



# Greater Manchester Bus Strategy

Better buses for the Bee Network



BEE NETWORK



Transport for Greater Manchester

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# Foreword

Greater Manchester is delivering better buses for our people, businesses and visitors, connecting them to new opportunities, essential services and each other.

This Bus Strategy sets out how, through the creation of the Bee Network and the new opportunities that bus franchising brings, we will develop a better bus system for our city region, built on affordable fares, high quality services, swift and reliable connections, and clear democratic and customer accountability.

Franchising means returning our bus network to public control and, with it, an opportunity for significant improvement. Since the deregulation of buses in 1986, we have seen reductions in services, greatly increased fares and a fragmented offer for bus users, with little ability for local leaders to intervene or integrate. Recognising the importance of buses for a prosperous city region, generations of Greater Manchester leaders have lobbied over many decades for powers to reform the bus system. Thanks to their tenacity, we now have the ability and responsibility to take control and improve Greater Manchester's most used form of public transport.

Buses are particularly important for many of our city region's most deprived communities, who are less likely to own a car and are therefore reliant on buses to connect them to work, leisure and public services. If buses are to realise their full potential in Greater Manchester, we will need to use our new powers over the network to make significant improvements, both to improve current users' experience and to make buses the preferred travel option for far more people.

Bus franchising will allow us to reimagine the role of buses within a wider integrated transport system, develop strong relationships with staff and trade unions and, over time, reshape this critical part of our infrastructure to serve the modern city region. More people using our better buses will help reduce congestion and air pollution, support economic growth, create access to opportunities, improve residents' health and reduce social exclusion: vital elements in building the greener, fairer, and more prosperous Greater Manchester of the future.

In 1824, the UK's first bus service took to the streets of Greater Manchester, sparking a public transport revolution. Two hundred years later, our city region is leading the way again, as we use the vision set out in this strategy to build a bus system for everyone, of which Greater Manchester can be proud.

**Andy Burnham**  
**Mayor of Greater Manchester**



# Executive summary

The Greater Manchester Bus Strategy sets out our vision for better buses for Greater Manchester. It will help people here understand how the bus system will develop to 2030 and will support Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to plan its work and make the case to government and external organisations for appropriate support and funding.

This document sets out:

- Our vision for buses
- The case for change in Greater Manchester
- What we need to do
- How we'll deliver better buses

## Our vision for buses

Buses are central to our transport network and carry three quarters of all public transport journeys. They can deliver significant benefits for the environment, health, traffic congestion and the economy.

Greater Manchester is building the Bee Network, an integrated transport system that will support sustainable travel across the city region. Better buses are central to delivering the Bee Network and with it a fairer, greener and more prosperous city region.

At present, buses are not delivering to their full potential. Bus travel is seen as a 'choice of last resort' and car use is rising. We need to take action.

We are taking our bus system into public control through bus franchising. For the first time, we can plan routes, set affordable fares and integrate buses into our transport system: the Bee Network.

## We want buses to be the first choice for more journeys.

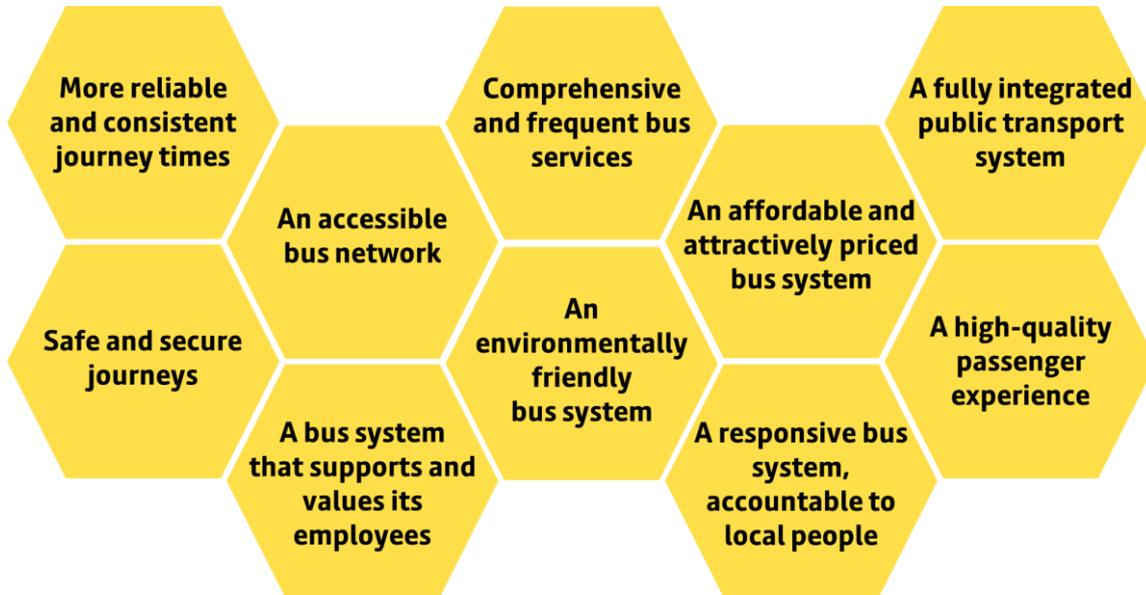
When planning bus routes and timetables, profit will no longer be the main focus. Instead, the network will be designed so that services arrive on time, at convenient locations and offer the best value for money.

This strategy sets out the integrated planning guidelines we will use to review the network and how will we put them into practice.

## We are aiming to grow bus patronage by 30% by 2030.

## What we need to do

To reach this target, we need to improve people's experience of getting the bus. By 2030, we want to deliver:



## Our roadmap for buses

### By September 2023

- First Bee Network bus services operate in Bolton, Wigan and parts of Bury and Salford.
- Bus fares across Greater Manchester capped at £2 for a single ticket, £5 for a day ticket and £21 for a week ticket. New integrated bus and tram tickets launched.
- Bee Network app launched for live travel information and ticket sales.
- New zero emission buses in use on routes in the west of Greater Manchester.
- Ongoing programme of bus pinch point removal across the network.

### By March 2024

- Second phase of bus franchising begins with Bee Network services operating in Rochdale, Oldham and parts of Bury and Manchester.
- New zero emission buses in use on routes in the north east of Greater Manchester.

### By 2025

- All Greater Manchester buses operating as part of the Bee Network.
- Contactless payment with automatic capping and integrated ticketing with Metrolink.
- New zero emission buses in use on routes in the south of the city region.
- Access improved at hundreds of bus stops, including through raised kerbs and more seating.

### **By 2026**

- New bus priority measures delivered between Salford Crescent and MediaCityUK will improve bus speed and reliability.

### **By 2027**

- On board next stop displays and announcements on all buses.
- New orbital bus priority measures delivered between Bury and Rochdale, Ashton and Stockport, Wigan and Bolton and Rochdale-Oldham-Ashton to improve bus speed and reliability.

### **By 2030**

- Buses will run at least every 12 minutes on key radial and orbital routes.
- 90% of the entire Greater Manchester population will be within a 30-minute frequency bus or Metrolink service on weekdays within 400m of their home.
- 500 more accessible stops are provided through measures such as raised kerbs and places to rest while waiting.
- The UK's first operationally carbon neutral transport interchange in Bury town centre opens, integrating bus, cycle parking and Metrolink.

## **Our aims**

By delivering these improvements, we will create a bus system that:

**Provides consistent and attractive car-free connectivity for all.**

**Connects to other parts of the Bee Network and longer distance public transport.**

**Supports attractive urban places, including town centres and new developments.**

**Has a positive impact on public health and the environment.**

**Provides people with more travel options in the day and night.**

**Is accountable and a source of shared local pride.**

The trip described overleaf shows how we want travel by bus to improve in the coming years.

# A trip on our future bus network

1

Most Greater Manchester residents live a short walk from their nearest bus route.



2

Bus stops are easy to access for everyone. They are tidy and well-lit, with clear information and the busiest stops have shelters too.



3

Bee Network cycle hire stands are located at key bus stops, and bikes can be hired as part of the same integrated ticketing system. Cycle parking facilities are provided at bus stations and interchanges.



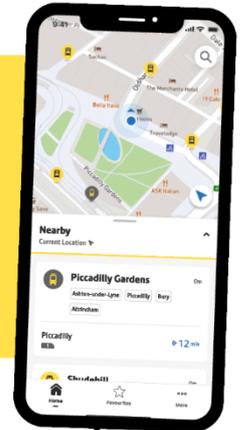
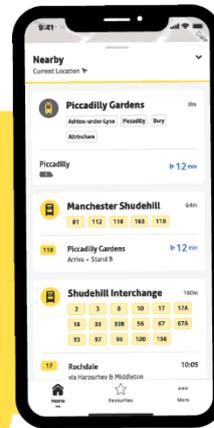
4

Investment in Greater Manchester's buses has improved their reliability and frequency. Many services are so frequent that checking a timetable beforehand is unnecessary.



5

People can plan their journey and follow their bus in real time using the Bee Network app and other journey planners. They can also purchase tickets for bus, Metrolink and train services before boarding.



6

The bus arrives on time and is easy to board for everyone, with ramps fitted on all vehicles. Fares are simple and affordable, with a hopper fare for single trips, day and week tickets, and integrated fare caps across the Bee Network.



Cont. on next page.

# A trip on our future bus network

7

Everyone has a safe and comfortable journey, with spaces for two wheelchair users, hearing induction loops, high back seating, non-slip flooring and USB charging points on every bus.



