

GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday 26th October 2022

Subject: Delivering the Bee Network

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, Portfolio Lead for Transport and Eamonn Boylan, Chief Executive Officer, GMCA & TfGM.

Purpose of Report

The Bee Network is Greater Manchester's future integrated 'London-style' transport system, which will change the way people travel across the city region. This report provides the GMCA Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Bee Network vision and progress towards its delivery.

Recommendations:

The GMCA Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

1. Note the content of the report and comment on progress towards delivering the Bee Network;
2. Consider which aspects of Bee Network delivery may require further and more detailed scrutiny; and
3. Review the GM Mayor's wider priorities for his GM transport portfolio in line with the priorities of the Greater Manchester Strategy.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Impacts Questionnaire			
Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation	
Equality and Inclusion	G		
Health	G		
Resilience and Adaptation	G		
Housing	G		
Economy	G		
Mobility and Connectivity	G		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G		
Consumption and Production			
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target			
Further Assessment(s):		Equalities Impact Assessment and Carbon Assessment	
<div></div>	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	<div></div>	Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.
<div></div>		<div></div>	Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
<div></div>		<div></div>	Negative impacts overall.

The Bee Network is a critical enabler of Greater Manchester's ambitions to achieve Net Zero and reduce inequalities; a truly integrated, affordable, accessible and inclusive transport network will provide excellent public transport and active travel choices for all, promoting sustainable travel behavioural change through integrated spatial, digital and transport planning; and supporting the electrification of vehicles and public transport fleets.

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: None

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?

N/A

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 A sustainable and integrated transport network is central to Greater Manchester's ambitions for a decarbonised and levelled-up city region: improving access to economic opportunity; unlocking new sites for residential and commercial development; promoting improved health and wellbeing through active travel, and making a significant contribution to the decarbonisation of the city region's economy.
- 1.2 The Bee Network is GMCA's vision for a London-style transport system which will bring together buses, trams, cycling, wheeling and walking by 2025, with commuter rail incorporated by 2030. An accessible, affordable, equitable and easy to use system, it will transform how people travel in Greater Manchester, with a daily fare cap and multi-modal ticketing to facilitate seamless end-to-end journeys within the city region. World class safety and customer experience standards will be supported with real time passenger information and audio-visual announcements.
- 1.3 Delivery of the Bee Network is now well underway, enabling the greatest transformation of a city region's transport network anywhere in the country.
- 1.4 This paper provides an overview of the constituent parts of the Bee Network, delivery progress to date, and some of the key enablers for its delivery.

2. Bus Reform

- 2.1 Buses are central to the Bee Network. Over recent decades, buses in Greater Manchester have not fulfilled their potential, and declining bus patronage set in motion a cycle of reduced service-frequencies, higher operating costs, higher fares and further reductions in patronage.
- 2.2 This cycle of decline has left too many of Greater Manchester's communities with insufficient local bus services, and bus travel is seen by many people as a 'choice of last resort'. However, buses continue to play a vital role in the lives of many people in Greater Manchester making up around 75% of public transport trips.
- 2.3 GMCA's ambition is to develop a modern low-emission accessible bus system, fully integrated with the wider Greater Manchester transport network on which everyone will be willing and able to travel regardless of their background or level of mobility.

2.4 GMCA's plan for Bus Reform includes:

- A plan to stabilise and recover bus services and patronage;
- A programme of work to franchise the bus network by early January 2025; and
- Further enhancements to the bus offer in Greater Manchester facilitated through the Bus Services Improvement Plan and the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

