



## Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 14 December 2023  
Subject: Network Planning and Review Process  
Report of: Stephen Rhodes, Director of Bus, TfGM

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### Purpose of Report

To gain approval for the proposed approach to reviewing and evolving the franchised bus network.

### Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note and endorse the proposed approach to reviewing and evolving the franchised bus network through a programme of Network Reviews;
2. Approve the proposed Network Planning Guidelines;
3. Approve the 12-month programme of Network Reviews;
4. Note and comment as appropriate on changes to the non-franchised network set out in Appendix 3 and agree that no action is taken; and
5. Approve the proposed changes to subsidised services set out in Appendix 3.

### Contact Officers

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## Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

### Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The GMCA is requested to note the positive outcome of the Benefits Decision Tool. Future specific interventions/proposals will be subject to a similar detailed assessment as part of the network review process, which is the subject of this paper.

### 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	Increase public transport use via modal shift away from private car
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Further Assessment(s):	Equalities Impact Assessment and Carbon Assessment			
<b>G</b> Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	<b>A</b> Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	<b>R</b> Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	<b>RR</b> Negative impacts overall.	

## Carbon Assessment

<b>Overall Score</b>		
<b>Buildings</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Justification/Mitigation</b>
New Build residential	N/A	
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A	
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A	
<b>Transport</b>		
Active travel and public transport		This proposal considers an overall approach to the network review process. Specific interventions and their impacts will be considered at a later date.
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access		This proposal considers an overall approach to the network review process. Specific interventions and their impacts will be considered at a later date.
Access to amenities		This proposal considers an overall approach to the network review process. Specific interventions and their impacts will be considered at a later date.
Vehicle procurement	N/A	
<b>Land Use</b>		
Land use		
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

Risks relating to the network review process will be considered as part of TfGM's Bus risk management approach

## Legal Considerations

It is likely that the network review process will include a period of consultation, particularly if the changes being proposed constitute a formal variation to the routes that are currently listed within the Greater Manchester Franchising Scheme for Buses 2021 (the Franchising Scheme). The Transport Act 2000 (as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017) sets out the process that GMCA would need to follow should any formal variations to those routes be needed. This is likely to take place whenever 1) a new route is introduced, 2) an existing route is withdrawn or 3) there are changes to the description, or stopping places, of a route as identified in the Franchising Scheme.

For these formal variations, there is a six month notice period that needs to be given before the changes can come into effect.

### **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

There are no direct financial implications associated with the network review proposals contained within this report. Future network recommendations will be reported at a later date. The financial implications arising from the changes to the non-franchised network are reported in Part B.

### **Financial Consequences – Capital**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Any associated infrastructure recommendations will be reported at a later date.

**Number of attachments to the report: 0**

### **Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

N/A

### **Background Papers**

Greater Manchester Bus Strategy: Better Buses for the Bee Network – Report to Bee Network Committee, 27 July 2023 [BNC 20230727 Greater Manchester Bus Strategy \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/bnc-20230727-greater-manchester-bus-strategy)

### **Tracking/ Process**

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution? Yes

### **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. Introduction**

- 1.1. Network Reviews will play a key part in optimising the Bee Network and, in particular, achieving the ambitions of the newly approved Bus Strategy, as part of a holistic, multi-modal approach. They will provide a mechanism to develop the bus network in a coordinated, planned and efficient manner, complementing and building on all other modes, and will be informed by the adoption of new network planning guidelines. This will become possible through the implementation of Bus Franchising, as the planning of the bus network comes under TfGM control on behalf of GMCA.
- 1.2. Subsequently, the Network Review process will be implemented in three tranches, mirroring the implementation of bus franchising across Greater Manchester, enabling the process to benefit from having access to improved network-wide data and management information for the first time, building up a more complete and comprehensive picture as time goes on.
- 1.3. The adoption of Network Reviews forms part of the Greater Manchester Bus Strategy 2023 and will form part of the refreshed Local Transport Plan (Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040).
- 1.4. This report outlines the approach which will be taken to implement these reviews and the proposed programme for the next 12 months.
- 1.5. Furthermore, details of changes to the existing non-franchised bus network are included in section 6 and in an appendix to this report.

# **2. Evolving our Network**

- 2.1. Our first priority is to implement franchising effectively and embed new data flows, technology, intelligence and new ways of decision making. To do this, it is essential that TfGM has flexibility to manage and improve day to day operations on behalf of the GMCA, reporting operational changes for information to this Committee.

