

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: Friday 13th December 2024

Subject: Delivering the Bee Network – Network Performance

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, Portfolio Lead for Transport
and Caroline Simpson, Group Chief Executive, GMCA

Purpose of Report

To provide GMCA with an overview of the performance of Greater Manchester's transport network for the period March 2024 – November 2024, and to update on preparations for implementation the final tranche of bus franchising.

Recommendations:

GMCA is requested to note and comment on the performance of Greater Manchester's Transport Network and preparation for completion of bus franchising.

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: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

Tracking/ Process

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

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

Bee Network Committee

Report will be considered by Bee Network Committee on Thursday 12th December.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the performance of the transport network for the period March 2024 – November 2024.
- 1.2. It summarises some of the key challenges and incidents which have impacted on network performance over the last quarter and provides metrics for reliability, patronage, safety, and security.
- 1.3. It highlights some of the interventions being implemented to improve network performance, and outlines major engineering works due to take place on the Metrolink network during 2025 as part of the Metrolink Renewals and Enhancements Programme.
- 1.4. The report also gives a short update on preparation for the third and final tranche of bus franchising.

The Bee Network – one year on

- 1.5. September marked the one-year anniversary of the Bee Network. With buses back under local control, passengers are getting the benefit of cheaper, cleaner more reliable services. Since the launch there have been more than 75 million passenger journeys on Bee Network bus services delivering year on year growth of 5% on the franchised network.
- 1.6. Greater control has enabled us to make improvements to services. From September a pilot of 24-hour Bee Network services commenced. The services on the V1 and 36 routes connecting Manchester with Leigh and Bolton via Salford run at least every hour both ways, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Night buses are proving popular with those working in or enjoying Greater Manchester's night-time economy with around 7,000 people getting onboard in the first month alone.
- 1.7. The development of the Bee Network has also seen revised timetables, more frequent services, and the launch of the first new bus route introduced by the Bee Network during October. The new 615 route connects the town and surrounding areas with Middlebrook retail park. The service has been a welcome addition to the network in the run up to Christmas. The first phase of performance improvements in the Tranche 2 area saw the introduction of additional vehicles on the 59, 83, 84 services as well as the Manchester city centre free bus.

- 1.8. Improvements to the Bee Network App have seen better real time information such as live tracking of buses and improved information during disruption. Further enhancements are planned to incorporate travel alerts into the app and journey planner. Since launch, the Bee Network App has been downloaded more than 674k times.
- 1.9. Work continues to improve services and customer experience with feedback from passengers used to help direct improvements in the on-bus experience and the reliability of the service.

Safety

- 1.10. Two significant safety incidents affecting the Bee Network received national media coverage during October and November.
- 1.11. A head-on collision between a tram and bus on Mosley Street on Friday 18 October left the driver seriously injured and three passengers with minor injuries. The incident led to disruption to services with the closure of Piccadilly Gardens Bus Station for 4 hours. A TfGM led investigation into the incident is ongoing.
- 1.12. In a second incident on Saturday 09 November two Bee Network buses collided on the A664 Rochdale Road close to the regional centre. The incident left 13 people needing hospital treatment, three with serious injuries. The A664 Rochdale Road was closed for 3 hours with bus services and traffic diverted. TfGM are working with GMP and the operator to understand the cause of the incident.
- 1.13. Accidents like those above are unacceptable on our transport network. There is nothing more important than the safety of both passengers and staff who keep the city-region moving.
- 1.14. TfGM is working with all Bee Network operators, including bus operators and representatives from Metrolink and the rail industry, as well as with Greater Manchester Police, highways experts and the trades unions, with a view to improving safety performance and setting a new gold standard for safety across all forms of public transport and active travel. A joint Bee Network Safety Plan is being developed, aligned to the Vision Zero strategy and action plan.

Delivering for events

- 1.15. Passenger numbers on Manchester City Matchday Bus Services, delivered in partnership with Manchester City Football Club, continue to grow with the first games of the season seeing more than 600 people using a Matchday Bus Service – 13% higher than last year’s busiest match. The network and ticketing have been adapted for the 2024-25 season. Buses now operate on 15 routes (compared to 17 last season), covering 64 stops and pricing has been tailored to make it even more appealing to families. Children under the age of five can now travel for free, and those under the age of 16 will have a discount of 50%.
- 1.16. GM will host major events at venues in and around the regional centre during a programme which intensifies in the run up to the New Year. The programme has already seen the MTV music awards at Co-op Live delivered and the UK’s biggest Christmas Market commence on 08 November. These events pose a challenge to the transport network and TfGM has developed strong partnerships with event organisers to make sure that these occasions run as seamlessly as possible.
- 1.17. The Christmas period is also seeing an increase in journeys and road traffic congestion. TfGM is providing additional services and enhanced operational tactics to manage the impact of congestion. Additionally, TfGM has issued a range of customer messages and marketing campaigns to encourage people to use public transport and behave safely when travelling.

