

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: Friday 22nd August 2025

Subject: Business Case Development for Rapid Transit Lines in GM

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

Purpose of Report

The report sets out the next steps for potential major fixed track investments in support of GM's growth ambition, and as part of the GM Integrated Pipeline. Further to the July 2024 Draft GM Rapid Transit Strategy, this report sets out development progress for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines in Greater Manchester. Emerging priorities for other lines/extensions for consideration are also identified.

Recommendations:

GMCA is requested to:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Endorse the next steps.

Contact Officers

Martin Lax	Transport Strategy Director, TfGM	Martin.Lax@tfgm.com
Luke Bramwell	Head of Rapid Transit Development, TfGM	Luke.Bramwell@tfgm.com

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The GMCA is requested to, noting the positive impacts for equalities, carbon and sustainability:

1. Approve the draft of the Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy and the commencement of a period of engagement as part of the wider engagement on refreshing our Local Transport Plan.
2. Note any recommendations or feedback from the Bee Network Committee.

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	Metrolink Phase 3, an exemplar of the types of rapid transit line that could result from the business case development process, provided the following >10% door-to-door improvement in public transport access for the following proportions of the GM population: 18.2% for employment (rising 30.5% of the 10% most deprived communities); 18.8% further education (27.7%); 19.8% for healthcare (29.5%).
Health	G	Metrolink Phase 3 was estimated for the financial year 2019/20 to have removed 3.2 million car trips and 38.8 million car kilometres from the roads, equating to the removal of 12.8 tonnes of NOx nitrous oxides. The greatest mode share for accessing rapid transit stops and stations is for walking, wheeling and cycling: rapid transit promotes regular active travel. Formal business case development will consider how active travel infrastructure and services could be co-delivered with rapid transit. Evidence from the Wythenshawe-specific evaluation showed strong evidence that Metrolink Phase 3 had enhanced the social experiences of residents and Metrolink has had strong off-peak (shopping, leisure) traffic from day one and has Concessionary arrangements in place - all contributing to lessening social isolation.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	New, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines aim at the 2040 'Right Mix' and 2038 carbon neutral target. As business case development of individual schemes progresses, resilience and adaptation will be considered at the appropriate time as part of the design process along with safety and security (including crime and antisocial behaviour) and green and blue infrastructure. Measures on NOx and CO2 for Metrolink Phase 3 are given above in 'Health' and below in 'Carbon, Nature and Environment' respectively, and TfGM has committed to PAS 2080.
Housing	G	Business case development will consider land use planning, bringing forward residential density around rapid transit stops and stations, and serving new-build residential developments including those as part of Places for Everyone. Statistics on Metrolink Phase 3's contribution to door-to-door improvements in accessibility have been given in sections above. House price increases around rapid transit stops and stations have been recorded through monitoring and evaluation of previous schemes.
Economy	G	Business case development will focus on good economic growth, including improving transport connectivity to growth locations. Any resulting schemes would lead to direct employment (e.g. construction) and then to better access to employment once in service. It is anticipated that any jobs eventually created (particularly in any rapid transit construction) would be 'good jobs' and that better rapid transit would itself attract 'good jobs' to GM. GM's growth locations themselves embody an industrial strategy regarding innovation, R&D and the knowledge economy. Metrolink is thought to have played a part in inward investment in GM, but as acknowledged by the Phase 3 evaluation, direct evidence / linkages are difficult - statistics on employment and education accessibility have been given above.

