

## Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July 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

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### Purpose of Report

To update GMCA on progress implementing the Bee Network: a high-quality, affordable and fully integrated public transport and active travel system which can support sustainable economic growth.

### Recommendations:

GMCA is asked to note the update on 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:** Appendix 1 – Franchised Bus Performance

## **Background Papers**

Delivering the Bee Network Update, GMCA, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024

## **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

## **Bee Network Committee**

N/A

## **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

N/A

## **1. Introduction**

- 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 has led the way in reforming and improving its transport network, and we are now in the transition phase with some elements of the Bee Network already starting to change the way in which people travel across the city-region. 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, and we are delivering 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. This paper reports on recent progress in delivering the Bee Network and looks ahead to further delivery in the coming months.

## **2. Bus Franchising Delivery and Operation**

- 2.1. The Bee Network launched on 24 September 2023 following the successful implementation of bus franchising across Wigan, Bolton and parts of Bury and Salford (Tranche 1).
- 2.2. Passenger numbers remain strong for Tranche 1 services with ridership increasing by 5% over the last 6 months. The week ending 18<sup>th</sup> May saw the highest weekly patronage to date since franchising commenced with over 849,000 passenger journeys. Passenger revenues for the period from 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, exceeded £20m, c£3m higher than budgeted for the financial year 2023/24. This strong revenue performance has continued into the new financial year with passenger revenues currently exceeding the new 2024/25 budget target by c5%. This strong patronage and revenue performance helps to mitigate wider financial pressures and risks across the bus franchised network and wider transport operations.

- 2.3. The punctuality of services in Tranche 1 is consistently outperforming both the current non-franchised network, and the pre-franchised network in the Tranche 1 area that operated over the same period last year. A further key performance indicator is 'kilometres (km) operated' which measures the actual volume of services delivered compared to what was scheduled. It includes any fully or partially cancelled trips. Overall, across the Tranche 1 area, over 98% of scheduled km has operated with a consistent upward trend in the 6 week period to 22 June 2024.
- 2.4. We are focused on the continuous improvement of service delivery to meet the high standards we have set for the Bee Network through a Network Excellence Plan. This includes moving quickly to introduce an additional twenty vehicles across Tranche 1 during April. This has delivered promising results, including on the popular V1 and V2 Busway services. All except two of the amended bus routes have seen on time punctuality above target levels (80%) during the 4 week period ending 22 June. The punctuality of some routes has significantly exceeded this target and the overall punctuality of Tranche 1 services has significantly increased as a result (see Appendix 1). During the period 28 April to 23 June 2024 the average punctuality of Tranche 1 services overall was 82.9%; a circa 20% / 14% points improvement compared to the same period twelve months ago (68.7%).
- 2.5. We are working closely with operators to address any negative feedback that arises from our Rate Your Journey survey as well as complaints. This covers specific complaints and also any trends that occur and we work to uncover the root cause of the issue and address that, e.g. not accepting a certain type of ticket, because the drivers were not aware of it, would require additional training.
- 2.6. Diamond operates 69 vehicles across 7 small franchises in Tranche 1. Since the start of March, 60 brand new single deck vehicles have been introduced (ADL Enviro 200), many on local routes which have not benefited from new buses for many years. The older interim fleet suffered from a number of reliability issues, with frequent breakdowns in service. Since the new fleet arrived, Diamond's reliability has improved significantly, with over 99.8% of scheduled KMs operated in the 4 week period to 22 June 2024.
- 2.7. Tranche 2 of Bus Franchising commenced in Rochdale, Oldham and parts of Bury on 24th March 2024. Together with Tranche 1 (Wigan, Bolton parts of Bury and Salford), this means that half of the Greater Manchester bus network is now franchised.

