

## Delivery Policy 19: Rail integration

We will work with Network Rail/Great British Railways and partners to fully integrate local rail into the Bee Network.

This will include:

- a) Integrating rail into the Bee Network in terms of fares and ticketing, interchange, branding and information.
- b) Improving local suburban rail services, including improved frequencies.
- c) Ensuring rail stations and services are accessible to all and perceptions of personal safety are significantly improved.
- d) Making it easier for passengers to access stations by walking, wheeling and cycling and to interchange between transport modes.
- e) Delivering new stations, including in key growth locations.
- f) Encouraging higher density development near stations, to bring more people closer to high quality public transport (**NP5: Land use and new development**).
- g) Support a sense of community ownership and placemaking, including through community rail partnerships and volunteer schemes, to ensure changes increase social inclusion.

We will develop an effective Mayoral Partnership with GBR, as heralded in the Rail Reform consultation document, and continue to explore deeper levels of rail devolution over time.

We will work with Government, the rail industry, regional and local partners to implement our Greater Manchester Rail Vision which is a joint long-term plan for the railway in our region.

### Policy explanation

1. The Greater Manchester Bee Network currently covers active travel routes, our newly franchised bus network, and our Metrolink network. The aim is to continually evolve and improve the Bee Network so that it can offer our customers a seamless journey experience. The incorporation of local rail services into the Bee Network is the next logical progression to expand the network and offer the benefits of integrated services to a wider audience –

through contactless “Tap and Go” technology, integrated multi modal Pay As You Go (PAYG) fares and multi modal tickets (across rail, bus and Metrolink services), integrated passenger information and recognisable branding.

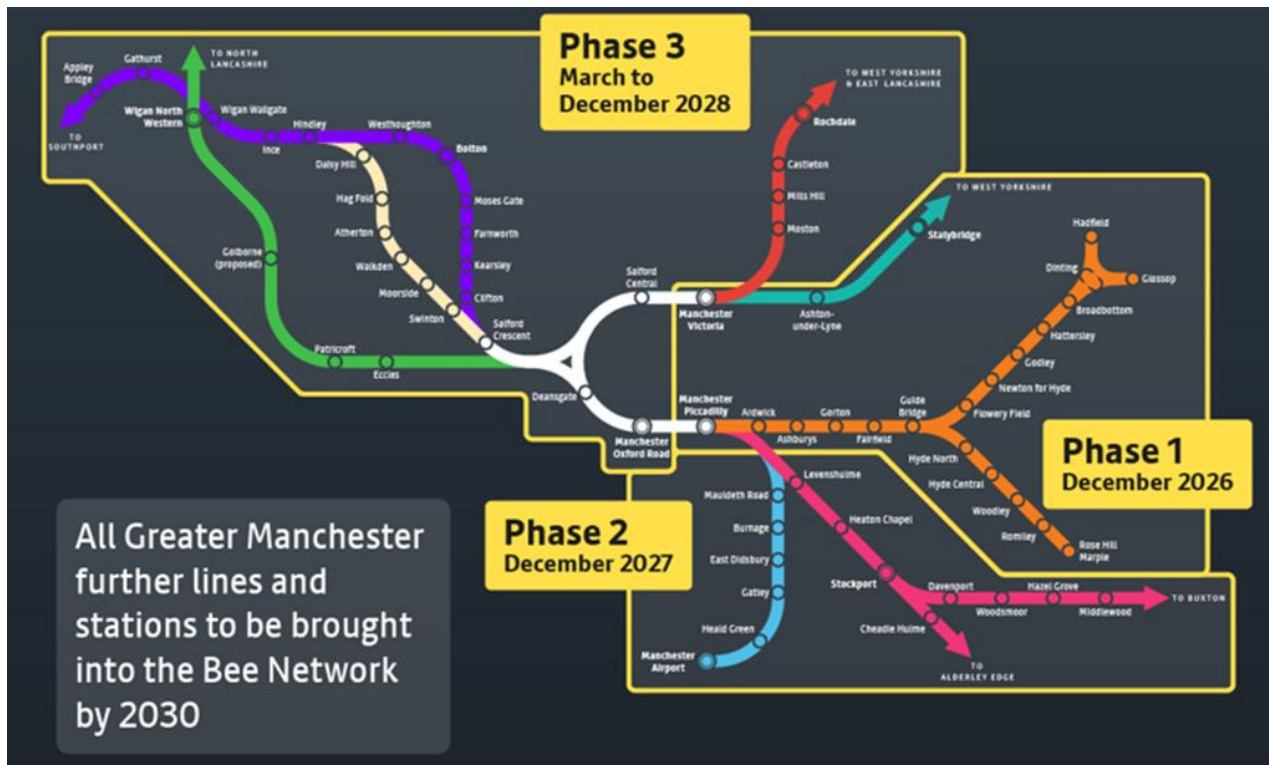
2. Network Rail is to be incorporated into Great British Railways following Royal assent of the Railways Bill.
3. Rail is the most efficient way of moving large numbers of people to and from the city centre, supporting over 20.8m rail trips to Manchester Central Stations in 2022/23 and facilitating GM’s large travel to work area (TfGM, 2024). On the National Rail network, trips to (and through) the Regional Centre during the morning peak increased by 72% between 2002 and 2017. Many of those additional trips were carried by the suburban rail services that form part of GM’s rapid transit system. Despite this significant growth, investment in capacity of the network has not kept pace.

