

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BEE NETWORK COMMITTEE  
HELD THURSDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024 AT BOARDROOM, GMCA OFFICES**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien (Chair)	Bury
Councillor Gareth Staples-Jones	Bury
Councillor Tracey Rawlins	Manchester
Councillor Josh Charters	Oldham
Councillor Howard Sykes	Oldham
Councillor Phil Burke	Rochdale
Councillor Mike McCusker	Salford
Councillor Grace Baynham	Stockport
Councillor Andrew McClaren	Tameside
Councillor Aidan Williams	Trafford
Councillor John Vickers	Wigan

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Chris Barnes	TfGM
Luke Bramwell	TfGM
Alison Chew	TfGM
Gillian Duckworth	GMCA
Martin Lax	TfGM
Richard Nickson	TfGM
Lee Teasdale	GMCA
Daniel Vaughan	TfGM
Sylvia Welsh	GMCA
Fran Wilkinson	TfGM

**BNC/12/24 Welcome & Apologies**

Apologies were received and noted from Mayor Andy Burnham, Cllr Hamid Khurram (Bolton), Cllr Sean Fielding (Bolton), Cllr Alan Quinn (Bury, substituted by Cllr Gareth Staples-Jones), Mayor Paul Dennett (Salford, substituted by Cllr Mike McCusker), Cllr Laura Boyle (Tameside, substituted by Cllr Andrew McLaren), Cllr Paul Prescott (Wigan, substituted by Cllr John Vickers) and Steve Warrener (TfGM).

**BNC/13/24 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

## **BNC/14/24 Chairs Announcements & Urgent Business**

The Chair opened by formally welcoming the four Mayoral appointees to the Panel for 2024/25.

An update was provided on the welcome news that industrial action on the Metrolink network had been averted following the acceptance by staff of a three-year pay deal with KAM which has provided all employees with a substantial pay increase, protection against inflationary increases and addressing other historical pay progression concerns. Thanks were expressed to all who had been involved in the successful negotiation process.

An update was provided on the work taking place to fully restore the Oldham-Rochdale Metrolink service following unsafe land movement near Derker. Detailed ground investigations and temporary repair works were underway. To complete the works a small section of track would need to be moved back into its original position with a number of overhead poles repaired. This was a complex process and would take some time to complete. The current estimate was 5 weeks, though if it could be accelerated it of course would be.

Members expressed concern that in some cases elected members were not receiving regular updates on the progress of the restoration of the line given the importance of this to ward residents in Oldham and Rochdale. Officers noted the issue and would take lessons away about communications to all relevant councillors.

Announcements had been received via the King's Speech that a number of potentially large-scale changes to transport would be progressed via bills in parliament. These included the Better Buses Bill; the Passenger Railway Services Bill; the Railways Bill; and the High-Speed Rail Bill (directly relating to the Crewe to Manchester leg). Arrangements would be made for briefings on these as and when relevant.

The re-appointment of the GM Transport Commissioners Vernon Everitt and Dame Sarah Storey at the recent GMCA meeting was welcomed by the Committee. The Committee also sent its best wishes to Dame Sarah Storey ahead of her competing in the forthcoming Paralympic Games in Paris.

Members expressed concern that Northern Rail had gone straight to the press with a story about school children committing fare evasion, naming specific schools without first having informed the relevant schools or councils. The Chair asked that correspondence around this issue be shared with him.

