



Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 24th October 2024

Subject: Draft School Travel Strategy – Our Vision for School Travel in Greater Manchester

Report of: Martin Lax, Transport Strategy Director, TfGM

Purpose of Report

This report asks members to note and comment on the draft School Travel Strategy, a sub-strategy of the 2040 Transport Strategy, and summarises its contents.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note and comment on the draft School Travel Strategy ahead of consideration by GMCA; and
2. Note the proposal to launch public engagement on the strategy, comprising a ten week online consultation and meetings with stakeholders affected by or involved in school travel.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers		
<p>Note and comment on the draft School Travel Strategy. Approve the commencement of public engagement on the strategy.</p>		
Impacts Questionnaire		
Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	<p>Draft Strategy includes proposals to improve access to education via sustainable transport options. This will disproportionately benefit young people by increasing their transport options, but the wider community would benefit from the reduction in private vehicles taking young people to school and the investment into improved transport connections would benefit those making other journeys.</p> <p>Families from socially and economically disadvantaged households are likely to have fewer transport options, so improving the ability to travel actively or on public transport will provide them with greater access to education.</p> <p>If implemented the proposals would improve access to education facilities for students in primary, secondary and further education.</p> <p>The draft strategy includes proposals to give communities more opportunities to become involved in promoting sustainable travel to school.</p> <p>Large numbers of cars picking up and dropping off at school harms local communities, by increasing the number of sustainable journeys to school local communities would benefit.</p>
Health	G	<p>Making it easier to travel actively to school would improve the physical and mental health of young people. The draft strategy includes multiple actions to encourage more young people to travel actively to school, alongside making it easier to access education facilities. The proposed actions would not only improve transport access for younger people, but the wider community.</p>
Resilience and Adaptation		
Housing		
Economy	G	<p>The draft strategy seeks to improve access to education and remove barriers to young people accessing opportunities due to limited transport options. Fewer young people being driven to school will have a positive impact in reducing congestion which negatively impacts economic development. Through improving access to education and giving young people travel skills, more young people in Greater Manchester will have the opportunities later in life to have a 'good job'.</p>
Mobility and Connectivity	G	<p>The draft strategy proposes providing new active travel facilities to schools and adjusting the general transport network to better serve schools. There are likely to be some adjustments made to dedicated schools which may result in short term disruption to existing travel patterns.</p> <p>By increasing the number of sustainable trips taken to school and reducing the number of trips taken in private vehicles there will be a positive impact on congestion as sustainable modes of transport are more space efficient.</p> <p>The draft strategy includes actions relating to making public transport more affordable and providing alternatives ways to access a cycle which avoid the high up front cost of buying a bike from new.</p> <p>Young people over 16 are able to access Starling Bank Bikes. Due to the age limit and limited operational area few young people will be able to use these bikes to access education, but some will.</p> <p>The draft strategy seeks to improve transport connections to education facilities by walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. The actions relating to making it safer to travel actively to school and delivering more walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure will involve modifications to roads.</p>
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	<p>Greater use of active travel and public transport to travel to school will help improve local air quality due to the large number of trips made to access education, meaning a growth in sustainable trips would have an impact on overall air pollution levels.</p> <p>Reducing the number of private vehicles will help reduce noise pollution, particularly if these trips are made by active modes. As many schools are located in residential areas the reduction in noise levels will have a positive effect on local communities.</p> <p>Transport is the largest emitting sector in GM, by increasing the number of education trips made by sustainable modes there will be a positive impact on carbon emissions.</p>
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		<p>The proposals in the draft school travel strategy seek to encourage more young people to walk, wheel, scoot, cycle or use public transport to travel to school. By increasing the number of sustainable trips made to school and thereby reducing the number of trips made in private vehicles there would be a positive contribution towards achieving carbon neutrality.</p>
Further Assessment(s):	Equalities Impact Assessment and Carbon Assessment	
G	A	R
Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
		RR
		Negative impacts overall.