- 2.2. There may also be occasions where the network may be amended as opportunities for growth arise. However, more significant, or strategic changes to the Bee Network will be determined through a rolling programme of network reviews, and approved by this Committee. Where a variation to the Scheme is proposed, final approval must also be sought from the Mayor (in accordance with the powers set out in the Transport Act 2000 (as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017)).
- 2.3. Table 1 below outlines the different types of changes to the franchised bus network:

**Table 1: Types of network change**

<b>Change Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
Operational Improvements	Timetable, route or fleet changes to address performance issues.
Growth Opportunities	Additional frequencies, trips, capacity or routes, where opportunities for growth are identified.
Network Reviews	Longer term strategic changes or deviations from the Franchising Scheme.

- 2.4. With the introduction of franchising, and the accompanying commitment of full accountability for the network, there is likely to be a range of views around how bus services should evolve.
- 2.5. Subsequently, a structured, evidence-base process is needed, which allows engagement and input from customers, communities and key stakeholders (including members and local authorities) at key points. This will feed into a clear decision-making framework, allowing the integrity of the network to be maintained.
- 2.6. The Network Review process will provide a consistent, proactive and efficient means to make sure we are making the best choices when evolving our network.

In practice this will see each tranche divided into smaller area-based networks or themes, with the Bee Network Committee agreeing an annual published rolling programme of these reviews each year.

- 2.7. Engagement with members, district Bee Network Forums (where in place), community groups and district officers will be integral and will help inform the base position and identify local strategic priorities.
- 2.8. The process will take an integrated approach to consider multi-modal opportunities holistically, as well as to ensure any changes support the ambitions of our strategic plans such as Greater Manchester's Transport Strategy 2040.

### **3. Network Review Process**

- 3.1. The reviews will be comprehensive and could take up to 12 months to complete and fully implement, however timescales associated with individual actions may in some instances mean the overall process can be completed sooner than this wherever possible.
- 3.2. The process will be made up of 5 stages, detailed below and outlined in Figure 1 (page 9), with indicative timings provided for each, which may flex during the course of a review:
- 3.3. Stage 1 - Engagement:
  - An integrated approach will be taken to consider multi-modal network opportunities as a whole and to align with strategic objectives.
  - Engagement with District Officers, members and community groups will form an integral part to ensure we are understanding local priorities and agree common objectives/priorities.
  - Also informed by insights derived from customer feedback.
- 3.4. Stage 2 – Appraisal:
  - Common approach to appraisal and recommendations adopted for the network.

- Evidence based, data driven, transparent process.
- Recommendations will be informed by Network Planning Guidelines (see section 4).
- Application of our Public Sector Equality Duty and meaningful consideration of equality impacts (including socio-economic), safety, accessibility and comfort, with equality impact assessments undertaken on proposed recommendations.

### 3.5. Stage 3 – Consultation

- There is likely to be a degree of public consultation during each review.
- There is also a Legal requirement for public consultation if any variation of the Franchising Scheme is proposed – this is outlined in Legal Considerations at the top of this report.

### 3.6. Stage 4 – Approval:

- The final set of recommendations will be submitted to the Bee Network Committee for approval. Where a variation to the Scheme is proposed, final approval will be sought from the Mayor (in accordance with the powers set out in the Transport Act 2000 (as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017)).

### 3.7. Stage 5 – Mobilisation:

- Legally required to have a minimum 6-month mobilisation period, between approval and implementation, where a change to the Franchising Scheme is proposed.

**Figure 1: Indicative timeline for a network review**

<b>Indicative timeframe</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Estimated duration</b>
Months 1-3	Engagement and base data established.  Objectives agreed	Up to 3 months
Months 3-6	Analysis, option generation, appraisal and recommendation	Up to 3 months
Months 6-9	Consultation	Circa 2 months
	Approval	Circa 6 weeks
Months 9-12+	Mobilisation	Up to 6 months

## **4. Network Planning Guidelines**

- 4.1. The Greater Manchester Bus Strategy 2023 outlines seven principles to help shape the future bus network in order to contribute to strategic, economic, social and environmental objectives and achieve the ambitious target of 30% patronage growth by 2030. These principles have been further developed to provide consistent guidance for the network planning process that will form the basis of the review programme outlined above, ensuring the network is developed in a coherent way.
- 4.2. The first six of these and their importance to customers are set out below:
- 4.3. **Comprehensive.** People need access to convenient transport at all times. A comprehensive network providing people with access to employment, education and key services such as shops, hospitals, and transport interchanges.