## **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the following Mayoral appointees be welcomed to the Committee:  
Cllr David Meller (Labour, Stockport)  
Cllr Howard Sykes (Liberal Democrats, Oldham)  
Cllr Martyn Cox (Conservatives, Bolton)  
Cllr Luis McBriar (Conservatives, Bury)
2. That the update on the acceptance by Metrolink staff of a three-year pay deal with KAM be received.
3. That the update on the works taking place to restore a full service to the Oldham-Rochdale Metrolink line following land movement near Derker be received.
4. That the update on the four transport bills arising from the King's Speech be received.
5. That it be noted that Vernon Everitt and Dame Sarah Storey have both been reappointed as GM Transport and GM Active Travel commissioners respectively.
6. That the Committee sends its best wishes to Dame Sarah Storey as she prepares to represent Team GM in her 9<sup>th</sup> Paralympic Games.
7. That it be ensured that ward councillors be kept regularly updated on significant ongoing transport issues that fall within their wards.
8. That Cllr Baynham provide Cllr O'Brien with information regarding Northern Rail 'naming and shaming' schools with pupils suspected of fare evasion.

Councillor Sykes sought clarity on the terms of office of Mayoral appointment and was advised that the .2023/24 Mayoral appointments to the Bee Network Committee were in place up to the GMCA Annual Meeting, which took place on 14 June 2024.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

1. That BNC/04/24 be amended to show that Cllr Josh Charters is a member of the Labour & Co-operative Party
2. That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of 27 June 2024 be agreed as true and correct record.
3. That information on the appointment timeline for Mayoral appointments be sent to Cllr Sykes.

#### **BNC/16/24 Delivering the Bee Network**

Danny Vaughan (Chief Network Officer, TfGM) presented a report updating the Committee on progress made in implementing the Bee Network. Points highlighted included:

- Positive news on the performance of the bus tranche one franchise in relation to the previous non-franchised performance was noted. This included patronage growth of almost 5% year on year.
- There had been some issues with tranche two performance due to the presence of roadworks on some key Oldham routes. However, even these had shown some of the advantages of franchising with increased joined up working allowing for better management of these issues.
- Close working was taking place with Stagecoach and Metroline to ensure that the commencement of tranche three on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2025 ran as smoothly as possible.
- Metrolink had seen its busiest May ever in its entire history.
- There had been successes seen on Metrolink in terms of increasing ticket checks to combat fare evasion. The public had responded well to this, welcoming the extra sense of safety.

- There would be some further disruption over the summer with further necessary works on Metrolink in the city centre. However, it would always be ensured that all lines could still directly access the city centre.
- Improvements had been made to the Bee Network App for tranche 2 following feedback from tranche 1. The App was proving successful with over half a million downloads to date.

## **Comments and Questions**

- An issue was highlighted around the use of folding bikes on buses, with luggage racks being too small for these. It was advised that this was an issue officers were aware of and that it was hoped that a consistent approach to folding bikes across all Bee Network modes could be developed.
- It was asked if it was envisaged that tranche two performance would soon match that of tranche one. It was advised that work was taking place to ensure that the performance did improve as expected, including timetable improvements where required. Performance updates would be brought to the Committee on a regular basis.
- It was asked whether out of town retail parks, particularly those that had offered free bus services were being considered within network reviews. It was advised that the Network Review process would be able to look at where improvements could be made, and if there was demand then services could be adjusted accordingly.
- Members asked if the map function on the Bee Network app was being worked on to show multiple buses at the same time. It was advised that the app was being continuously improved via feedback being provided, and this feedback would also be taken on board.
- Reference was made to the overhead lines on the Bury to Altrincham Metrolink line. Given the age of the line was further funding planned around renewal and replacement. It was advised that work was taking place to review the possibility of replacing all overhead lines on the track. Quite a substantial amount of capital funding went into Metrolink renewals, and this was one of the higher priority jobs on the list.
- Members referenced some of the early teething troubles with tranche 2, such as a lack of driver availability for some routes. It had been difficult for some

Councillors to gather communications from TfGM in this period on when these issues would be resolved. It was advised that the first few weeks of the changeover had been dynamic and fast moving, given the issues with driver availability a comms focus had been placed on getting information directly out to drivers and customers in the first instance, which had resulted in a knock on effect that elected representatives sometimes received the information later than hoped. Work would take place on improving these comms ahead of tranche 3.