- 2.8. The successful implementation of Tranche 2 represented the culmination of months of hard work between TfGM and the Tranche 2 franchise operators Stagecoach, First and Diamond to mobilise the franchise services, and work with the outgoing operators (First, GNW, and Transdev/Rosso) to demobilise and transition depots, services and employees. Depots were acquired in Oldham and Queen's Road, with electrification works carried out at Oldham depot to accommodate a new fleet of zero emission electric buses. New ticket machines, radio and CCTV were installed, and drivers and other new members of staff were recruited and trained. Stagecoach is currently operating franchise services from Middleton Depot under their existing lease arrangement. We have now reached agreement on terms with the landlord and are working toward completion of the lease acquisition by July 2024.
- 2.9. High staff absence levels at the Oldham depot initially affected the performance of some Tranche 2 services, but those initial problems were quickly addressed by Stagecoach and performance continues to improve.
- 2.10. As part of our focus on continuous improvement, work is underway, in partnership with Stagecoach and individual Local Authorities, to assess what interventions are necessary to improve the worst performing routes and mitigate where possible the impact of congestion on bus passengers.
- 2.11. Our original patronage and revenue forecasts for Tranche 2 were increased in light of the positive trends seen in Tranche 1. Actual performance is tracking in line with these revised forecasts. However, it remains relatively early days and we need to observe performance over a longer period of time before reaching any conclusions.
- 2.12. Overall, operated KM across the Tranche 2 franchises is consistently over 98.5%. Further detail on the performance of franchised bus services can be found in Appendix 1.
- 2.13. In addition to the immediate operational changes being made to drive up performance, franchising also allows us to plan the network differently and provides opportunities to introduce new services or make existing services more efficient. Network Reviews of services in Bolton and Wigan are already underway and include engagement with local authorities (including local Bee Network committees), the public, businesses and our partner operators.
- 2.14. At the end of March, contracts were awarded to operate the final round of Bee Network bus services in Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and remaining parts of

Manchester and Salford from 5 January 2025 – at which point all buses across Greater Manchester will be franchised and under local control.

- 2.15. Metrolink has been awarded contracts to operate four of the five large franchises, with Stagecoach awarded the contract to operate the fifth. Diamond Bus has been awarded contracts to run three of the four small franchises and Go North West the remaining one.
- 2.16. Mobilisation has commenced and detailed mobilisation plans have been received from all operators. Metrolink has established a mobilisation office on Hyde Road, near to the bus depot there, as well as a training centre at the Arriva Wythenshawe site. They have commenced recruitment of key mobilisation and operational roles and will shortly launch a campaign to recruit drivers and engineers. Metrolink are working with trade union officials and employees, via the outgoing operators, regarding the TUPE process.
- 2.17. The acquisition of the final Tranche 3 area depot in Sharston is in the final stages and we have commenced the design for the electrification of Hyde Road and Ashton (Tameside) which will be operational ahead of 5th January 2025. Stockport and TfGM officers continue to work closely to deliver the new Zero Emission Bus fleet depot in Stockport.

### **3. Metrolink Operations**

- 3.1. The reliability of Metrolink services has been consistently very good, which has helped to increase passenger numbers to above pre-Covid levels. Passenger satisfaction levels are also high with the most recent surveys showing 91% of passengers are satisfied with the service.
- 3.2. Surveys also show increasing perceptions that Metrolink represents value for money, with 64% of passengers responding positively. Metrolink fares have been frozen since 2020, and the introduction of the Bee Network App now enables the purchase of multi modal bus and tram tickets with a 20% saving, offering even better value for money.
- 3.3. In January, Metrolink increased tram capacity between Piccadilly and the Etihad, in anticipation of the launch of the Coop Live Arena. This increase helped cater for increased demand both for football matches and the busy schedule of concerts and events that are now taking place at the new venue. Additional trams have also been added on the Ashton line to support the evening peak.

- 3.4. In an innovative partnership between TfGM and Co-op Live, Metrolink and shuttle bus travel has been included in the event ticket for the opening season of the venue (to end of July 2024). This has successfully supported the launch of Co-op Live, with over 200,000 passengers carried to and from the Etihad campus for events so far. Feedback from customers and partners has been very positive. Discussions are ongoing with a view to extending this initial integrated ticketing offer for future events.
- 3.5. Following the opening of Co-op Live, a significant number of other major events across GM, and continuing the trend of increasing levels of patronage on the network, Metrolink had its busiest ever month in May, with patronage reaching 4.1 million journeys in the month. Overall Metrolink revenue is showing year on year growth of 17%.
- 3.6. However, Metrolink has not been without some challenges. A track fault earlier this year resulted in a suspension of service between Victoria and Exchange Square, with services through Oldham reduced in frequency. This issue was resolved at the start of May and the 6-minute service restored on the Oldham line.
- 3.7. The most significant issues impacting on Metrolink performance in recent periods were an overhead line issue on the Altrincham Line caused by a construction vehicle near to Old Trafford cricket ground, and a number of road traffic collisions blocking the tracks on the Ashton Line.
- 3.8. Work has commenced to restore the escalator at Bury interchange, which saw a large number of complaints in recent months as flooding resulted in major damage.
- 3.9. A programme of Metrolink renewal and improvement works is planned for the city centre throughout the summer to safeguard the continued good performance and strengthen the resilience of the network.