8

A trip on a Bee Network bus feels safe at any time of day or night. TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers are on hand to help across the network, while CCTV and audio-visual announcements mean everyone can use the bus with confidence.

10

In the background, the Operational Control Centre is monitoring the network and working to keep services on time and passengers informed.



9

The bus makes swift progress on its route, thanks to bus lanes and other infrastructure that separates it from general traffic.



Transport for Greater Manchester

11

All buses are either electric or the cleanest emission standard, limiting their impact on local air quality. By 2032, all buses in Greater Manchester will be zero-emission.



12

The bus arrives at its destination on time and passengers are able to change seamlessly to other buses, trains, trams, or cycle hire. Using the Bee Network app, bus users can also rate their journey and provide immediate feedback on their experience.



BEE NETWORK

Transport for Greater Manchester

# Our vision

**As part of the Bee Network, we want the bus to be the first choice for more journeys in Greater Manchester.**

To make this happen, we have a vision for a bus system that is reliable, affordable and integrated with other forms of transport. Buses will be accessible, connect communities and provide an attractive and environmentally friendly alternative to car travel.

## At the heart of the Bee Network

Greater Manchester is building the Bee Network, an integrated transport system that will support sustainable travel across the city region. Better buses are central to delivering the Bee Network and with it a fairer, greener and more prosperous city region.

In anticipation of bus franchising, this Bus Strategy sets out the role of the bus in delivering our Bee Network ambition and will help to inform Greater Manchester's refreshed local transport vision and plans.

It will help the public, councillors and other stakeholders understand how their bus system will develop to 2030. It will also support TfGM to plan its work and to make the case to government and external organisations for appropriate support and funding.

The Bus Strategy is not a funded delivery plan and the priorities and ambitions set out here are anticipated to require some additional funding to be delivered in full.

## Our ambitions

In the [Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 \(GMTS 2040\)](#), we set out a vision for a **modern, low-emission and accessible bus system, fully integrated with the wider Bee**



By 2030, we want  
our buses to carry over  
**200 million**  
journeys per year.

**Network, on which everyone will be willing to travel, regardless of their background or mobility level.**

This document is a supporting strategy to GMTS 2040. It focuses on our actions to 2030 and will help to put us on the right path to achieving our Right Mix vision: for 50% of all journeys in Greater Manchester to be made by active travel and public transport by 2040, with zero net growth in motor vehicle traffic over that period. To achieve this, and maintain a growing city region, bus use must grow.

## More popular buses

We have set an ambitious initial target to **increase bus patronage by 30% by 2030** from 2022/23 levels. This would mean almost 50 million more journeys being taken by bus each year, to a total of around 200 million. This change will need to be driven by affordable fares, a more user-friendly and frequent network, and better infrastructure to provide more reliable bus journeys.

This growth will require additional investment and careful prioritisation of existing resources, enabled by bus franchising. Final targets for patronage growth across all modes will be confirmed through the development of Greater

Manchester's next Local Transport Plan and refreshed Right Mix vision.

### More affordable buses

**We will keep fares as low as possible** and reinvest any surplus back into the transport system. Greater Manchester has already seen the positive impact of lower fares on bus ridership. We will continue to support low fares and the benefits in terms of inclusivity, simplicity and access to opportunity that they bring.

### More frequent buses

We will run more high frequency services on our bus network. By 2030, **we will aim to run buses at least every 12 minutes on key radial and orbital routes**. Subject to demand, people in the most built-up areas of Greater Manchester will have at least five buses per hour within 400m of their front door. **We will aim to provide 90% of the entire Greater Manchester population with a 30-minute frequency bus or Metrolink service** on weekdays within 400m of their home (78.9% of the population as of November 2022). Where this is not possible, we will put in place other options to provide connectivity as part of the Bee Network e.g. demand responsive transport (like Local Link).

### More reliable buses

To support improved reliability and quicker, more consistent journeys, **we intend to deliver on-street bus improvements across 70km of high frequency, strategic bus routes across Greater Manchester by 2030**. A quarter of car users would consider switching to buses if they were quicker and more reliable, while a 10% decrease in bus speeds reduces patronage by at least 10%.<sup>1</sup>

These improvements will include ambitious bus priority measures, signal upgrades to improve bus reliability, enhanced access to bus stops by walking and wheeling, and bus stop upgrades.

People's journeys don't start and end at the bus stop – they begin the moment they leave their front door. This Bus Strategy therefore supports and develops the Streets for All approach previously adopted in Greater Manchester.

We need to reform and grow our bus system so it can play a key role in creating more attractive places, achieving the Right Mix and supporting our ambition for an integrated transport system in Greater Manchester. We will install and improve the significant quantity of bus priority infrastructure that bus services need to run reliably.

## We want Greater Manchester's bus system to:

1. Provide consistent and attractive car-free connectivity for all.
2. Connect to other parts of the Bee Network and longer distance public transport.
3. Support attractive urban places, including town centres and new developments.
4. Have a positive impact on public health and the environment.
5. Provide people with more travel options in the day and night.
6. Be accountable and a source of shared local pride.

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<sup>1</sup> [Confederation of Passenger Transport, 2016](#)

# The case for change

Buses are the most-used form of public transport in Greater Manchester, carrying three-quarters of all public transport journeys: almost three million trips a week.

Despite this, the proportion of all journeys taken on buses is small: just 5%.<sup>2</sup> By improving journey times, frequency, reliability, and other aspects of the bus system like affordability and safety, we

will increase the proportion of journeys taken by bus.

By meeting its full potential, the bus system and wider Bee Network can help us tackle some of our city region's most significant challenges, including congestion, access to opportunities, population health and the need to reduce air pollution.

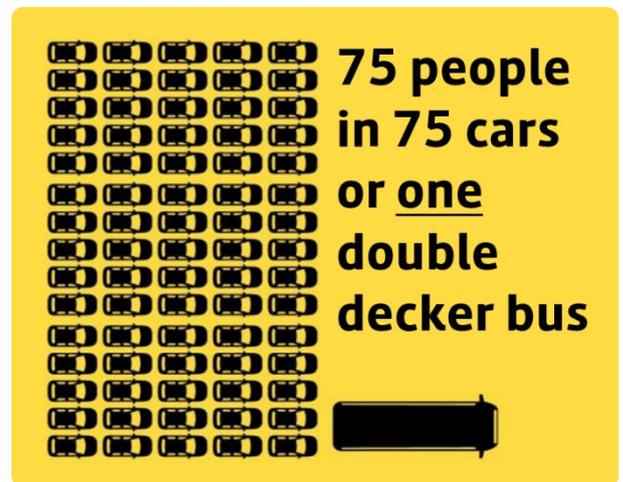
## Benefits of better buses

- **Buses reduce congestion**

On average, each car in Greater Manchester carries just 1.3 people. Buses are able to carry many more people than cars and are a more efficient way to use limited road space. Attracting non-bus users to travel by bus and current bus users to use it more is therefore one of the most effective ways to reduce congestion and improve conditions for all road users. Congestion currently costs Greater Manchester businesses £1.3bn per year.<sup>3</sup>

- **Buses are affordable**

Bus travel is more affordable than owning and maintaining a car and allows other costs – like parking – to be avoided, making it an accessible travel option for people on all incomes.



A survey carried out by Opinium found that the average cost of running a car in the UK is ~£3,400 per year, rising to ~£5,740 per year if the car is bought on finance.<sup>4</sup> In comparison, buying 'AnyBus' weekly bus passes (currently capped at £21 per week in Greater Manchester) would cost £1,090 per year.

<sup>2</sup> [TfGM, 2021](#)

<sup>3</sup> [TfGM, 2018](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Opinium, 2020](#)

- **Buses provide access to opportunities**

Over a quarter of Greater Manchester households do not own a car.<sup>5</sup> Reliable and affordable public transport provides people with equal access to job opportunities, education, and other important services. In 2018, 18% of unemployed people in England either turned down a job or decided not to apply for a job due to transport-related problems.<sup>6</sup>

Buses are key to supporting local prosperity and reducing deprivation. A KPMG report found that a 10% improvement in bus service connectivity was associated with a 3.6% reduction in social deprivation in an area.<sup>7</sup>

- **Buses are greener**

Transport currently accounts for around a third of carbon emissions in Greater Manchester. Local authorities here have declared a Climate Emergency and the city region aims to be completely carbon neutral by 2038. To achieve this, we need more people to choose to travel by bus and other more sustainable forms of transport.

We are working towards a zero-emission bus fleet by 2032. As more vehicles are replaced with zero emission alternatives, the positive environmental difference that buses can make will grow.

- **Buses deliver health benefits**

Greater Manchester has significantly poorer health than other parts of the country. Life expectancy in the city region is almost two years lower than the England average<sup>8</sup>. Nearly a third (28%) of the population is classed as “inactive”, meaning they complete less than 30 minutes of activity a week, costing health services here £26.7m a year.<sup>9 10</sup>

Increased use of less polluting buses can also help improve local air quality, leading to health benefits and a more attractive environment for more active lifestyles.

Buses also promote more regular active travel through the journey to and from the bus stop, encouraging activity amongst groups who might otherwise be inactive.

