

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BEE NETWORK COMMITTEE
HELD THURSDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2024 AT BOARDROOM, GMCA OFFICES**

PRESENT:

Councillor Tom Ross (in the Chair)	GMCA
Councillor Alan Quinn	Bury
Councillor Tracey Rawlins	Manchester
Councillor Josh Charters	Oldham
Councillor Mike McCusker	Salford
Councillor Grace Baynham	Stockport
Councillor Aidan Williams	Trafford
Councillor John Vickers	Wigan

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Vernon Everitt	GM Transport Commissioner
Dame Sarah Storey	GM Active Travel Commissioner

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chris Barnes	TfGM
Peter Boulton	TfGM
Gill Duckworth	GMCA
Nick Fairclough	TfGM
Martin Lax	TfGM
Rosalind O'Driscoll	TfGM
Stephen Rhodes	TfGM
Rachel Scott	TfGM
Adam Sedgmond	TfGM
Caroline Simpson	GMCA
Lee Teasdale	GMCA
Fran Wilkinson	TfGM

BNC/32/24 Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were received and noted from Mayor Andy Burnham, Cllr Eamonn O'Brien (Bury), Cllr Toby Hewitt (Bolton), Cllr Hamid Khurram (Bolton), Cllr Howard Sykes (Oldham), Cllr Phil Burke (Rochdale), Cllr David Meller (Stockport), Danny Vaughan (TfGM), Steve Warrener (TfGM) & Richard Nickson (TfGM).

Note: Due to the unavailability of Mayor Andy Burnham and Chair Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, legislation required that a nomination was taken from the floor for a Chair of the meeting. A nomination was received for Councillor Tom Ross (Trafford) which was subsequently seconded. Councillor Ross took the Chair for the meeting.

BNC/33/24 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

BNC/34/24 Chairs Announcements & Urgent Business

The Chair opened by advising that earlier in the year Greater Manchester had signed up to the Accessible Transport Charter. One of the asks of the Charter was the appointment of an advocate or champion to work with strategic decision-making bodies to ensure that the needs and experiences of people with disabilities were represented. It was proposed that the Bee Network Committee appoint this advocate from its membership. Committee Member Councillor Tracey Rawlins had expressed an interest in taking up this role. This was formally agreed by those present.

The Chair updated Members about recent serious collisions that had taken place on the Network involving Bee Network vehicles. Investigations would be taking place into each incident in consultation with operators, and highway authorities where relevant.

In terms of bus franchising fleet proposals Members would receive a report the day after the meeting proposing a number of bus fleet transactions in preparation for the start of Tranche 3; to improve Tranche 1 & 2 performance and resilience; and to help meet Clean Air commitments.

The Chair welcomed the news that Stockport Interchange which opened in March 2024 had won the Design, Engineering and Construction Project of the Year at the National

Transport Awards earlier in October. Congratulations were expressed to Chris Barnes (TfGM Network Director Infrastructure) and his colleagues at TfGM.

The Committee congratulated GM Active Travel Commissioner Dame Sarah Storey as this was her first meeting since winning 2 paralympic gold medals in the cycling time trial and cycling road race events in Paris. Sarah had now won 19 paralympic gold medals across swimming and cycling, which was a British record. Sarah also won gold in the time trial event at the Para-cycling Road World Championships in Zurich at the end of September.

RESOLVED/-

1. That Councillor Tracy Rawlins (Manchester) be appointed as the Bee Network Committee's Disability Advocate.
2. That the update on the recent number of serious collisions involving Bee Network vehicles be received.
3. That it be noted that the GMCA will receive a report on 25th October proposing a number of bus fleet transactions.
4. That the committee expresses its congratulations to Chris Barnes and his team at TfGM after Stockport Interchange won the Design, Engineering and Construction Project of the Year at the National Transport Awards.
5. That the committee expresses its congratulations to Dame Sarah Storey following her record-breaking success in reaching 19 paralympic gold medals.

BNC/35/24 Minutes of the Meeting of 26th September 2024

RESOLVED/-

That the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 26 September 2024 be agreed as a true and correct record.