## **4. Safety and Security**

- 4.1. Tackling network anti-social behaviour, crime and fare evasion remains a key focus. TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers (TSEOs) are now deployed across the franchised bus network, interchanges and bus stations. In May alone TSEOs attended 425 incidents, submitted 62 intelligence reports and dealt with 60 safeguarding incidents. TSEOs boarded almost 4,000 buses, checking over 56,000 passenger tickets.

- 4.2. Further TSEO recruitment is taking place, in advance of franchising arriving in Tranche 3. These staff will supplement existing teams and provide enhanced security and protection in bus interchanges.
- 4.3. Since September 2023, an additional 50 Customer Service Representatives were also recruited on Metrolink, dedicated to tackling fare evasion and providing support to customers. This measure has been extremely effective in driving down fare evasion, which reduced from a post-Covid high of nearly 17% to approximately 10%, and although there is more to do, passengers have greatly appreciated the additional staff presence.
- 4.4. A recent passenger survey on Metrolink has shown an increase in passengers feeling safe on the network. 75% of passengers now feel safe on board trams during hours of darkness (up from 71%) and 73% of passengers feel safe on stops (up from 68%).
- 4.5. These results are welcome, and TfGM will be seeking to improve perceptions further still. In the coming months we will be continuing our programme of joint operations between Operators and GMP, including and “Operation AVRO”, a high profile policing operation, dedicated to the transport, in July.
- 4.6. In May we added GMP Live Chat to the Bee Network app, enabling customers to report any safety concerns and we have plans to promote it and improve its prominence over the coming months.

## **5. Active Travel**

- 5.1. Providing people with the opportunity to walk, wheel or cycle is fundamental to the Bee Network, helping people move around Greater Manchester in different ways, particularly for short trips or giving barrier free access to public transport stops.
- 5.2. Delivery of Bee Active Network schemes across Greater Manchester continues with the third phase of the Bee Network Crossings Programme, which has delivered new and upgraded crossings at 9 sites across Bolton, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford.
- 5.3. Other works include delivery of the Trafford Borough Council’s Talbot Road scheme - a junction upgrade linked to a wider set of improvements for the A56 corridor, which is planned for completion in June 2024; and Manchester City Council ’s

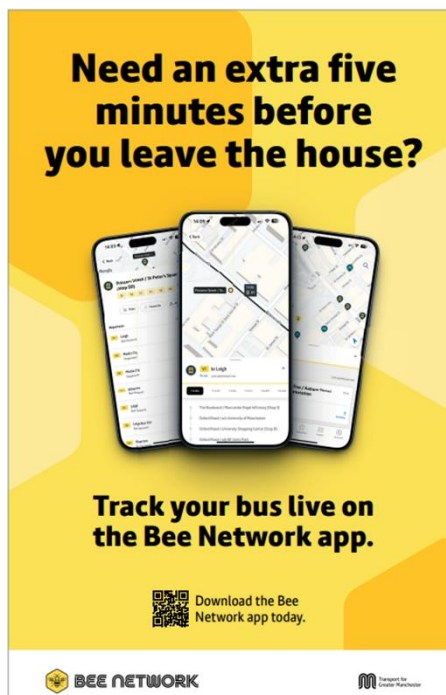
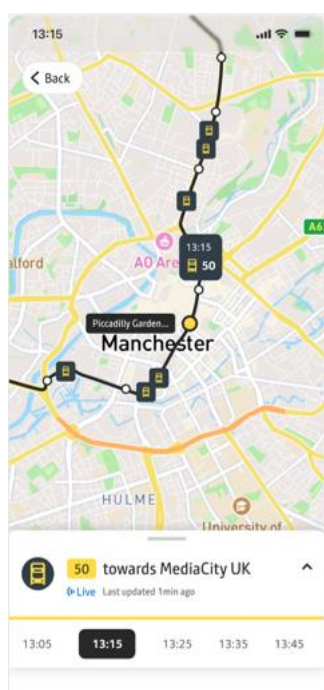


Northern and Eastern Gateway scheme, which is progressing through a phased delivery, with a number of early phases complete.

- 5.4. As well as dedicated active travel schemes, inclusion of active travel in the wider infrastructure programme being delivered is embedded through the Streets for All design guide and the infrastructure design assurance process.
- 5.5. In January Starling Bank were announced as the first sponsor of Greater Manchester's cycle hire scheme. The partnership represented TfGM's biggest commercial sponsorship in its history. The Starling Bank branding continues to be rolled out across the scheme and is nearing completion.
- 5.6. Starling Bank Bikes continues to operate well with over 790,000 rides taking place using the scheme. The recovery plan put in place last year has made excellent progress. Over 1,100 bikes are now regularly available with an average of over 1,400 rides taking place each day. Continuing the delivery of the recovery plan 48 of stations closed during the delivery of the recovery plan have now been re-opened.
- 5.7. The bikes on Metrolink pilot concluded successfully in April following 6 weeks of supervised trials to test whether bikes and non-standard cycles can be taken on trams safely in a variety of operational settings.
- 5.8. The trial took place on off-peak services on different lines, routes and stops across the Metrolink network. Testing included the carriage of adapted bikes used as mobility aids, scooters and a broader range of mobility scooters that are not currently permitted.
- 5.9. Feedback from passengers was recorded as a part of the pilot along with feedback from the volunteers taking part and any other participants involved. A report on the pilot results will be brought to the Bee Network Committee in the autumn with recommendations on next steps.

