportunity for all.

The need to consider the size of the fleet was highlighted and a member also went on to query the lifespan of the new fleet. Officers advised that the fleet consisted of both double and single deckers and assured members that the sustainability of the local areas would also be taken into consideration before the deployment of busses. Concerning the lifespan, it was explained that the fleet had the lifespan of 12 to 15 years and upon renewal would form part of a residual value mechanism.

In discussing the ticketing system, it was reported that the proposition would evolve through to 2025 transforming the way people pay for travel by giving customers the ability to simply tap and go across both Bus and Metrolink, with a day or weekly cap with tap-and-go available on buses from day 1. Further details on an integrated ticketing model, which would also include concessionary passes, would be brought to a future meeting prior to the launch of Tranche 1 in September 2023

Members also highlighted the need to engage with residents and stakeholder to increase awareness. Officers advised that TfGM and the GMCA had been working with members, officers, partners, and stakeholders to develop a Greater Manchester Bus Plan, which would also set out an ambitious vision, objectives, and delivery priorities for bus services in Greater Manchester, in line with the Bee Network Principles.

The need to enhance the bus offer for wheelchair users was also highlighted. Officers assured members that all new buses would have wheelchair bays and a ramp.

A member highlighted the challenges regarding punctuality of services and sought to understand whether there would be any provisions to track the route of busses. Officers advised that the new fleet of buses had been installed with trackers that would be utilised to manage the performance of operators and provide real time information to customers. The Mayor added that the performance would be managed centrally and that quarterly discretionary payments would be based on public feedback and complaints.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the update on progress including the overview of the Bus Franchising Programme in terms of how the Bee Network would be shaped and informed by the experience of customers and the to date be noted.
2. That a report outlining the details of the Greater Manchester Bus Plan would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.
3. That further details on an integrated ticketing model, which would also include concessionary pass, would be brought to a future meeting prior to the launch of Tranche 1 in September 2023.

9. MAYORAL UPDATE

The GM Mayor, Andy Burnham provided a verbal update on the overall progress of the Bee Network. It was noted that GM was at a key moment in the delivery of the Bee Network, with only seven months to go to the operation of the first franchises in Wigan, Bolton and parts of Salford and Bury. Go North West and Diamond were the successful operators for those franchises - both operators provided strong social value plans, with commitments around recruitment and pay in line with the city-region's Good Employment Charter.

The Mayor touched on the challenges faced by the network due to the withdrawal of services by Diamond and Vision and went on to assure members that under the franchise, local accountability would play a pivotal role. This would be seen alongside

improvement to passenger information and experience, with the introduction of a customer charter and new Bee Network app. The intention was for all buses on the network to be branded with the colours of the Bee Network from the launch of Tranche 1 to increase visibility and for the purpose of uniformity across the network. Members were assured that regular progress updates would be included within future reports to the Committee.

Since the launch of the Get on Board Campaign, Bus and Metrolink patronage across the network had continued to grow and the £2/£1 fare cap, that was introduced in September had already had a positive impact, contributing to a 10% increase in patronage in its first three months.

It was noted that there were a number of challenges that were facing the transport network including the ongoing rail performance issues being experienced across GM and the North. Therefore, along with other Northern Mayors at the Convention of the North, the Mayor had made it clear that the current situation with TransPennine Express was unacceptable, and that their contract needed to be withdrawn. However, through franchising GM would then be an opportunity to set a template for how rail might work across the whole of the North in the future.

The move towards franchising the bus network was seen essential to providing a quality and reliable service to GM residents that would link towns to cities thus opening opportunities for residents. It was noted that Anti-Social Behaviour on the network was a deterrent for many residents using the bus transport. However, through the launch of operation AVRO and through joint working with the TravelSafe Partnership there was a commitment from GMP to treat the public transport network as the '11th district' for policing activity this would ensure standards around safety across all modes of transport. It was highlighted that pursuing a minimum standard for licensing taxis in Greater Manchester was a key priority area for the Mayor.

With regards to the trailblazer discussions with government, members were assured that discussions with Government were underway to ensure adequate support was received in order to deliver and further develop the Bee Network.

In response to a member's query regarding HS2, it was stated that GM was fully supportive of HS2 once properly connected with Northern Powerhouse Rail, as it

represented a significant opportunity to transform connectivity and drive economic growth.

The Mayor added that GM's primary objective remains making the case for the new High-Speed station at Piccadilly to be an underground through-station rather than the current plan for a terminus station built on the surface. The GM option would provide a future-proofed facility which would better-accommodate future increases in capacity and support more efficient east-west (NPR) connectivity.

In response to a member's query regarding cross border services, it was report that TfGM were in the process of carrying out a consultation ahead of implementation to ensure cross boundary services were integrated with the rest of the Bee Network.

It was noted that there was a need to work together with national government to deliver the Bee Network and to push government for parity of services to ensure adequate support was received in order to support the development of the wider transport network.

In terms of policing activity across the network, members highlighted the need for a dedicated workforce. Members were assured that a dedicated workforce had been deployed to manage the network and noted the need to work with the Deputy Mayor to ensure better arrangements were in place to respond to antisocial behaviour on the network.

