



Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 21st March 2024
Subject: 24-hour Transport Pilot
Report of: Martin Lax, Transport Strategy Director, TfGM
Stephen Rhodes, Director of Bus, TfGM

Purpose of Report

To seek the Committee's endorsement for a proposed pilot of 24-hour bus services in the Tranche One bus franchising area, to support the city region's night time economy, as part of development of the wider Bee Network.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note the development of a pilot of 24-hour bus services in Greater Manchester;
2. Note the process followed to develop the pilot proposals;
3. Endorse the recommended routes (V1 and 36) to be taken forward as part of the pilot; and
4. Note the next steps to be taken by TfGM in development of the proposed pilot.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

Endorse the proposed pilot of night bus services and associated next steps.

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation					
Equality and Inclusion	G	<p>Pilot is more likely to benefit young people as they are more likely to work and use the NTE. Buses provide greater accessibility than private hire vehicles, providing an accessible option for those with disabilities.</p> <p>Pilot will provide greater late night connectivity to those on lower incomes, providing an affordable late night transport option.</p> <p>Pilot will provide late night public transport options enabling access to public services which currently aren't accessible at night due to a lack of transport options.</p>					
Health	G	<p>Pilot will provide an affordable late night transport option for those who don't have access to a private vehicle and those who may struggle to afford travelling by taxi.</p> <p>Proposed bus routes runs past Manchester Royal Infirmary and Bolton Royal Hospital. Runs close to Salford Royal Hospital (less than 15 minutes on a shared e-scooter) and Leigh Infirmary. This means they will provide 24 hr public transport access to these healthcare institutions.</p>					
Resilience and Adaptation							
Housing							
Economy	G	<p>Pilot will support GM's night time economy by providing both workers and users of NTE with affordable transport options late at night.</p> <p>Pilot will enable more people to access jobs in the late night economy by providing an affordable alternative to taxis, for example.</p> <p>Will enable NTE businesses to more easily recruit workers and supports GM's reputation as a city that wants to have a thriving 24 hr economy.</p> <p>The V1 runs along Oxford Road and past the University of Salford which are hubs for innovation, R&D and the knowledge economy.</p> <p>Expect it to help the night time economy and be seen as an vote of confidence in the sector. Business forum members and officials from LAs are very supportive of the proposals and believe it can help grow the NTE.</p> <p>Provides 24hr public transport access to the University of Salford and access to Manchester Metropolitan and University of Manchester from the North West of the conurbation.</p>					
Mobility and Connectivity	G	<p>Pilot will provide new 24hr transport services to Leigh and Bolton from the city centre. Little congestion at night to remove, but may reduce congestion if it encourages people to use the bus during both the day and at night. Pilot will investigate impact on patronage across full 24hr period.</p> <p>Provides an affordable transport option at night for those who may not otherwise have been able to afford to travel.</p> <p>Enabling people to make multimodal journeys and extending the range of the night buses through the use of shared transport are aims of the pilot. Both the V1 and 36 run through the Starling Bank Bike and rental e-scooter operational areas.</p> <p>Provides enhanced night time transport provision and connectivity.</p> <p>Extends operational hours of V1 and 36, improving access to public transport.</p> <p>Full operational details still to be confirmed.</p>					
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	<p>Looking to mitigate the noise impact of running buses through the night. We will investigate using electric vehicles or modern buses to minimise noise. By providing an alternative to using private vehicle the number of cars on the road will be reduced, reducing noise levels at night in turn.</p>					
Consumption and Production							
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		<p>The pilot will provide an affordable public transport option for late night travel. At the moment there is limited provision forcing people to drive, use taxis / private hire vehicles or not travel at all. The geographical scope of the area is limited given that this is a pilot, but it is hoped that it will form the evidence case to improve night time transport</p>					
Overall G	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A	Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	R	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		Providing more transport options at night, with the operating hours of the 36 and V1 being extended to provide 24hr transport access. Will be encouraging the use of shared transport options to access the night bus services. Will investigate how the interchange between the two can be improved to give more people easy access to the night bus service.
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A	
Access to amenities		Provides enhanced access for workers and users to the night time economy, this includes the leisure sector, healthcare and manufacturing for example.
Vehicle procurement	N/A	
Land Use		
L	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