#### **Integrating rail into the Bee Network**

4. Greater Manchester has committed to integrating local rail services and stations through a three-phase plan to bring rail services and stations into the Bee Network along eight priority rail lines by 2028.
  - **Phase 1** [By December 2026]: Contactless tap in tap out ticketing across 17 stations on the first two lines between Manchester Victoria and Stalybridge, and Manchester Piccadilly and Glossop. Passengers will also see a trial of Bee Network branded trains, stations brought up to Bee Network standards, and flagship stations at Manchester Piccadilly and Stalybridge showcasing the integrated approach in action.
  - **Phase 2** [By December 2027]: Rollout of tap in tap out ticketing on a further two lines, including services connecting Manchester Piccadilly to Manchester Airport, Alderley Edge and Buxton via Stockport, which will join the Bee Network.
  - **Phase 3** [By December 2028]: Services on the Rochdale, Wigan via Atherton (onward to Southport), Wigan via Bolton (onward to Southport) and Wigan via Golborne lines enter the Bee Network, with these stations being upgraded to the new standard.

- All stations and lines within Greater Manchester will join the Bee Network by 2030 with the Bee Network Pay As You Go (PAYG) integrated payment system extended to include rail fares.

**Figure 1: Rail Integration to the Bee Network**



- Integrating rail stations into the Bee Network is essential to support seamless connectivity between modes, promoting sustainable transport options. By linking rail stations with bus, Metrolink, active travel infrastructure and shared transport, passengers will gain convenient access to a variety of transport options. Continuing the work on Access to All schemes will also ensure all stations are accessible to everyone. This will enable efficient multi-modal travel, expanding access through the Bee Network and supporting sustainable transport and economic growth.
- Upgrading station facilities, including waiting areas, information centres, and branding, will create a more comfortable environment for passengers, which enhances the Bee Network offer. Technological solutions like the Bee Network app will also play a crucial role. Contactless multi modal PAYG fares will aim to streamline ticketing.

8. Our commitment to customer feedback across the Bee Network involves undertaking regular surveys to identify areas for improvement. Expanding this to local rail services will enable us to take a holistic approach which aims to create a seamless and pleasant travel experience for passengers.

### **Fares and ticketing**

9. Integrated fares and ticketing across all public transport modes, including rail, is an essential step to support seamless journeys and is an important lever in supporting mode shift to rail. We know that, for occasional rail users, 'Value for Money' is the most important factor in encouraging increased use (TfGM, 2021). Greater Manchester's ambition to integrate local rail fares into the Bee Network Pay As You Go (PAYG) integrated payment system, by 2030, will make it easier to use the rail network and make multi-modal journeys. This will encourage rail as a modal choice for more people in the city-region.

### **Interchange and branding**

10. The introduction of Bee Network branding across rail in Greater Manchester, will create a clear identity which ensures trains and train stations are well connected into the wider Bee Network. Our franchised bus services also offer opportunities for greater interchange between bus and rail networks with more integrated timetabling and fares.

### **Passenger information**

11. Live, accurate, and easily available passenger information about rail services is crucial to build trust and encourage greater use of the network. The ability to link different modes of travel and find the most efficient options for every journey is vital (see also **DP1: Delivering the Bee Network** and **NP4: Journey planning and information**).