Mobility and Connectivity	G	Business case development will focus on provision of new transport links (Metrolink's statistics regarding removal of car-kilometres from roads have been given above) to improve connectivity (inc. Regional Centre, wider city-region, and growth locations) and provide an attractive alternative to driving in pursuit of the 'Right Mix' vision of accommodating GM's growth with zero net growth in motor vehicle traffic. Supporting links with active travel and TfGM's 'Travel Hubs' approach for rapid transit stops and stations (which involves wider consideration of the first and last mile including shared transport) will be considered as part of business case development at the appropriate time. Whilst some potential proposals for new/extended/converted rapid transit lines could potentially involve some street-running (use of roadspace) the main emphasis is on making better use of existing and former infrastructure corridors and segregated running where possible. The intention is to specify and procure 'Next Generation Vehicles' for Metrolink to provide adequate capacity for the existing network and new, extended and/or converted lines.					
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	Metrolink Phase 3 estimates in regard to NOx are given above under the Health section, as an example of what rapid transit expansion can achieve. Construction and operation may generally produce emissions, run-off, light pollutants, noise pollutants, impacts on natural carbon sinks and visual amenity - but individual schemes would be expected to be designed to relevant environmental standards and be subjected to EIA etc. to demonstrate that these impacts have been properly mitigated. Standards in place for Biodiversity Net Gain mean that the overall impact of any schemes is expected to be positive. It is anticipated that given the door-to-door public transport accessibility improvements described above for Metrolink Phase 3, schemes would generally improve the local community's access to greenspace (although certain schemes may have specific impacts on local greenspace, these impacts being managed and appropriately mitigated through the EIA process etc.) Metrolink Phase 3 was estimated for the financial year 2019/20 to have removed 3.2 million car trips and 38.8 million car kilometres from the roads (6,700 tonnes of CO2 equivalent) as an example of rapid transit's potential and TfGM is committed to PAS 2080.					
Consumption and Production	G	Building more rapid transit lines would result in construction waste, but this is expected to be managed in line with construction industry norms. TfGM is committed to PAS 2080 (with carbon reduction acting as a proxy for minimising waste) and has an Environmental Management System. With regard to resource efficiency, the aim is for new, extended and/or converted lines to make best use of our existing infrastructure.					
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target	Rapid transit lines are clearly aimed at both the Right Mix vision and the 2038 Carbon Neutral target itself. The potential for carbon emission reductions achievable by rapid transit is illustrated in statistics given for Metrolink Phase 3 above in 'Carbon, Nature and Environment') - estimated for the financial year 2019/20 to have removed 3.2 million car trips and 38.8 million car kilometres from the roads (6,700 tonnes of CO2 equivalent). Business case development will take into account embodied carbon as well as carbon saved through modal shift. TfGM is committed to PAS 2080. Business case development will take into account climate change mitigation measures at the appropriate stage.						
Further Assessment(s): Equalities Impact Assessment and 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	N/A			
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A	N/A			
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A	N/A			
Transport					
Active travel and public transport		See Impacts Questionnaire, particularly the sections 'Health' for active travel in relation to rapid transit and 'Mobility and Connectivity' for public transport and shared transport.			
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A				
Access to amenities		See Impacts Questionnaire, particularly the sections 'Health' for active travel in relation to rapid transit and 'Mobility and Connectivity' for public transport and shared transport.			
Vehicle procurement		Specification and procurement of Metrolink 'Next Generation Vehicles' with both tram and tram-train variants will result in new zero-emission vehicles; embodied carbon will be fully considered throughout the process in line with TfGM's commitment to PAS 2080.			
Land Use					
Land use	N/A	Business case development will consider land use planning, bringing forward residential density around rapid transit stops and stations, and serving new-build residential developments including those as part of Places for Everyone. Rating set to N/A as ratings have been presented under the 'Transport' heading.			
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

At a strategic level, to not sequence the business case development for new, extended and converted rapid transit lines as part of a rolling pipeline approach would risk constraining the future growth of Greater Manchester by failing to articulate the case for major investment in the rapid transit system – both to provide adequate capacity for background growth and to stimulate further growth through improved connectivity.

Legal Considerations

The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 was the subject of an Integrated Assessment, covering matters such as Strategic Environmental Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment, and a statutory public consultation. The contents of the Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy (July 2024) and subsequent work to sequence development will form part of a refreshed Local Transport Plan that will again undergo Integrated Assessment and statutory public consultation. Individual schemes will be developed in line with applicable regulations (e.g. Environmental Impact Assessment).

Financial Consequences – Revenue and Capital

Financial consequences in terms of both revenue and capital for the ongoing options development and business case development described in this report are managed through annual budgets and the periodic Transport Infrastructure Pipeline papers to the Bee Network Committee. The CRSTS1 funding allocation for the options development and business case development work described in this report is £27.4 million between April 2022 and March 2027. The capital funding requirement for delivery of any new line or extension scheme is significantly in excess of this – for example, the cost of the 5.5km Trafford Park Line Extension was £350 million at the time of its delivery around a decade ago. Capital funding requirements for delivery of any of the new line or extension schemes in this report will be determined and set out through the business case process.

