

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: Friday 29th November 2024

Subject: Delivering the Bee Network

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, Portfolio Lead for Transport and Caroline Simpson, Group Chief Executive, GMCA

Purpose of Report

To provide an update to GMCA on progress towards delivering the Bee Network, our plan for a high-quality, affordable and fully integrated public transport and active travel system for the people and businesses of Greater Manchester. A short presentation from the Greater Manchester Transport Commissioner and the Managing Director of Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) will be delivered at the meeting noting progress to date and looking ahead to priorities for 2025.

Recommendations:

GMCA is requested to note and comment on the delivery of the Bee Network.

Contact Officers

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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: 1 Delivering the Bee Network presentation.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

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

1. Bee Network Update

- 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 is leading 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.
- 1.4. The Bee Network is now in a transition phase. Several elements have been delivered, on time and on budget, and already it is starting to change the way in which people travel across the city-region. Bus patronage has increased, fares have reduced and reliability has improved. We've invested in a new modern bus fleet, including zero emission electric buses, and added more frequent bus services, longer operating hours and the launch of a 24hr bus pilot.
- 1.5. The Bee Network app has improved access to integrated, real time information; Metrolink use has hit record levels; and we have continued to call an end to the poor performance of local rail services, whilst making the case, successfully, for greater devolution and control of GM's rail services.
- 1.6. Modern facilities like the award-winning Stockport Interchange have opened, and we have continued to deliver 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.
- 1.7. Franchising of the bus network is due to be completed on 5th January 2025 when all of GM's bus network will be under local control. To coincide with the completion of bus franchising, the cost of 7 and 28-day bus tickets is being reduced along with a new annual bus ticket. An innovative scheme with local Credit Unions will give more people the opportunity to benefit from the added value of an annual product.

- 1.8. Another significant milestone will be reached in March 2025 with the introduction of 'pay as you go' contactless ticketing and multi-modal capped fares across bus and Metrolink. From 23rd March customers will be able to use their contactless bank card on Bee Network buses and Metrolink or device and know they will be charged the appropriate capped fare. This will be a key moment of integration for the Bee Network providing flexibility and seamless travel for customers.
- 1.9. Work is already underway to bring eight local commuter train services into the Bee Network. That work will step up in 2025 and will be a key focus, working towards integration of local rail services into the Bee Network by 2028.
- 1.10. Funding and the financial stability of public transport remains a challenge due to the long term impacts of COVID and inflation on revenue and costs. The £66m of funding for GM for bus fares and bus services announced by Government in Autumn is welcome, but Reserves will still be required to balance the budget in 2025/26. Achieving financial sustainability will therefore be a key priority in 2025 and beyond, with a plan to tackle this by driving passenger demand, finding efficiencies and more effective ways of work, focusing on key priorities and increasing commercial revenue streams.
- 1.11. 2025 will also see further work to improve the reliability, safety and punctuality of bus services, continued investment in active travel, new and renewed transport infrastructure, implementation of the Vision Zero Strategy and Action Plan and renewed focus on managing GM highways. All of this work will be underpinned by a new Local Transport Strategy supporting the emerging Greater Manchester Strategy and 10-year delivery plan.