Network Stabilisation

- 2.5 Since April 2020, the UK Government has been providing financial support to bus operators and Local Transport Authorities in England in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. With funding then due to end in October 2022, and with patronage still below pre-pandemic levels, operators gave notice of their intention to make a significant number of commercial service changes across Greater Manchester including service withdrawals and reductions in frequency. Without intervention the consequences would have reduced network accessibility, further hindering the recovery of patronage and revenue whilst undermining future opportunities for network growth and development as Greater Manchester transitions towards bus franchising.
- 2.6 Following consultation with members of the GM Transport Committee, TfGM is replacing withdrawn services at current frequencies with the exception of minor variants where there is no negative impact on network coverage. Where commercial changes involve frequency reductions, these are being restored to current levels up to a maximum of four buses per hour. The new arrangements will come into effect on 30th October 2022.
- 2.7 The financial impact of the additional services being supported is approximately £15 million per annum, funded through a combination of existing budgets and government funding. This will include funding from the Bus Recovery Grant which has since been extended to the end of the current financial year.
- 2.8 Following the commencement of the new arrangements, TfGM will be undertaking ongoing patronage monitoring which will inform subsequent reviews of services as well as providing input to wider market and network renewal activities being taken.

Bus Franchising

- 2.9 Greater Manchester is the first place in the UK outside of London to introduce bus franchising, bringing bus services under local control in the biggest change to public transport in the city region in over 30 years.
- 2.10 Franchising will deliver passenger benefits, including simpler fares and ticketing, with the ability to offer price capping for journeys across both buses and trams. It will enable better joined-up planning between bus and tram journeys so passengers will be able to quickly and easily change between them, and a 'one-stop shop' for travel information and customer support, as well as consistent standards for a high-quality passenger experience across the network.
- 2.11 Implementation of the Bus Franchising Programme is now well under way with Tranche 1, covering Wigan and Bolton, due to become operational on 17th September 2023. Bids for Tranche 1 contracts were received on 9th September 2022, and bid evaluation is currently taking place. Following evaluation, Preferred Bidders will be notified on 28th November, with contract award planned to take place on 16th December 2022.
- 2.12 The Expression of Interest for Tranche 2 was issued in September and the second tranche will be operational at the end of March 2024. The third tranche will be contracted by the end of March 2024 and be operational by 5 January 2025.

Bus Fleet and Depots

- 2.13 In readiness for the start of Tranche 1, an order for 50 new zero emission buses has now been placed, with the buses scheduled to arrive in time to be deployed for day 1 of Tranche 1. Work is also underway to develop a delivery plan for the deployment of the additional Zero Emission Buses that will be funded from Greater Manchester's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) fund allocation.
- 2.14 Following a successful joint bid with Stagecoach and Stockport MBC to the Government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) Fund, TfGM has commissioned Stagecoach to lead on the design, development, construction and commissioning of a zero emission bus depot in Stockport. Stagecoach will also lead on the procurement of 170 'ZEBRA funded' zero emission buses, with an order currently scheduled to be placed in March 2023, for delivery by May 2024.
- 2.15 Following delegations granted by GMCA in July 2022, the process is underway to acquire bus depots identified as strategically important for bus franchising, from which the ten large franchises will be operated.

2.16 In addition to negotiating the acquisition of the existing depots for Tranche 1 Wigan and Bolton, GMCA has already acquired land at Martland Park to build a new depot, if required. The next phase of construction on Wigan Martland Park will commence in October 2022 if an agreement cannot be reached to acquire the existing depots for Tranche 1.

Bus Fares

2.17 New lower bus fares have successfully been rolled out across Greater Manchester, delivered a year ahead of schedule following agreement with bus operators and government to increase patronage and respond to the cost-of-living crisis.

2.18 On the 4 September, a capped £2 single fare (£1 for children) for any single journey within the city region was introduced. Passengers are also able to make unlimited journeys across all bus operators for no more than £5 (adult) or £2.50 (child) a day.

2.19 While the fare cap applies to single fares and day-tickets initially, opportunities are being explored to extend the cap to other ticket types such as weekly passes.

2.20 As reported to this committee in August 2022, the reduction in fares is being funded from money that the Government has allocated to Greater Manchester for its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

2.21 Bus operators will be compensated on a 'no better, no worse off' basis for participating in the scheme.

2.22 Given the considerable uncertainty over public transport funding going forward, the fare initiative is to be reviewed annually to ensure that it is financially sustainable.

