



Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 24th July 2025
Subject: Greater Manchester Lane Rental
Report of: Peter Boulton, Network Director Highways, TfGM

Purpose of Report

This report provides the committee with information about the development of the existing Greater Manchester Road Activities Permit Scheme (GMRAPS) to include a proposed Lane Rental element and sets out proposed next steps accordingly.

Recommendations:

The Committee are requested to:

1. Note the contents of the report and endorse the work currently being undertaken in relation to the development of proposals for a Lane Rental Scheme in Greater Manchester.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

Insert text

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion		
Health		
Resilience and Adaptation		
Housing		
Economy		
Mobility and Connectivity	G	
Carbon, Nature and Environment		
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		Roadworks will be done in much shorter periods and at the least busiest times which will reduce the amount of queuing traffic in congestion and therefore reduce the amount of Nox and CO2 emissions
Further Assessment(s):		Carbon Assessment
G	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.
R	Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	RR Negative impacts overall.

Carbon Assessment

Overall Score				
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation		
New Build residential	N/A			
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A			
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A			
Transport				
Active travel and public transport	N/A			
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access				
Access to amenities	N/A			
Vehicle procurement	N/A			
Land Use				
Land use	N/A			
No associated carbon impacts expected.	High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

Risk Management

Should a Lane Rental Scheme be introduced, there is a risk that changes in work volumes and/or behaviour by Promoters may result in income lower than the costs to administer a lane rental scheme, however, the likelihood of this risk occurring is considered very low.

Legal Considerations

The lane rental powers are contained within Section 74a of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and the relevant regulations, Street Works (Charges for Occupation of the Highway)(England) Regulations 2012. The power for highway authorities to implement and operate lane rental in England is subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The income and its subsequent is detailed in the report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

Not applicable

Number of attachments to the report: 3

Appendix One - Proposed Lane Rental Streets in GM

Appendix Two - Percentage of Highway Network Selected for Lane Rental

Appendix Three - Works on the Proposed Lane Rental Network in 2023.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Not applicable

Background Papers

24 October 2024 – BNC Highway Network Management

Tracking/ Process

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

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency? No

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In 1991 the New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA) placed a duty on the District Councils, as highway authorities, to coordinate activities of all kinds on the highway under the control of that Authority.
- 1.2. The Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA) and associated secondary legislation widened the NRSWA coordination duty. The scope of this increased the overall duty to secure the expeditious movement of all traffic and Part 3 of the TMA allows for an Authority to introduce a permit scheme to deliver this duty.
- 1.3. In 2013 the GMCA introduced the Greater Manchester Road Activities Permit Scheme (GMRAPS) across all ten Local Authorities. Permit schemes require utility companies and highway authorities to apply for permission before carrying out works on the whole highway network. Highway authorities are not charged for permits under a permit scheme because they are the regulating body responsible for managing and coordinating roadworks on their own network. Charging themselves a fee would be a circular transaction with no financial or administrative benefit. Permit schemes:
 - **Improve coordination:** They help authorities schedule and manage works more effectively, reducing overlap and congestion.
 - **Charge modest fees:** Authorities can charge for permits, but the fees are generally low and are meant to cover administrative costs.
 - **Focus on compliance:** They encourage better planning and adherence to agreed timelines, with penalties for overruns or non-compliance.
- 1.4. Evaluation of the GMRAPS demonstrates that the permit scheme is delivering a more effective network management service across the region, through the increased capability to control how work is planned and undertaken across the network.
- 1.5. Lane rental is intended to complement the operation of a permit scheme, by providing a financial incentive, as a daily lane rental charge, to encourage organisations to work outside of specified times on specified streets. i.e. the busiest sections of the network at the busiest times (peak hours) to avoid charges. Lane Rental Schemes:

- **Incentivise efficiency:** The high daily charges encourage quicker completion of works and off-peak scheduling.
- **Target congestion hotspots:** They apply only to the busiest roads and times, where disruption has the greatest impact.
- **Generate revenue:** Surplus funds from lane rental can be reinvested into road improvements and innovation.

1.6. Highway authorities must pay lane rental charges when they carry out their own roadworks on designated lane rental roads because of the principle of parity, a core concept in the scheme's design. The lane rental scheme is designed to treat all works promoters equally, whether they are utility companies or the highway authority itself. This ensures:

- **Fairness** in how charges are applied.
- **Transparency** in decision-making and planning.
- **Accountability** for public sector works just as much as private sector ones.