BNC/36/24 School Streets and Crossings

Rachel Scott (Active Travel Manager, TfGM) advised the Committee on the development and implementation of a series of School Streets and Crossings as part of a wider School Travel Programme. The GM Mayor had committed to delivering 100 school streets by 2028. Dame Sarah Storey (GM Active Travel Commissioner) was also present to explain the importance of this initiative to support more pupils to walk, wheel and cycle to school.

Dame Sarah referenced how the school streets initiative was playing a huge role within communities. Not only ensuring that children got to school more safely but also health and wellbeing with feedback from children stating their satisfaction at not being able to “taste the cars” on their commute. Teachers had also provided feedback that on the days in which the initiative was in operation, children arrived at school in a better frame of mind for learning.

Comments and Questions

- Members referenced the permanent establishment of school streets and asked if there would be some form of centrally coordinated hub so that districts could learn from each other and put best practice into place as quickly as possible. Communications advice would also be sought on how best to communicate with parents about the scheme. Officers advised that this was being taken onboard and through the pilot scheme there had been a working group with representatives from the 10 LAs and TfGM, there was a plan to expand upon this. Evaluation work was also taking place following the pilot schemes and an interim report would be ready to share imminently.
- Members stated that the scope hoped for on school streets would require additional funding as it could not permanently depend upon the goodwill of volunteers and further technological solutions such as mobile cameras would be needed. Officers advised that one to one meetings were being arranged with each borough as it was known that some LA's did have concerns about their ability to deliver, particularly in terms of resourcing. High level funding revenue expectations had been set and these would help in funding permanent positions. Work was taking place regarding the capital funding required to fund elements such as ANPR cameras.

- Members expressed concern about the retention and replacement of school crossing patrols and what could be done to address this.
- Members stated that some areas where it was difficult to encourage walking to school was due to narrow carriageways, causing a feeling of unsafety amongst children.
- Members expressed concern about the number of schools with routes to them that had no crossings nearby. There was estimated to be approximately 80 sites across GM with this issue and members would welcome the opportunity to see how these were geographically distributed. It was advised that a map was available and that this could be shared with the Committee Members.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the proposed approach to School Streets and Crossings be noted and endorsed.
2. That the map of junctions that currently do not have pedestrian crossings be shared
3. That the Committee expresses its thanks to all schools, colleges and volunteers who had taken part in School Streets trials.

BNC/37/24 Draft School Travel Strategy – Our Vision for School Travel in Manchester

Martin Lax (Transport Strategy Director, TfGM) and Nick Fairclough (Senior Policy Manager, TfGM) presented a report on the draft School Travel Strategy, a sub-strategy of the 2040 Transport Strategy setting out a vision and approach for GM would enable more young people to walk, wheel, scoot, cycle or use public transport to get to school and access further education.

The ambition was that by 2030, 70% of primary students would be walking, wheeling, scooting or cycling to school (currently 63%), 80% of secondary school students (currently 74%), and 80% of further education students (currently 66%).

A programme of engagement was taking place with local schools and communities, and the formal strategy would be brought to the Bee Network and the GMCA in spring 2025.

Comments and Questions

- It was stated that with Places of Everyone, efforts should be made to ensure areas requiring new schools are designed in such a way that would support safer walking to school. Officers advised that as part of the development of growth locations consideration was being given to appropriate transport frameworks including schools.
- Members expressed concerns around local areas becoming congested with traffic at school pick up times – particularly in areas where a lot of education establishments were in close proximity. Officers advised that as part of the strategic proposals' consideration was being given to diversion of bus services at the appropriate times of day to accommodate school demands.
- Members stated that strategic collective work should take place to address the £100m spend currently seen across GM on SEND transportation for schools. Officers had started to look at the issues around SEND transport in partnership with authorities and there was a keenness to help in this space.
- Members stated that they would welcome feasibility studies around all children being able to get public transport to school without cost.
- Members stated that reviewing school catchment areas would be a step towards children being able to walk to school.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the draft School Travel Strategy be noted ahead of consideration by the GMCA.
2. That 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 be noted.

BNC/38/24 Transport Infrastructure Pipeline

Chris Barnes (Network Infrastructure Director, TfGM) presented a report providing a progress update on delivering a pipeline of transport infrastructure improvements to support the operation of the Bee Network. The report made a number of recommendations for members to support the continued development and delivery of the pipeline programme.