- **Buses deliver economic benefits**

Reliable and efficient bus services can boost local economies by increasing high street footfall and reducing the time lost to congestion. The research and campaign body Greener Journeys estimated that, for every £1 of targeted investment in bus priority measures and bus infrastructure, £3.32 of economic benefit is generated.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [Census, 2021](#)

<sup>6</sup> [The Health Foundation, 2021](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Confederation of Passenger Transport, 2016](#)

<sup>8</sup> [GM Independent Prosperity Review, 2022](#)

<sup>9</sup> [GM Moving, 2021](#)

<sup>10</sup> [GM Moving, 2021](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Greener Journeys, 2014](#)

There is significant new development underway across Greater Manchester. The bus network will need to be sufficiently flexible to ensure these new developments are well served. At the same time, developers and businesses must work alongside TfGM to ensure that plans for new developments include bus service provision to reduce car dependence.

- **Buses provide access to the wider transport network**

Buses can provide people with good access to Metrolink and rail services so longer journeys can be made easily. In the past, Metrolink, rail and bus services have often competed against each other. Local control of our buses means that Greater Manchester has some of the tools it needs to remove this inefficiency and better integrate services.



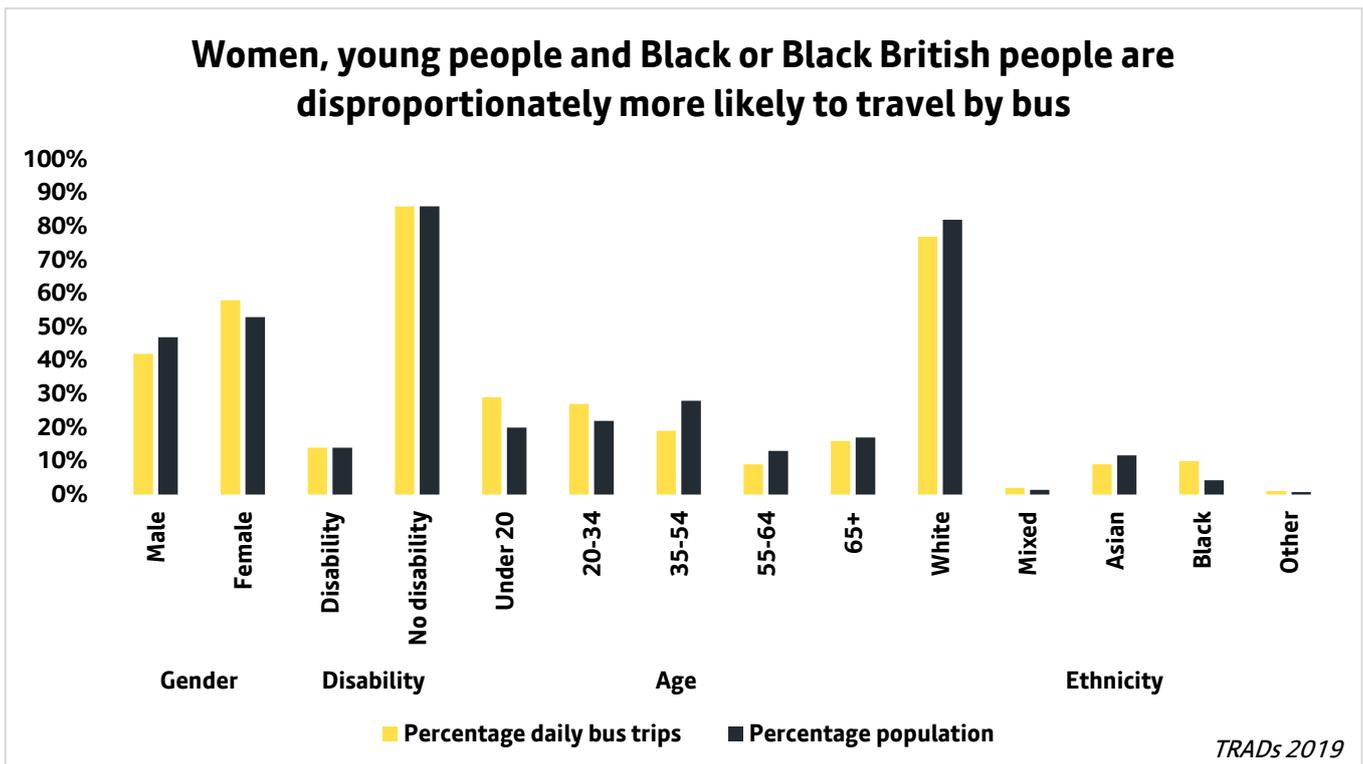
## Who uses the bus?

Buses play a vital role in the lives of many people who live, work, and visit Greater Manchester. A wide range of people use buses, and many more people say they would be prepared to use them in the future, especially once services are improved.<sup>12</sup> We need to further broaden their appeal and make taking the bus a more attractive choice.

Education and shopping are especially common reasons for travelling by bus. These established uses are helpful to understand our network and the types of places it should serve, but the bus's reliance on shoppers means that services are particularly vulnerable to changes in the cost of living and in retail habits.

Buses are particularly important for residents in Greater Manchester's most deprived areas. Low car ownership is sometimes a result of lower incomes, often found in isolated communities living in poorly designed estates with poor access to services.

Women, young people and Black or Black British people are disproportionately more likely to travel by bus.<sup>13</sup> These groups are more likely to experience multiple forms of disadvantage and social exclusion and could particularly benefit from improvements to the bus system. When making any changes to the bus system, we will actively consider the likely impacts on these groups and others.



<sup>12</sup> [TfGM, 2021](#)

<sup>13</sup> [TfGM, 2021](#)



### **New users**

Our research shows that only a minority of people (less than 20%) would never consider using the bus.

A far larger group - over 50% of the Greater Manchester population - have no objection to the bus in principle, but do not use it, or do not use it regularly. These are potential target markets and, with an improved bus offer, should be more open to switching to regular bus use.<sup>14</sup>

We will use detailed demographic analysis of all these groups, along with the unique opportunity provided by franchising, to improve buses and increase everyone's willingness to use them.

We need to encourage those who would never take the bus to consider using it and retain satisfied customers through a consistently high standard of delivery. We also need to consider relatively new post-pandemic travel behaviours, including hybrid working.

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<sup>14</sup> [TfGM Sales Funnel](#)

## The story so far

Greater Manchester has always been a pioneer when it comes to buses. In 1824, the UK's first ever "omnibus" service was introduced between Pendleton and Manchester, and bus services grew rapidly in the following decades.

### Boom and bus

Bus patronage in Greater Manchester peaked around 1950, just as towns and cities began to be remodelled to prioritise private cars. At the time, car ownership (and population) was much lower, and many people did not foresee the congestion and environmental challenges that lay ahead. In the face of an increasing focus on private cars, decline in the bus system was inevitable.

As the number of people using buses declined, a vicious circle emerged. Fewer passengers made each bus more expensive to run, resulting in reduced service frequencies and routes, and higher fares to passengers, leading to even fewer people using buses.

### Deregulation

Before 1986, most bus services in Greater Manchester were provided by public bodies, initially by local councils and then by the Passenger Transport Executive at a regional level. Local government was accountable for the planning, delivery and performance of the bus system.

In 1986 the bus market in Great Britain was "deregulated" outside of London. Deregulation meant that bus services were no longer planned centrally by local governments. Anyone could run a bus service at any fare, route or timetable they decided.

Taking decision-making away from local elected politicians shifted priorities away from serving

## Compared with 10, 20, and 50 years ago:

- Waiting times are **longer**.
- Journey times are **longer** (i.e. buses run more slowly), especially at peak times.
- Bus punctuality is **poor**.

communities and towards the convenience and profitability of bus operators, who were not permitted to cross-subsidise routes. Deregulation also broke the link between bus operations and local highway authorities: a critical relationship for an efficient, reliable and sustainable bus network.

Deregulation did lead to improvement and innovation in some areas, but the overall impact has been negative. Services were no longer joined up, and a lack of consistency led to confusion and a poor passenger experience in some cases.

Deregulation meant different operators competing for the same customers, causing problems for passengers and the wider public. The so-called 'Bus Wars' of the 1980s and 1990s saw the most lucrative routes (such as Manchester's Oxford Road corridor) flooded with buses as different operators competed for customers, often causing significant disruption in the process.

Over time, larger operators began to dominate areas, stopping new competitors entering the market. As car use continued to grow, bus journey times increased, fares rose, the number of people using the bus reduced and the bus network shrank.

This was the case across almost the whole of Great Britain, except in London, where a system of bus franchising was implemented. Thanks to additional investment, London saw patronage sustain into the 1990s, followed by 40% growth between 1999 and 2004.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [TfL, 2006](#)

## The bus today

Today, bus travel is seen by many people as a 'last resort' and, in recent years, levels of car dependency have dramatically increased. After decades of decline, Greater Manchester and many other parts of the country are caught in a vicious circle, where falling bus patronage leads to rising fares and costs of operation and a shrinking bus network.

### Our network has shrunk

In 1977, buses in Greater Manchester travelled 137 million kilometres.<sup>16</sup>

In 2022, buses in Greater Manchester travelled 85 million kilometres.