Growing Patronage and Revenue

- 1.18. October saw the highest passenger numbers on the bus network since the launch of the Bee Network (and post-pandemic). Patronage during October 2024 was 7% up on October 2023. Total bus patronage for the 12 months ending October 2024 is up 5% year on year. Bus revenue has outperformed the budget target in every month of the year so far. Year-to-date there is a positive variance against budget of 9% mitigating wider financial pressures across transport operations.
- 1.19. October saw record passenger numbers on the Metrolink network with 4.12 million journeys. Year on year Metrolink journeys are 15% up (the 12 months ending October 2024 compared to the 12 months ending October 2023).
- 1.20. Metrolink fare evasion has fallen by more than third following the introduction of a plan to tackle fare evasion 12 months ago. Measures delivered included increasing the penalty fare from £100 to £120, recruiting an additional 50 customer service

representatives (CSRs) to bring the total number of frontline staff to 169 across the network and the roll out of new inspection devices. More than 5 million ticket inspections are now undertaken each year. This new approach is on target to generate an extra £2 million in net revenue per year.

- 1.21. TESO deployments during October delivered a 50% increase in ticket inspections on Bee Network buses. TSEO Bus Revenue Inspection activity during October included: 7,294 Buses boarded, 113,266 passenger tickets checked, and 48 passes or ticket withdrawn. TSEOs also supported User Acceptance Testing of the new penalty fare app. The software has now received technical acceptance. Officers will receive training to issue Penalty Fare Notices on bus throughout November and December.

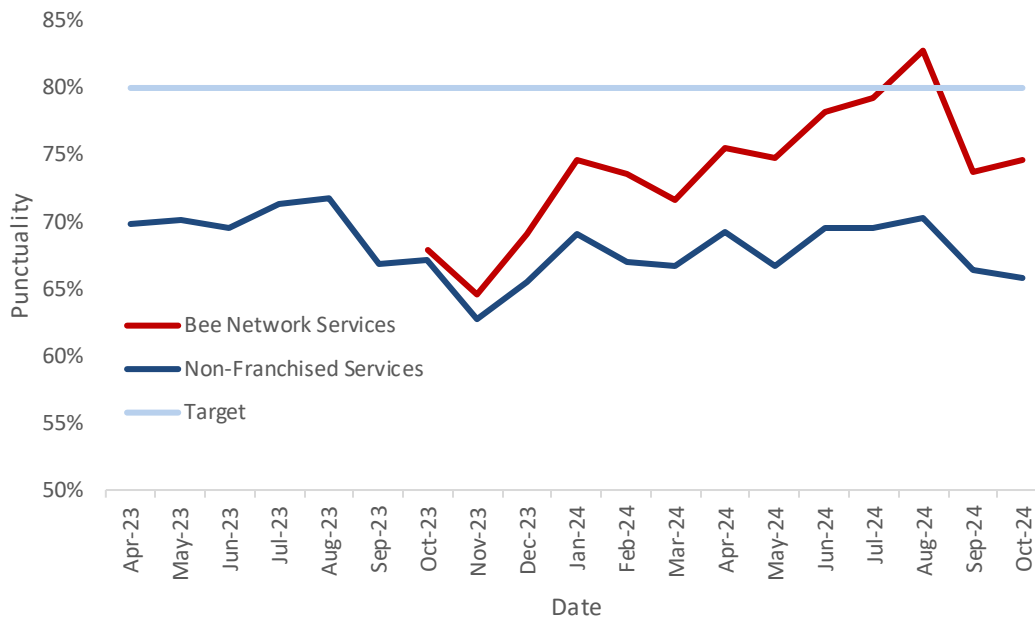
2. Reliability

Bus

- 2.1. Punctuality for the franchised network continues to track above both the non-franchised network.
- 2.2. A range of initiatives to improve the performance of franchised bus services are being delivered including service improvement measures, priority for late running buses at traffic signals and tackling the impact of roadworks through closer working relationships with districts and roadwork promoters.
- 2.3. A package of service improvement measures, including new timetables across some services in tranches 1 and 2, and additional buses on the Manchester city centre free bus and the 59, 83, 84 services, were introduced on 27 October and 17 November 2024. New timetables on some routes operated by First Manchester are showing significant improvements in punctuality with both start point and mid-point punctuality up 5% on figures under the old timetables.
- 2.4. The overall age and standard of the fleet continues to improve with 10 new Zero Emission Buses received at Oldham depot. Additionally, 140 new buses have also started to arrive ahead of the launch of Tranche 3 in January and plans have been approved to invest £71 million to further expand and bolster the fleet, delivering a step change in the experience for passengers with new, cleaner, and accessible buses.

- 2.5. Delivering on our commitment to transparency and accountability, weekly reporting of bus performance continues to be published. Performance figures are posted on X (formerly Twitter) and linked to a more detailed report on the TfGM website.

Chart 1: Bus Punctuality



Metrolink

- 2.6. Autumn has been a challenging period for Metrolink performance with punctuality and reliability affected by significant stand-alone events including, the derailment at Cornbrook and trees on overhead lines (across multiple lines) due to adverse weather.
- 2.7. Punctuality was also affected by late running on the Rochdale line due to speed restrictions because of the Derker land slip which had caused a partial closure of the Oldham and Rochdale Line during the summer. Away from these one-off incidents performance remains good and has returned to a positive trend following a timetable change in November.
- 2.8. The final disruptive phase of the 2024 Metrolink renewals programme has been delivered. The programme has seen £21.4 million invested to improve the Metrolink network over the year and is part of a planned £147 million package to maintain and upgrade the network up to 2027. These works will deliver improvements in punctuality, reliability, and safety.