2.23 The impacts of the fare reductions on patronage will be monitored through data returns from bus operators and surveys of bus users.

3. Metrolink

3.1 Metrolink, already owned and controlled locally, is the foundation on which the Bee Network is being built and already exhibits many features – like audio-visual announcements and simplified ticketing - that will ultimately be required across the wider network. In recent years, significant customer improvements have been introduced including contactless payments and simpler capped zonal fares.

3.2 All 27 new trams have also now been delivered. Ordered in 2018, the new trams represent a £72m investment in the network, funded by the government's Transforming

Cities Fund, which has also helped expand park and ride capacity around the network and Metrolink depots.

- 3.3 The new vehicles will make Metrolink's services more resilient, boost capacity for passengers and allow for additional capacity to be scheduled for major events within Greater Manchester.

4. Customer Information and Ticketing

- 4.1 Simple integrated payments, fares and information are cornerstones of a joined-up customer travel proposition and will be fundamental to a fully integrated Bee Network.
- 4.2 The Bee Network ambition is for all customers to be able to access and pay for GM transport services in the easiest manner possible and get best value. This will be integrated with the provision of accurate, reliable and easy to understand travel information allowing customers to make informed choices.
- 4.3 From 2023 customers will be able to access Bee Network fares and tickets on-bus and via the Bee Network App, which will also offer information services like journey planning. Customer services and information will also be available via the Bee Network website and Bee Network customer contact centre.
- 4.4 As part of the implementation of bus franchising, customers will be able to tap and travel using contactless Pay As You Go (PAYG) across the Bee Network with day and week capping available, as they do now when travelling on Metrolink. The App and other digital channels will evolve to improve the user experience including with personalised disruption information. Customers will also benefit from live travel information at key journey points including interchanges and bus stops.

5. Active Travel

- 5.1 The Bee Network includes the delivery of the UK's largest active travel network. It aims to connect every area and community in Greater Manchester, making it easy, safe and attractive for people to walk, wheel or cycle for everyday trips.
- 5.2 The Greater Manchester Active Travel Programme comprises a broad and extensive range of workstreams and activities which can be broadly split into five 'pillars' of work, aligned to the original 'Made to Move' document.
- 5.3 The pillars are
 - Strategy and Policy Development;

- Infrastructure Programmes;
- Access and Opportunity to Active Travel;
- Behavioural Change (Activation), and
- Safety and Road Danger Reduction.

5.4 This report provides some highlights from a number of these areas.

Infrastructure programmes

Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund

5.5 In 2018, GMCA agreed to allocate £160 million from Greater Manchester's Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) to develop a Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund (MCF). The MCF programme has now been extended into a fifth year, as part of an ongoing pipeline approach to active travel capital delivery and building the network.

5.6 At a summary level, the MCF programme now comprises 127 individual infrastructure packages. 39 schemes have received full delivery funding approval from the GMCA to date, with a combined value of circa £94 million. 22 MCF schemes are now complete, whilst there are a further 15 under construction.

Active Travel Fund

5.7 In May 2020, DfT announced a new Active Travel Fund (ATF), to support local transport authorities with delivering active travel infrastructure. From the three tranches announced to date, GM has successfully secured over £32m for temporary projects during the Covid 19 pandemic, active travel infrastructure schemes (including school streets) and a series of supporting complementary measures, including monitoring and evaluation, cycle parking, marketing and behaviour change activities.

5.8 The fourth round of funding (ATF4) is currently scheduled to commence shortly. Managed by Active Travel England, ATF4 is expected to offer multi-year settlements from a national funding pot of circa £500 million.