## 6. Wider Bee Network Delivery and Operation

- 6.1. To coincide with the start of Tranche 2 of bus franchising, and following feedback from customers, new functionality was added to the Bee Network app. The new features include journey planning and live bus tracking.
- 6.2. Bus Tracking supports people when waiting for the bus by showing the location of that service on a map using the GPS tracker on the vehicle.



- 6.3. On average 20,000 people are using the app every day to track their bus and over 6 million buses have been tracked so far.
- 6.4. Improvements have also been made to our real time stops and departures information to make the predicted arrival time of buses more accurate. This, alongside bus tracking, is helping customers with better live travel information.
- 6.5. Journey Planning has also been added supporting new and existing customers wanting to check how to get to a destination using public transport or active travel. This covers bus, tram, train and bike hire alongside park and rides and active travel. Over 1.2m journeys have been planned since launch.
- 6.6. Supporting Greater Manchester's leisure economy and major events is a key focus. A bespoke bus shuttle service for Manchester City FC games went live in February, with usage above expectations, and was well received by match going fans. Discussions are taking place to continue the shuttle service into the 2024/25

season, and several other local clubs wish to explore the potential of providing match day travel for their fans as well.

- 6.7. In addition, Metrolink carried 126,00 people on the day of the Manchester Marathon and Manchester City Parade and shuttle buses and Metrolink supported Parklife festival in June, with event tickets sold on the Bee Network app for the first time to make it simpler for customers. Planning for additional events taking place over the busy summer months is at advanced stages.
- 6.8. There have been some price rises by commercial operators, but TfGM have held the fares across bus and Metrolink.
- 6.9. Stockport's new, state-of-the-art, transport interchange and rooftop park opened to the public in mid-March. The new facility is the first phase of the transformational regeneration of Stockport Town Centre West. The interchange features 18 bus stands allowing up to 164 departures an hour, residential apartments, a two-acre park, recently named as Viaduct Park, a spiral active travel ramp and new walking and cycling links to the railway station and the town centre.