1.7. A lane rental scheme should not be considered a tax for working on the highway. The duty to manage the road network and secure the expeditious movement of traffic is predicated on enabling work to maintain and upgrade vital infrastructure, including roads, utility services and housing, whilst limiting the impact of this work to the road user.

1.8. There are currently four authorities with operational lane rental schemes, Transport for London (TfL) (from June 2012); Kent County Council (from May 2013); Surrey County Council (from April 2021) and West Sussex County Council (from December 2022).

1.9. In April 2015, the Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned research evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the two-pioneer lane rental schemes within TfL and Kent. This evaluation determined that both schemes had been implemented effectively and monitoring data from both Kent County Council and TfL showed that a lane rental scheme had been successful in reducing disruption and the associated costs of congestion.

1.10. The report from this evaluation, Street Works Lane Rental Evaluation, published by the DfT in 2015, summarises observations from both TfL and Kent County Council on the benefits of a lane rental scheme. The overall observations are:

- Improvement in journey times and journey time reliability on lane rental routes for TfL, during a period with a general trend towards a decrease across the network as a result of increased traffic flows;
- Reduction in total serious and severe disruption (42%) on TfL's lane rental streets, compared with other non-lane rental streets;
- Increase in the number of collaborative sites for TfL (81%), resulting in a decrease in the percentage of works taking place during peak times, with an increase in works taking place out-of-hours and overnight; and
- Slight reduction in overall durations of work.

1.11. In summary, the evaluation stated that lane rental has helped to reinforce and encourage behavioural change, but that it is only one of several factors and that internal drivers, such as the need to reduce costs and improve customer service, and the influence of the regulator are also important factors which have already led to Promoters exploring new ways of working and investing in innovation.

1.12. In 2024 Surrey County Council made available a lane rental scheme monitoring report to show progress of their scheme within the initial two years and to provide any indicators of change, outcomes or impacts.

1.13. This report provided more granular qualitative analysis on the outcomes from a lane rental scheme, comparing works under a lane rental scheme with pre-scheme works. Through this report Surrey demonstrated clear benefits from the initial two years of scheme operation. Key results from this report include:

- A reduction from 13% to 9% (of total) duration of work impacting the carriageway at peak times;
- A trend for decreasing work durations, especially for shorter duration minor work and unplanned Immediate (urgent or emergency) work;
- Lower durations and work at peak times compared to other traffic-sensitivity designated streets (without lane rental); and
- Positive compliance to the scheme by Promoters (97% pass rate of all onsite inspections).

2. Performance

- 2.1. GM experiences some of the highest congestion levels in England, with average delays on local A roads of 70 seconds per vehicle mile (spvm) compared to the national average of 46 seconds. The City of Manchester has even higher delay of 88 spvm which places it in the top 10 most congested authorities outside London.
- 2.2. Analysis of works on the lane rental streets for the period 2021 – 2023 shows a yearly average of 4,889 (83% of total) planned works and 967 (17% of total) unplanned immediate (urgent or emergency) works were undertaken on the lane rental network. The majority of these works involved an impact to vehicular traffic, but they did include 152 (2.6%) works impacting pedestrian traffic flow on lane rental streets applied to the footway.
- 2.3. These works amounted to a yearly average of 27,039 total days (74 years) of occupation per year – 21,125 (78%) days for planned works and 5,856 (22%) days for unplanned works. This equates to a work starting every 90 minutes per day during the year.
- 2.4. Despite effective coordination through the GMRAPS, 47% of these planned works and 69% of unplanned works on the carriageway involve some occupation at peak times, thereby impacting traffic on the busiest streets at the busiest times.
- 2.5. Analysis of work start times shows that 34% of planned and 47% of unplanned short duration (<6 hours) works start in the peak periods, where these works could easily be scheduled to start outside of peak periods. Additionally, only 21% of planned works under 48 hours in duration are undertaken at weekends (on streets without a proposed charge at weekends).
- 2.6. The impact of this work to society as a result delays, increased vehicle operating costs, diversions or idling (queuing) at works has been estimated at over £100m¹ a year, and around 60,000 tonnes of carbon emissions, equivalent to the greenhouse gas emissions produced by travelling 50 million miles in a typical car.

¹ £100m in 2025 prices (£70 million in 2010 prices) calculated based on the nature of works undertaken in Greater Manchester between 2021 and 202 using QUEues And Delays at ROadworks (QUADRO) modelling.