**This is a 38% decrease.**

### Length of bus routes in Greater Manchester (km) by year

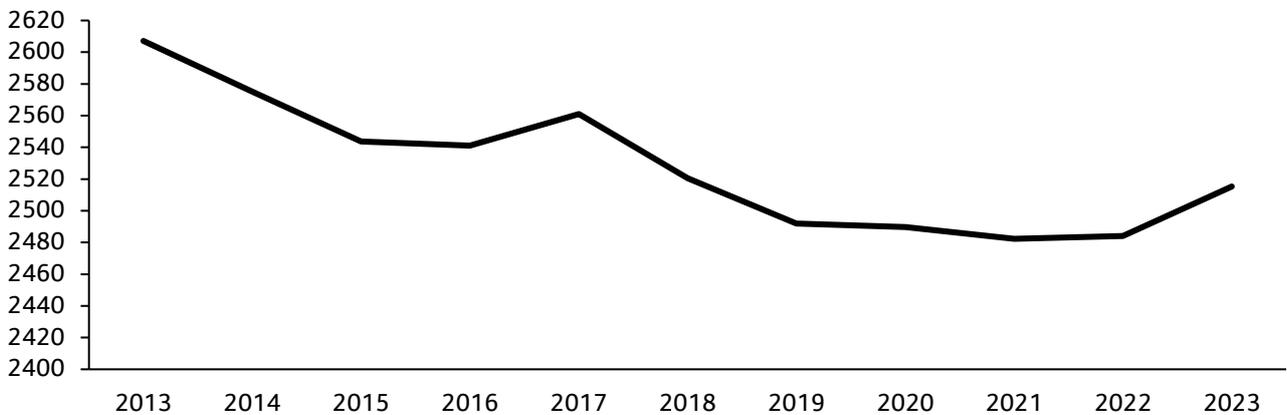
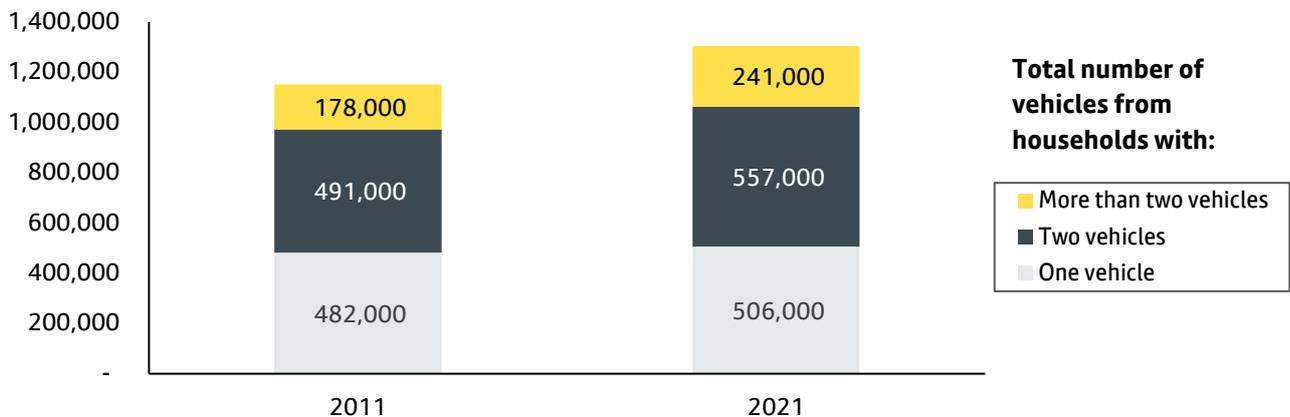


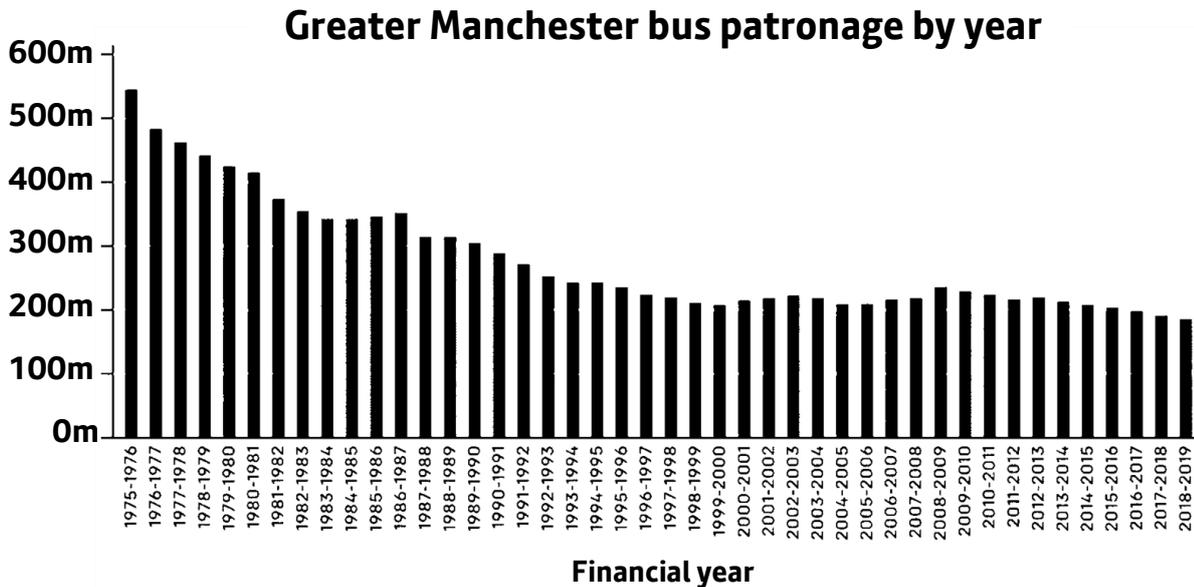
Figure 1: Over the last decade, and before, Greater Manchester's bus network has been shrinking.

### Total cars / vans available for household use in Greater Manchester census data, household level



<sup>16</sup> GMPTA/E Annual Reports and Accounts, 1987/88

**Figure 2: While personal car-keeping in Greater Manchester has increased.**



**Figure 3: Bus patronage has fallen dramatically since the 1970s.**

Local government bodies like TfGM have previously had limited ability to make improvements to the bus system. Where funding has been available, it has been necessary to use this to fill gaps in the network where commercial operators do not provide services. This job has been made harder by a lack of access to detailed data about who is using the buses, how often and on which routes.

Combined with an increase in private car use, the decline in bus use has contributed to many of the wider challenges faced by Greater Manchester:

- Decline of town centre shopping.
- Growing social and economic inequalities.
- Increased air and noise pollution.

To reverse this growing car dependency, buses need to provide attractive, reliable, accessible and affordable services across Greater Manchester to allow more people to access jobs,

### More private cars

Between 2011 and 2021, the number of cars available for household use in Greater Manchester grew by **13%**.

essential services, and other opportunities. This is particularly important for people who do not own a car, and also for car-owners for whom improved bus services could mean car ownership is no longer necessary.

For more people to use the bus, we need to improve the network, so it serves more of our residents. Historically, Greater Manchester’s bus network was much larger: in 1977, buses here travelled 137 million kilometres. Today, buses travel about 85 million kilometres every year and only 28% of our residents live within 400 metres of a high frequency bus or Metrolink service.

## Franchising – local control of bus services

In recent years, Greater Manchester has spent increasing sums of money to support and maintain the current bus network, filling gaps between commercially provided services. This is an inefficient use of funding and a poor way to plan a public transport system. Without change, we face either an unsustainable funding requirement or a diminished bus network.

To break free of this cycle, in 2021, the Mayor of Greater Manchester made the decision to implement bus franchising. Franchising is the system used to procure and co-ordinate bus services in London, and many other cities around the world.

### Challenges remain

The possibilities unlocked by franchising are exciting, but we will need to make sure people can continue to make their journeys by bus during the transition to this new system. Initially, current routes and service patterns will be maintained, providing continuity and clarity for bus users.

Years of deregulation have meant that our understanding of the current network and the commercial performance of existing services is

Under franchising, we will contract with transport operators to deliver bus services we specify, with revenue risk and public accountability remaining with the transport authority.

This system provides Greater Manchester with a new, more effective way to manage bus services. Public bodies will plan the network and customer offer, and contract operators to provide services. For the first time since deregulation, integrated timetables, ticketing and information will become a possibility and fares will be set locally, with the public sector taking on the revenue risk for the system.

limited. For the initial period following the introduction of franchising, we will focus on gathering data and better understanding the system as it stands, to ensure informed decisions can be made.

As we better understand how people are using bus services, we will have the ability (subject to funding) to develop the network further, with new routes, increased service frequencies and other improvements.

# What do we need?

## Building a successful bus system

Increased bus patronage will be vital if we are to achieve our aims for the bus system and improve its financial sustainability.

We know there are many different drivers of increased bus use, and they vary significantly

## Listening to our residents

If we are to increase ridership, the bus system will need to be responsive to bus users and non-users alike.

When we asked people from across Greater Manchester what they want their bus network to look like, they told us that they want bus journeys to be:

- More reliable
- Quicker
- Greener
- More affordable
- More integrated with other forms of public transport
- Safe and accessible<sup>17</sup>

Bus users are clear that the 'whole journey' experience needs to be improved – including information on and off the bus, customer care,

between bus users. For some, service reliability and frequency will be the most important consideration. For others, the key factor will be how direct the route is. For others still, safety and accessibility, or the overall price of the journey will be the primary concern.

ticket integration with other public transport modes, and better waiting environments.

It is important that the people who make decisions about the bus system understand the views of local people. As franchising proceeds, we will build upon existing engagement processes, and develop new ways to engage with local communities, businesses and bus users, to make sure they are involved in decision-making.

Throughout the process of developing our ambitions for the bus network, we have benefited from hearing a wide range of opinions about how it should develop. This process will continue over the coming years as our plans evolve and we will ensure that we speak to people we do not always hear from, as well as regular bus users.