- Members sought an update on the futureproofing work on lifts on the Metrolink network. As part of the capital works programme a number of lift replacements were earmarked amongst the worst performers. This would be accelerated wherever possible.

### **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the update on the delivery of the Bee Network be noted.

### **BNC/17/24 Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy**

Martin Lax (Transport Strategy Director, TfGM) & Luke Bramwell (Head of Rapid Transit Development, TfGM) presented a report asking members to note and comment on the draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy, a sub-strategy of the 2040 Transport Strategy, including how fast and frequent mass transit will support the integrated Bee Network. Points highlighted included:

- One of the key themes was around integrating the system. A lot of this was already happening as part of the Bee Network, but there were further clear commitments around the next stages.
- The Strategy also set out clear commitments around the growing of capacity necessary to ensure the future prosperity and equity of GM.
- Interim steps on the path to Bee Network Rail were included as well as the 15 priorities for a fully integrated system.

### **Comments and Questions**

- Members welcomed the tram train pathfinder in terms of the opportunities it could open up to locals in widening access to the Atom Valley development.
- Members asked if there was any further work taking place on developing orbital routes around the north of GM that averted having to travel towards the city centre. It was advised that there would be opportunities on existing links between GM conurbations to bring forward tram train services. Where existing rail links were not possible, bus links would be used.
- Members asked if there would be consideration of opportunities for local authorities to take ownership of bus services. Officers advised that if government proposals came forward around this then this would be a medium to longer term consideration.
- Members welcomed the development of the multi-modal ticket system and how much this would help residents.
- Members expressed continued concern about the cancellation of the Northern leg of HS2 and the generational impact that this could have on capacity. The Chair noted that discussions in parliament had recommenced on the Crewe to Manchester leg of 'Northern Powerhouse' rail and that the Committee would welcome a report on how it could best influence parliamentary discussions around Northern Powerhouse rail.

## **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy, be noted.
2. That a further report be submitted to the Committee on how it can best influence parliamentary discussions on proposals around Northern Powerhouse rail.

## **BNC/18/24 Bee Network Fares & Ticketing Products**

Fran Wilkinson (Customer & Growth Director, TfGM) presented a report that proposed a number of changes to Bee Network fares and ticketing products to increase access to public transport through affordable and simpler fares and ticketing. Points highlighted included:

- It was intended that in January 2025, to coincide with the commencement of Tranche 3, the fares for weekly and monthly products would be reduced. This would deliver a significant saving for existing customers and attract further new customers to the network.
- It was also intended that a 'hopper' ticket be introduced. This would allow the purchase of single £2 ticket that could be used across the whole bus fleet for an hour after purchase.
- March 2025 would see the launch of the multi-modal tap on/tap off scheme encompassing the full Bee Network transport offer.

### **Comments and Questions**

- Members enquired about the incentive to buy a monthly ticket when it would cost the same price as 4 weekly tickets. It was advised that a reduction was being seen in the purchases of monthly tickets and the longer-term goal was to encourage users towards the tap-off system rather than having to pay an up-front fee.
- In reference to the Hopper fare. Members noted that bus journeys which should take less than an hour to swap onto another service were often held up in traffic, which in turn could cost people for another journey through no fault of their own. It was advised that a lot of background work had taken place on the understanding of journeys, and the potential frustrations that could arise had been taken on board, therefore some tolerance would be built into the strictness of the 60-minute window. Further feedback would be taken from customer experiences after the service went live.
- A campaign around fares for carers travelling with people with additional needs was raised. Was this still on the radar and due to be submitted to the Committee? It was advised that this absolutely remained on the radar and a wide-ranging concessions review was underway and would be brought to the Committee upon its completion.
- Members highlighted that some residents had expressed complaints about some people being allowed on buses without tickets at busy times. It was advised that TfGM had received similar feedback, and work was taking place with drivers and operators on combating this.