N/A

Financial Consequences – Revenue

See Section 8 – Costs & Revenue

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

Greater Manchester Night Time Economy Strategy, March 2022

Greater Manchester Bus Strategy, July 2023

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. Introduction

- 1.1 The GMCA has set an ambition for Greater Manchester to become a top global city region¹, with a transport network that supports that ambition. To be an attractive place to work, live, visit and invest in, Greater Manchester needs to cater to the travel demands of a growing, dynamic conurbation. That means supporting residents and visitors to get around the city region at any time of day or night.
- 1.2 Transport options at night are essential for Greater Manchester's night time economy to function. Workers and customers need to be able to move around the conurbation as safely, affordably and efficiently as possible.
- 1.3 Steps have already been taken to improve the provision of night time transport options through the later running of some bus services as part of bus franchising and the reintroduction of later running Metrolink services on Friday and Saturday evenings, but there are opportunities for further improvement.
- 1.4 The Greater Manchester Night Time Economy Strategy, published in March 2022, committed to developing a business case for a pilot of later night transport to assess the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of providing later night public transport across the city region.
- 1.5 The Greater Manchester Bus Strategy, published in July 2023, reaffirmed this ambition and committed to exploring services to major town and employment centres during the night. The delivery of the Bee Network and bus franchising make piloting this approach both more sustainable and desirable as we seek to grow patronage on the public transport network.
- 1.6 In February 2024, the Mayor of Greater Manchester announced that a pilot of 24/7 services would take place on routes 36 and V1 later in 2024².
- 1.7 This paper sets out the rationale for the pilot, the research questions the pilot aims to address and the process we have carried out to select our proposed options. It also establishes the steps TfGM will take to deliver the pilot in 2024.

2 Strategic Case for a Pilot

- 2.1 The night time economy is an important part of Greater Manchester's economic landscape. Around a third of the city region's workforce³ is employed in jobs or businesses that are significantly active at night. This includes, for example, those

¹ [International - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/)

² [Bee Network moves ahead as Greater Manchester gets ready for phase two of bus franchising \(tfgm.com\)](https://www.tfgm.com/news/bee-network-moves-ahead-as-greater-manchester-gets-ready-for-phase-two-of-bus-franchising)

³ <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s20056/17%20Night%20Time%20Economy%20Strategy%202021-24%20Final%20GMCA%2015032022.pdf>

who work in the culture and leisure sector, health and social care, manufacturing, and logistics.

- 2.2 Poor transport links at night have been identified as a barrier in residents' access to employment and other opportunities. The latest Greater Manchester Residents' Survey (February 2024) found that a lack of public transport at night has prevented 27% of respondents from accessing opportunities (such as work, evening education or seeing friends) or services (such as accessing late night healthcare).
- 2.3 Transport for Greater Manchester's Business Transport Advisory Council members have also noted night time public transport provision as a key concern for businesses in the city region. The frontier sector of advanced materials and manufacturing tends to employ late night working patterns at manufacturing sites. Sites of major employment in the distribution, and other sectors have shifts starting and finishing through the night.
- 2.4 The NHS in Greater Manchester, which has significant shift-based working through the night, is seeking to encourage more sustainable transport options for its staff. Public transport options for people working in these industries and at these sites through the night are currently limited.
- 2.5 Analysis from the Greater Manchester Travel Diary Survey shows that the level of demand for travel is greatly reduced between midnight and the early morning. Trips are still being made, but a much greater percentage of these trips are made using private vehicles.
- 2.6 There is therefore potentially unmet demand for transport services at night. A bus-based pilot would help TfGM test the location and size of this demand and make the most of buses' inherent operational flexibility. It could also contribute to Greater Manchester's overall bus patronage target – of 30% growth by 2030.
- 2.7 Analysis of similar city regions worldwide and their transport networks has helped to identify a range of possible benefits associated with improved night time transport options. These include:
 - Creating new jobs in the night time economy through increased demand and widening the pool of workers for businesses to recruit from.
 - Enabling those who were previously unable to seek employment in the night time economy to do so.
 - Providing an affordable and sustainable transport option, supporting low paid workers and helping to tackle poverty.
 - Reducing congestion after events and shows as attendees do not have to rush for the last service home and are able to travel using public transport both to and from events / shows.
 - Allowing restaurants, bars and clubs to attract customers later at night.