3. Proposals for a Greater Manchester Lane Rental Scheme

- 3.1. At the June 2025 meeting of the GMCA, in addition to agreeing the allocation of additional highways maintenance funding, Leaders agreed to jointly review Highways Network Management more generally, with a view to putting place more integrated arrangements. The review will include areas such as:
- how highways maintenance, road works and utility companies work can be better co-ordinated, including a review of the Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme (GMRAPS);
 - a review of local resources, including workforce capacity and delivery models, given the competition for capacity from within GM, TfGM and other agencies, including National Highways;
 - a benchmarking exercise of practices elsewhere, including in London;
 - the prioritisation applied to the condition of highways, pathways and transport, relative to segregated cycle lanes, major bus priority works and other large capital schemes; and
 - consideration to the broader interpretation and use of Active Travel funding so that it could be used for making pavements, pathways, rights of way etc safer to use.
- 3.2. This review included consideration of the introduction of a Greater Manchester Lane Rental Scheme.
- 3.3. It is considered that the introduction of such a scheme would support the city regions aspirations for more integrated arrangements being put in place and collaboration across Local Authorities to support Highways Network Management.
- 3.4. To establish the wider impact and benefit of a lane rental scheme for GM, extensive analysis of traffic flow, speeds and congestion across the region was reviewed to select the busiest sections and busiest times to apply lane rental.
- 3.5. The proposed lane rental network is shown in Appendix One and comprises of 787 streets covering 855 kilometres, equating to 9.5% of the total GM highway network. Guidance issued by the Government states *DfT expects lane rental to cover between 5% and 10% of an authority's network ... this is 5% to 10% of the total length of streets that are maintainable at public expense in an authority's area.*

- 3.6. Proposed timings for when lane rental charges would apply are based on aggregated profiles for peak traffic flow and delay across GM, whilst allowing windows for interpeak, overnight and weekends for Promoters to undertake their works without charge. All emergency works and immediate responses would be subject to a limited access period without a charge being applied to the works promoter. The length any emergency access period is to be determined, but typically such periods are two days.
- 3.7. For the proposed selected streets, it is proposed that charges would apply to all works that impact vehicular traffic flow on the carriageway, in addition to the footway for 36 streets around key areas of high pedestrian traffic. The percentage of network selected for the proposed lane rental varies per district and is shown in Appendix Two.

4. Operational Changes

- 4.1. The operation of GMRAPS involves TfGM operating as central administration, initially receiving the applications and then forwarding onto the individual Districts once any initial checks or triage is complete.
- 4.2. Should a lane rental scheme be introduced, it is proposed that TfGM would continue in this central administration function, whilst also undertaking compliance inspections on the lane rental network. This is to ensure parity of approach for both streetworks (statutory undertakers) and roadworks (Local Authorities).
- 4.3. Additional resource will be required to administer the scheme; the costs of the additional resource can be recovered from lane rental income. Additional resource may include posts relating to coordination, inspection and reconciliation of payments relating to charges.

5. Finance

- 5.1. The regulations prescribe a maximum daily lane rental charge of £2,500. Guidance states *“that it will not be sufficient for authorities simply to apply the maximum charge level for all times of charging periods without clear justification”*.
- 5.2. Lane rental charges should therefore bear relation to the impact that works have on society. The estimated average cost of a day of works which involved some carriageway incursion on the proposed lane rental network is £5,600 (2025 prices). For works requiring a road closure, the impact was a much higher £10,925 per day

of works, whilst works requiring a lane closure (thereby limiting traffic flow) had an impact of £4,775 per day.