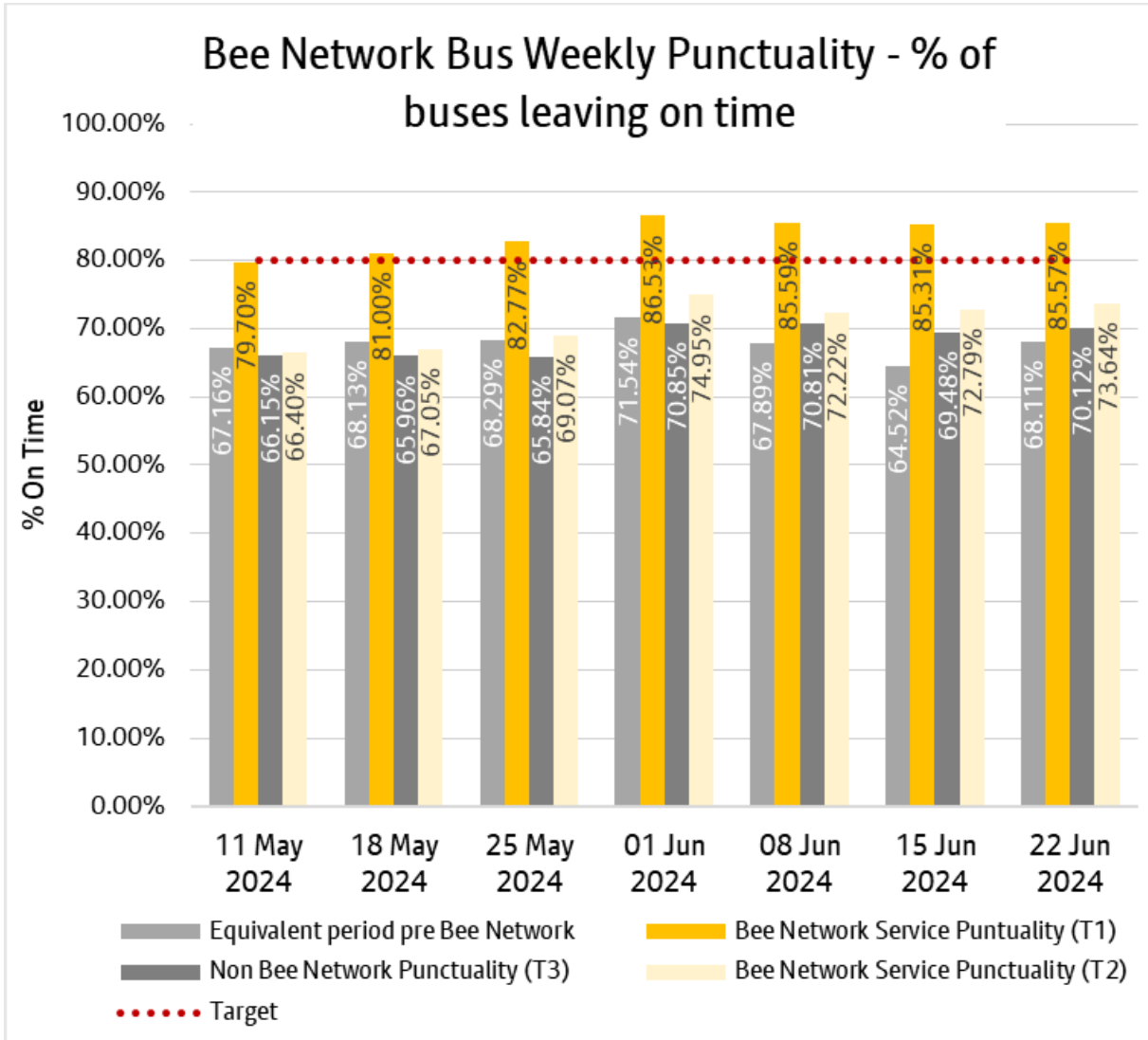
## **7. Continuing to Deliver**

- 7.1. Looking ahead there are a multitude of other schemes and initiatives planned for delivery in the coming months. Highlights include:
  - Development of a refreshed 2040 Transport Strategy – GM's statutory local transport plan;
  - Publication of a draft Rapid Transit Strategy setting out the future of Metrolink and rapid transit in the city region;
  - A roadmap to integrate local rail services into the Bee Network by 2028;
  - Continuation of the work on the six city centre rail stations and Stockport rail station regeneration and development work.
  - Working with the rail industry and central government to deliver a new station in Cheadle as part of the Towns Fund Scheme.
  - Finalising the case for the roll out of the fares and ticket pilot on the Glossop and Stalybridge lines – delivery expected by the end of 2025.
  - Making the case for Greater Manchester's high speed rail ambitions, including the establishment of a Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board;
  - Initiatives to tackle network crime, anti-social behaviour and fare evasion;
  - Further plans for simpler and more affordable fares and ticketing;