Number of attachments to the report: 1

[Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy \(July 2024\)](#)

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

12 July 2024 – GMCA The Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy –
Trains, Trams, Busways and Beyond for the Bee Network

Key Decision

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

Yes

Exemption from call in

N/A

Bee Network Committee

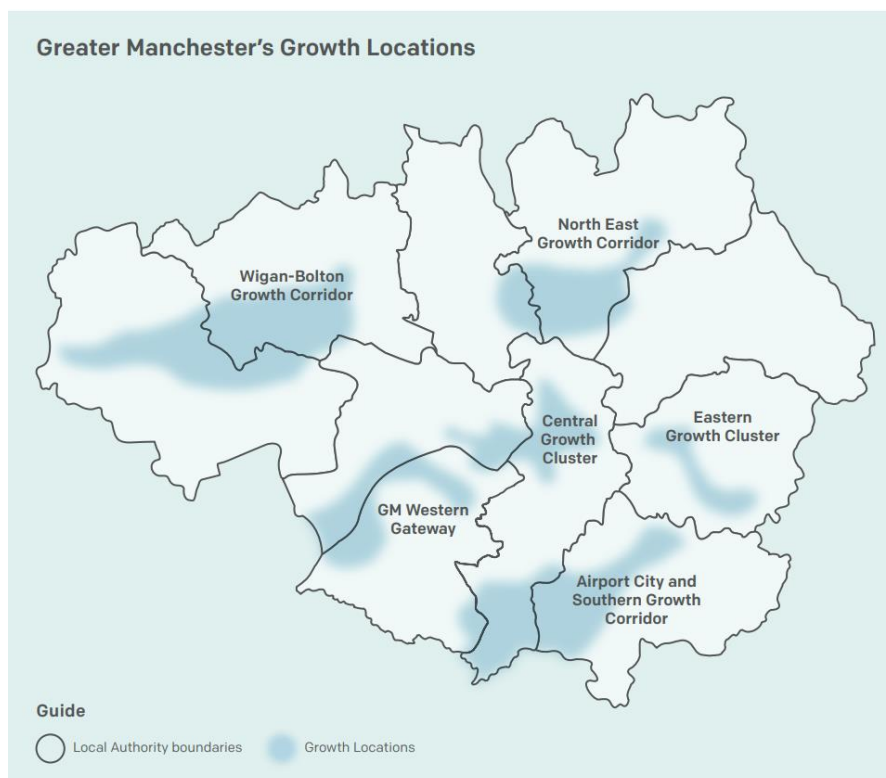
The report will be considered by the Bee Network Committee.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Greater Manchester Strategy sets out the strategic approach to growth for the city-region, and Places for Everyone is the adopted spatial plan for nine of the Greater Manchester local authorities, setting out 280,000 new residents, 175,000 new homes and 100,000 new jobs by 2039.
- 1.2 This development is focussed on the Growth Locations identified on the map below. All of the rapid transit 'new lines and extensions' schemes set out as emerging priorities in the [Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy \(July 2024\)](#) serve at least one of GM's Growth Locations.



Greater Manchester Growth Locations

- 1.3 In parallel, as set out in the Local Transport Plan at least 50% of journeys are to be made by walking, cycling and public transport by 2040. This will enable sustainable growth as part of the 'Right Mix' for GM. Rail and Light Rail must double the trips they carry by 2040 as part of the pathway to the Right Mix.
- 1.4 As well as new lines and extensions, providing additional capacity on the existing Metrolink network must play an important part in enabling growth.
- 1.5 All of the work described in this report is to be undertaken in conjunction with Local Authorities (and Mayoral Development Corporations) to ensure regeneration and broader opportunities are at the heart of the business cases.