### **Service frequency**

12. The frequency and regularity of services was considered the second most important factor in encouraging increased use amongst those who occasionally use rail (TfGM Sales Funnel research, 2021). On certain routes, there is potential to move towards services operating at a turn-up-and-go

frequency, of at least four trains an hour, to increase the number of local rail journeys.



### **Improving local suburban rail services**

13. TfGM has worked closely with the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) and is now working closely with Shadow Great British Railways, in advance of GBR being formed when legislation is enacted (expected to be in Spring 2027). This work is exploring the options for GM to play a stronger role in specifying and delivering rail services beyond the Bee Network integration programme set out above, including through potential devolution of services. Some stations, within and near to, Greater Manchester suffer from low service frequencies (less than half hourly) and limited services on evening and weekends. This level of service impacts on the ability of the rail network to delivery our network ambitions.

13. Therefore, we will advocate for a reformed railway that better enables GM and the rail industry to specify and deliver local rail services, which better

match our wider growth ambitions and further contribute to Bee Network rail integration.

### **Ensuring rail stations and services are accessible and safe**

14. One of the most important things we need to do is ensure that all people can use our stations. The Access for All programme, which aims to make stations step-free and accessible to all through for example, the introduction of new lifts, customer information screens, and public announcement systems is central to improving accessibility to our stations.
15. Alongside step-free access, accessible toilets, clear signage, improved lighting, tactile paving on platforms and keeping stations in a good state of repair are just some of the things that can make sure no one is excluded from using them. We discuss more on public transport inclusivity and accessibility in **NP6: An inclusive and accessible network**.
16. More broadly, we need to prioritise improving access to stations on foot and by bike by improving the quality of the active travel infrastructure in the immediate vicinity of stations and linking them to the walking, wheeling and cycling networks. This includes increasing the amount of secure cycle parking around stations and access onto the platforms.



### Safety and Security

17. Safety measures in railway stations are essential to manage large crowds and instil a sense of security. A safe rail station encompasses various facets, including well-lit platforms, clearly marked emergency exits, and visible security personnel. These elements not only deter potential threats but also reassure passengers of their well-being during their journey. Furthermore, efficient surveillance systems and regular maintenance of infrastructure contribute to minimising accidents and hazards, enhancing the overall perception of safety. When passengers perceive a rail station as a safe environment, they are more likely to choose rail travel, leading to increased ridership. Thus, prioritising safety measures within rail stations not only protects passengers but also promotes the viability and sustainability of our rail network.

### First and last mile

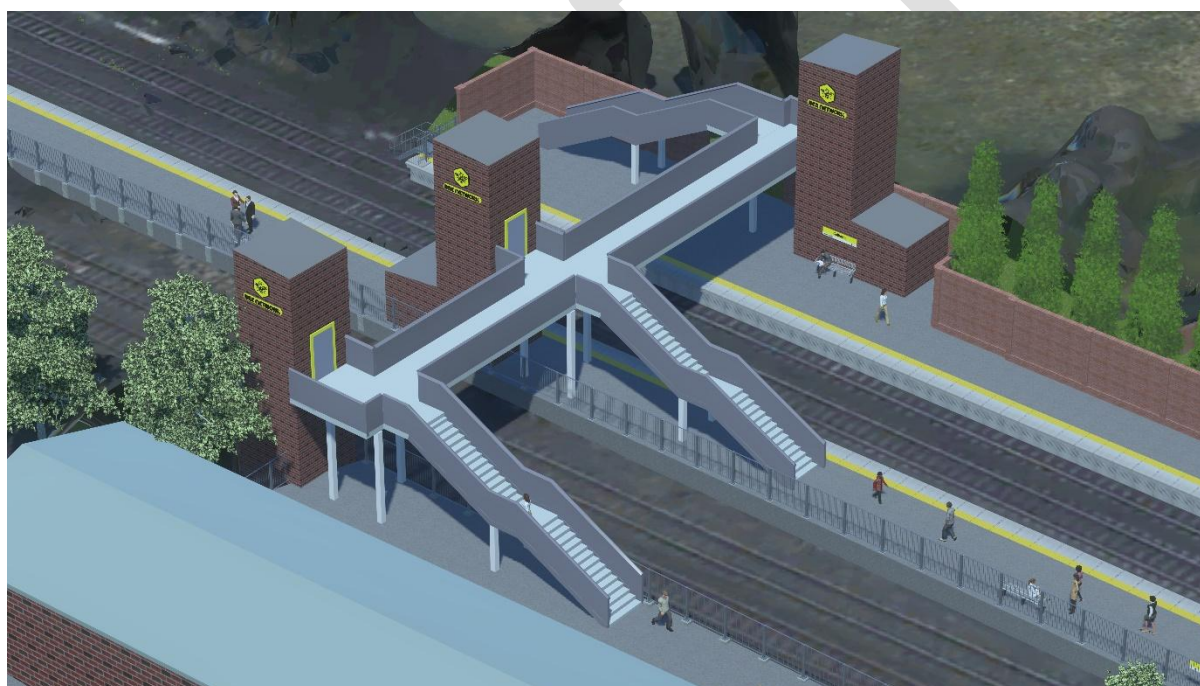
18. The first and last mile to and from stations and stops is an important element of rail-based travel and can be a critical weakness in the rail service offer **DP3: Walking and wheeling** and **DP23: Transport hubs (including park and ride)**