Carbon Assessment

Overall Score				
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation		
New Build residential	N/A			
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A			
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A			
Transport				
Active travel and public transport		The draft strategy includes actions that would improve and extend active travel routes but as this is not a funded delivery plan it is not possible to confirm this impact at the present time. The draft strategy includes actions that would improve access to education facilities by public transport but this would be done via the network review process so it is not possible to confirm this impact at the present time.		
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access		The draft strategy includes actions that would improve and extend active travel provisions but as this is not a funded delivery plan it is not possible to confirm this impact at the present time. The draft strategy includes actions that seek to make travelling either actively or by public transport more attractive. The proposals to gradually integrate school services into the general network would help improve services and make public transport more attractive in the longer term but it could lead to short term growth in personal vehicle travel as existing travel patterns are disrupted.		
Access to amenities		The draft strategy includes actions that if implemented would increase access to shops and services by improving active travel facilities, but as this is not a funded delivery plan it is not possible to confirm this impact at the present time. The draft strategy includes actions that if implemented would increase access to shops and services by improving public transport services, but as this is not a funded delivery plan it is not possible to confirm this impact at the present time.		
Vehicle procurement	N/A			
Land Use				
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

N/A

Legal Considerations

Legal support will be obtained as required when finalising the consultant/engagement process. The legal implications of the proposals set out within the strategy will require further consideration as the proposals are developed including any impact on the Bus Franchising network

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The draft School Travel Strategy is not a funded delivery plan, and the priorities and ambitions set out are anticipated to require additional funding to be delivered in full.

Financial Consequences – Capital

The draft School Travel Strategy is not a funded delivery plan, and the priorities and ambitions set out are anticipated to require additional funding to be delivered in full.

Number of attachments to the report: 1

Background Papers

Draft Vision Zero Strategy, January 2024

Greater Manchester Bus Strategy, July 2023

Active Travel in Greater Manchester - Bee Network Committee, 14th December 2023

Refreshing Greater Manchester's Active Travel Mission, November 2022

Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040, January 2021

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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Safely and reliably taking young people to and from places of education is a key function of transport networks across the world. Done correctly, it can support greater inclusion, enhanced access to opportunities and better health outcomes.
- 1.2. Every day approximately 460,000 pupils travel to over 1,200 schools and further education establishments across Greater Manchester. 15% of all trips in Greater Manchester are to access education, and in the peak periods between 08:00-08:59 and 15:00-15:59 almost half of trips are education related.
- 1.3. Greater Manchester is transforming its transport system through the creation of the Bee Network, bringing walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport together. This means that there are new opportunities to create a joined up transport network which can better connect young people (and the people that work there) with their place of education and other key destinations.
- 1.4. The draft School Travel Strategy sets out the vision and approach for how the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and the ten local authorities will enable more young people to walk, wheel, scoot, cycle or use public transport to get to school and access further education.
- 1.5. This strategy supports the ambition for Greater Manchester to achieve Vision Zero by 2040 and fulfils the recommendation from Refreshing Greater Manchester's Active Travel Mission for a home to school travel plan to be developed. In addition, by improving the ability to access post-16 courses and careers it seeks to support the Mayoral ambition of creating two educational pathways (one technical, and one academic) for young people.
- 1.6. The draft School Travel Strategy will, once adopted, be a sub strategy of the Greater Manchester 2040 Strategy, GM's statutory Local Transport Plan. It is not a funded delivery plan, and the priorities and ambitions set out are anticipated to require some additional funding to be delivered in full.
- 1.7. Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) travel is outside the scope of this strategy. TfGM is separately assisting local authorities in exploring what opportunities there are to better coordinate the provision of SEND transport in Greater Manchester.

2. Structure, purpose and content of the draft strategy

2.1. The draft School Travel Strategy sets out:

- Our vision for school travel and why there's a case for change;
- Current travel patterns for primary school, secondary school and further education;
- The activities we are proposing to encourage more young people to travel sustainably;
- Next steps.

2.2. Using the Greater Manchester Travel Diary Survey (TRADS), we have estimated how children and young people currently travel to and from education. Using the averaged travel patterns for the years 2021-2023 we have proposed three ambitious targets for how we can support young people to travel by 2030. These targets have deliberately been chosen to act as a bold statement of intent that will catalyse action and help inspire a cross-GM effort to achieve a common goal.