Chart 2: Metrolink Reliability

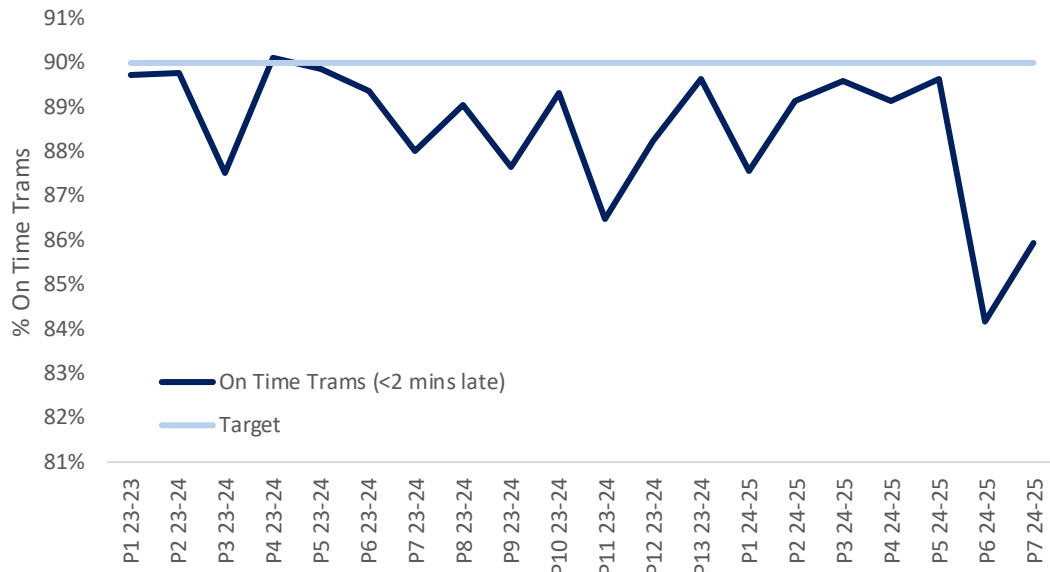
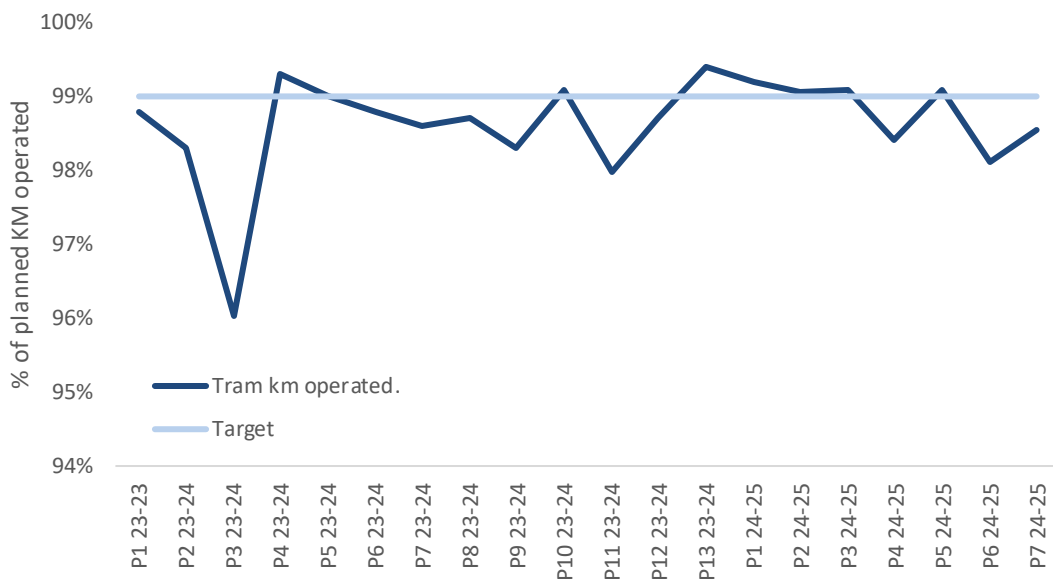


Chart 3: Metrolink Planned Operated Mileage



- 2.9. An enhanced approach to tackling fare evasion was launched 12 months ago with an increase in the fine for travelling without a ticket, more staff checking tickets and new inspection devices. Since these measures were introduced, fare evasion has fallen by more than a third.
- 2.10. Further analysis is required to link cause and effect. However, revenue inspection activity may be disrupting and deterring those who looking cause trouble on the network. Over the same period the number of reported incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) on the Metrolink network has also fallen. During the 12

months to October 2024 reported incidents of crime and ASB were 31% down on the equivalent period to October 2023.