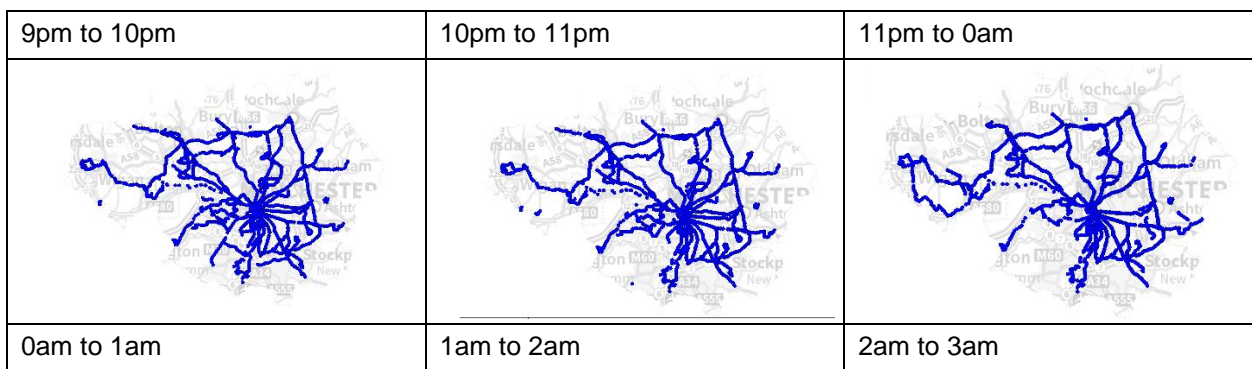
- Providing greater resilience and confidence in the transport system by ensuring that there will always be a way to travel home.
- Improving a city’s reputation as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest.
- Contributing to Vision Zero by helping to reduce incidences of drink driving by providing a safe and cheap way to travel home.

3 Night Buses in Greater Manchester

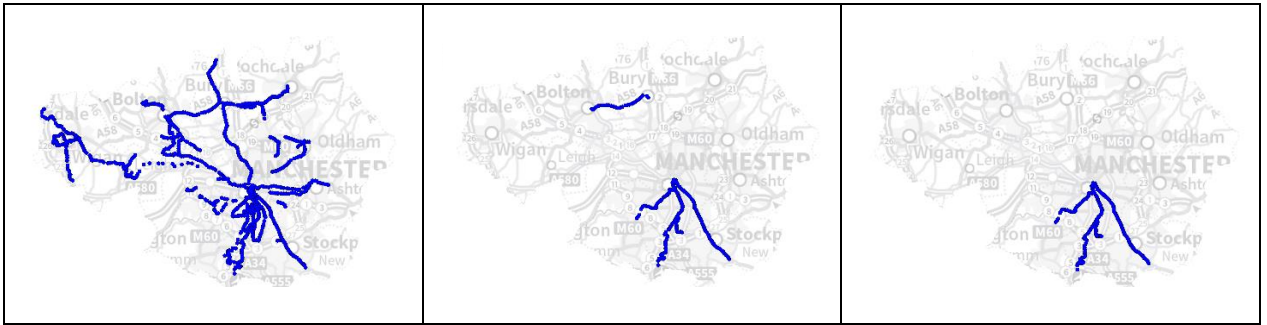
3.1 Historically, Greater Manchester had an extensive night bus network that covered much of the city region but, like the ‘daytime’ bus network, this has shrunk over time. Commercial operator decisions during the period of deregulation mean that the current night bus network predominately serves the south and southeast of Greater Manchester, focusing on leisure travel on Friday and Saturday nights.

3.2 Tranche One of bus franchising has seen the introduction of some later bus services that run past midnight on weekdays, but beyond 1am there is a very limited weekday night time public transport offer across the conurbation. The exception to this is the commercially operated 43 service, which serves Rusholme, Fallowfield and Manchester Airport and is the only ‘24/7’ bus service in Greater Manchester.