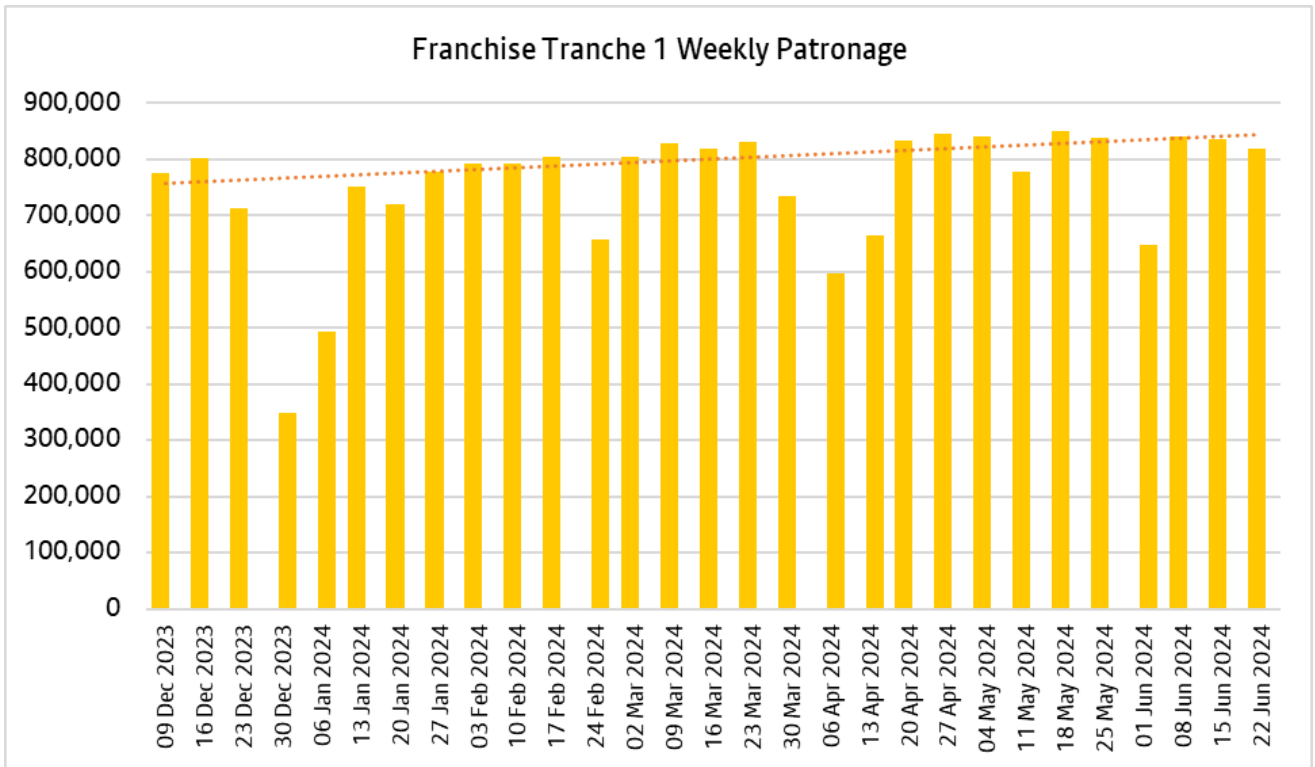
- Further Bee Network app improvements including promotion of active travel options and continuous improvements made to Bus Tracking and Journey Planning features;
- Development of a Vision Zero Action Plan to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on GM roads;
- Highways measures to tackle congestion including red routes, a Roadworks Charter and lane rental scheme;
- Infrastructure delivery, including road and junction improvements, active travel schemes and bus priority measures;
- Submission of planning applications for a new rail station at Golborne and a new southern access for Bury Interchange;
- Completion of the cycle hire recovery plan and looking to extend the cycle hire scheme further in GM;
- Further delivery of the Bee Active Network, including corridors, crossings and junction improvements to support more walking, wheeling, and cycling;
- A plan to deliver School Streets and school crossings to enable more children to walk, wheel or cycle to school; with 100 School Streets to be delivered by 2028;
- Delivery of electric vehicle charging points and a plan for a zero-emission bus fleet;
- Proposals for a 24hr bus pilot - with a view to have a network of night bus services serving all 10 GM local authority areas by 2028;
- Identifying the next steps following the 'Bikes on Metrolink' pilot;
- Network Reviews to integrate and enhance Bee Network services;
- Implementation of the final Tranche (Tranche 3) of bus franchising in Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and remaining parts of Manchester and Salford;
- Delivery of step free access at Daisy Hill and Irlam stations, and Dementia Awareness Training for all frontline staff, to support an accessible and inclusive transport network; and
- Exploration of how the MBacc (Greater Manchester Baccalaureate) – a new technical education pathway can provide a 'Bee Network pathway' for those who want to work in public transport.