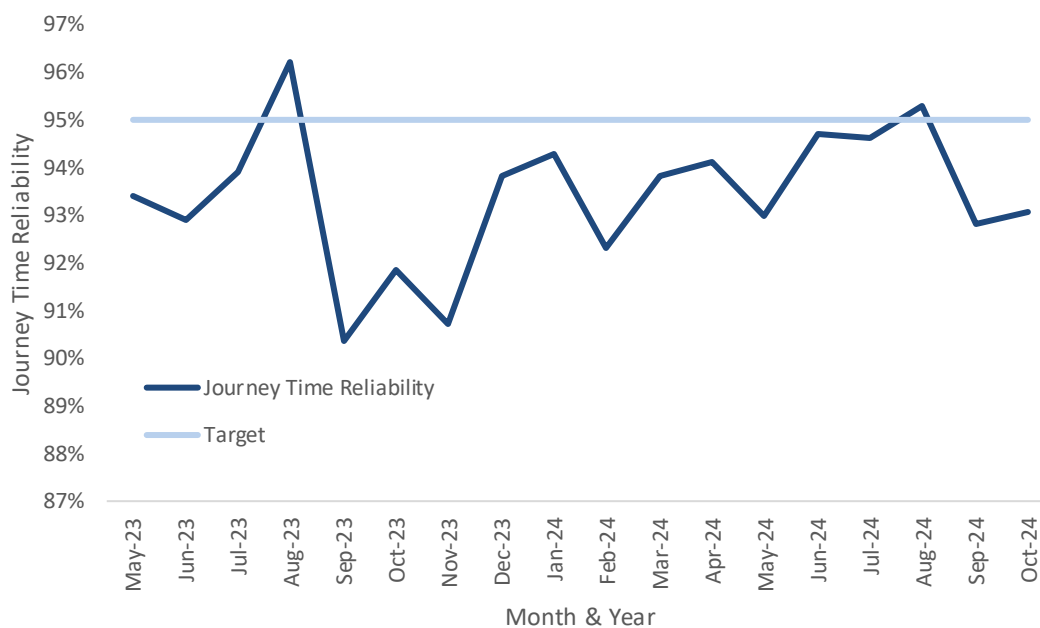
Highways

- 2.11. The traffic signal asset continues to be used as a key tool for managing journeys across all modes. Including priority across the Metrolink network and for late running buses, 1 in 4 junctions (around half of the locations feasible) are now providing priority for public transport.
- 2.12. Delivery of bus priority has been focussed on routes in Tranche 1 and 2. Priority measures to support Tranche 3 services will be identified once Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) data from Bee Network buses becomes available (in January 2025).
- 2.13. Additionally, to compliment the ongoing upgrade of junctions to improve active travel facilities which has seen new or enhanced pedestrian facilities commissioned in districts across GM a review of pedestrian facilities has seen a reduction in pedestrian wait times at 189 crossings across GM this year so far.
- 2.14. More than £7 million in funding has been approved for improvements to junctions near new schools and separated pedestrian and cycle lanes. The schemes in Radcliffe and Salford will deliver improvements in safety, better active travel facilities and easier access to the public transport network.
- 2.15. Traffic engineers continue to work within TfGM's Operational Control Centre (OCC) to monitor the network, making changes to the signal timings when necessary. In addition, there are a growing number of signal strategies for known or recurrent issues. These signal strategies can be deployed instantly by the OCC 24/7.
- 2.16. Managing seasonal increases in congestion and pedestrian activity has been a major focus. During December, weekend traffic volumes in the Regional Centre are typically 12% above average, equivalent to an addition 80,000 journeys to, from or through the Regional Centre.
- 2.17. A range of measures are in place to help manage the network through the seasonal congestion and the busy events schedule including roadwork embargo, interventions by the OCC and amended signal timings as well as co-ordination with highways authorities targeting enforcement activity (by both Police and Local Authorities) and temporary traffic regulation orders.

2.18. The routes in and around the regional centre continue to see significant schemes delivering improved facilities for cycling and walking. The extension of the Deansgate Active Travel scheme is now on street with a scheme on Chapel Street in Salford programmed for the new year. The effects of these schemes on highway capacity will be monitored.

2.19. TfGM continues to work with Google on an artificial intelligence (AI) project to ensure signal timings are optimised to reduce stop-start traffic and associated vehicle emissions. This initiative has delivered local benefits where signal timings were adjusted. Additionally, having the performance and operation of GM's signal asset reviewed by an independent third party provides assurance that the signal network is working well with the development of the asset and day to day operation delivering benefits.

Chart 4: Highway Journey Time Reliability



2.20. Works to enhance TfGM's Operational Control Centre have been completed. The new space enables bus franchise operators, TravelSafe, GM Police as well as Customer Communications and Control Centre colleagues from TfGM to be co-located, delivering a coordinated approach to managing the Bee Network.

Rail

2.21. In September members of the ASLEF Union (train drivers) accepted a pay deal that brought an end to more than two years of strike action on the rail network. The offer

included a 5% backdated pay rise for 2022-23, a 4.75% rise for 2023-24, and a 4.5% increase for 2024-25.

- 2.22. Crew availability at Northern continues to be a challenge for service delivery. Northern issued a “Do No Travel” notice on multiple GM routes on consecutive Sundays. Northern are not operating up to half of planned services, with Sundays being the most affected day. A rest day working agreement for drivers at Northern has been confirmed for 3 years. This will help reduce cancellations.
- 2.23. The latest period saw operational performance steady on public performance measure (PPM) but declines on Right Time (RT) at final destination for all six GM train operating companies (TOCs). Only Northern and TfW managed to achieve 1 in 2 trains arriving on time. The worst performing operator on the RT metric continues to be Avanti West Coast, where only one in around seven trains arrived at its final destination on time on the Manchester to Euston route.
- 2.24. The latest ORR quarterly figures (April – June 2024) show Avanti was the worst operator across Great Britain (GB) in terms of ‘on time trains’, achieving just 41.2% in the latest quarter (this was 4.9% down on the previous quarter), with the latest GB average at 70.1%.
- 2.25. The ORR performance data (April – June 2024) shows a continuing increase in the total number of trains operated in GB. The latest data shows there were 5% more planned trains compared to the same quarter in 2023. Nationally, there have been declines in both punctuality and reliability, with more trains operating late and increases in cancellations compared to the previous year.