It was advised that a review was currently being undertaken of the delivery status of the programme generally and its alignment to emerging local and national priorities. It was intended that an update on this be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Comments and Questions

- Members asked that TfGM officers liaise with the relevant council officers to ascertain the maintenance requirements on local highways, and how best to procure the funding required for that maintenance. Officers stated that they fully understood the current concerns around highways maintenance and would be reaching out to local authority colleagues to ensure the right balance of investment (dependent on CRSTS 2 funding allocations).
- Reference was made to some of the difficulties faced in taking forward the business case for development at New Carrington, with thanks being expressed to TfGM officers for their support around this.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the current position, recent progress and key milestones on the transport infrastructure pipeline be noted.
2. That approval be given to the drawdown of CRSTS funding and associated scheme progression as follows:
 - Bury: Radcliffe Town Centre Development Phase 1 (Spring Lane Junction Improvements): £2.89m and Full Business Case;
 - Trafford: Carrington Sustainable Corridor (Active Travel Complementary Measures): £1.021m; and
 - Hindley Travel Hub, including Park & Ride: £0.87m.

3. That approval be given to the drawdown of £4.32m Active Travel 3 funding for Salford: Oldfield Road Corridor.

BNC/39/24 Delivering the Bee Network Update

Fran Wilkinson (Customer & Growth Director, TfGM) & Vernon Everitt (GM Transport Commissioner) presented a report advising of progress made in delivering the Bee Network. Points highlighted included:

- It was reflected upon that the contents of the report reflected an extraordinary level of effort across all partners in GM and the thanks of the GM Transport Commissioner were put on record.
- Demand for transport across the region was continuously increasing. Patronage on Metrolink was above pre-pandemic levels and the bus network was on a similar trajectory. The opportunities for further growth were very significant.
- The first year of bus franchising in tranche 1 had seen close to 60 million journeys undertaken. With two new record days for ridership seen in September 2024. Punctuality was up, ridership was up, income was up, and the cost of the network per kilometre was down.
- Tranche 2 had not seen quite the same level of improvements in punctuality yet (though was still up on pre-franchising punctuality) and the team were putting in a number of measures to address this.
- Other new additions to the bus network such as the night bus pilot and the new 615 route were highlighted.
- Work around safety and the Travelsafe Partnership and plans for further improvements, particularly around women and girls were highlighted.

Comments and Questions

- Members highlighted how vital funding for further expansion of public transport infrastructure was after many years of managed decline and the current networks running at near capacity. Members hoped that the upcoming spending review would reflect this need for funding.

- Members noted the reference to buses costing a third less per kilometre than pre franchising costs. Was there a reason behind the high costs prior to franchising? It was advised that a lot of the lower costs could be attributed to the 'economies of scale' that were now available through the packaging up of franchises and the ability to give operators levels of certainty that were not previously available. The competition for franchises and widened ability to bid has also allowed for some lower costs.
- Members noted that profits from Metrolink were being used to mitigate financial pressures elsewhere on the Bee Network and sought further information on this. Officers advised of two main financial pressures. Firstly the 'scarring' effect of COVID, and the significantly reduced income over that period. Secondly the price inflation seen over the past couple of years, causing increases in the capital programme, raw materials etc.
- Members noted that car ownership figures were continuing to rise which ran contrary to the hopes that the Bee Network would result in less car usage. Officers advised that they were closely monitoring this, as the biggest determinant for whether a person was likely to use public transport was car ownership. A key factor had been that the costs associated with car ownership had reduced by around 10% over the past ten years whilst public transport had increased in price by around 20% and with services reduced. The Bee Network was a key first step in combating this, with fair prices, improved reliability and increased services.
- Members welcomed the night bus trial and hoped that it would lead to safe reliable night transport throughout the region. It was asked that when this was expanded, that the major hospitals throughout the region be included on the route plans.
- Members congratulated the planning works around major music events taking place in the region.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the update on the delivery of the Bee Network be noted.

BNC/40/24 Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Bee Network Committee would take place on Thursday 28th November 2024.