2. Future Rapid Transit as part of an Integrated Pipeline

- 2.1 As set out to GMCA in May 2025, Greater Manchester is bringing forward a 10-year Integrated Pipeline to support the new Greater Manchester Strategy and associated Growth & Prevention Delivery Plan – and to underpin our Local Growth Plan with government, aligned with national strategies for industry, infrastructure and skills. It brings together previously separate pipelines for transport, housing, innovation and the low-carbon economy, to allow effective prioritisation and sequencing of delivery.
- 2.2 The [Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy \(July 2024\)](#) – noted and commented on by BNC and GMCA in July 2024 – set out the ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ for sustaining, growing and transforming the rapid transit network in GM. Rapid transit is defined as being fast and frequent mass transit – including suburban train services, tram services, and busway services.
- 2.3 Since July 2024, engagement on the Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy has formed part of wider engagement on the refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy and GM’s statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP). This engagement will continue as the LTP moves to and through its statutory consultation process. Rather than having many separate strategies, the contents of the Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy will be absorbed for clarity and simplicity into one consolidated LTP – comprising a refreshed LTP Strategy and an LTP Delivery Plan (2027-2037).
- 2.4 The Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy set out three critical steps to grow and transform our rapid transit system:
- move forward Bee Network Rail Integration. Plans have since been published setting out the integration of 8 lines by 2028 in three tranches (2026, 2027 and 2028) with the remaining rail lines to be part of the Bee Network by 2030;
 - continue developing and delivering in-flight schemes such as Golborne Station, Access for All, Bury Interchange Redevelopment and Metrolink Next Generation Vehicles / Tram-Train Pathfinder. All of these schemes have progressed since July 2024;
 - further prioritisation of the emerging priorities for new, extended and/or converted rapid transit lines and additional capacity, identified in the Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy July 2024 – the subject of this report.

3. Additional Rapid Transit Capacity

3.1 The Metrolink fleet currently comprises 147 M5000 trams. The contractual arrangements to allow purchasing further M5000 trams has now expired.

3.2 New vehicles will be required to:

- Deliver additional capacity to accommodate and enable growth on the existing Metrolink network; and
- Allow new lines and extensions to be added to the Metrolink network.

3.3 The design life of the M5000s was assumed to be around 30 years, and they could therefore start to require replacement in the late 2030s. Despite maintenance, we would anticipate that the existing fleet will also become less reliable as it ages.



3.4 Whilst in the near-term there will be a focus on maximising vehicle availability and service patterns, there is a limit to this. Acquisition of a Next Generation Vehicle fleet for Metrolink (and associated stabling and depot arrangements) is critical.

3.5 Development work is progressing to specify a Metrolink Next Generation Vehicle fleet and procure it, subject to funding. The intention is that this fleet would complement the existing M5000 fleet, but would differ in terms of all vehicles in the fleet being 'double' length (c.60m) and fully walkthrough, offering additional capacity over and above our existing 'double' tram formations that have space at the centre occupied by driving cabs and couplers and not available to passengers.

3.6 The Metrolink Next Generation Vehicle fleet is anticipated to be specified and procured with both tram and tram-train variants.

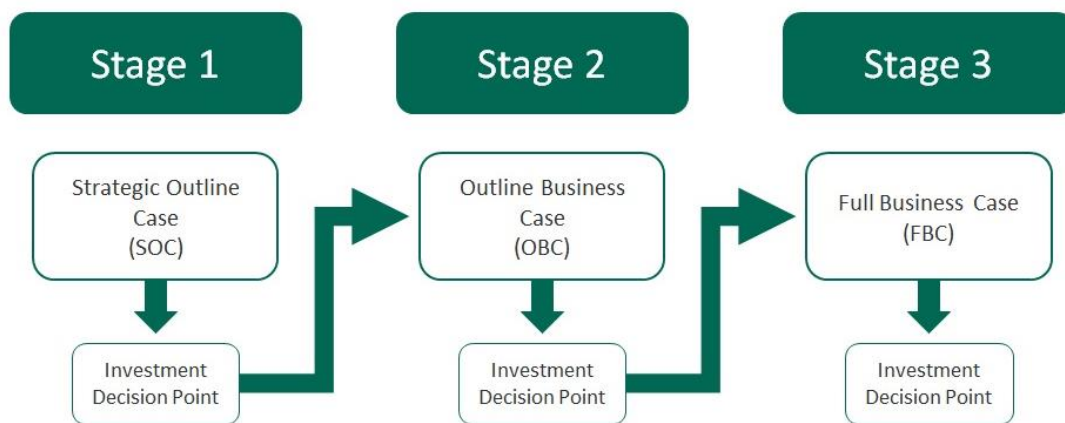
- 3.7 The Greater Manchester Strategy launch also set out the need for underground capacity by 2050, after other capacity options (such as longer vehicles) are exhausted. The [Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy \(July 2024\)](#) set out some potential options for underground metro capacity with the potential to connect existing National Rail and Metrolink lines, as well as some of the new lines or extensions under consideration.