Chart 5: Public Performance Measure (PPM)

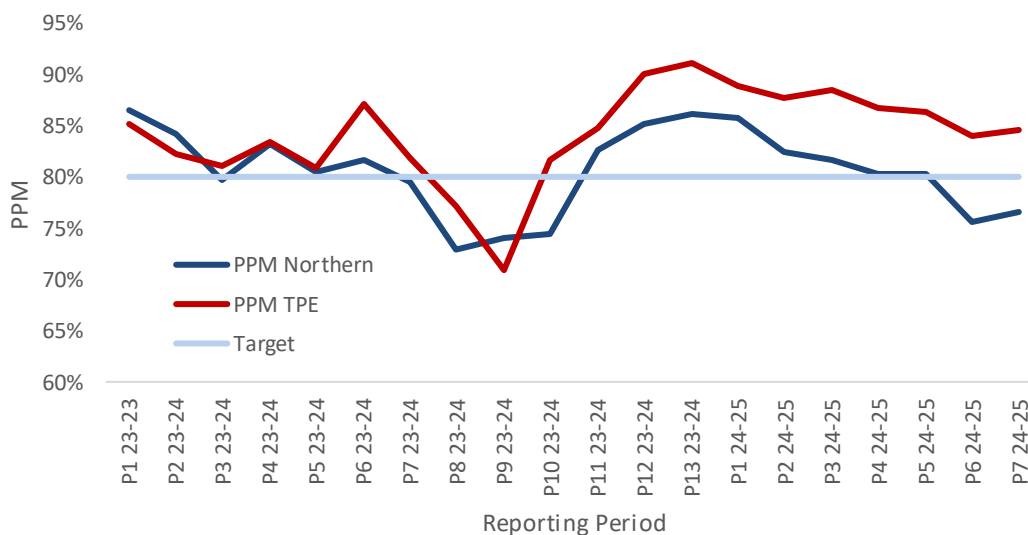
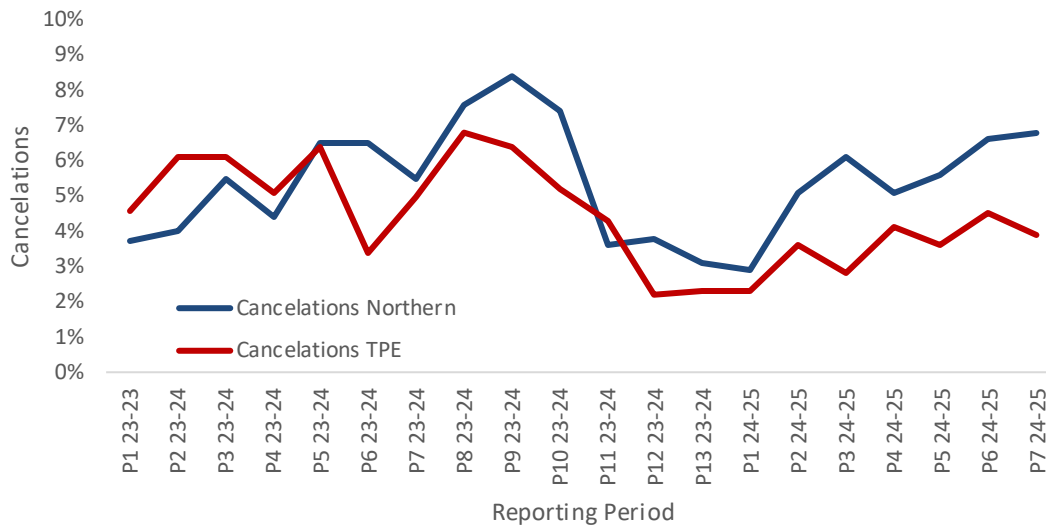


Chart 6: Percentage Cancellations



3. Safety and Security

TravelSafe

- 3.1. During the 12 Months to October 2024, there has been an increase in the number of reported incidents of crime and ASB to the TravelSafe Partnership (TSP). In part, this is believed to be a result of the increase in the number of TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers (TSEOs) deployed across the Bee Network making it easier for passengers to report incidents
- 3.2. Key themes remain youth related incidents and incidents associated with homelessness. Together these account for more than half of all reported incidents of crime and ASB on the public transport network. Incidents related to missiles being thrown at vehicles continues to be a concern.
- 3.3. Between March and November, TravelSafe enforcement activity saw 73 exclusion notices (removing the implied permission of entry to our sites) issued to prolific offenders, as well as 366 tickets and travel passes removed.
- 3.4. 98 TSP operations have taken place across the period and Operation AVRO¹ (Transport) took place on the 19 July, scheduled to coincide with the end of the school term. The results of this operation are detailed in the infographic overleaf.

¹ Operation AVRO is a Greater Manchester Police, force-wide monthly day of action which runs in a different district each month to target criminality.



