

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: Friday 31st January 2025

Subject: Bee Network Fares and Ticketing Products

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

Purpose of Report

The report proposes that new ticketing products be added to the Bee Network fares and ticketing proposition to increase access to public transport through and improve affordability.

Recommendations:

GMCA is requested to approve the following Bee Network fares and ticketing product proposals, subject to any feedback from the Bee Network Committee:

1. The introduction of a suite of Annual Multi Modal Tickets, from March 2025.
2. The addition of these Annual Multi Modal Tickets to the TfGM scheme with local Credit Unions, from March 2025, to improve access to affordable annual products.
3. The addition of the existing Annual Tram Tickets to the TfGM scheme with local Credit Unions, from March 2025, to improve access to affordable annual products.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

The proposed products and fares have been structured in such a way so as to ensure that they do not breach financial or procurement regulations.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The 2025/26 net budgetary impact of the addition of the multimodal products and the inclusion on the Credit Union scheme could see a revenue impact of circa £125,000, however this is expected to be offset by additional patronage.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None.

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Background Papers

[GMCA 20230630 Delivering the Bee Network - Annual Review of Capped Bus Fares](#)

[GMCA 20230728 Delivering the Bee Network - Fares and Products](#)

[GMCA 20240712 Bee Network Fares and Tickets](#)

[GMCA 20240927 Bee Network Fares and Ticketing Products](#)

Tracking/ Process

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

Yes

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

This report will be considered by BNC on Thursday 30th January 2025.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Greater Manchester is delivering the Bee Network, an integrated, high-quality public transport and active travel system for the people and businesses of the city region. Key to the Bee Network are integrated, affordable and simple fares and ticketing products, aimed at supporting more people to travel for less.
- 1.2. As pioneers of bus franchising, we now have full local control of our most-used form of public transport, in addition to the largest light rail network in the country – Metrolink. GMCA is now able to set fares and introduce and amend ticketing products across the Bee Network, without the need to negotiate with commercial operators. Importantly, franchising also allows GMCA to integrate fares and ticketing so that passengers can move seamlessly between Bee Network buses and trams, with an ambition to integrate cycle hire and GM rail in future.
- 1.3. At its meeting in September 2024, GMCA approved the introduction of an annual bus ticket, priced at £800 and the ability to retail this through a Credit Union loan.
- 1.4. This was approved alongside a suite of other changes, including a hopper fare and lower weekly and monthly (28-day) fares from January 2025; and contactless multi modal ‘pay as you go’ (PAYG) contactless ticketing and multi modal capped fares across bus and Metrolink from 23 March 2025.

2. Proposals

- 2.1. It is proposed to introduce a number of further improvements to Bee Network fares and ticketing products, as set out below, to align with the introduction of PAYG contactless ticketing and multi modal capped fares across bus and Metrolink from 23 March 2025.

Annual Multi Modal Products

- 2.2. TfGM has a suite of existing annual Metrolink products, covering the different fare zones which have been live since January 2019.
- 2.3. In January 2025, alongside the final phase of bus franchising, TfGM introduced an annual bus product, priced at £800.
- 2.4. TfGM launched a multi modal 28-day product in September 2023 as part of the launch of the Bee Network. This offers a significant saving against purchasing individual 28-day tram and bus products. For example, a bus only product costs

£80.00 and a 28-day single tram zone product costs £36.40: a total of £126.40. A 28-day Bee Any Bus + Any 1 Tram Zone costs £91.40, representing a saving of £25.00.

- 2.5. It is now proposed to introduce an Annual Multi Modal (bus and tram) product to further support our integrated transport network, making it simpler, easier and more affordable for customers to travel across different modes of transport.
- 2.6. The proposed Multi Modal annual products and prices are as set as below:

Product	Price	% saving versus 13 x 28-day tickets
Bus and any one Metrolink zone	£1,005	15.4%
Bus and Metrolink zones 1+2	£1,211	15.4%
Bus and Metrolink zones 2+3 or 3+4	£1,140	15.4%
Bus and Metrolink zones 1+2+3	£1,418	15.4%
Bus and Metrolink zones 2+3+4	£1,293	15.4%
Bus and all Metrolink zones (1+2+3+4)	£1,496	15.4%

- 2.7. The product pricing equates to the cost of 11, rather than 13, 28-day tickets, a saving of 15.4% (or an equivalent to two free periods of travel).
- 2.8. The new products will be available to purchase from any TfGM Ticket Office, or on the Bee Network App.

Credit Union

- 2.9. At present, annual products can provide better value for money for regular public transport users than shorter period tickets but they require a significantly greater initial outlay.
- 2.10. In December 2024, TfGM created a new scheme in which local Credit Unions could make an annual bus ticket available to their customers via a loan, with no additional cost. This was designed to enable those who may not be able to afford the initial outlay of an annual product to benefit from the increased value that it offers.
- 2.11. It is proposed to add the above Annual Multi Modal Products and the existing Tram Annual Products to this scheme from 23 March 2025, aligned to the Multi Modal Contactless PAYG launch.
- 2.12. Customers will then be able to pay for the annual products in monthly or weekly instalments via a local Credit Union.

- 2.13. The scheme will enable Credit Union members to benefit from the savings of an annual ticket whilst spreading the costs over a year. This will particularly support those unable to afford long period products.

3. Benefits

- 3.1. Making transport more affordable supports and enables more people to access education, skills, essential services and opportunity.
- 3.2. The multi modal annual ticket offers customers a cost saving as a reward for choosing to use public transport frequently and committing to this behaviour by buying upfront.
- 3.3. The Credit Union scheme is particularly attractive to customers who use public transport regularly and who may not be able to afford the initial outlay of an annual product and benefit from the additional value it offers.
- 3.4. Purchasing annual tickets through the Credit Union, will enable Credit Union members to spread the cost of an annual ticket without any additional cost.

4. Affordability

- 4.1. The 2024/25 net budgetary impact of the proposed changes will only impact from their introduction in March 2025, so there will only be one week's financial impact in the current financial year.
- 4.2. The proposed changes have been factored into subsequent budget years.
- 4.3. The 2025/26 net budgetary impact of the addition of the multimodal products and the inclusion as part of the Credit Union scheme would, without any 'generation', result in an adverse revenue impact of circa £125,000. However, this impact is anticipated to be offset by additional, generated, patronage and revenues.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. Subject to GMCA approval, and consideration of any feedback from the Bee Network Committee, work will begin to set up the new Annual Multi Modal products from March 2025.
- 5.2. Work will also continue with local Credit Unions to implement the proposed offer from March 2025.