- 5.3. The proposal is therefore to set lane rental charges across GM at £2,500 per day for a road closure and £1,500 per day for a lane closure (traffic control limiting the flow of vehicular traffic). Whilst the social cost impact far exceeds the charge proposed for works which do not require road closure, the differentiation in charge has been made in order to provide incentive to Promoters not to close the road unless it is essential for the safe delivery of the work. This should also hopefully incentivise different approaches to the planning and delivery of work in consideration of the impact and use of traffic control.
- 5.4. The lane rental scheme also applies to work on the footway (36 streets) and quantifying the cost impact to pedestrian traffic on these sections of the network is more difficult. Transport for London (TfL) operate a lane rental scheme across the strategic network in London that includes footway with a daily charge of £350. In consideration to this and the assumed levels of pedestrian traffic within GM, being comparable to London, a similar £350 daily charge is proposed.
- 5.5. Potential income from lane rental charges, where Promoters do not avoid working at the designated lane rental times, is estimated using analysis of historic works. This estimation considers current ways of working, including the use of permit conditions for timing to ensure works do not impact traffic at peak times, together with the work characteristics, e.g. location, traffic management and duration.
- 5.6. This estimation included further changes, i.e. benefits, to be derived from lane rental, which include, but are not limited to:
 - Shorter duration work starting and finishing outside of lane rental times;
 - Working moving to off-peak times, such as weekends or overnight;
 - Changes in the use of traffic management at peak times to remove, or limit, any impact to traffic flow;
 - Discounts for less disruption ways of working, such as collaboration between Promoters or more efficient traffic management arrangements; and
 - Reduction in work duration to limit the days of work with charge.
- 5.7. The estimated income from charges, based on analysis of adjusted historic works, is between £10M and £13M per year across GM. Results of this analysis are

predicated on historic work and also potential behaviour changes, and are therefore sensitive to many different influences, especially volume of work and changes in Promoter behaviour.

- 5.8. In consideration to road works, those undertaken by, or on behalf of the Local Authorities and by TfGM, the Guidance states *an authority will, therefore, be expected to demonstrate that the same standards and charges apply to their own activities and works and provide an undertaking to operate lane rental charges on all specified works that meet the criteria, including those by the promoters of their own work.*
- 5.9. As such, there is a potential charge for road works which is estimated at between £3.5M and £4.4M per year. The majority of these charges are for longer duration planned works (73% of total charges), such as major schemes, and unplanned reactive maintenance (18% of total charges). Typically, shorter duration routine maintenance is undertaken outside of peak times or does not require a permit.
- 5.10. The estimation for roadworks contains charges for licences issued by the Council, typically for Developer works (Highways Act section 278) which would be fully recoverable from these organisations. Taking these into consideration, the reduced charges for roadworks is between £3M and £4M per year.
- 5.11. It should be noted that the volume of recorded road works in Street Manager is low for some authorities, and therefore the estimate may not include all road works that could be subject to a charge.
- 5.12. In relation to the use of income from lane rental charges, regulations state “*an Approved Authority may deduct from charges received from undertakers pursuant to these Regulations, its reasonable costs of operating and evaluating the effectiveness of the scheme under which they are paid.* Additionally, guidance states that a *separate permit fee cannot be raised where an activity is liable to a lane rental charge.*”
- 5.13. Based on the estimated income from lane rental charges, it is assumed that the additional costs to administer the scheme, together with any loss of income from permit fees, would be fully recovered and there will be no cost burden to the either TfGM or an individual Authority. There is a risk that changes in work volumes and/or behaviour by Promoters may results in income lower than the costs to administer a