- 4.4. **Simple.** People need to find the network easy to understand and use. To encourage greater use of bus services our network design aims to minimise complexity, ensuring it is as simple as possible for existing and potential passenger to understand and navigate.
- 4.5. **Frequent.** Low waiting times are highly valued by passengers, and a frequent bus service is a key factor in encouraging increasing bus use.
- 4.6. **Direct.** Bus users value low journey times and we aim to provide services (either to ultimate destinations or interchange points) that run as directly as possible.
- 4.7. **Reliable.** People need to be able to depend on their buses. A reliable service has more predictable waiting times and journey times, making it more attractive and building customer confidence and encouraging greater use.
- 4.8. **Integrated.** The bus network needs to be planned as part of a broader integrated transport network with all other modes, taking advantage of the complementary integrated approach to fares and ticketing, to broaden catchment areas minimise overall public transport journey times.
- 4.9. The seventh guideline recognises the need for the network to be **Cost Effective**, to ensure that we can provide a stable and dependable network for our customers. This is essential to addressing social, economic and environmental objectives.
- 4.10. There are inevitable tensions between the different service planning guidelines, and so trade-offs will be needed to achieve a balanced outcome between – for example – journey times, frequency and coverage. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken for each review to consider these factors. This will be complemented by an analysis of access to activities in an overall evaluation of proposed service changes.
- 4.11. More detail on how these guidelines will be used in supporting the justification and validation of proposals for network change in a consistent way across the bus network, is provided in Appendix 1.

## 5. Next Steps

5.1. A programme of Network Reviews is appended to this report for approval. Currently the following Tranche One and Two services are proposed for review between November 2023 and November 2024, these nine reviews are:

- Bolton Local Routes<sup>1</sup>
- Bolton Radial Routes<sup>2</sup>
- Wigan Local Routes
- Leigh Local Routes
- Salford Radial Routes
- Bury Radial Routes
- Wigan & Leigh Radial Routes
- Oldham Local Routes
- Oldham Radial Routes

5.2. The first reviews will commence in the Tranche 1 area, with Tranche 2 routes starting to be reviewed approximately three months following commencement of Tranche 2. Each review will last around 12 months, but this may vary depending on consultation requirements.

## 6. Non-franchised bus service changes

6.1. Changes to services operating under TfGM permit in the Tranche 1 area: one change to a service subsidised by Lancashire County Council which took effect at the end of November and two changes to commercial cross-boundary services due to take effect in January 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> Local services are defined as the services which specifically serve residential communities in the area and are anchored within the district.

<sup>2</sup> Radial services are defined as the services covering the major radial corridors into Manchester and to the relevant district centres.

- 6.2. Changes to services operating commercially in the non-franchised area:  
Proposed withdrawal of the Oldham — Huddersfield service due to take effect in December 2023. TfGM and West Yorkshire Combined Authority will be jointly funding the service, maintaining the current level of service, from December until the start of the Tranche 2 franchised services in March 2024.

## Appendix 1: Network Planning Guidelines

<b>1. The Comprehensive Network</b>
Confirms the Bus Strategy aim to (as far as possible) provide a daytime bus service within 400m of people's homes, and the target that this service will be at least half hourly for 90% of residents.
Describes the approach in cases where this is not practical or good value.
Sets out corresponding principles for evening, Sunday and night services.
Emphasises the importance of good access in town centres, and the role of interchange in extending the range of journey opportunities.
Describes the conditions where Local Link services will be considered.
<b>2. The Simple Network</b>
Sets out principles for standard routings; clock-face timetables; consistent start and finish times; simple frequency patterns; and unique route numbers.
Service changes limited to certain dates within the year, unless needed to address an urgent issue.
<b>3. The Frequent Network</b>
Emphasises the importance of a core network of frequent services in supporting the demand growth target in the Bus Strategy.
Sets out frequency guidelines for daytime, evening and Sunday services, for each of core, local and inclusion services – though notes that delivery will be dependent on the level of funding available.
Notes where exceptions will apply in certain specific markets.
Confirms the minimum service level to be hourly, for Mon-Sat daytimes.
Provides guidance on co-ordinating timetables for parallel services, and on capacity planning

#### **4. The Direct Network**

Sets out the role of the core network in providing direct routings to complement rail and Metrolink

Highlights trade-offs between directness and network coverage, and the approach to balancing these factors on a network basis.