Figure 2: Greater Manchester bus stops with more than 1 departure between Friday Evening and Saturday Morning⁴



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3.3 Our city region and travel demands have changed dramatically over the last decades, and this trend has accelerated in recent years. We therefore need to create a transport network that reflects these changes and can meet our future ambitions. The proposed pilot will therefore trial running night services throughout the night, every day of the week to serve a wider range of trip purposes – creating a truly ‘24/7’ public transport offer.

4 Scope and Pilot Selection

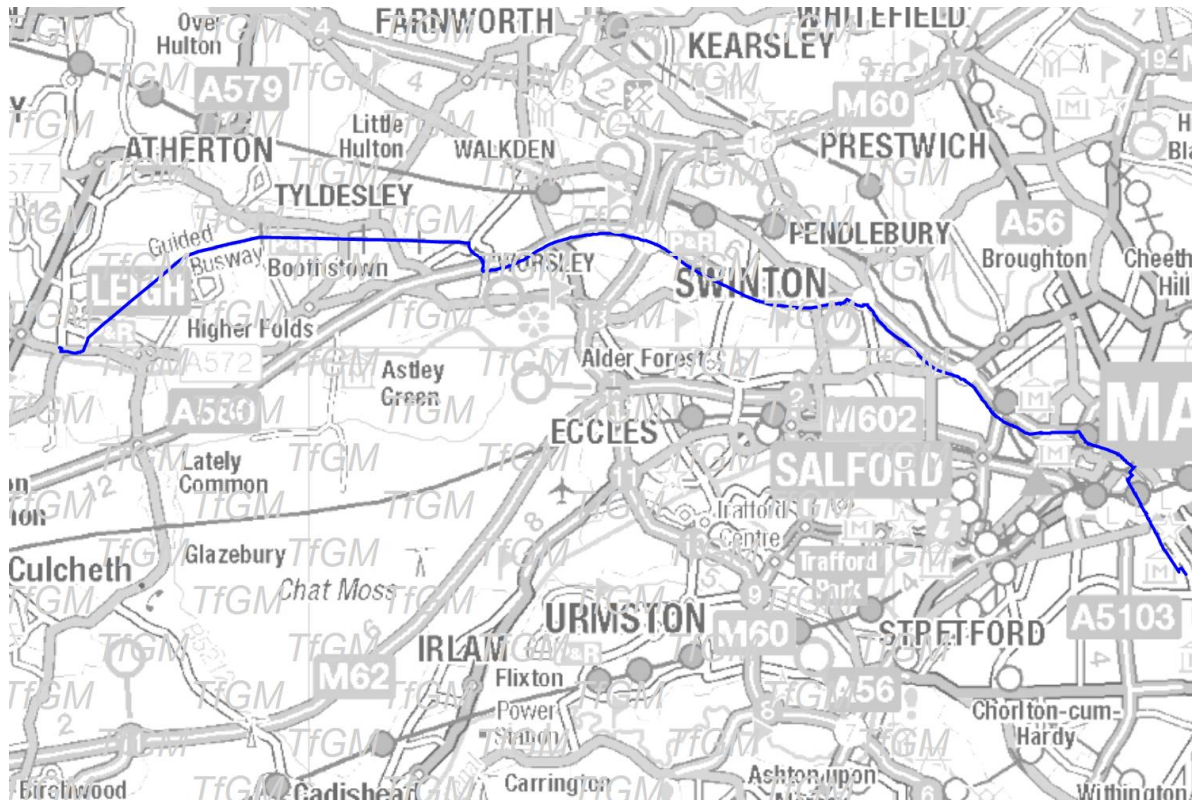
- 4.1 Early stage plans have been developed to pilot the running of 24/7 bus services in the Tranche One bus franchising area for an initial period of up to a year. The proposed pilot would be focused on understanding the implications of improved access to public transport for workers and users of the night time economy. The pilot will therefore evaluate the effect of these additional services across the full 24/7 period, not just at night.
- 4.2 The aim of the proposed pilot is to develop an evidence base that can inform how night time transport provision in Greater Manchester could be improved through future Network Reviews and our Local Transport Plan. A full monitoring and evaluation exercise will be specified as part of the pilot programme.
- 4.3 In order to maximise the benefits of the proposed pilot, a broad evidence-gathering exercise has been undertaken to support the development of an early proposal.
- 4.4 As franchised services are already within the GMCA's control, the route selection process has focussed on services in the Tranche One bus franchising area. Local control means that TfGM has the opportunity to make changes to timetables. Importantly, it is proposed that the pilot would only seek to extend the operational hours of existing bus services. The creation of new routes would require a change to the published franchising scheme, significantly extending the time required to mobilise the pilot. Operating different routes at night and daytime can also cause confusion for customers.
- 4.5 As a result of the limited existing connectivity, there is little demand data available for night time travel. The primary method used to select routes has therefore been analysis of current daytime patronage. There has been a particular focus on patronage in the early mornings and late evenings, immediately before services end and immediately after they start on a new day, which could suggest unmet demand late at night.
- 4.6 Consideration has been given to the presence of key anchor institutions/ trip generators, such as hospitals or distribution warehouses, or large clusters of existing night time industries along a route, which could generate travel demand. In addition, thought has also been given to routes which serve areas that may have a large proportion of students, or households that are statistically less likely to own a private vehicle and more likely to use public transport as their main form of transport.
- 4.7 The selection process has also focused on 'core routes', which provide key connectivity between town, employment and city centres. Core routes are well-equipped to move large numbers of people quickly and at high frequency. The sifting process has therefore prioritised routes of this kind.
- 4.8 The results of this selection process are set out below.