4. Candidates for New Lines and Extensions

- 4.1 There are a total of 15 candidates for new lines and extensions. Clockwise, they are:

- A. Oldham–Rochdale–Heywood–Bury Tram-Train ‘Pathfinder’ for GM
- B. Middleton / Northern Gateway (Tram / Busway)
- C. Manchester to Glossop and Hadfield (Tram-Train)
- D. Manchester to Marple (Tram-Train)
- E. Tameside to Stockport via Denton and Reddish (Tram-Train)
- F. Manchester (East Didsbury) to Stockport/Hazel Grove (Tram / Tram-Train)
- G. Stockport to Airport (Tram-Train)
- H. Airport Western Leg (Tram)
- I. Altrincham to the Airport and potential links to Mid Cheshire (Tram-Train)
- J. Busways West and East of the Airport (Busway)
- K. Trafford Waters / Port Salford (Tram)
- L. Warrington via the CLC line (Tram-Train)
- M. Salford Quays to Salford Crescent (Tram)
- N. Regional Centre to Salford Crescent (Tram)
- O. Wigan via Atherton, Bolton options and Leigh options (Tram / Tram-Train)

- 4.2 The Integrated Settlement provides GM with greater control and flexibility over how government funding is invested, however transport schemes which either cost over £200m or require integration with national networks are ‘DfT retained schemes’ where the Department for Transport (DfT) retains responsibility for the project's delivery. It is therefore vitally important to develop the strongest possible business cases for them to secure the full delivery funding needed for completion. To unlock this funding, DfT business case process is required as illustrated below.



2.8 GM's existing City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 1 (CRSTS 1) funding to March 2027 commits us as part of the CRSTS1 Delivery Plan to undertake "Development of a Powers application for one scheme and pre-Powers development for two schemes". In practice, this means that GM is aiming to:

- Develop one scheme to the point of a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application, supported by an Outline Business Case (OBC); and
- Establish the next two schemes with relatively well-advanced Strategic Outline Cases (SOCs).

2.9 This sets a target to have three new lines and extensions schemes in total moving forward at pace through the scheme development process by the end of March 2027 in addition to the Oldham–Rochdale–Heywood–Bury Tram-Train 'Pathfinder' scheme.

2.10 The intention is for an 'always-on' prioritised pipeline of new lines and extensions. This means that further business cases to be developed will be progressively identified and worked through, as and when scheme development and delivery resources allow.

2.11 As set out to Bee Network Committee in July 2024, the formal business case for Metrolink to Stockport was then to be commenced as soon as possible and is on track for completion and submission to GM assurance and governance forums by the end of 2025.

2.12 In line with the process set out above, this report sets out recommendations for the next two formal SOC's to commence and further recommendations for the development work needed on other schemes.

2.13 New lines and extensions are major projects. With the need for such schemes to develop strong business cases, identify and secure funding, undertake extensive

community engagement and a full public consultation – and then complete detailed design and procure and mobilise contractors for construction, testing and commissioning – the timescale to the opening of any new line or extension is on the order of a decade (i.e. the opening date from now would be in the mid-2030s).