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<sup>17</sup> [GMCA, 2020](#)

## Learning from others

As we develop our modern bus network, we want to learn lessons from other parts of the United Kingdom that have successfully increased patronage and service satisfaction.



By their nature, bus networks are unique to the places they serve, but we hope to use these examples to build on the success that other areas have seen. Other lessons can also be learnt from places like Brighton & Hove, Nottingham and Reading, which have maintained high bus patronage over long periods of time.

## Designing our network differently

When planning routes and timetables, public control means that profitability will no longer be the primary focus for our buses, although financial sustainability will remain a key consideration. Instead, the transport network will be planned in a way that connects people and places and helps services arrive on time in an environmentally and financially sustainable way.

For the first time, we will have the opportunity to plan services as part of an integrated network. Rather than focussing on individual routes, we will consider how passengers can reach their destination, wherever it may be, using all available transport options.

### Area-based network reviews

Rolling programme and overarching aims of network reviews are agreed by Bee Network Committee.



Following the arrival of franchised services, we will begin a programme of rolling 'Network Reviews'. These reviews will cover a geographical area of Greater Manchester and consider how its integrated transport needs can be better met by amending the bus, Metrolink, rail, demand responsive transport and active travel networks.

Before a network review can take place, the bus network will require several months to stabilise following the arrival of franchising and for data to be collected. Reviews themselves are usually expected to take approximately 12 months from inception to implementation of network changes.

Following the process set out in the diagram above, we will work with local people and elected representatives (e.g. through local Bee Network committees) to understand the needs of their area, the best use of available funding and how the bus system can support a better quality of life.

The reviews will include the application of our Public Sector Equality Duty and meaningful consideration of equality impacts, safety, accessibility and comfort. Significant changes to the network will be carefully considered and subject to assessment and consultation, with local politicians collectively agreeing how the network changes over time.

In some situations of low travel demand (e.g. in less populated locations or at less popular times of day), dynamic, demand responsive services may represent the most convenient and viable option. These services, like Local Link and Ring &

Ride, are booked by users in advance and do not run to a set timetable, supporting public transport connectivity in every part of Greater Manchester.

## Network planning guidelines

When undertaking network reviews, we will apply seven planning guidelines to deliver on the bus's potential:

- **Integrated – because bus users need access to other journey opportunities.**
  - Design the detailed specification of services to facilitate interchange with shared mobility services (e.g., cycle hire) and other bus, rail, Metrolink services and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT).
  - Align timetables with other public transport, particularly for first and last services in areas of lower frequency.
- **Comprehensive – because people need access to convenient transport at all times.**
  - Aim to provide accessibility within 400 metres of a daytime local bus service, apart from instances where there are a small number of dwellings beyond this catchment.
  - Aim to ensure users can reach employment, education and key services. Where this cannot be provided directly, suitable facilities exist to change between services or Local Link (demand responsive transport) services are considered.
- **Reliable – because people need to be able to depend on their buses.**
  - Provide sufficient running time and space within the timetable to deal with unexpected delays.
  - Avoid routes with journey times that vary significantly from day to day.
  - Provide accurate timetables that take account of expected peak period congestion.
  - Avoid lengthy services crossing multiple major intersections and other areas with frequent delays.
- **Simple – because people need to find the network easy to understand and use.**
  - Ensure that the network is as simple as possible to make it easier to use for existing and potential users.
  - Where possible, schedule services to arrive at bus stops at the same time after the hour throughout the day.
  - Avoid different routes and numbers, particularly in the evenings and on Sundays.
- **Frequent – because keeping waiting times low makes the bus more attractive.**
  - Provide a minimum frequency of 1 bus per hour on Monday to Saturday daytimes on all routes.

- Provide a minimum frequency of 5 buses per hour on Monday to Saturday daytimes on key radial and orbital routes.
- Provision of early morning and late-night services to be determined by travel patterns and user characteristics.
- Sunday and evening provision to be determined by travel patterns and user characteristics.
- **Direct – because bus users value low journey times.**
  - Aim to provide bus services (either to ultimate destinations or interchange points) that run as directly as possible.
  - Provide direct, orbital connections between district centres.
- **Cost-effective – because our bus network needs to be financially sustainable.**
  - Minimise duplication between services on common sections of route to ensure efficient use of resources.
  - Better integrate school and general bus services to provide a better service for students and other customers.

The examples overleaf show changes that could be made to the bus network when these guidelines are applied. All proposals would be subject to further analysis and formal governance.



1

### **Comprehensive**

Middlebrook Retail and Leisure Park is an important destination within Bolton district, although it is currently not well served by bus. To address this, through our Network Planning Guidelines, services between Horwich and Bolton, Wigan and Leigh would be replanned to provide a simpler service pattern, improved frequencies, and direct links to Middlebrook and adjacent employment areas where interchange opportunities would also be available.

2

### **Integrated**

The Prestwich, Radcliffe, Whitefield and Unsworth areas of Bury district are served by lengthy routes which provide links into Manchester city centre and Bury, as well as local trips within these areas, but do not integrate well with Metrolink services. To address this, through our Network Planning Guidelines, the pattern of services would be reviewed to strengthen and simplify links from the residential areas to local amenities and the Metrolink stops in Whitefield and Prestwich, whilst also providing simplified radial bus links into Manchester city centre.

3

### **Reliable**

The Chadderton, Royton and Shaw areas of Oldham are served by a network of lengthy and complex services which provide links to Manchester city centre and can be subject to on-road performance problems. To address this, through our Network Planning Guidelines, the pattern of services would be reviewed and, where possible, shortened and made more frequent to ensure that passengers continue to be able to make key links whilst also improving the reliability of the routes.

4

### **Simple**

Areas around Pendleton and Eccles in Salford are well served by buses but there are a lot of different services run by more than one operator which makes the network difficult to understand. Through our Network Planning Guidelines, this would be addressed by removing the overlap between services to make the network easier to understand.

5

### **Frequent**

There are current orbital services in Manchester and Salford which provide links to important destinations such as Salford Quays and the universities and hospitals on Oxford Road from communities including Gorton and Levenshulme, but these are not currently very frequent. Through our Network Planning Guidelines, this would be addressed by making orbital services shorter and more frequent and also extending some orbital services to provide improved links, such as from Cheetham Hill to Eccles and Trafford Park.

6

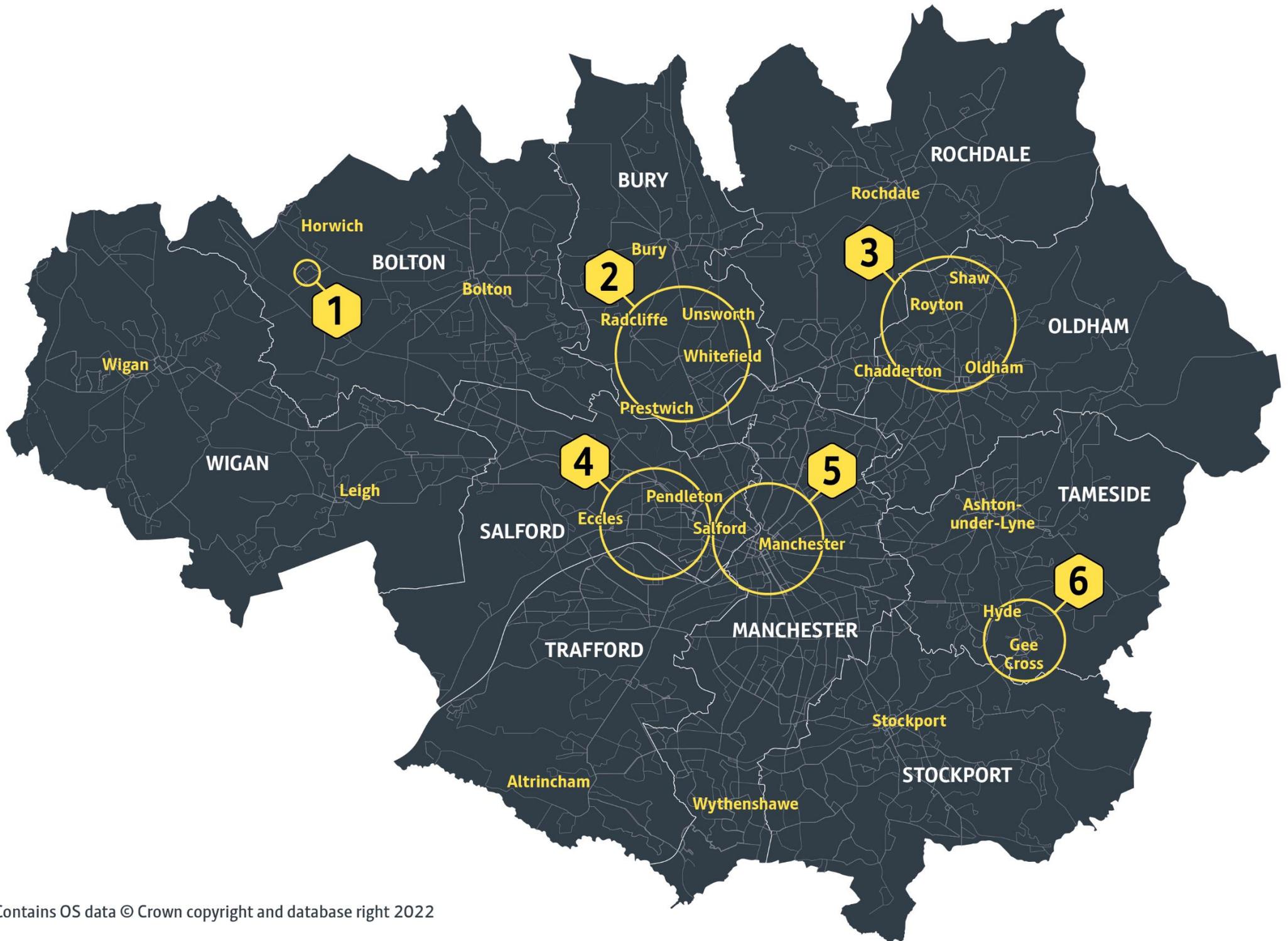
### **Direct**

The Gee Cross area of Tameside does not have access to rail stations or Metrolink stops, and journey times on bus services to Manchester city centre travel are lengthy. Through our Network Planning Guidelines, this would be addressed by revising the pattern of services along the Hyde Road corridor to serve these communities directly whilst simplifying the routing to Manchester city centre to provide more attractive journey times.