recognise the importance of improving public transport and active travel links to stations. There is also the need to consider how best to accommodate cyclists on rail services and to ensure that travelling to and from public transport with a bicycle is a convenient option.

### Delivering New Stations

19. Opportunities to provide new rail stations in areas of growth that are currently not well served by rail should be explored, particularly where higher density development has the potential to increase rail patronage and minimise the growth in road traffic.

**Figure 2: A CGI image showing the proposed Golborne train station**



20. A new rail station has the potential to stimulate economic growth and act as a catalyst for regeneration and housing. Additionally, improved connectivity offered by a new rail station facilitates easier commuting for residents, reduces traffic congestion, and lowers carbon emissions by promoting the use of public transport. Work is underway to deliver new stations in Cheadle and Golborne and potential further new stations are being investigated.

### **Encouraging High Density Development Around Stations**

21. Greater Manchester's concerted efforts to develop areas around rail stations aligns with the broader goals of supporting future growth in population and the city region's economy. By creating compact, mixed-use communities with good access to transport, reliance on cars is reduced, employment opportunities are created, and amenities are easy for people to reach.
22. The central railway stations in Manchester, Salford and Stockport are integral to wider regeneration plans. Redevelopment provides the opportunity to secure funding for their refurbishment; ensure they are fully accessible and deliver wider improvements for the local areas. Across the rest of Greater Manchester, station investment is also supporting local growth aspirations and helping to unlock other development opportunities, see **NP5: Land use and new development**.

### **Supporting a sense of community ownership and placemaking**

23. Fostering community ownership and placemaking at rail stations is important to support wider policies to improve health, education and bring forward social enterprises. When residents feel a sense of ownership, they take pride in maintaining these spaces, enhancing safety and cleanliness.
24. Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) are collaborative ventures between local communities, railway operators, and other stakeholders aimed at promoting and enhancing local rail services. TfGM have also been working collaboratively alongside Network Rail, Northern, London Continental Railways (LCR) and Greater Manchester Consultants for Voluntary Organisations (GMCVO) in identifying old station buildings and rooms that can be used for community use. Heaton Chapel, Altrincham and Trafford Park have been identified as being locations that could be redeveloped and brought back into use.

### **Rail Reform and a Future Mayoral Partnership**

25. The Government's rail reform agenda will provide an opportunity for the rail industry to organise itself differently and offer a different approach to serving the rail needs of the GMCA and other Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs). The Mayoral Partnership framework sets out a much stronger role for MCAs

and places an expectation on the rail industry to build this partnership working by design.

26. Greater Manchester has been consistent in seeking a greater place-based agenda in the delivery of rail services in the City Region, including up to full service devolution, where this is suitable. We will continue to advocate this agenda as GBR comes in to being and will look to exploit opportunities that enable the benefits that a local focus and genuine multi-modal decision-making can bring.
27. A stronger role for Mayoral Combined Authorities (including potential financial devolution of existing railway budgets) would ensure local accountability, opportunities to make better integrated transport decisions across transport networks, which could lead to improved passenger and wider economic outcomes, and better value from taxpayers' money.
28. Financial devolution is seen as vital for MCAs and other local authorities to ensure they can best allocate available resources to deliver the right service provision for their areas.
29. As the GM-GBR Mayoral Partnership develops TfGM, Government, and partners from the rail industry are working together to ensure that the new arrangements address the failings of the railway in the past, creating a more productive, place-based approach to decision-making.

## References

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