# Appendix 1 – Franchised Bus Performance Data

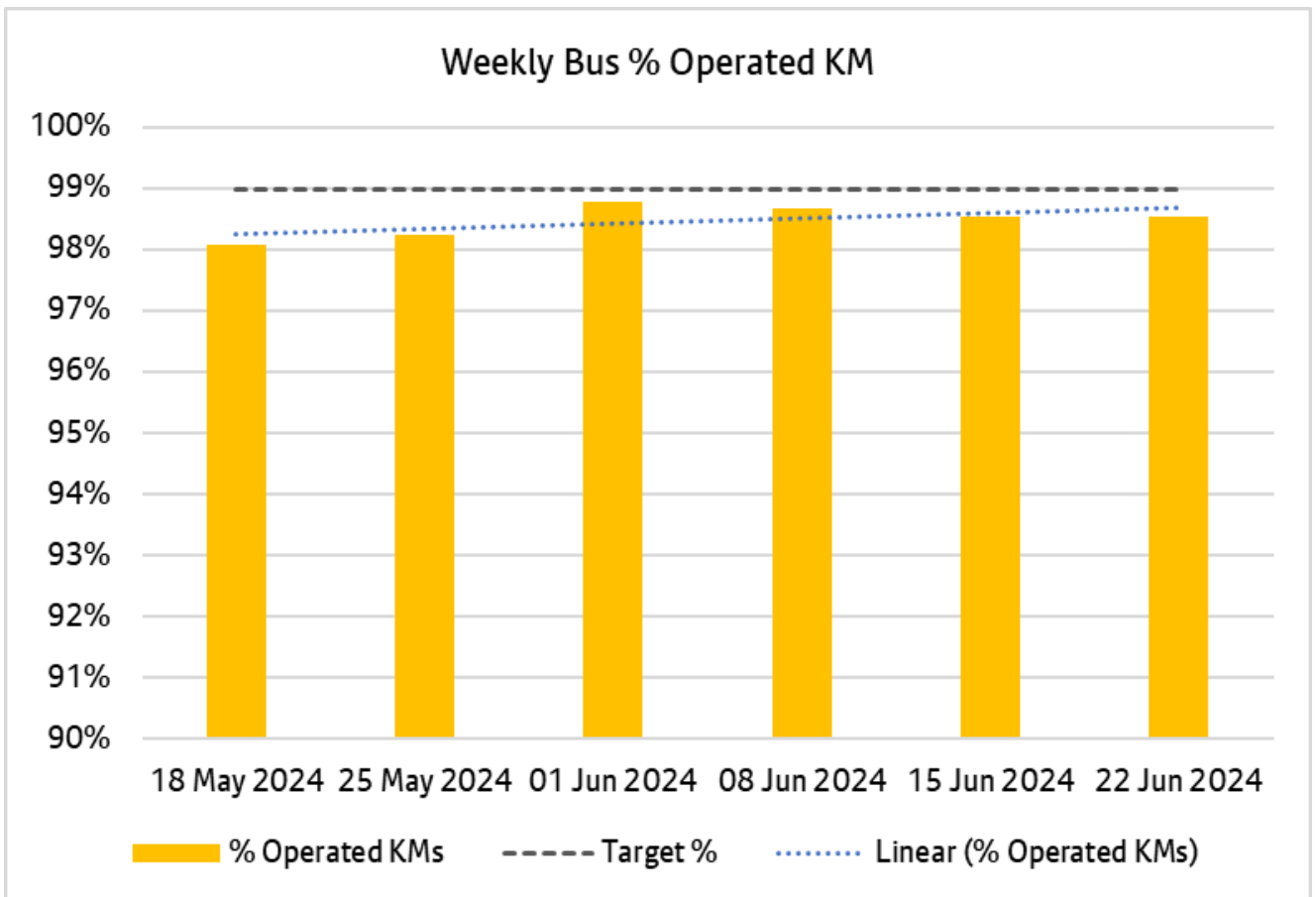
## Tranche 1 and 2 – Punctuality



## Tranche 1 – Patronage

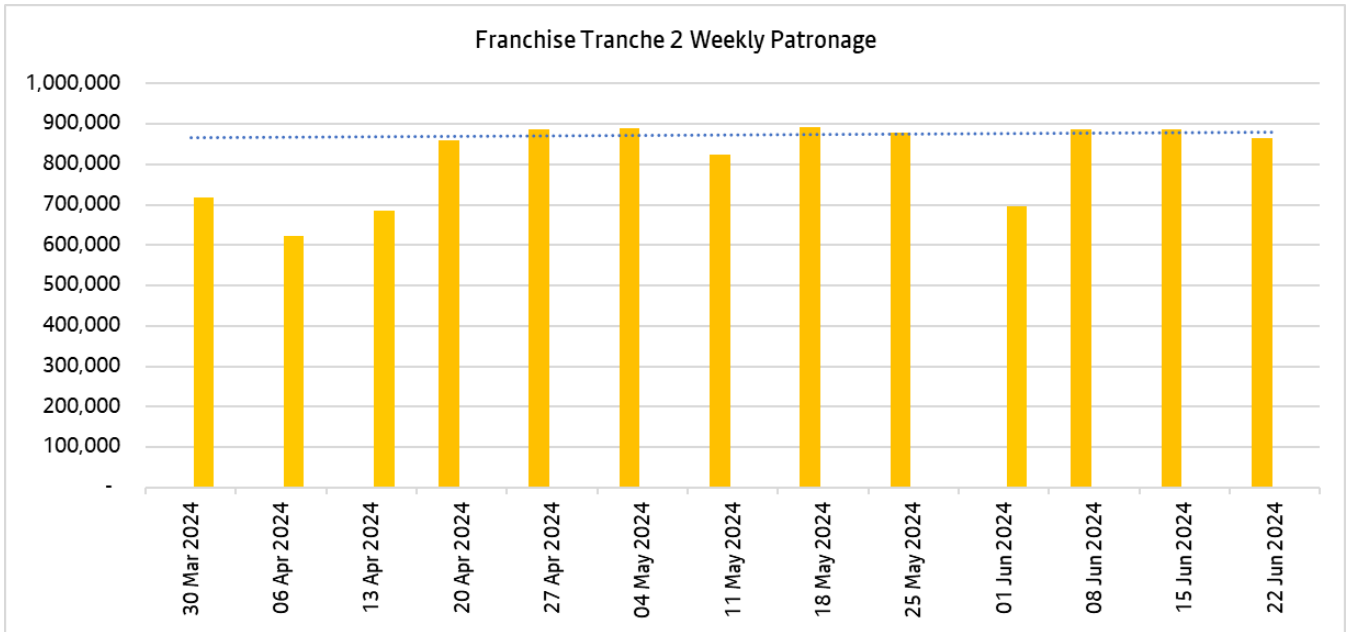