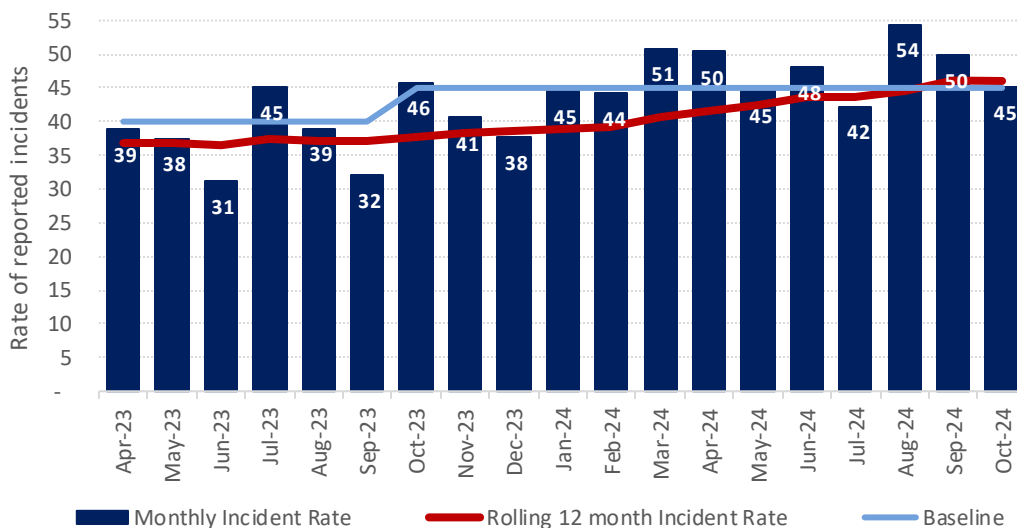
- 3.5. The TravelSafe education and engagement programme delivered sessions to 15,000 young people between March - November. This included several sessions using virtual reality headsets which have been well received by both staff and pupils as well as exploring new joint working opportunities in partnership with GMFRS at the Fire Safety Centre in Bury.
- 3.6. TravelSafe commissioned deployments by Foundation 92 detached youth workers have continued to take place across the network, targeting youth ASB hotspot areas and ensuring referrals back into local authorities. Over 3,400 young people have been engaged by this outreach capability across the period.
- 3.7. September marked twelve months of having TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers (TSEOs) deployed across the Bee Network. A summary of outcomes is shown below.



- 3.8. To support the launch of the night bus pilot, an additional team of TSEOs were formed to provide overnight safety and security provision. These officers work between 2200-0800 hrs to support staff and customers. TSEOs maintain a visible presence at key route locations and assist with service loadings, as necessary.

- 3.9. To further enhance safety on night bus services, the TSP has partnered with Strut Safe, a UK charity that offers a free (national) phone service for anyone wishing ‘companionship’ when travelling alone. The service is advertised across all night bus services alongside LiveChat reporting.
- 3.10. Recruitment of additional TSEOs ahead of the start of the third and final tranche of bus franchising is well underway and a new hub will be opened at Stockport Interchange.
- 3.11. TSP has launched two campaigns within the period:
- A summer ASB campaign ‘don’t get ghosted’ ran from 12 August to 15 September. This performed well with feedback that young people were playing back the campaign messages to youth teams.
 - ‘Help the scene. Intervene’ supporting safety of women and girls, is currently live. This campaign aims to promote safe, active bystander intervention and was co-designed with the support of the GMCA Gender Based Violence Lived Experience Panel.

Chart 7: TravelSafe rate of reported incidents of Crime and ASB per million passenger journeys.



- 3.12. The baseline was adjusted from September 2023 to reflected increase in reporting due to the deployment of TSEOs.

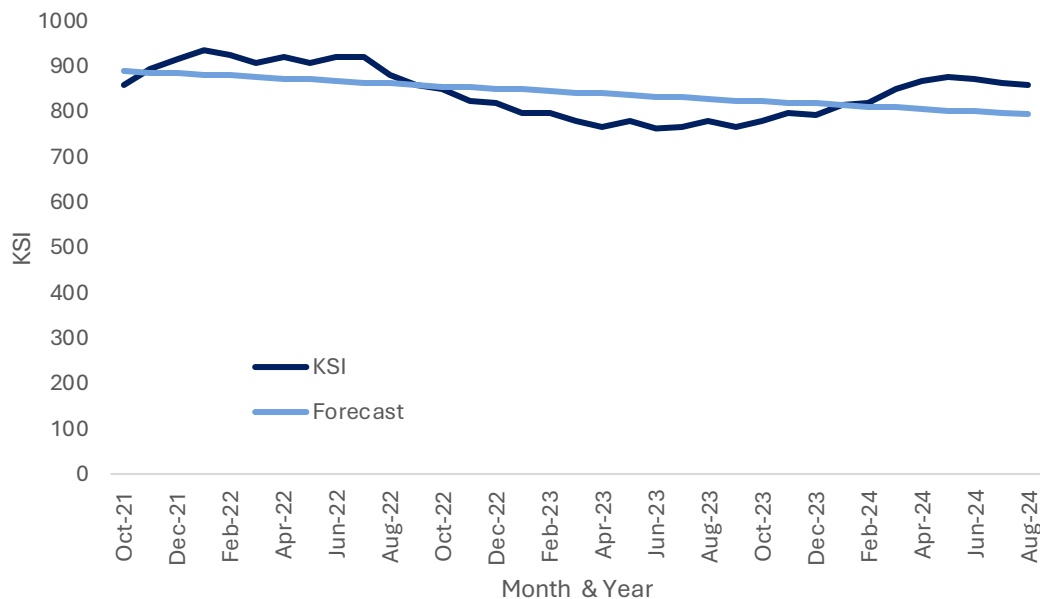
Highways

- 3.13. The Vision Zero Strategy and Action Plan was launched in November following approval by GMCA. Ahead of launch, Vision Zero showcase activity took place

during road safety week (week commencing 18 Nov). Including, AI camera trials, the relaunch of GMP’s Operation Snap, education-based activities, and the announcement of the Vision Zero Innovation Fund.