7

### **Cost-effective**

Whilst a specific, geographical example is not given here, cost-effectiveness will be an important consideration when any changes to the network are proposed.



Our network planning guidelines will help ensure that important local amenities, like hospitals, schools and shops are well-connected to their communities and integrated with other parts of the Bee Network. They will also help us to

provide enhanced orbital connectivity across Greater Manchester and ensure major new developments and strategic growth areas across the city region, like Atom Valley, are well connected to the bus network.

### Trade-offs to build a better network

The finite available funding for bus services means that the process of planning routes will require trade-offs between journey times, frequency and coverage, as shown by the example below.

Our guidelines will help us to strike the right balance, alongside local engagement and an understanding of each place, including equalities impacts.

New bus lanes and other bus priority measures can help to support improved journey times, frequency and coverage, and lessen the impact of required trade-offs. When choosing where to

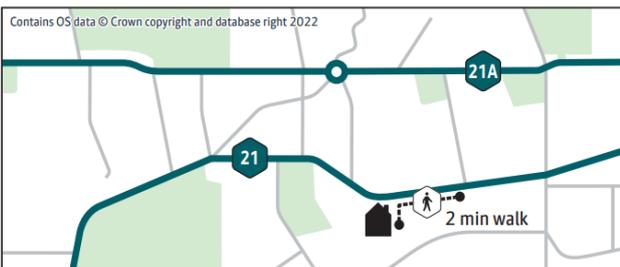
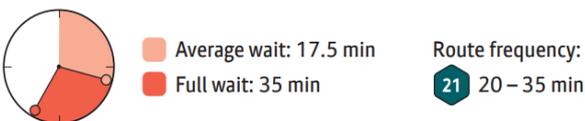
provide new services or enhance existing ones, traffic conditions and existing bus priority measures that allow for reliable journey times will be an important consideration.

Our planning guidelines will also help ensure that our bus network remains commercial. In the future, revenues from the most successful parts of the network will play an important role in supporting less commercial services that are important for connecting communities or provide links at times when demand is low.

**Increasing patronage on the parts of the network with the greatest potential for growth will therefore be an essential part of maintaining and improving services across the whole city region.**

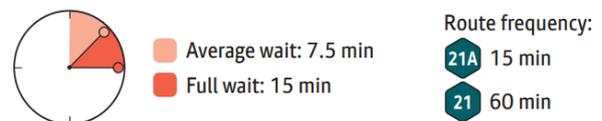
#### Minimise walking

Divide service into parallel, infrequent routes on all roads  
Walks to a bus stop are short, but people spend a lot of time waiting



#### Minimise waiting

Concentrate service into frequent routes on some roads  
Even with the longer walk, the shorter wait makes many people's journeys faster





## **Funding our buses**

The growing costs of supporting the deregulated bus network mean that, increasingly, we cannot afford not to franchise. Greater Manchester already supports almost a quarter of bus services, with this figure having risen in recent years.

Our transition to bus franchising is locally funded but supplemented by significant Government support. This includes a (reduced) extension of the support provided during the pandemic; the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), and funding for our first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The priorities and ambitions set out here are anticipated to require some additional funding to be delivered in full.

### **Government support**

To achieve our ambitions, we will need to continue to plan and manage our transport network carefully and secure more investment. Government has already demonstrated its appetite for a strengthened, long-term approach to transport funding through recent funding announcements. Greater Manchester has an excellent track record when it comes to capital programme delivery, which will help to make the

case for more funding to deliver major improvements to our bus network infrastructure.

### **Local decision making**

We also need to enable local decision makers to allocate funds across the whole network and generate revenue locally, including by identifying new funding sources. Our bus network will need to be commercial, and route specifications and fares will need to be set at a sustainable level that keeps buses attractive to customers but also supports the network we are building.

### **Developer contributions**

Given the scale of housing and employment growth expected in Greater Manchester over the next two decades, more funding will need to be secured for bus network improvements in specific areas, including through Section 106 agreements with developers. Our city regional strategies, including the emerging Places for Everyone Plan and specific strategic site masterplan documents, provide the tools for better integration between strategic land use planning and transport planning to enable this.

## Roadmap

Delivering our vision will require continued engagement with customers and stakeholders to ensure the network meets their current and future needs, while Greater Manchester meets its carbon responsibilities. Franchising is necessary, but not enough on its own - we need to invest in local highways, service integration and the customer offer alongside concessionary fares and subsidised bus services to achieve our vision.

Our envisaged delivery plan is set out below and will be expanded on as proposals are developed and funding secured.

### By September 2023

- First Bee Network bus services operate in Bolton, Wigan and parts of Bury and Salford.
- Bus fares across Greater Manchester capped at £2 for a single ticket, £5 for a day ticket and £21 for a week ticket. New integrated bus and tram tickets launched.
- Bee Network app launched for live, integrated travel information and ticket sales.
- New zero emission buses in use on routes in the west of Greater Manchester.
- Ongoing programme of bus pinch point removal across the network.

### By March 2024

- Second phase of bus franchising begins with Bee Network services operating in Rochdale, Oldham and parts of Bury and Manchester. New zero emission buses in use on routes in the north east of Greater Manchester.

### By 2025

- All Greater Manchester buses operating as part of the integrated Bee Network.
- Contactless payment with automatic capping and integrated ticketing with Metrolink.
- New zero emission buses in use on routes in the south of the city region.
- Extend our programme of bus stop access improvements to cover more stops.
- Establish a new Travel Hub at the Tyldesley stop on the Leigh Guided Busway, including improved integration between buses, cycle parking and Park & Ride facilities.

### By 2026

- Deliver new bus priority measures between Salford Crescent and MediaCityUK as part of a Quality Bus Transit Corridor

### By 2027

- Deliver new orbital bus priority measures between Bury and Rochdale, Ashton and Stockport, Wigan and Bolton and Rochdale-Oldham-Ashton as part of Quality Bus Transit Corridors.

### By 2030

- Buses will run at least every 12 minutes on key radial and orbital routes.

- 90% of the entire Greater Manchester population will be within a 30-minute frequency bus or Metrolink service on weekdays within 400m of their home.
- 500 more accessible stops will be provided - through measures such as raised kerbs and places to rest while waiting.
- The UK's first operationally carbon neutral transport interchange in Bury town centre will open, integrating bus, cycle parking and Metrolink.

### Beyond 2030

- By 2032, all buses in Greater Manchester will be zero emission and depots will be electrified.
- We will continue to resolve highway pinch points which impact on bus journey times and reliability.
- We will deliver further infrastructure improvements for additional bus priority.



# How we'll deliver better buses

This section of the Bus Strategy sets out how, with additional powers and funding, we will deliver improvements across all aspects of bus services in Greater Manchester.

If we are to meet our target, to **grow bus usage by 30% by 2030**, we need to transform our bus system, driven by innovation and new ways of thinking. The actions below are therefore split between improvements we commit to deliver by 2030, and areas for further investigation, learning from best practice elsewhere.

## More reliable and consistent journey times

Bus services in Greater Manchester should be reliable. This means sticking to timetables or, on busier routes, running so frequently that checking a timetable is not necessary. This will allow customers to plan more effectively and have confidence that their journey will take the same amount of time every day, making them more likely to use the bus again.

- **On the highest frequency routes (served by one bus every 10 minutes) we will target excess waiting times of no more than 90 seconds.** On routes where buses are less frequent, 90% will depart on time (less than one minute early and five minutes late).

One example of infrastructure that can be delivered is bus priority schemes, including bus lanes, which make bus services reliable by increasing speeds and reducing delays.

- **We aim to increase bus speeds by 9% by 2030 on key corridors.** These corridors account for around 25% of bus trips in Greater Manchester. Our target is an average speed for buses of just over 13 mph (compared to 12 mph now) on all key roads outside the M60 by 2030 (and 11.6 mph on those at least partially inside). For all other routes, with a lower concentration of bus priority interventions, we will target an average increase in bus speed of 3% to 4%.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Expect and require bus operators to meet specified schedules and adhere to timetables.
- Introduce a structured performance management regime for operators, monitoring reliability, punctuality, fleet condition and customer complaints. Financial penalties, worth up to 10% of the contract revenue, will be incurred by operators who fall below the set performance standard.

## Bus Lanes

There are 55km of bus lanes in Greater Manchester. They play a key role in helping buses avoid congestion, making them more attractive and more financially sustainable.

Bus lanes can give the impression of being “empty” while general traffic queues alongside. As a result, highway authorities are sometimes asked to remove them.