5 Route Recommendations

Summary

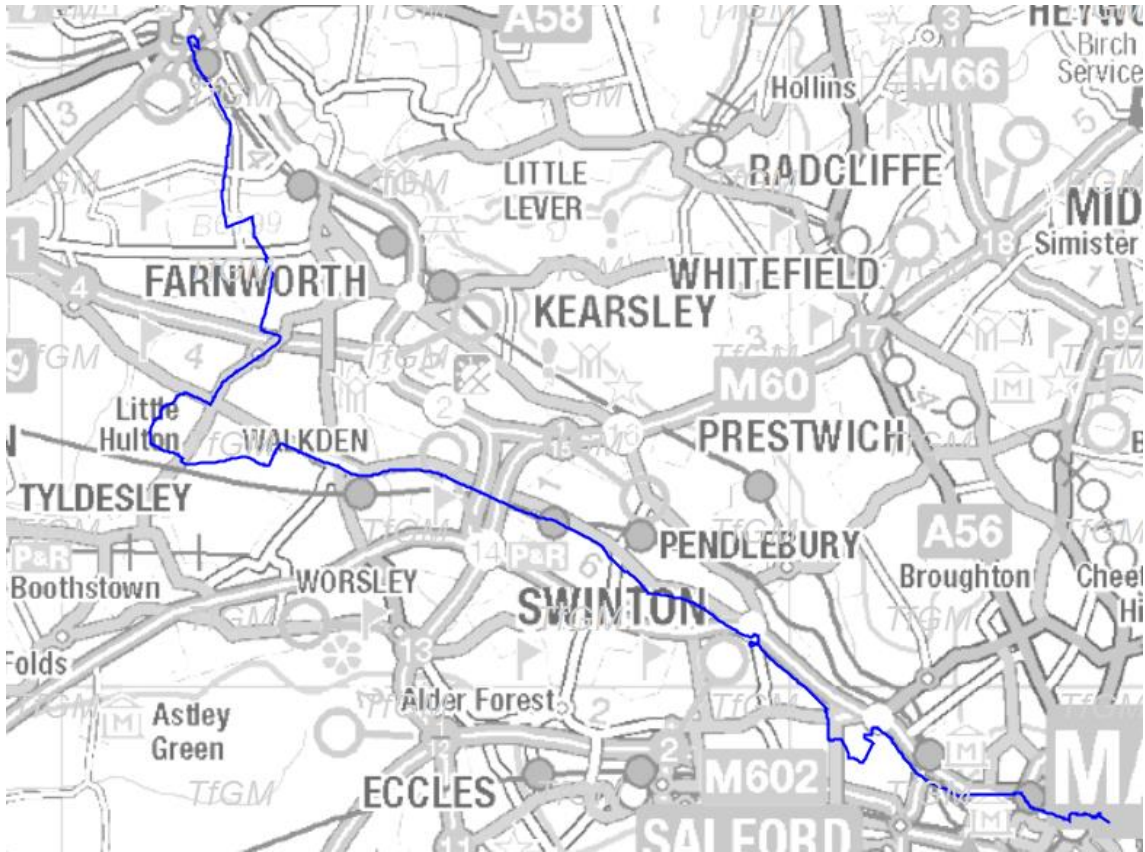
- 5.1 Given the limited available data regarding demand for bus services at night, it is recommended that only a small number of routes are taken forward for inclusion in the proposed pilot at this point. Lessons from the pilot will help to inform Greater Manchester's future approach to 24-hour public transport provision.
- 5.2 In the first instance, consideration was given to 'radial' routes which travel into and out of the regional centre.
- 5.3 As it has the highest late evening and early morning patronage of any route considered, it is recommended that service V1 (Manchester Royal Infirmary – Leigh) is included within the proposed pilot.
- 5.4 Service 36 (Bolton Interchange – Manchester Piccadilly Gardens) has amongst the highest patronage of routes of this kind and passes a number of major employment sites, as well as residential areas. It is therefore recommended for inclusion in the pilot.
- 5.5 The route selection exercise also considered a number of orbital routes that would support trips between local centres. At present, patronage on these services at night is significantly below that for radial routes and therefore they are not recommended for inclusion at this time.
- 5.6 A map and description of each of the recommended routes is set out below.

