

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BEE NETWORK COMMITTEE
HELD THURSDAY, 12TH DECEMBER 2024 AT BOARDROOM, GMCA OFFICES**

PRESENT:

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien (in the Chair)	GMCA
Councillor Hamid Khurram	Bolton
Councillor Alan Quinn	Bury
Councillor Tracey Rawlins	Manchester
Councillor Mike McCusker	Salford
Councillor Grace Baynham	Stockport
Councillor Jacqueline Owen	Tameside
Councillor John Vickers	Wigan

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Vernon Everitt	GM Transport Commissioner
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OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chris Barnes	TfGM
Melinda Edwards	GMCA
Martin Lax	TfGM
Richard Nickson	TfGM
Caroline Simpson	GMCA
Stella Smith	TfGM
Lee Teasdale	GMCA
Danny Vaughan	TfGM
Steve Warrener	TfGM

BNC/50/24 Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were received and noted from Mayor Andy Burnham, Councillor Joshua Charters (Oldham), Councillor Howard Sykes (Oldham), Councillor Phil Burke (Rochdale), Councillor David Meller (Stockport) and Councillor Stephen Homer (Tameside).

BNC/51/24 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

BNC/52/24 Chairs Announcements & Urgent Business

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, explaining that unfortunately the Mayor was unable to attend due to necessary attendance at a growth mission board with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, he had asked that his comments on the current strike action being undertaken by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) staff be highlighted at the meeting.

The Mayor had been in frequent correspondence with the relevant unions on the pay offer dispute. The latest correspondence was presented to the Committee which focussed on the need to ensure that the lowest paid in the workforce received the highest levels of pay rise as a priority.

Members noted that whilst disruption of bus and tram services as a result of the strike was not anticipated, concern was expressed about the potential impact on users who needed support functions provided by TfGM staff. It was noted that not all staff members were striking, and a 'roaming management' ensured that no locations were going unsupervised, and no interchanges had needed to close. However, roughly half of 'travel shops' had needed to close. If the strike continued into the weekend, it could cause a number of disruptions, but plans were in place to minimise the impact of these as much as possible.

Members asked if the strike action could impact upon the 5th January 2025 commencement date of tranche 3 of the Bee Network. It was advised that a committed team remained in place to ensure the successful launch of tranche 3, and that no partner providers at the bus networks were engaged in strike action.

Members noted that the discussions over pay had been taking place for a considerable amount of time and expressed concern that there had not been previous updates on the status of discussions before reaching the point of the strike action. Officers stated that

with hindsight more regular updates should have been brought, and there would be a commitment to bringing these as and when required going forward.

Members noted that the concerns of striking staff were not just related to pay levels, but also a wider range of terms and conditions such as maternity arrangements. It was advised that pay agreements were made collectively with transport authorities in West Yorkshire and the West Midlands. Local issues around terms and conditions would need to be considered separately to this and the Mayor was open to further discussions on meeting asks on maternity, paternity, adoption, leave arrangements and 'on call' pay.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the new representatives for Tameside Council – Councillor Stephen Homer & substitute member Councillor Jacqueline Owen, be welcomed to the Committee.
2. That the update received on the strike action by TfGM staff and the current pay offer status be noted.
3. That TfGM officers will commit to updates on future active discussions with unions.

BNC/53/24 Minutes of the Meeting of 28th November 2024

Members referred to a government call for evidence taking place in relation to concerns about the impact of utility company street works and expressed hope that the coordinated response to this would emphasise the need for full carriageway reinstatements after works and not just patchwork filling, an appropriate response to the call for evidence would be drawn up.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the minutes be updated to note the apologies of Cllr Aidan Williams and Cllr Toby Hewitt.

2. That subject to the above amendment the minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2024 be agreed as a true and correct record.
3. That a coordinated response to the government consultation on managing the impact of street works be prepared by TfGM.

BNC/54/24 Bikes on Metrolink Pilot Evaluation

Danny Vaughan (Chief Network Officer, TfGM), Richard Nickson (Network Director, Active Travel, TfGM) and Stella Smith (Metrolink Sponsor) presented a report that provided a progress update on the guided pilot of the carriage of non-folding bikes on Metrolink trams and outlined the next steps, which was to further develop the proposition.

The studies to date had found that there would be a need to modify trams accordingly with the removal of some seating for bikes, to ensure safety as well as the further space constraints. There had been some opposition to date from disability representative groups who were understandably concerned about the impact on wheelchair space.

Some operational restrictions would likely be required, such as not allowing bikes on trams during the busiest peak periods, and there may be a need to restrict access to some stations due to narrow platforms, such as the Market Street stop in Manchester city centre.