Concerning developments on Metrolink, it was reported that the recruitment of a new team dedicated to tackle fare evasion on the network was currently underway.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the update by the GM Mayor be noted.
2. That it be noted that the move towards Bus Franchising would allow better control over Bus Services in GM.

3. That it be noted that performance management, local accountability and improvements to passenger information and experience would be key to franchising, with the introduction of a customer charter and new Bee Network app.
4. That it be noted that progress on the branding of buses would be included within future updates to the Committee.
5. That it be noted that the Good Employment Charter was enshrined in the bus franchising process.
6. That it be noted that tackling crime and Anti-social behaviour and increasing visibility across the public transport network was a priority to increase customer confidence.
7. That it be noted that intensive trailblazer discussions were underway with Government to ensure adequate support is received in order to deliver and further develop the Bee Network.
8. That it be noted that a joint statement was made at the convention of the North calling for the removal of the franchise from Transpennine Express due to continued poor service standards.
9. That it be noted that ensuring standards around safety across all modes of transport including Taxi's continues to remain a priority for the Mayor.
10. That it be noted that the Deputy Mayor would be overlooking the level of service to ensure appropriate arrangements were in place to respond to antisocial behaviour on the network.
11. That it be noted that under operation AVRO GMP have designated the Bee Network as the 11th district of Greater Manchester for policing purpose.
12. That it be noted that recruitment of a new team dedicated to tackling fare evasion on Metrolink was underway.
13. That it be noted that GM remains fully supportive of HS2 and was committed to securing the optimum scheme to transform connectivity and drive economic growth for the entire city region.

10. TRANSPORT REVENUE BUDGET

Consideration was given to a report that set out the transport related Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) revenue budget for 2023/24.

This report was also considered at the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 8th February and by Greater Manchester Combined Authority on Friday 10th February.

In discussing the proposed changes to the 2023/24 Transport Revenue Budget, it was clarified that funding from the Bus Service Improvement Programme (BSIP) had been allocated until March 2025. As the single, daily and weekly fares caps were funded through the BSIP grant income however to ensure efficient use of resources the scheme would be reviewed on a yearly basis.

With regards to the Bus Service Improvement Grant, it was reported that a total of £6 million had been earmarked for expenditure for the 2023/24 financial year.

The shift in travel behaviour was highlighted and members sought to understand the impact on patronage. Officers explained that there was a steady increase in patronage levels across all forms of public transport and advised that further work was underway to tap into new markets. It was stated that further updates regarding performance of the network would be provided at the respective sub committees.

In parallel to, and as part of the discussions with DfT, TfGM had committed to a Financial Sustainability Plan (FSP) that set out a set of initiatives, alongside continuing central government financial support, would ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the transport network and the foundation for the continued delivery of the Bee Network.

The various initiatives underpinning the FSP were summarised as below:

- Market renewal: A set of initiatives to increase patronage and revenues across all modes, including continued innovation around the marketing of transport services, proposals to reduce fare evasion and to increase commercial and other income.
- Network review: Continuous network review to scope potential efficiencies on the transport network, including initiatives to reduce energy costs and to further optimise service delivery.

- Internal efficiencies: A programme to reduce the core operating costs of TfGM, including by reducing staff costs (TfGM has already initiated a voluntary severance process), reductions in external expenditure, optimising the use of TfGM's office space and increasing commercial income from the existing TfGM asset base.
- Additional local funding: The proposed 4% (£7.7m) increase in the Transport Levy in 2023/24 will be ringfenced in full to contribute towards funding the budgeted Metrolink net deficit and the budgeted costs of stabilising the Bus network as it transitions to franchising.

It was reported that regular progress updates on the discussions held with the Metrolink Operator concerning the maintenance of services amidst the current financial climate be provided at the respective sub committees.

Officers advised that TfGM would continue to consider options, for longer term financial sustainability beyond the next two financial years, as part of the longer-term shared funding model envisaged in the Greater Manchester 'trailblazer' proposition and assured members that the Committee would receive regular progress updates on this piece of work.

In response to a member's query regarding the use of Capital Programme Reserves, officers advised that these reserves were held by GMCA and TfGM that were primarily ring-fenced to pay for and manage the risks of delivering their ongoing capital programme, including repaying capital and interest on borrowings and to fund Metrolink renewals to ensure system integrity.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the risks and issues affecting the 2023/24 transport budgets as detailed in the report be noted
2. That the GMCA budget relating to transport functions funded through the Levy, as set out in this report for 2023/24 be noted.

3. That it be noted that to increase patronage there was a need to tap into new markets, which would be captured within future Market Renewal updates.
4. That regular progress updates on the discussions held with the Metrolink Operator concerning the maintenance of services amidst the current financial climate be shared with members.

11. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED /-

That the proposed Work Programme for the GM Transport Committee and its Sub Committees be noted.

12. DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED /-

That the dates and times of the Full Committee and the Sub Committees for the forthcoming year be noted.

Metrolink & Rail	03-Mar-23
Bus Services	10-Mar-23
Active Travel	10-Mar-23
Full committee	17-Mar-23