Service V1



- 5.7 The V1 is an express bus service that runs from Manchester Royal Infirmary to Leigh Bus Station. It is considered a core route, providing radial connectivity into and out of the regional centre. It utilises the Leigh – Ellenbrook guided busway with limited stops outside the regional centre. This results in a relatively short end-to-end journey time of 53 minutes.
- 5.8 The V1 route passes the University of Salford which hosts approximately 22,000 students. In addition to the University, the immediate surrounding area has a high percentage of 15- to 24-year-olds. As young people are more likely to work in the night time economy and use public transport as their main means of travel we believe substantial unmet demand for transport could exist in this area.

Service 36



- 5.9 Like the V1, the 36 is a high frequency, radial route which serves the regional centre, connecting Bolton town centre and Manchester Piccadilly Gardens, via Salford, Swinton, Walkden, Little Hulton and Great Lever. 88,541 people live within 400m of the 36's route and, like the V1, it passes the University of Salford. The 36 has a greater number of stops than the V1 and an end-to-end journey time of just over one hour.

6 Operational Considerations

Frequency & Hours of Operation

- 6.1 Given the focus on supporting workers, we have proposed extending services to run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, excluding bank holidays (with separate consideration for later running services over the New Year period).
- 6.2 It is currently envisaged that the pilot will involve one bus per hour in each direction operating on both the V1 and 36 routes.
- 6.3 On the overlapping, core section of both routes between the city centre and Salford Crescent, it is proposed that the 36 and V1 could be timed to provide a combined approximate half hour frequency.
- 6.4 Fares & Ticketing

- 6.5 A number of other UK cities with 24-hour bus services charge a premium fare to reflect the higher costs and lower patronage associated with operating at night. For example, night buses in Edinburgh cost £3 for a night single ticket, while a single journey in Glasgow at night can cost £5 on some operators' services.
- 6.6 It is recommended that at this stage of the pilot the same range of fares is available and valid on both night and 'daytime' services.

Facilities

- 6.7 As part of the pilot, we will explore implications for the operation of Leigh Bus station and Bolton Interchange e. g. whether it is possible to partially open Bolton Interchange at night or if it is necessary to terminate services at a bus stop just outside the Interchange. This pilot will enable us to assess the impacts of 24-hour services on operations, anti-social behaviour, and staff requirements.
- 6.8 All TfGM interchanges have CCTV that is monitored by TfGM's control centre, which is staffed 24 hours a day.
- 6.9 Toilet facilities for drivers will be made available 24 hours a day at Bolton Interchange, Piccadilly Gardens, and at Leigh Bus Station.