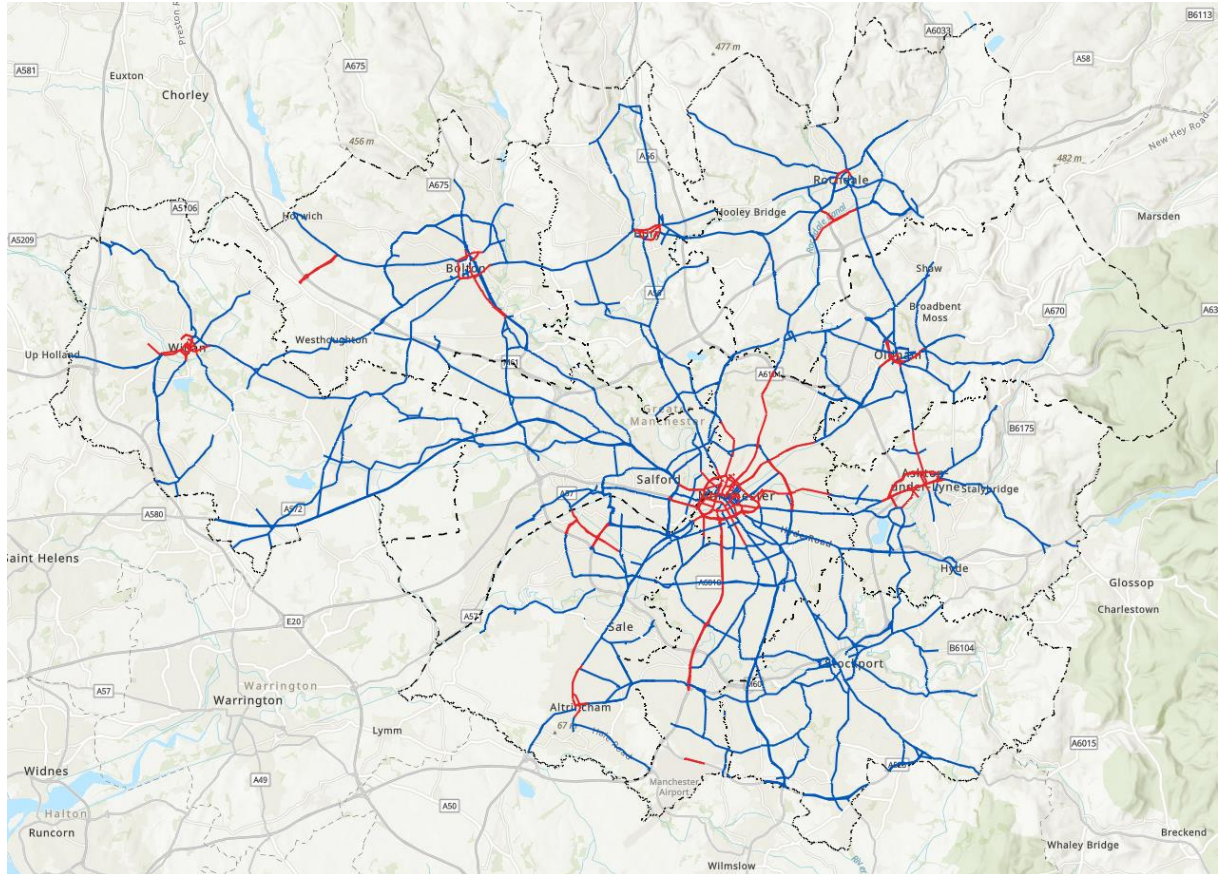
lane rental scheme, however, the likelihood of this risk occurring is considered very low.

- 5.14. For the application of surplus funds, the regulations state *“an Approved Authority must apply the net proceeds [after the deduction of reasonable costs] for purposes intended to reduce the disruption and other adverse effects caused by street works.* Examples of use are set out in guidance. Additionally, the guidance states *the government has announced that it will amend regulations to require authorities to spend at least 50% of surplus lane rental funds on road maintenance. It is expected that this change will come into effect later in 2025. This guidance will be amended when the changes have been made”.*
- 5.15. Based on the potential income this would result in up to an additional £6M of available funds for highway maintenance annually for the GM region.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The power to introduce Lane Rental Schemes sits with the 10 GM local highway authorities. There is a statutory process to follow which includes public consultation. Subject to the outcome of that consultation, the highway authorities must then make an application to the Secretary of State for permission to operate a lane rental scheme. In that regard, DfT guidance restricts applications to two periods of the year, those being spring (April) and autumn (October).
- 6.2. The DfT carried out a consultation in December 2024, as part of the Government's devolution promise, this consultation sought views on whether or not the power to approve lane rental scheme applications should be devolved from the Secretary of State to Mayors of Strategic Authorities (the preferred option) or to highway authorities. At the time of writing this paper no outcome of the consultation has been published.
- 6.3. TfGM officers are currently liaising with the individual GM highway authorities to discuss the proposals and, in turn, identify the governance requirements should local authority officers wish to make recommendations to their decision makers to consult on the Lane Rental Scheme proposals. Further updates will be provided to the committee in due course.

Appendix One - Proposed Lane Rental Streets in GM



Monday to Friday 07:00 – 09:30 and 15:00 – 19:00, Saturday 10:00 – 18:00 and Sunday 10:00 – 18:00



Monday to Friday 07:00 – 09:30 and 15:00 – 19:00

Appendix Two - Percentage of Highway Network Selected for Lane Rental

District	Streets	Length (Km)	% of total (RDL) length
Bolton	63	85	8.7%
Bury	59	61	10.5%
Manchester	149	161	11.6%
Oldham	58	65	8.0%
Rochdale	53	66	8.6%
Salford	71	85	10.7%
Stockport	103	95	9.8%
Tameside	64	58	7.8%
Trafford	71	72	8.8%
Wigan	96	105	9.0%
Total	787	855	9.5%