- It was asked that support be given for care-leavers to have an extended free bus pass up from 21 to 25 years old. It was advised that this would also be included within the Concessions Review.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the changes to Bee Network fares and ticketing products, as approved by GMCA, be noted.
2. That the Concessions Review currently being worked up be submitted to the Committee once available.

#### **BNC/19/24 Transport Infrastructure Pipeline Report**

Chris Barnes (Network Director Infrastructure, TfGM) presented a report updating on the progress made in delivering a pipeline of transport infrastructure improvements to support the operation of the Bee Network. The report made a number of recommendations for members to support the continued development and delivery of the pipeline programme.

#### **Comments and Questions**

- Members expressed the need to continue lobbying of National Highways for a full study of works required to improve the M60, particularly junctions 8 to 18.
- Concerns were raised around the amount of funding provided for basic maintenance – particularly gulleys and road surfaces. Officers advised that CRSTS 2 allocations would be worked on to find the best possible mix of sustaining the network, growing the network and transforming the network – with substantive allocations for highways maintenance.
- Members welcomed the further development of the business plan for Middleton.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the current position, recent progress and key milestones on the transport infrastructure pipeline be noted.

2. That the submission of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Annual Report 2023-24 and updated Delivery Plan be approved.
3. That the drawdown of CRSTS funding and associated scheme progression be approved as follows:
  - Rochdale: Middleton Streets for All Phase 1: £0.7m;
  - Integrated Ticketing and Travel Information : Full Business Case and £7.3m;
  - Bus Franchising IS and Ticketing System Assets: £25.0m;
  - Improving Journeys - Orbital Bus Routes: Initial phased delivery of Rochdale – Oldham – Ashton (Rochdale elements): £2.1m, subject to TfGM's approval of the Outline Business Case in August 2024;
4. That the drawdown of £0.5m of GM match contribution to Network Rail Control Period (CP) 7 funding for Access for All (AfA) be approved.
5. That the drawdown of funding from the Mayor's Challenge Fund (MCF) be approved as follows:
  - Trafford Seymour Grove Phase 1: £4.99m (CRSTS funding through the MCF programme);
  - Wigan Leigh St Helens Road: £2.17m (CRSTS funding through the MCF programme);
  - Wigan Standish Western Route: £1.99m (CRSTS funding through the MCF programme);
  - Wigan Whelley Loop Line: £1.31m (CRSTS funding through the MCF programme).

#### **BNC/20/24 Bee Network Bus Service Improvements**

Alison Chew (Deputy Director of Bus, TfGM) presented a report which updated on the approach to improving Greater Manchester's bus network over the short, medium and long term as part of the delivering of the Bee Network. The report also made a number of recommendations for members to consider on the process for reviewing the network, and the proposal to pilot 24-hour bus services.

## **Comments and Questions**

- Members sought advice on the best way for authority officers to provide feedback on network reviews. It was advised that relevant officers were being contacted at each authority, and through the local bus network committees in areas where these were already in place.
- Members expressed concerns about the way in which Stockport local link services were being removed. Officers stated that it was recognised that some people did make use of the service, and the best way forward would form a key part of the Stockport service review.

## **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the updated programme of Network Reviews for the next 12 months, as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved.
2. That the pilot of 24-hour bus services, noting the proposed timescales, the enhanced TravelSafe provision; and the costs of and funding for the pilot be approved.
3. That the preparation of a refreshed Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024, reflecting the ambition set out in the GM Bus Strategy, for submission to Department for Transport be noted.
4. That the withdrawal of the Stepping Hill Local Link service be approved.
5. That the recent and forthcoming changes to commercial bus services in the non-franchised area be noted.
6. That a change to the X50 subsidised service in the non-franchised area, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved.

## **BNC/21/24 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

That, under section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on business on the grounds that this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as set out in the relevant

paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

**BNC/22/24 Bee Network Bus Service Improvements**

**RESOLVED/-**

1. That the financial implications of the proposed changes to the bus network be noted.