But an “empty” bus lane is not a sign of spare capacity on a highway: bus lanes enable buses to overtake queueing traffic on the approaches to junctions, which are the main locations of traffic delays.

- Maintain and increase bus priority infrastructure and defend bus lanes and other priority measures. By 2030, we will deliver on-street bus improvements across 70km of high frequency, strategic bus routes across Greater Manchester.
- Put in place systems to share road works information between highways authorities, TfGM and operators at the earliest opportunity. This would help to minimise the impact on the bus network e.g. by putting in place temporary bus priority measures.
- Where road works do take place, work with the agencies responsible to prioritise bus movements during times of disruption.
- Protect existing bus infrastructure, for example, by prohibiting parking around bus stops and ensuring this is enforced effectively.
- Optimise all existing compatible traffic signal infrastructure to delivery priority for buses.
- Deliver a new Intelligent Transport System to improve network management, control centre operations and customer information. The new platform will support more efficient responses to planned and unplanned events across the transport network, reducing congestion and its impacts.
- Deliver a bus 'pinch point' programme to tackle localised highway issues that cause delays to buses and use new tools to identify 'pinch points' on the network to support planning and service design.
- Work with highways authorities and utilities to develop a Greater Manchester Roadworks Charter to reduce delays to bus services.

**We will also explore:**

- Ways to reduce 'dwell' times at bus stops such as moving to cashless onboard ticketing or using vehicles with additional doors for the busiest services.
- Increasing the hours of bus lane operation to reflect changed travel patterns and improved frequencies.
- Introducing a lane rental scheme or similar, where agencies who wish to undertake roadworks would pay local highway authorities for the duration of their works, incentivising quicker completion.
- New ways to make better use of data and technology to maximise bus performance efficiencies.

## Comprehensive and frequent bus services

To make buses more people's first choice, we need to deliver a network with broad geographical coverage, which operates at a wide range of times of the day and week. The timing of network coverage is also critical for passengers, so increasing the frequency of services provided will be a priority.

Our network planning guidelines will prioritise access to shopping, health, education and employment locations (amongst others), although difficult decisions will sometimes need to be made about affordability and it will not always be possible to provide high frequency services to every destination.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Aim to bring at least 90% of the entire Greater Manchester population within a 30-minute frequency bus or Metrolink service on weekdays within 400m of their home. Where this is not possible, we will put in place other options to provide connectivity as part of the Bee Network e.g. demand responsive transport (like Local Link).
- Aim to run buses at least every 12 minutes on key radial and orbital routes.
- Apply our new network planning guidelines to design a bus network that facilitates access to health, education, shopping and employment locations; not just in city centres but between Greater Manchester's towns too.
- Support cross-boundary connectivity by implementing a service permit scheme that enables buses from outside Greater Manchester to operate here without undermining or diluting the values of Bee Network bus services.
- Work with developers from an early stage to embed buses and bus friendly highways within plans for major new developments. New or amended public transport services should be subsidised by the developer where the development would otherwise have inadequate public transport access.
- Work with event promoters to enhance the network during events for the benefit of visitors as well as regular users.
- Continue to work with developers and local businesses to maximise opportunities to provide better services to and from major employment sites, events and large attractions, for example, Manchester Airport.
- Develop criteria to inform decisions between providing fixed-route or demand-responsive services (e.g. Local Link and Ring and Ride) in situations of low travel demand.
- Publish a dedicated school travel policy, setting out how we will use our franchising powers to support travel for education.

### We will also explore:

- Providing services to major town and employment centres during the night, albeit on a less frequent basis than during the day. Continued connectivity and safe travel options are important for workers and users of the night-time economy, as highlighted by Unite the Union's 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign.
- Opportunities for new express, limited stop bus routes to support medium to long distance journeys on corridors where rail or Metrolink would not be feasible or affordable.
- Designing cross-city bus services where appropriate to make more efficient use of resources.

I'm getting  
ready to join the  
Bee Network



Manchester 37  
via Farnworth & Walkden 37

DIAMND

40759



MX20 KYR

## A fully integrated public transport system

Buses are at the heart of the Bee Network and franchising is key to unlocking the benefits of an integrated transport system.

To provide people with the widest possible range of journey options, buses need to be better integrated with each other, and with other modes. This includes active travel, which is

critical for supporting journeys to and from the bus stop.

As well as finding it simple to change between buses, passengers should be able to travel easily to Metrolink stops and railway stations where high bus frequencies and integrated fares, timetables and information support easy interchange.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Build bus ticketing, timetables, routes and real time information into the Bee Network app from launch and make data available to other app and website developers to build into their own systems.
- Provide a consistent ticketing offer across the Bee Network and extend integrated pay-as-you-go price capping to bus services and Metrolink.
- Invest in new multi-modal interchange facilities and travel hubs to support easy transitions from one form of transport to another.
- Install better crossings and wayfinding between modes and improve public realm and accessibility between stops.
- Build on measures we have introduced to make bus tickets more affordable and flexible by exploring options for expanding the contactless, pay-as-you-go system (currently on Metrolink) to other modes of transport, including bus services.
- Use the Bee Network app and information screens on board buses to provide updates and schedules for other parts of the transport system at relevant points in the journey e.g. when approaching an interchange.
- Share real time information with other journey planner and app providers (e.g. Google Maps, Citymapper) to ensure the best customer experience.
- Implement cross-modal timetables, aligning bus services with Metrolink and heavy rail, particularly where services are less frequent and at the end of the day.
- Ensure that bus infrastructure measures are integrated with active travel, as set out in the Streets for All Design Guide, including bus stop bypasses, cycle lanes within bus lanes and cycle parking at bus stops.
- Prioritise making cycling and walking to stops and interchanges an attractive option as we deliver Active Travel schemes.
- Ensure that Demand Responsive Transport Services, which cover some of the less densely populated areas of the City Region, continue to fill gaps which cannot be filled by timetabled services.

### We will also explore:

- Relocating bus stops closer to Metrolink stops, rail stations and cycle hire stations where it would benefit passengers.
- Opportunities to enhance integration between buses, Metrolink, rail, active travel and shared mobility through our Travel Hubs programme.

## An accessible and inclusive bus network

As the one form of public transport that covers all parts of Greater Manchester, it is critical that our bus system is accessible to everyone, whatever their background and wherever they live or work.

Bus services must be accessible for people who have a mobility or sensory impairment, a learning

### To deliver this, we will:

- Ensure the whole fleet continues to be equipped with ramps as standard to allow access for wheelchair and pushchair users.
- Install hearing induction loops and two spaces for wheelchair users on every bus as part of a comprehensive renewal programme. All new buses will be equipped with these features from day one.
- Rollout display screens and audio systems across the fleet to announce approaching stops and improve onboard passenger information.
- Create a further 500 more accessible stops through measures such as raised kerbs and places to rest while waiting.
- Make sure bus drivers and interchange staff are given the training they need to support all customers.
- Produce Bee Network journey assistance cards, in line with the Confederation for Passenger Transport template, which allow passengers to indicate a request for specific assistance to the bus driver.
- Complete the programme of access improvements for 500 bus stops (currently underway), bus stations and interchanges and extend the programme to cover more bus stops.
- Where applicable, recommend improvements to local highway authorities and franchise operators, including tactile paving and making sure stops, walkways and crossings are clear of debris/overgrown hedges.
- Tackle pavement parking to remove obstacles and help people who are walking or wheeling access stops and services.
- Embed meaningful consideration of equalities in all planning and decision making including through engagement with representative groups at an early stage to shape future service and infrastructure design.
- Work with local highway teams to enforce parking and loading restrictions so inconsiderate parking does not impede buses or customers' access.

disability or who have other access needs – for example, a parent pushing a buggy. This will mean improving both the onboard experience and - as set out in our Streets for All Strategy - on-street infrastructure, including kerb heights, bus stop markings and parking restrictions, which will need effective enforcement.



*An example journey assistance card.*

## An affordable and attractively priced bus system

Affordable fares will be critical in increasing the attractiveness of bus services and delivering a 30% increase in bus patronage.

Already, Greater Manchester's capped fares have contributed to a 12% increase in patronage between 2021/22 and 2022/23.<sup>18</sup>

Fares will need to be integrated between modes to provide customers with better value and set at the right level to safeguard the financial sustainability of the bus system. Reducing costs by improving reliability and increasing patronage will both be vital if we are to keep fares as low as possible.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Seek to maintain the £2 single, £5 daily and £21 weekly adult fare caps until at least March 2025, when the franchising process is complete.
- Make Pay As You Go ticketing available to customers from January 2025, enabling people to simply 'tap and go' across both Bus and Metrolink, with a day or weekly cap.
- Introduce a single 'hopper' fare from January 2025, allowing unlimited bus travel within a given period.
- Make paying for travel in advance much simpler, ensuring customers can choose which product best suits their needs.
- Continue to support existing national and local concessionary schemes (including Our Pass) as we transition into franchising.
- Undertake a review of proposed new concessions to support people who need access to the bus network and ensure the most effective use of limited resources.
- Over time, standardise fare levels and remove anomalies to ensure fairness and consistency across the city region. We will work to understand the implications and complexities of any change before making it.
- Continue to make the case that taking the bus is an attractive and viable option for many people and cheaper than using and maintaining a car.