- 3.14. Latest data shows the 12-month (to Apr 2024) there were 857 people killed or seriously injured on GM roads. This is a 0.8% decrease in KSIs from the average of the 36-month period ending April 2023 (856.7) but is above the DfT forecast of 795.

Chart 8: Killed and Seriously Injured Casualties (KSI) (Rolling 12 Months)



- 3.15. The programme of road safety campaigns continues with a pedestrian focussed campaign targeting drivers during the winter months launched in October and a Don’t Drink/Drug Drive campaign in development with partners (particularly GMP) ahead of festive period.
- 3.16. Safety camera upgrades continues with average speed cameras now being delivered. Sites which have previously been vandalised are scheduled for replacement during November. The sites, and others in the vicinity are being fitted with an anti-vandal cover.

Communications

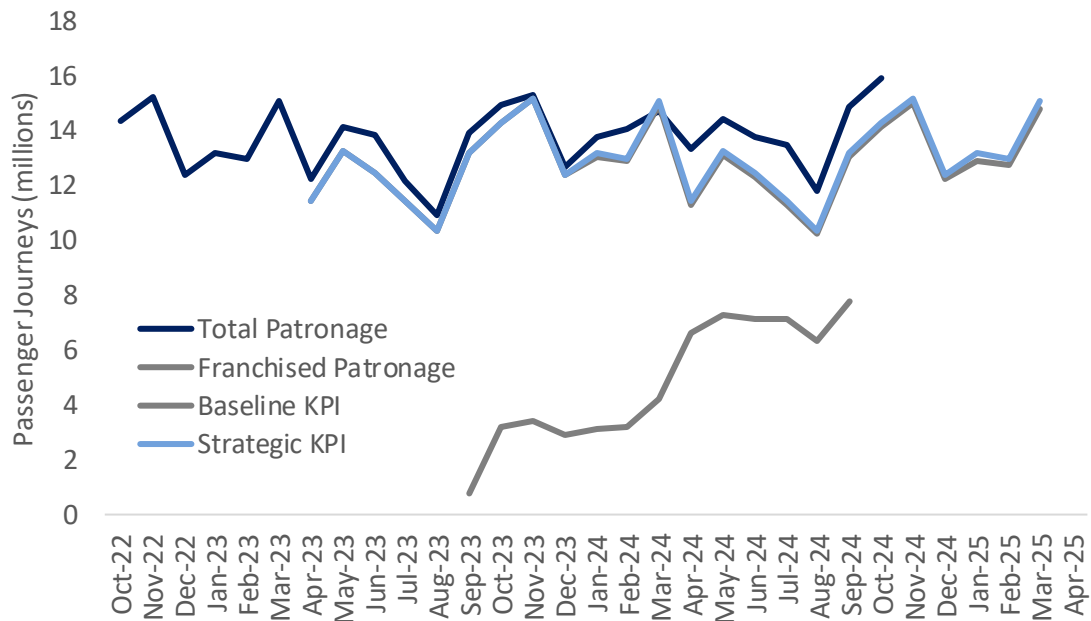
- 3.17. Travel demand management (TDM) plays an important role in managing the network and delivering customer information during periods of exceptional demand and/or disruption. In addition to ongoing activity supporting events and major works programmes, a TDM plan is being delivered throughout the Christmas market period. The plan is designed to both help manage the impact of increased trip numbers and congestion as well as maximise revenue opportunities.

4. Passenger Journeys and Revenue

Bus

- 4.1. Patronage on the bus network continues to grow. Passenger journeys are 5% up year on year and October 2024 saw patronage at its highest level since the introduction of the Bee Network (and post pandemic).

Chart 9: Bus passenger journeys (millions)



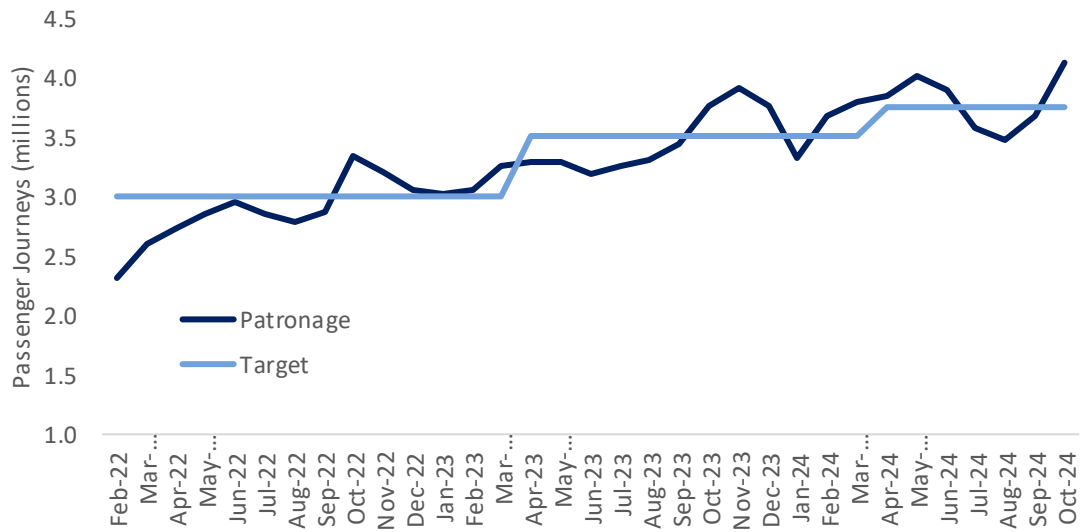
- 4.2. The introduction of the first new service under franchising (the 615) on 27 October 2024, has seen a very positive start in terms of patronage, as has the increased frequency on the 132 service. There has been on average of 752 passengers per week on the service 615 and a 39% increase in patronage on the service 132 ½ hourly service when compared with the hourly service, in its first 2 weeks.