Integration with the wider transport network

- 6.10 There is an opportunity to promote the use of shared transport, taxis and private hire services, alongside active travel options, to widen access to night bus services and provide a first/last mile connection. This could enable people to travel by bus for part of their journey, leaving the regional centre for example, before then transferring to another mode for the last part of their journey.

- 6.11 The recommended pilot routes have several ‘hubs’ where it would be possible for user to connect with other transport services as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Modes available at ‘hubs’ along recommended bus routes

Location	Bus Service	Taxi Rank	Shared E-Scooters	Starling Bank Bikes	Car Club
Piccadilly Gardens	36	Yes - 10 + 5 + 3 spaces		Yes	
Salford Central	36, V1	Yes - 3 + 2 spaces	Yes		
Salford Crescent	36, V1	Yes - 3 + 3 spaces	Yes	Closed	
Salford Shopping Centre	36, V1*	Yes - 14 + 15 spaces	Yes	Yes	
Swinton Civic Centre	36	Yes - 2 spaces			Yes
Little Hulton	36	Yes - 2 spaces			Yes
Bolton Interchange	36	Yes, in town centre			

**V1 does not go through Salford Shopping Centre but does run within a 5 minute walking distance.*

7 Safety and Security

- 7.1 Safety is a critical consideration in the development of any new public transport service. It is well-understood that safety and the perceptions of safety play a key role in encouraging or discouraging bus use.
- 7.2 Given a small number of night services already operate in Greater Manchester, we will work with operators to understand existing challenges as well as lessons they have learnt. TfGM officers have also spoken to colleagues from Lothian Buses in Edinburgh, who operate a number of 24-hour routes, to understand what issues have arisen and what mitigations the operator has put in place.
- 7.3 To promote safety on board night services, TfGM is working through the TravelSafe Partnership to consider an appropriate level of support at key interchanges and onboard vehicles. This could take the form of in-person patrols by TravelSafe Support & Enforcement Officers, although the cost of this support is likely to be significant. Further work will be undertaken in tandem with the development of final pilot costs to reach a proportionate and sustainable proposition for a TravelSafe presence.

8 Costs and revenue

- 8.1 Given the lower demand experienced across the transport network at night, we would expect that fares income is unlikely to cover the costs of running the service, meaning that significant subsidy is likely to be required. An incremental funding stream will need to be identified to fund the pilot. The review point after six months of the pilot's operation will allow for further consideration of subsidy requirements.
- 8.2 In addition to bus operations, other costs are expected to be incurred as the pilot is mobilised, including the changes to safety and facilities practice outlined above.
- 8.3 Following endorsement of the outlined approach, TfGM will engage with Go North West (who operate both the V1 and 36) to establish the operational requirements, costs and timing of the pilot, and continue to engage with the trade unions. The total costs will also include TravelSafe support, marketing, monitoring and evaluation and changes to facilities management practices.
- 8.4 The final proposal and timing for the pilot will be brought to the Bee Network Committee prior to the mobilisation of the pilot.

9 Further development

Engagement

- 9.1 Engagement with trades unions and the operator Go North West, who operate the proposed routes in Tranche One, is at a very early stage.
- 9.2 Local authority officers have supported development of the pilot proposals. The success of the pilot would benefit from local authorities actively promoting the pilot to their local communities through the relevant channels.
- 9.3 Throughout the development of the pilot there will be close engagement with employers. We will also work with major night time employment sites to identify any co-ordination of timetable and shift times that may better enable workers to use the service, and monitor usage of the services once in operation.
- 9.4 Alongside engaging with employers, we will work with voluntary organisations, community groups and representatives of both users and workers in the night time economy to ensure we gather a wide range of perspectives and experiences of the pilot, with a particular focus on groups identified through our Equality Impact Assessment.
- 9.5 To raise awareness of the pilot, a marketing campaign will be developed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- 9.6 A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed as part of the pilot. Intelligence gathered through development and operation of the proposed pilot will also support the wider, multi-modal Network Review process.
- 9.7 A review point is planned for six months into the pilot's duration to consider performance, patronage and net costs.