5. Business Cases in Progress

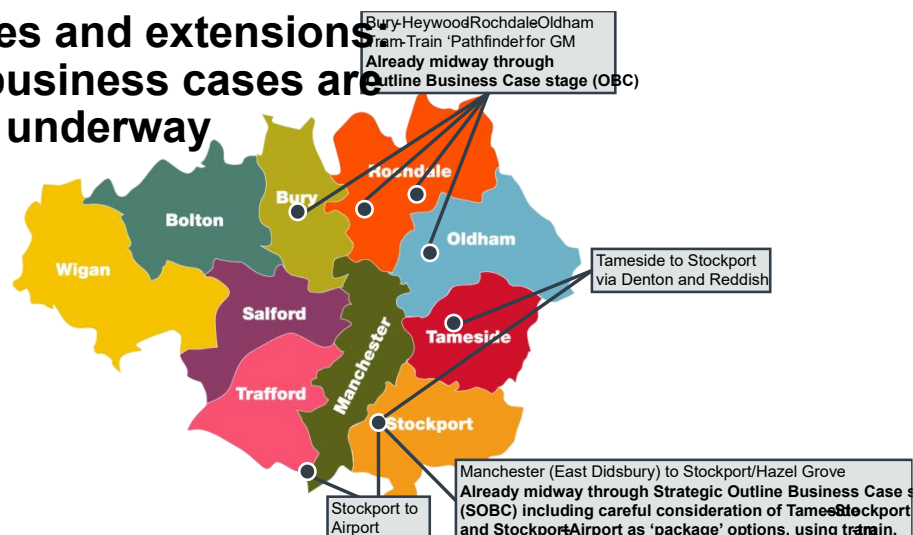
- 5.1 The Oldham–Rochdale–Heywood–Bury Tram-Train ‘Pathfinder’ for GM, listed as scheme A above, was prioritised for CRSTS funding and is already midway through its OBC. As a ‘DfT retained scheme’, it continues to progress towards the next government investment decision point of ‘Conditional Approval’. The OBC is expected to be complete in 2026. This scheme is intended to unlock tram-train technology for GM, as well as providing a valuable rapid transit service across Atom Valley in its own right. The Bury Interchange Redevelopment has been future-proofed with provision for a third platform for tram-train services from Heywood – which themselves need careful consideration as to how to share the corridor with the East Lancashire Railway.
- 5.2 The intention to commence the formal ‘Stockport-focussed SOC’ as soon as possible was set out to Bee Network Committee in July 2024. The SOC is on target for completion and submission to relevant GM assurance and governance forums in Autumn 2025, toward the next government investment decision point (‘Programme Entry’). Several related proposals have been included in the SOC as it is logical to consider them together with the link from East Didsbury, to ensure that if any future proofing is required it can be factored into the proposals:

E. Tameside to Stockport via Denton and Reddish (Tram-Train)

F. Manchester (East Didsbury) to Stockport/Hazel Grove (Tram / Tram-Train)

G. Stockport to Airport (Tram-Train)

New lines and extensions where business cases are already underway



6. Business Cases Proposed to Commence

6.1 Four criteria have been used, all of which have some associated metrics to inform decisions at an appropriate level of detail for this early stage of development:

- Delivering Good Growth – economic agglomeration and growth potential.
- Meeting Our Environmental Commitments – carbon and modal shift.
- Tackling Inequalities – targeting new investment at deprived areas.
- Deliverability – fare recovery, dependencies and environmental impacts.

6.2 Considering these criteria, the next business cases proposed to commence as formal SOC's at Stage 1 of DfT's business case process are:

- **Airport – proposed to start in Autumn 2025 following submission of the Stockport-focussed SOC.** This would include consideration of the following schemes, which are strong performers across the criteria set out above:

- G. Stockport to Airport (Tram-Train), building on Stockport-focussed SOC
- H. Airport Western Leg (Tram)
- I. Altrincham to the Airport / potential links to Mid Cheshire (Tram-Train)

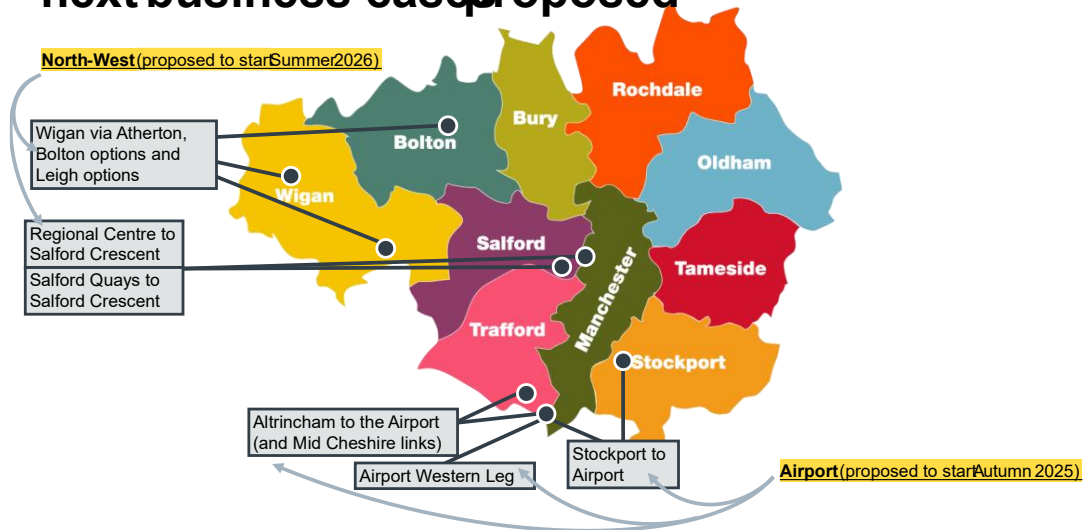
Along with the much wider range of options that need to be considered in any business case to demonstrate value for money, scheme J. – Busways West and East of the Airport – will be considered as part of the same work. GM already holds statutory powers for the Metrolink Airport Western Leg, acquired via a 1990s Transport and Works Act Order, and significant portions of land have already been acquired for it. Previous business case work exists that can be refreshed from Autumn 2025 to take full account of major developments in the area, as well as considering potential phasing.