Access to Active Travel and Behaviour Change (Activation)

5.9 Bee Network Cycle Hire launched on 18 November 2021 and has subsequently expanded from three initial areas: Oxford Rd, University of Salford and Media City to large areas of Manchester, Salford and Trafford, including the City Centre, Ancoats, Chorlton and Hulme, with more than 500 bikes now on-street. The scheme has averaged 2 rides per bike per day throughout the recent expansion totalling over 130,000 rides and 340,000km ridden so far. The current extension will lead to the full

rollout of 1,500 bikes (including 300 E-Bikes) by December 2022. At that point there should be over 180 Stations and approx. 3,000 stands within a five-minute walk of circa 200,000 residents, providing convenient and affordable access to bikes. If successful, subsequent phases will see the scheme expand within Greater Manchester.

5.10 Increasing levels of active travel requires that infrastructure delivery is supported and 'activated' by complementary programmes of behavioural change activity. The following are some examples of these.

5.11 A Bee Active campaign was delivered in Spring 2022 to encourage people to walk and cycle across GM. This activity also featured promotion of the GM cycle hire scheme. Active Travel now features prominently in TfGM's overarching #GetonBoard campaign to promote sustainable travel.

5.12 Other initiatives include:

- The Cycle and Stride project, funded by the London Marathon Charitable Trust which continues to work with community groups and schools with the aim of inspiring 10,000 people in Greater Manchester to take up walking, wheeling and riding for more journeys.
- School Streets; cycle parking grants, and a pilot Youth Travel Ambassador project (delivered in eight Secondary Schools) with the intent to recruit a further ten schools later this year, exploring how children and young people could help themselves and their schools to develop more sustainable travel patterns.
- A comprehensive training programme for skills and confidence.
- Partnering with Wheels for All to provide adapted cycles, training and support.

6. Rail Integration

- 6.1 Following the implementation of bus franchising, GM will have the levers locally to integrate bus services and the Metrolink tram network – aligning fares, ticketing, information, branding and services – to optimise the utility of the network as a whole, increase public transport use and the financial sustainability of the network.
- 6.2 Incorporating passenger rail into the Bee Network, will ensure commuters get the benefits of an integrated system whatever mode they choose to use (as they do in London).
- 6.3 TfGM is already engaging with the rail industry and the Great British Rail Transition Team (GBRTT) to explore how to unlock early integration. One key area of focus is ticketing, and joint working arrangements have been established to explore introducing PAYG contactless payment and capping, as well as rationalising the number of ticket products available and simplifying the approach to tickets offered on certain routes.
- 6.4 TfGM will also be working with GBRTT over the longer term on rationalising fare bands within GM, improving the retail experience, expanding the availability of easy-to-use multimodal tickets and improving the offer to the wider GM ‘travel to work’ area.
- 6.5 In the near term, TfGM continues to work with rail industry partners including train operators, the Rail North Partnership Board and Government to improve the current poor performance of the rail network and call for the investment in infrastructure that is needed to address rail congestion in central Manchester.

7. Enabling the Bee Network

- 7.1 There are a number of key enablers which will be essential to the successful delivery of the Bee Network.

Funding

- 7.2 Greater Manchester has been successful in securing significant funding from government to deliver the Bee Network vision including £1.07bn over 5 years from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) fund, £94m for the GM Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and funding to support active travel from a number of funding streams, as set out in section 5. It is likely that, as with all transport authorities across the country, additional Government support will be needed to help overcome the challenges of the pandemic and energy crisis.

- 7.3 Greater Manchester has never shied away from backing up its transport ambitions with significant local funding contributions. In addition to the c£1 billion of local funding that contributed to the development of the Transport Fund which delivered the expansion of Metrolink and the Leigh Guided Busway amongst other schemes, £135m has been set aside from different local sources to support the delivery of bus franchising and Greater Manchester's CRSTS allocation included a local contribution of £170m.

Devolution Trailblazer

- 7.4 Over the past decade, Greater Manchester has benefited from a number of devolution deals, allowing the city region to have greater control over its future success. The GMCA's Devolution Trailblazer bid, currently being discussed with government, includes a proposal to devolve further powers to support the integration of rail into the Bee Network and improve transport integration more widely.