Metrolink

- 4.3. A new record for Metrolink passenger journeys was set in October with patronage up 15% year on year (rolling 12 month). Year to date Metrolink revenue is showing year on year growth of 11%. However, this is 1.3% down on the challenge target set for the financial year.
- 4.4. Both patronage and revenue were affected by a number of challenges during the summer months. Closures due to engineering works, civil disorder and subsequent changes in travel behaviour and the unplanned closure between Oldham Mumps and Rochdale due to a landslip all had an effect.

- 4.5. Strong patronage numbers during Q3 (October to December) are critical to Metrolink achieving the ambitious targets set at the start of the financial year.

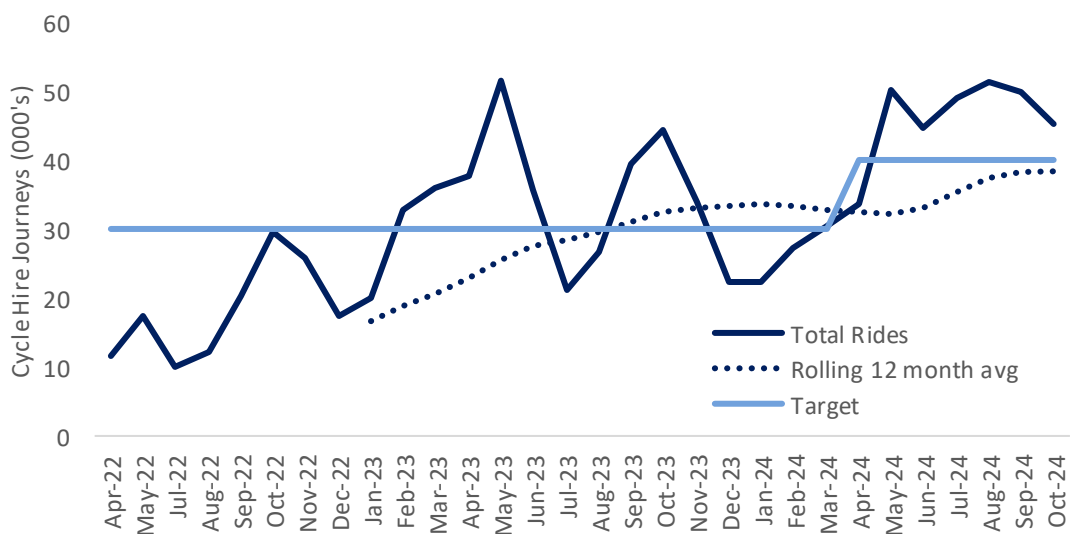
Chart 10: Metrolink passenger journeys (millions)



Cycle Hire

- 4.6. Starling Bank Bike hire scheme reached a major milestone in October passing one million rides. Not only have bike hire users clocked up one million rides, but they have also collectively pedalled 2.5million kilometres since the scheme first launched in November 2021, the equivalent of travelling around the world 62.5 times.
- 4.7. The scheme continues to be popular with usage 18% up on year on year. The scheme will receive a further boost with 300 new e-bikes added to the fleet over the coming months.

Chart 11: Cycle hire trips per month thousands



5. Bus Franchising Implementation

- 5.1. Preparations are now in the final stages to implement the third and final tranche (Tranche 3) of bus franchising on 5th of January 2025, when all of Greater Manchester's bus services will be under public control
- 5.2. Metrolink will operate services from four out of five of the large bus depots, with Stagecoach operating services from the Stockport depot. GNW and Diamond will operate all small franchises and school services.
- 5.3. Hyde Road depot will be electrified in advance of the 5th of January with Ashton depot set to be electrified in February 2025 to support the deployment of a new fleet of electric zero emissions buses (ZEBs).
- 5.4. 60 ZEBs will operate from the 5th of January, with a total of 134 ZEBs set to be deployed by the end of March 2025. Nearly 400 new buses will be operating across the Tranche 3 area by the end of March 2025.
- 5.5. 45 new TravelSafe and Enforcement Officers are being recruited for Tranche 3 to support passengers. Metrolink have recruited 100 new drivers and aim to recruit a further 100.
- 5.6. Representing half of the GM bus network, the third and final tranche of bus franchising represents the biggest challenge yet. TfGM are training employees, communicating with customers, and working with both new and incumbent operators to ensure the smoothest possible transfer of depots, vehicles, staff, and services on 5th of January, and the best possible start to franchised services across Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and parts of Manchester and Salford.