- **North-West – proposed to start in Summer 2026 following conclusion of pre-SOC Strategic Assessment of the relevant schemes.** This would include consideration of the following schemes (along with the much wider range of options that need to be considered in any business case to demonstrate value for money):

- M. Salford Quays to Salford Crescent (Tram)
- N. Regional Centre to Salford Crescent (Tram)
- O. Wigan via Atherton, Bolton options, Leigh options (Tram / Tram-Train)

Taken together, these schemes perform well across the criteria set out above, with some strengths and weaknesses – for example, Scheme O. offers strong potential for modal shift but is challenging in terms of deliverability (as it is a very large scheme with a number of dependencies). Pre-SOC Strategic Assessment of these schemes is currently ongoing, to provide a firmer platform from which to start the formal SOC in Summer 2026. Alongside Stockport in the south, Bolton and Wigan in the north-west are the remaining local authorities currently without a Metrolink service. The Salford schemes are also on this north-west axis, and a holistic business case is needed.

New lines and extensions: next business cases proposed



7. Schemes where further preparatory work is needed

7.1 The method used to look at the schemes is sensitive to whether there are already high numbers of jobs and homes along the proposed routes. Where large developments are proposed at the Northern Gateway and Western Gateway on land that is currently un-developed, the criteria set out above for growth and modal shift are less responsive than they are to schemes through already developed areas. For that reason, further pre-SOC Strategic Assessment work is proposed over the course of 2025 to examine the likely shape of business cases for two particular schemes – and thereby allow firmer decision-making on the progression of formal business cases in the future:

- B. Middleton / Northern Gateway (Tram / Busway)
- K. Trafford Waters / Port Salford

New lines and extensions: further work needed over Summer 2025...



8. Longer-Term Schemes

8.1 Three schemes have particular dependencies in terms of the fourth criteria – deliverability – which mean they are likely to be longer-term schemes. For these schemes, further work is recommended (e.g. with Network Rail) to protect routes:

- Scheme C. Manchester to Glossop and Hadfield (Tram-Train) and scheme D. Manchester to Marple (Tram-Train) – these lines are Bee Network Rail ‘Phase 1’ lines, to be integrated into Bee Network Rail by the end of 2026, and the focus will be on this activity in the near-term. To connect these lines into the Metrolink system at Piccadilly requires coordination of a link through the Ashburys and Ardwick area with major rail proposals to the south and east of Piccadilly (Northern Powerhouse Rail / Liverpool Manchester Railway) that are currently fluid. Work with the rail industry and other parties is recommended to protect routes for these longer-term tram-train proposals – which could uplift frequencies and provide connectivity to and through the city centre beyond that which rail services to Piccadilly Station can provide.
- Scheme L. Warrington via the CLC line (Tram-Train) – this scheme is challenging to bring into the Metrolink system in the Cornbrook area, both in terms of physical connection and system capacity. The CLC line is proposed to become part of Bee Network Rail by 2030, and the focus will be on this activity in the near-term. There are also proposals as part of the Liverpool Manchester Railway that could release capacity to provide better services on this line. Both of these changes have the potential to bring better services to

stations such as Urmston, Flixton and Irlam (which also serve the Carrington, Partington and Cadishead areas via local transport connections). Work with the rail industry and other parties is still recommended to protect this line's ability to accommodate longer-term proposals including tram-train services.