2.3. Our ambition is that by 2030:

- 70% of primary school students in Greater Manchester will walk, wheel, scoot or cycle to school, up from 63%¹;
- 80% of secondary school students in Greater Manchester will walk, wheel, scoot, cycle or use public transport to school, up from 74%¹;
- 80% of further education students in Greater Manchester will walk, wheel, scoot, cycle or use public transport to access education, up from 66%¹.

2.4. If we are to achieve our ambitious goals, we must remove the barriers that are currently preventing young people travelling in a sustainable way. To achieve this, we have identified in the draft strategy eight overarching activities on which to focus our efforts. These eight activities are not the only solutions that exist and delivering them will require close collaboration with young people, parents, guardians, carers, schools, partner organisations, and communities.

2.5. The eight activities identified in the draft strategy are set out below.

¹ GMTRADS, 2021-23

Create Safer Streets Around Schools

- 2.6. For parents to allow their children to walk, wheel, scoot, or cycle to school, they must feel that it is safe. Every school faces unique challenges; therefore, we need to have a range of measures that can be tailored to address a school's specific safety needs.
- 2.7. One of these measures could be creating a school street to provide a safe, traffic-free space at drop off and pick up time. In line with the Mayor's ambition, we are committing, subject to funding, to creating 100 school streets by 2028.
- 2.8. Experiences across the country have shown that interventions that introduce physical road safety improvements alongside behaviour change programmes that engage with the school community have more chance of succeeding. It is therefore proposed that TfGM develop a pilot project to explore how this can be best achieved in Greater Manchester.

Continue to Deliver Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling Infrastructure

- 2.9. Greater Manchester has committed to building a world-class walking, wheeling, and cycling network that will link up communities and provide safe routes to schools and further education establishments. A previous Bee Network Committee paper provided further information about our future network ([14th December 2023, Active Travel in Greater Manchester](#)).
- 2.10. Nearly two-thirds of all education trips are within or between local neighbourhoods. To encourage more young people to walk, wheel, scoot or cycle we therefore need to create neighbourhoods that are safer and more attractive places to be in. This means alongside improving walking and wheeling routes, we need to create quieter and therefore safer streets in line with the [Streets for All](#) approach and Safe System approach, as set out in the draft [Vision Zero Strategy](#).

Increase Access to Cycle and Cycle Storage

- 2.11. To give young people the opportunity to cycle to school we need to help them, and their parents, guardians and carers, have access to a bike and have a secure place to store it at school and in the wider community.
- 2.12. One way we are proposing to provide greater access to cycles is by encouraging schools to either set up their own bike library or work closely with their nearest bike

library. Bike libraries allow people to borrow a bicycle and try it out for a short loan period, either for free or for a small fee.

Support Young People to Become Travel Champions

- 2.13. If we want young people to travel in a more active and sustainable way, we need to encourage and enable new travel habits throughout their school career. We want to give young people the ability to not only travel to school sustainably, but to become lifelong users and advocates for sustainable travel.
- 2.14. It is proposed that a new education programme is developed in partnership with schools and external partners. The aims of the programme would be to:
- Ensure that every young person has learnt about road safety and has basic navigation skills before they go to secondary school.
 - Better coordinate our efforts to enable every primary school student in Greater Manchester who wishes to do so, to learn how to ride and fix a bike.
 - Provide every young person in Greater Manchester with the skills and knowledge to travel by bus, tram, and train by the time they start their GCSEs.
 - Support young people during the transition between primary to secondary school, and secondary school to further education.
 - Work with young people to give them greater ownership over what activities or incentives their school carries out to encourage more young people to travel sustainably.
- 2.15. To make it easier for schools and young people it is proposed that as a first step all our available resources, information and funding opportunities for schools should be brought together in one place.

Improve the Customer Experience on Public Transport

- 2.16. If more young people are to use public transport to travel to school and access further education, we must have an attractive public transport network which is accessible, reliable and affordable.
- 2.17. The draft School Travel Strategy builds on the [Greater Manchester Bus Strategy](#), which set out our proposed actions to deliver more reliable, accessible and affordable bus services.