Comments and Questions

- Members made reference to European tram networks such as Copenhagen where bike users had specific carriages reserved for them. Had this been ruled out due to the capital costs involved? It was advised that the current tram network design in Manchester was considerably shorter than those seen in many European cities therefore this was not feasible in the near future.
- Members referenced the potential capital costs, which were estimated to be between £5-8m. Where would these monies be coming from? And would it result in other works not taking place to fund this? It was advised that there was sufficient funding in place now to undertake detailed design work and prepare the business case for the funding. There would be internal bidding for

the funding as part of the CRSTS monies depending on the strength of this business case.

- Members sought further information relating to the mitigations for disabled people and how these would be policed? Officers stated that there were a number of issues generally with etiquette on the network that could be improved. Further work would be required with tram drivers on the importance of enforcing the rules, and on-board announcements would be improved to ensure frequent reminders. There would be signage for separate doors for bikes and wheelchairs to keep them apart and the increases in frontline staff on the network would be maintained.
- Members noted that the existing mobility scooter allowance scheme for Metrolink had resulted in a few barriers. Further detail was sought on this. It was advised that the studies had re-examined the arrangements for mobility scooters. It had been necessary to introduce a permit scheme for these on the network as the scooters came in such an array of sizes that some do not physically fit onto the trams. The scheme monitored the size and manoeuvrability of the scooter, as well as the driver competence. However, some complaints had been received about the scheme, particularly from visitors to Manchester, who had to undertake their testing in the area to acquire the permit. Therefore, the permit scheme was being modified to remove some of the current barriers to entry.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That endorsement be given to the development of designs, cost estimates and a programme to enable the carriage of bikes on Metrolink.

BNC/55/24 Transport Infrastructure Pipeline

Chris Barnes (Network Director Infrastructure, TfGM) presented a report that provided an update on progress delivering a pipeline of transport infrastructure improvements to support the operation of the Bee Network.

Requests for financial approvals within the report included the Metrolink renewals and enhancements programme, and the redevelopment of Bury Interchange.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the current position, recent progress and key milestones on the transport infrastructure pipeline be noted.
2. That the submission of the Outline Business Case for the Bury Interchange Redevelopment scheme to the Department for Transport (DfT), as a CRSTS retained scheme be noted.
3. That approval be given to the drawdown of CRSTS funding and associated scheme progression as follows:
 - Bury Interchange Redevelopment: £1.55m; and
 - Metrolink Renewals Supervisory and Controls System: £3.6m.

BNC/56/24 Delivering the Bee Network – Network Performance

Danny Vaughan (Chief Network Officer, TfGM) and Vernon Everitt (GMCA Transport Commissioner) introduced a report that provided the Committee 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.

It was stated that a year into the Bee Network franchising, bus patronage was growing at a strong rate, which was testament to improving services. The introduction of new services and night service pilots had been strongly welcomed. Tranche 2 still had room for improvement, and it was hoped that the introduction of a number of additional buses in late November would stabilise and improve reliability in the problem areas.

November 2024 had seen Metrolink's highest ever patronage in a single month, beating records previously set during the same year. The continued expansion of the city region would likely see these numbers continue to grow.

Tranche 3 was a huge area to transfer over, but all plans remained in place for commencement on 5th January 2025. There would inevitably be a number of initial

teething problems, but a lot of learning had been taken from the first two tranches and it was hoped that these would quickly be resolved.

It was advised that work on safety had been taking place with bus operators, as it was intended that the bus network would reach a gold standard in terms of safety and pushing forwards the Vision Zero Strategy. A Bee Network Safety Strategy would be developed and brought to the Panel.

It was noted that the introduction of further TravelSafe officers onto the network had seen anti-social behaviour on the network fall by a third, and feedback was being received confirming that customers had picked up and had an improving perception of safety.

Comments and Questions

- Members referenced HS2, stating that existing arterial routes to the south were already at capacity, and it was vital that it was introduced in some form.
- Members welcomed further work taking place on bus safety, noting examples they had witnessed of buses going through red lights and pulling up very close to cyclists. It was asked that any examples of dangerous driving on buses be reported through appropriate channels at TfGM and action would be taken.
- Members stated that Metrolink timetables should be reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose in an increasingly busy landscape, particularly in what were formally quieter periods such as late evenings following concerts and on Sundays.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the performance of Greater Manchester's Transport Network and preparation for the completion of bus franchising be noted.

BNC/57/24 Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Bee Network Committee would take place on Thursday 30th January 2025.