Transport Capital Programme

- 7.5 On 1st April 2022, the Secretary of State wrote to the GM Mayor to say that GMCA had been awarded an allocation of £1.07 billion of capital funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) fund.
- 7.6 The CRSTS is funding a significant pipeline of investment in public transport infrastructure and highway maintenance across Greater Manchester.
- 7.7 The programme includes an investment in bus infrastructure schemes of c£360m, of which there is c.£140m to support the delivery of bus franchising (i.e. the electric bus fleet and associated depots, as well as fares, ticketing and information systems). Investment in rail, stops and interchanges and future Metrolink scheme development is more than £160m, with a further contribution towards the Metrolink renewals programme of c.£21m. Other significant contributions include £64m towards Greater Manchester's ongoing investment in its Active Travel programme and £85m towards addressing GM's infrastructure needs in response to the HS2 programme.
- 7.8 There is also c.£435m of CRSTS funding channelled directly through to the Local Authority Partners for investment in maintaining their respective local and strategic highway networks as well as investment in town centre and local corridor schemes.
- 7.9 In all, the CRSTS funded pipeline of infrastructure investment is a significant enabler in delivering the Bee Network.

Bee Network Brand and Campaigns

- 7.10 In September 2022 a preview of the Bee Network Brand was unveiled. The new brand builds on the region's symbolic bee emblem and Metrolink colours – both of which are synonymous with Greater Manchester – to deliver something modern and iconic that reflects the first-class transport network it will become.
- 7.11 The Bee, a long-established regional emblem, will become seen as the promise of a high-quality transport experience.
- 7.12 In the near term, TfGM's #GetOnBoard campaign launched in August to raise awareness and support the new low bus fares initiative. The low fares campaign ran until mid-September and campaign activity generated considerable media coverage across key broadcast and print/digital media titles, as well as strong engagement on social media, with overwhelmingly positive sentiment. The campaign was intended to build awareness of the introduction of low fares, supporting people during the cost-of-living crisis, while also encouraging people to use the bus to sustain lower fares over the longer term and help to build the Bee Network.
- 7.13 From late September, #GetOnBoard evolved into an integrated multi-channel strategic communications campaign, promoting the use of Public Transport and Active Travel in Greater Manchester, while continuing to build awareness of low bus fares. The launch of the fully integrated #GetOnBoard campaign was marked by a range of media relations, digital, advertising and marketing activity. It also included a specific business engagement strand linked to the launch of a new journey planning portal and business engagement strategy linked to generating new markets. The creative strategy of #GetOnBoard includes the targeted promotion of a range of key products and interventions, as identified in annual modal marketing plans. This central creative strategy will run for a minimum of 7 months and potentially into the next financial year to ensure maximum message penetration and customer impact.

8. Network Review and Market Renewal

- 8.1 Over the next three years, significant investment in Greater Manchester will dramatically improve the transport offer.
- 8.2 At the same time, Greater Manchester is facing uncertain passenger numbers on public transport, increasing energy prices and inflation as the city region recovers from the pandemic.
- 8.3 To overcome these challenges and prepare GM's public transport network for the delivery of the Bee Network, GMCA will undertake a programme of work focused on

Network Review and Market Renewal (NRMR). The aim of the programme is to navigate and move past the current shortfalls in demand, to plan for and promote a growth path for public transport in Greater Manchester to 2025 and provide the basis for further growth through franchise operation thereafter.

- 8.4 The “Market Renewal” element of the programme will be targeted at growing patronage on Metrolink and bus by designing interventions and products that will attract and retain customers, optimise patronage and revenue or reduce the cost of operating the network, aligned with the Bee Network delivery and vision.
- 8.5 The “Network Review” element of the programme will consist of Network Reviews of Metrolink and tendered bus services, on an ongoing basis to identify potential efficiencies.
- 8.6 This work will be vital to ensuring the financial sustainability and future success of the Bee Network.