New lines and extensions: longer-term schemes: protect routes



9. Central Area Underground Capacity and Connectivity

- 9.1 The current rapid transit system in the Regional Centre is unlikely to have sufficient capacity to accommodate demand by the middle of the century, driven by continued population and economic growth – and by the need for non-car modes to accommodate a higher proportion growth in line with the Right Mix.
- 9.2 Proposals for the Liverpool Manchester Railway, Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Transpennine Route Upgrade are intended to provide strategic regional capacity and connectivity on the west-east axis.
- 9.3 It is anticipated there will be insufficient capacity on the following axes even after measures to lengthen trains and trams are taken up:
- South-west to north-east axis
(aligned with the longest serving and busiest Metrolink lines, Altrincham and Bury)
 - North-west to south-east axis
(aligned with the Castlefield Corridor and Salford Crescent to Piccadilly)

Connecting these axes with new underground capacity could offer a step-change in wider city-region capacity and connectivity. However, there are clearly significant

interfaces with the existing Metrolink and National Rail networks that need consideration, working with the rail industry in the latter case.

- 9.4 There is also a north-south gap in the rapid transit network (with no existing tram or train lines) running broadly from the Northern Gateway to the Airport via a number of hospitals, universities and associated facilities. This axis, which would not directly incorporate any existing Metrolink or National Rail lines, could also be investigated for its potential as a wholly segregated underground metro.
- 9.5 It is therefore recommended that very early development work commences on underground proposals on each of the south-west to north-east, north-west to south-east and north-south axes to understand the potential. This development work will complement, respond to and integrate with the existing proposals for east-west underground connections as part of the Liverpool Manchester Railway.

10. Next steps

- 10.1 In early June 2025 the Chancellor of the Exchequer visited Rochdale to announce devolved 'Transport for City Regions' funding for regional transport infrastructure, later confirmed as part of the Spending Review in June. The Chancellor's announcement confirmed that Greater Manchester is set to receive £2.5 billion. This funding runs from April 2027 to March 2032 and will form part of Greater Manchester's Integrated Settlement, allowing some funding flexibility between thematic areas as part of the Integrated Pipeline.
- 10.2 Highlights of the indicative 'Transport for City Regions' programme were published as part of the Chancellor's announcement and then set target dates at the Greater Manchester Strategy launch in July 2025, including: starting construction to facilitate new Metrolink 'tram-train' services connecting Oldham, Rochdale, Heywood and Bury by 2028; beginning construction of a new Metrolink line to Stockport by 2030; and investment in new Metrolink stops in North Manchester, Bury and Oldham with opening dates starting from 2030.
- 10.3 In addition, work is now proposed to:
- Specify and procure (subject to funding) the Metrolink Next Generation Vehicle fleet with both tram and tram-train variants.
 - Continue the Oldham–Rochdale–Heywood–Bury Tram-Train Pathfinder Outline Business Case (OBC), expected to be complete in 2026. A target date for starting

construction of this scheme has been set for 2028, and the Bury Interchange Redevelopment has been future-proofed with provision for a third platform.

- Conclude the Metrolink to Stockport-focussed Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for submission to relevant GM assurance and governance forums in Autumn 2025 – targeting the first government investment decision point of ‘Programme Entry’, as this would be a ‘retained’ scheme due to value greater than £200m. A target date for starting construction of this scheme has been set for 2030.
- Commence the Airport-focussed Strategic Outline Case (SOC), with a target to start this in Autumn 2025 following on from the Stockport-focussed SOC.
- Commence the North-West-focussed Strategic Outline Case (SOC) – considering options for Salford, Wigan, Leigh and Bolton – with a target to start in Summer 2026 following conclusion of the ongoing pre-SOC Strategic Assessment of the relevant schemes (that provides a firmer platform from which to commence a formal SOC).
- Undertake further pre-SOC Strategic Assessment over the course of Summer and Autumn 2025 for potential schemes toward Middleton and the Northern Gateway, and Trafford Waters, Port Salford and the Western Gateway.
- Work with the rail industry and other parties to protect routes for tram-train schemes to Warrington via the CLC line, and to Glossop, Hadfield and Marple.
- Commence very early development on underground proposals on each of the south-west to north-east, north-west to south-east and north-south axes.
- Absorb the Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy (July 2024) into the refreshed Local Transport Plan (with content captured by both the LTP Strategy and the LTP Delivery Plan (2027-2037), including engagement and consultation as part of the overall LTP refresh process. This avoids having many separate strategies, and provides clarity and simplicity for transport strategy in GM.

10.10 All the development work described above is to be undertaken in conjunction with Local Authorities (and Mayoral Development Corporations where relevant) to ensure regeneration and other opportunities are at the heart of the business cases.