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<sup>18</sup> [GMCA, 2023](#)

## A safe and secure bus network

When talking to us, people have been clear that negative perceptions of personal safety can be a key barrier to taking the bus, particularly for women and girls and people from minority groups. For our buses to work for everyone, people need to be and feel safe on board the bus, but also while walking to, and waiting at, bus stops and interchanges.

Through the GM TravelSafe Partnership, we will continue to work together with the police and operators to improve safety and security while

people are waiting for and travelling on buses, and deliver the aims of the [TravelSafe Strategy](#).

TfGM will also work continually to improve health and safety and reduce the number of accidents, incidents and near misses through performance monitoring, Bus Operator Safety Forums, and safety campaigns. This work will be undertaken in line with the development of a draft Vision Zero road danger reduction strategy for Greater Manchester.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Deploy highly visible TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers across the network to support passengers to feel safe, deter anti-social behaviour, conduct ticket checks and answer customer queries.
- Install infrastructure that will improve safety and perceptions of safety, including CCTV on buses, better lighting at stops, improved lighting and CCTV at interchanges, crossings in close proximity to stops and more real-time arrival information.
- Ensure that incident reporting methods are simple, visible and effective.
- Reiterate our zero-tolerance approach to abuse of staff on the transport network and support staff where this does occur.
- Identify opportunities to make the on-board experience and waiting environments feel safer and more comfortable.
- Use TfGM's powers to exclude specific individuals from its bus stations and interchanges and remove or restrict travel passes in response to anti-social and criminal behaviour.
- Work with operators to improve health and safety and reduce the numbers of accidents, incidents and near misses on the network.
- Work with Greater Manchester Police to ensure the transport network continues to be patrolled by uniformed and plain clothes officers.
- Uphold recommended Counter Terrorism Security best practice and other regulatory standards to support the safety and security of passengers.

### We will also explore:

- Working with Greater Manchester Police to enhance the powers available to TfGM staff through the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme and byelaws.

## An environmentally friendly bus network

As the most efficient way to carry passengers on the highway, buses are an environmentally friendly choice, although there is more that can be done to support Greater Manchester's aim of carbon neutrality by 2038 and clean up our air.

- **Our ambition is for the full electrification of Greater Manchester's bus fleets (and supporting infrastructure) by 2032**, with 50% of the fleet to be zero emission by 2027.

### Electric pioneers

Greater Manchester's **first battery electric bus** took to the streets in **1975**.

The latest number of zero emission buses in operation in Greater Manchester may be found [here](#).

### To deliver this we will:

- Accelerate the roll out of zero emission and Euro VI compliant buses. This will limit the network's impact on local air quality, reduce carbon emissions and deliver many passenger benefits including a smoother and quieter ride.
- Work with operators to monitor services' fuel efficiency and support more economical driving styles.
- Support land use changes which bring bus services closer to where people live.



## A high-quality passenger experience

Our bus system needs to provide customers with a more pleasant travelling experience, where they feel comfortable and informed, in a light and clean environment.

As an integral part of the Bee Network, bus services under franchising will also require a constant flow of marketing and communications activity to help drive revenue and patronage. In

recent years, passengers have had tens of operators and hundreds of tickets to choose from, each with differing offers.

The Bee Network bus system will have consistent standards, in line with our wider customer commitments, so users know exactly what to expect even before the bus arrives.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Require partners to keep vehicles, bus stops and associated infrastructure clean and maintained to a high standard, including by regularly disinfecting commonly touched surfaces and keeping fresh air flowing.
- Make sure the areas around stops and interchanges are appealing, including by working with partners to ensure litter bins at stops are regularly emptied and graffiti around interchanges is removed.
- Work with providers to ensure shelters are consistently maintained to a high standard and are in the most appropriate locations.
- Deliver strong branding for bus services as part of the Bee Network, which will provide a consistent look, feel and point of reference for passengers when travelling around Greater Manchester.
- Provide clear online guidance on how to use the bus network, alongside improved signage at key interchange points.
- Install Real Time Customer Information displays at 300 stops in Greater Manchester, giving people confidence that their bus will arrive.
- Develop new initiatives as part of our school travel policy to attract young people to public transport and educate them on how to use it effectively.
- Ensure advertising on buses does not disproportionately impact the customer experience and is in line with our published advertising policy.
- Provide clear route maps on the Bee Network website, showing opportunities for interchange and points of interest.
- Build additional opportunities for feedback into the Bee Network website and app so customer comments can be addressed and, where appropriate, form part of franchising contract management.

### The stop is the start

There are over **12,000 bus stops in Greater Manchester**, a third of which are equipped with shelters.

## We will also explore:

- Using named services to highlight different types of service (e.g. limited stop) strengthen pride in bus services and encourage more people to recognise and use them. Witch Way branding for route X43 between Burnley and Manchester and the historic Trans-Lancs Express name, used on a service between Bolton and Stockport, have been used successfully to market bus travel (particularly express services) to new users.
- New ways to improve the clarity and simplicity of route numbering in Greater Manchester e.g. by using different numbers to indicate the type of route or adding letters to indicate interchanges that may be made with other modes.
- Ways to make the network easier to navigate e.g. by renaming bus stops to relate to nearby landmarks rather than street names alone.
- Appropriate opportunities for commercialisation of the bus system to generate additional revenue for reinvestment into the Bee Network.



## A bus system that supports and values its employees

Bus drivers and people who work in interchanges and depots are engaged in rewarding but often challenging work. They deliver a key public service across our city region and often go beyond the expectations of their role to support

their community. Our future bus system must value them and their talent, whilst also providing them with training so they can support customers and play their part in a positive onboard experience.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Support operators to recruit more bus drivers including from groups who are currently underrepresented in the profession.
- Work with TfGM and operators to ensure bus drivers and operational staff are provided with good training opportunities to enhance the customer experience and support professional development.
- Work with staff and their representatives, including trade unions, to ensure they are suitably valued and supported.
- Ensure payment of the Real Living Wage is a requirement for all franchise holders. Would-be operators will be strongly encouraged to subscribe to the [Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter](#) to provide confidence that they are delivering high employment standards across a range of criteria.
- Organise events with drivers and staff from multiple operators, trade unions and other stakeholders to hear from workers, build a 'one network' ethos, showcase good customer service on the Bee Network and celebrate their contribution.

## A responsive bus system, accountable to local people

Under deregulation, the role of elected members in specifying and scrutinising the bus network has been minimal. Bus users themselves have also rarely had the opportunity to influence the development of their services.

Increased local decision-making power and accountability is a key part of developing the Bee

Network and will be at the heart of Greater Manchester's bus system.

The governance of our bus network will be accountable but also sufficiently dynamic and flexible to support efficient and effective operation of services.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Improve our understanding of how passengers are using services, after the transition to franchising. As knowledge of what works well develops, we will start to review the services in a place as part of structured, area based 'Network Reviews'.
- Ensure that Network Reviews form part of a transparent, rolling programme so communities understand when they can feed into the process. This could entail ongoing feedback, regular insight, and meaningful public engagement activity.
- Review bus routes in an integrated, multi-modal way at a local network level, looking at groups of routes within a given area in a holistic way, linked to other transport modes.
- Follow agreed network planning guidelines to deliver a consistent level of service across Greater Manchester, with major changes to the network being subject to local consultation or engagement.
- Roll out the Bee Network app, which will give users the chance to rate their journey upon completion, with key satisfaction indicators reported publicly and opportunities to highlight good service they have received.
- Ensure that, where things have gone wrong, bus users are encouraged to submit a complaint to ensure issues are investigated and, where appropriate, incorporated into reviews of operators' performance.
- Publish quarterly bus performance data for the network, allowing passengers and elected representatives to hold TfGM and operators to account.
- Following completion of the franchising process, consult on how well the scheme is working, in accordance with the Bus Services Act 2017.

## A stable bus network during the transition to franchising

Whilst franchising carries enormous opportunities for an improved bus service across Greater Manchester, it will not be fully implemented until January 2025. TfGM already supports over 20% of the bus network and will continue to have an important role to play in safeguarding services and coordinating between different operators.

The introduction of franchising represents a significant change to Greater Manchester's bus market and some operators may choose to change their business models in response. This,

alongside a challenging economic outlook, may mean that commercial operators reduce the frequency or even completely withdraw some services during this transitional period.

As Greater Manchester prepares to take on responsibility for the whole bus network, it is vital that disruption is minimised so bus users can still make essential journeys and are not pushed to other, less sustainable modes of travel by a reduction or total withdrawal of their services.

### To deliver this, we will:

- Subject to funding, seek to replace withdrawn services at current frequencies (except for minor variants where there is no negative impact on network coverage). Where reductions are being made to service frequencies, these should be retained at current levels wherever possible.
- Work closely with local authorities and bus operators to plan roadworks and diversions and ensure bus movements are prioritised through any disruption.



# Our destination

The bus network is a critical element of our city region's public transport system and our vision to improve it and broaden its appeal is clear. We intend to deliver a better bus system for everyone in Greater Manchester.

Our vision will not be delivered overnight, although improvements in reliability, service quality and integration should be felt as new franchised services are rolled out and as operators work to meet the new standards that have been put in place.

Over the coming years, we will need to work with national and local partners to put in place the resources and capacity to deliver on this ambitious Bus Strategy. We will use indicators to measure our progress against these long-term objectives and the improvements that underpin them.

By 2030, Greater Manchester will seek to deliver a bus network that provides an improved experience for bus users, much greater accountability for elected members and the wider public, and greatly increased bus patronage, with associated social, economic and environmental benefits.





**BEE NETWORK**



Transport for  
Greater Manchester