- 2.18. The introduction of the hopper fare in January 2025 will help make our ticketing system simpler and fairer for young people. In addition, it is proposed that TfGM will explore how the application process for the igo card (5–16-years old) can be improved to make it more user friendly. This will make it easier for more young people to access affordable public transport.

Make Our Network Safe and Secure

- 2.19. Improving the perception of safety and security for all our passengers is a priority. Young people behaving in an anti-social manner on public transport makes other passengers, including other young people, feel unsafe and reluctant to travel on our transport network.
- 2.20. To deter and prevent unwanted behaviour TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers are regularly deployed across Greater Manchester to support passengers, deter anti-social behaviour, conduct ticket checks and answer customer queries. This is in addition to uniformed and plain clothes police officers who regularly patrol the network.
- 2.21. Through the TravelSafe's Educational Outreach Programme we will seek to encourage and promote positive travel behaviour, making young people aware of how they should behave on public transport and what the consequences are for being involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour.

Create an Integrated Network

- 2.22. Before the creation of the Bee Network and the start of bus franchising Greater Manchester was unable to plan its transport network in an integrated way. This meant that when there were gaps in the commercial network the only way we could ensure young people could travel to school was to introduce a dedicated school bus service.
- 2.23. Whilst filling gaps in this way provided an immediate solution to a school's connectivity problems, this case-by-case approach did not allow planners to take a strategic view of the whole network. This meant that over time an uneven patchwork of services developed, with limited interaction with the wider public transport network and outcomes that could be perceived as unfair.
- 2.24. As a general principle our transport network should be available to all users, and therefore not consist of special services that only certain people can use. Therefore,

it is proposed that as part of our work to create a simpler and more integrated network we will look to gradually incorporate existing school services into the general network through the network review process, taking into account local circumstances and requirements.

- 2.25. This will give young people greater flexibility about where and when they travel (allowing them to go to after school clubs, for example) and improve the resilience of the network by enabling them to take alternative services if things go wrong. It will also give young people the life skills of being able to use public transport and support improved transport options for the whole community.
- 2.26. The network review process will consider how the transport network can be improved in line with our agreed planning principles (comprehensive, simple, frequent, direct, reliable, integrated, cost-effective). Our preference will always be to make any adjustments to specific services or the wider network through the network review process.
- 2.27. Going forward it is proposed that new school services will only be provided when there is an exceptional need to do so. This will be judged against the Department for Education's guidance on walking distances and maximum journey times. The provision of new services must also provide value for money and be consistent with our network principles.

Engage Schools and Local Communities

- 2.28. If we are to encourage more young people to travel sustainably, we must work in partnership with schools, pupils, parents, guardians, carers, and local communities. Many schools and further education establishments want to help but face significant competing pressures.
- 2.29. It is proposed that Modeshift STARS, an accreditation programme that helps schools develop travel plans and carry out activities to promote sustainable travel, will be used to better support schools. However, despite being free for schools, few schools in GM have sought to become accredited. It is therefore proposed that improvements should be made to the service based off feedback from schools and councils. Additional guidance and support should also be provided for schools.
- 2.30. Local communities are leading the way in promoting walking, wheeling, scooting, and cycling to school. Whether that be installing a school street, running a bike bus, or helping schools engage with children and their families. Without their help we

cannot achieve our vision. The draft strategy therefore proposes that more opportunities should be created for local communities and voluntary groups to work with schools and young people.

3. Next steps

- 3.1. This is a draft strategy, and its further development will benefit from hearing a wide range of opinions on how we can best enable more young people to choose to walk, wheel, scoot, cycle or use public transport to travel to school and access further education.
- 3.2. Following approval of this draft, a period of engagement will take place from November for ten weeks with the public and stakeholder groups. An online survey will be run to enable members of the public to share their insights and help shape the final strategy. Paper copies of the survey will be made available at key locations and by request.
- 3.3. It is proposed that the finalised School Travel Strategy will be reported to Bee Network Committee and then to the GMCA for formal adoption and approval in Spring 2025.