## Tranche 1 – Operated KMs\*

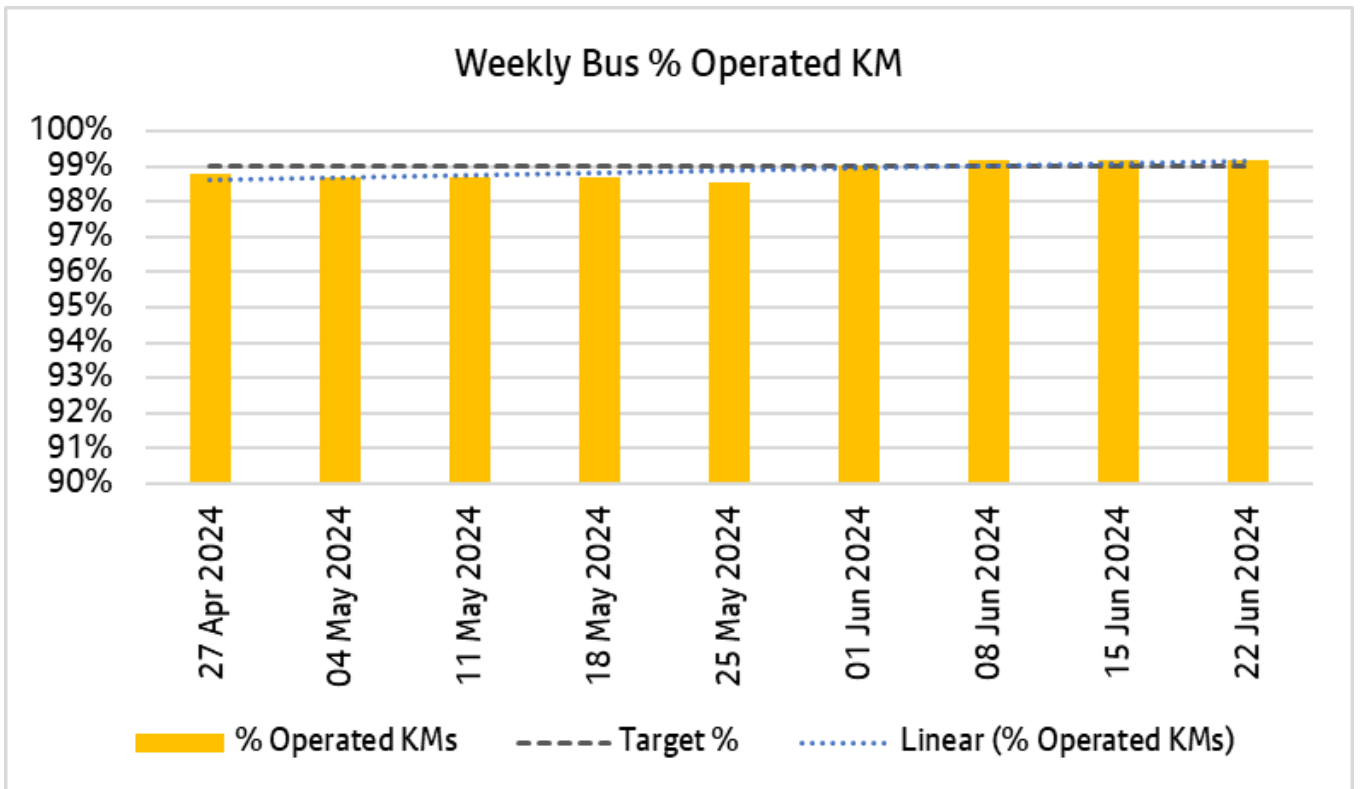


\*Operated kilometres are provided by the bus operators

## Tranche 2 - Patronage



## Tranche 2 - Operated KMs\*



\*Operated kilometres are provided by the bus operators