#### **5. The Reliable Network**

Summarises principles for setting scheduled journey times and recovery times.

Notes that long routes can be difficult to operate reliably, and so will be avoided - with longer passenger trips catered for through interchange on bus or transfer to rail/Metrolink, or alternatively through express services.

Areas with significant traffic variation will also be avoided - though where this places undue constraints on meeting travel patterns, bus priority or traffic enforcement measures will be considered.

Where services are disrupted by road works, special schedules or temporary bus priority should be considered.

#### **6. The Integrated Network**

Describes the importance of planning the bus network in the broader context of an integrated network, and emphasises the importance of frequent services in making interchange easier.

Sets out guidance on specifying services to facilitate interchange - including first and last services, and the approach to timetabled connections between low frequency services.

Notes the wide range of possible interchange locations, and the need to ensure they are safe, attractive, and that walk times between services minimised and clearly signposted.

## 7. The Cost-Effective Network

Notes that financial sustainability is essential for the network to address wider objectives, with funding coming from both fares revenue and subsidy.

Aim is to allocate resources to provide the best value to passengers from this funding. In this context, important to support services with strong potential to generate revenue for cross-subsidy – and such services also drive progress towards the Bus Strategy 30% demand growth target.

Highlights the need to keep the network under review, as travel patterns change over time.

Summarises the approach taken to improve the integration between school and general bus services.

Sets out a high-level description of the principles used to allocate resources:

- The financial effects of any service change proposal (on both operating costs and revenues) will be assessed.
- There are tensions between the different service planning principles, and so trade-offs are needed to achieve a balanced outcome - with an assessment of passenger impacts considering changes in walk time, wait time, in-vehicle time, and any need to change between services.
- This will be complemented by an analysis of access to activities in an overall appraisal of proposed service changes.

## Appendix 2: Network Area Review Programme

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24
	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Tranche 1: Bolton local &amp; radial services</b>		<b>Bolton</b>											<b>Ongoing</b>
		Engagement				Appraisal		Consultation		Approval		Mobilisation	
<b>Tranche 1: Wigan &amp; Leigh local services</b>					<b>Wigan &amp; Leigh</b>								<b>Ongoing</b>
					Engagement		Appraisal		Consultation		Approval		
<b>Tranche 1/2: Salford &amp; Bury radial services, Wigan &amp; Leigh radial services</b>				<b>T2 Live</b>				<b>Salford, Bury, Wigan</b>					<b>Ongoing</b>
								Engagement		Appraisal			
<b>Tranche 2: Oldham local &amp; radial services</b>										<b>Oldham</b>			<b>Ongoing</b>
									Engagement				

### Appendix 3: Summary of Changes to Bus Services

#### Changes Prior to Date of Committee

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Service Number</b>	<b>Route</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>New, Variation of Cancellation</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Preston Bus	312	Wrightington Hospital – Appley Bridge – Skelmersdale	27/11/2023	Variation	Service 312 replaced by service 311 providing the same links between Wrightington Hospital and Skelmersdale (although operating direct along Ormskirk Road in Hall Green), then extending to Ormskirk. This follows a change to an LCC contract related to BSIP funding and only briefly enters GM at Shevington Vale.

## Forthcoming Changes

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Service Number</b>	<b>Route</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>New, Variation or Cancellation</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Arriva Merseyside	360	Wigan – Platt Bridge – Golborne – Newton le Willows – Warrington	21/01/2024	Variation	Commercial timetable change (reduction in frequency of Monday to Saturday service from every 40 minutes to hourly).
Arriva Merseyside	395	Wigan – Skelmersdale	21/01/2024	Cancellation	Withdrawal of Monday – Saturday half hourly service. Services 375 and 385 continue to provide links along the Ormskirk Road/Orrell Road corridor on an hourly frequency (half hourly combined).

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Service Number</b>	<b>Route</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>New, Variation or Cancellation</b>	<b>Comment</b>
First West Yorkshire	184	Oldham — Huddersfield	09/12/2023	Commercial service to be replaced by subsidised service	<p>This service was proposed for withdrawal, but TfGM and West Yorkshire Combined Authority will be jointly funding the service, maintaining the current level of service, from December until the start of the Tranche 2 franchised services in March 2024.</p> <p>The financial implication is reported in Part B</p>