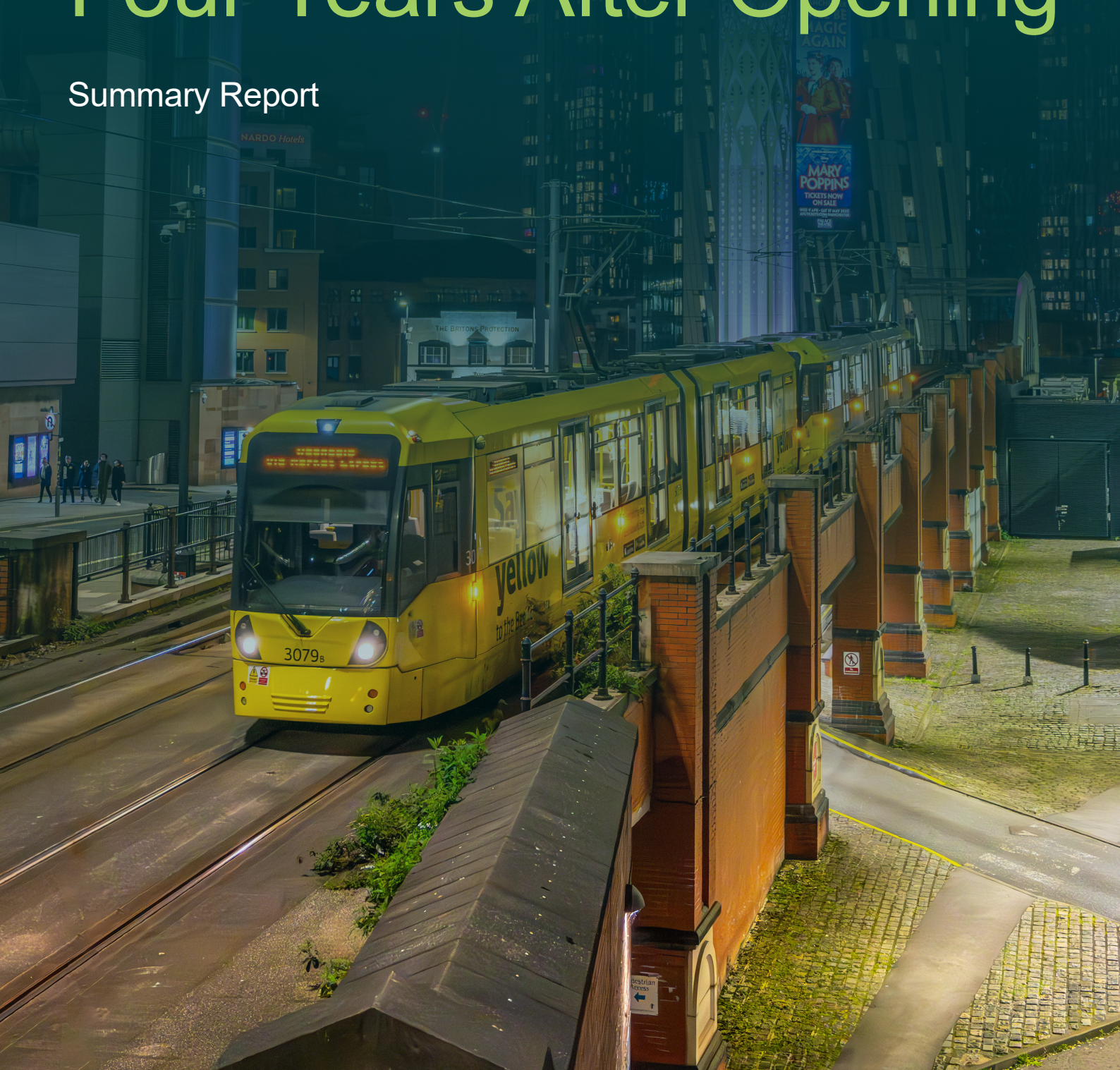


Trafford Park Line Four Years After Opening

Summary Report



Quality Information

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Introduction

Background

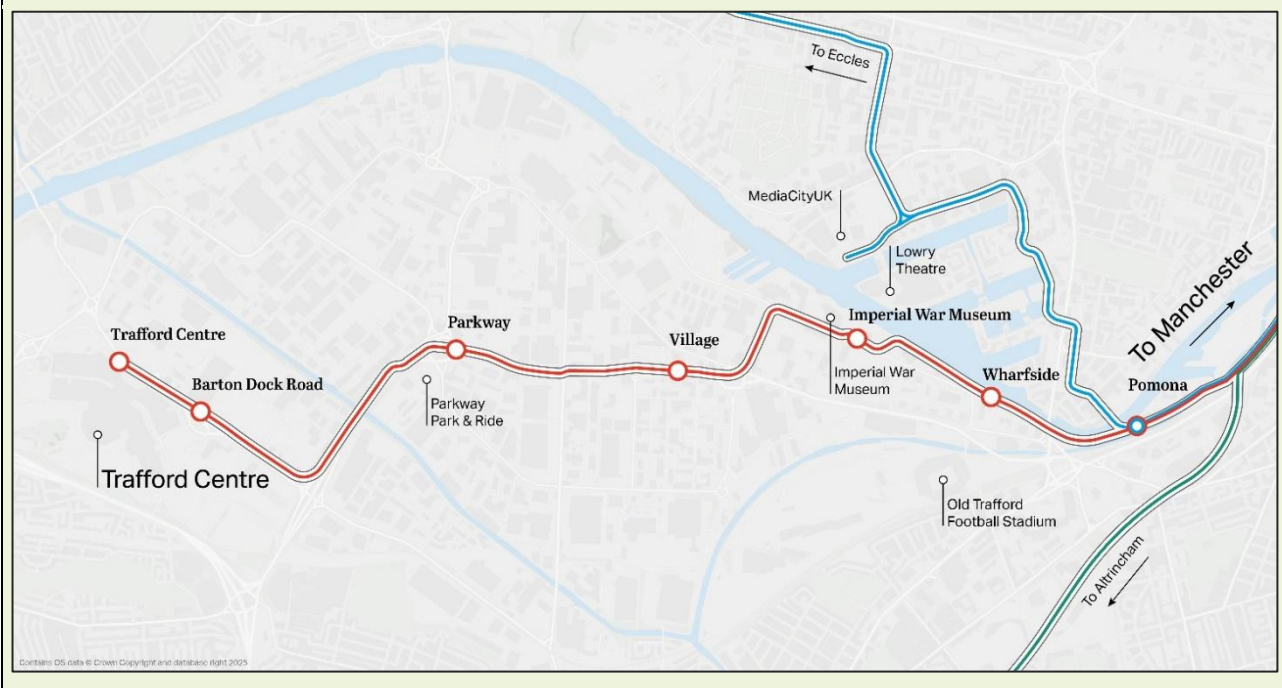
In March 2020, the Trafford Park Line opened, creating six new stops between the existing Pomona stop and the Trafford Centre. The scheme objectives focused on three themes: (1) regeneration and growth, (2) connectivity, and (3) reducing car dependency.

An evaluation was undertaken to understand the extent to which the scheme was delivered as planned, whether the intended benefits of the Trafford Park Line have been achieved and to determine the scope and scale of any unforeseen impacts. A four year after opening study was conducted in 2024 and the key findings are presented in this report.

About the Trafford Park Line

The 5.5km extension to the Metrolink network (**Figure 1**) was largely segregated from the highway, although several junctions with the highway network were required to facilitate the Metrolink line through Trafford Park. It was intended that services would operate with five trams per hour (i.e. every 12 minutes) and run between the Trafford Centre and Crumpsall on the Bury Line via Manchester City Centre, which provides interchange opportunities to the wider Metrolink network and rail from Manchester Victoria. When the line opened in March 2020, the service operated between the Trafford Centre and Cornbrook, and in 2022 the service was extended from Cornbrook to Deansgate-Castlefield.

Figure 1: Trafford Park Line



Scheme Implementation

Was the scheme delivered on time and within budget?

The Trafford Park Line opened seven months ahead of schedule in March 2020 with a service to Cornbrook. The accelerated delivery of the scheme followed some delays in advance of the construction with additional time spent refining the design, for example following a value management exercise. It was recognised that the business case had a very high-level programme with five milestones, and additional schedule detail within the business case would have been beneficial during the initial mobilisation.

- A flexible approach was taken to managing the construction with a focus on the most critical tasks to ensure the project was completed on time. For example, resources were targeted towards key sections of the line as needed, even if it meant some less critical aspects were completed slightly later than planned.
- The Trafford Park Line followed other extensions to the Metrolink network, such as Second City Crossing and the Manchester Airport Line. Many of the project team brought relevant and recent experience which enabled learning to be transferred into project delivery.
- The contract included a financial incentive to finish 16 weeks early which helped to speed up the construction phase. This also helped to manage costs by reducing the risk of additional costs when finalising project finances after the line opened.

The line is on track to be delivered within the £350 million budget identified in the business case and there is potential for some contingency to be returned once the final costs have been reconciled¹. While there were cost increases associated with design & construction, civils and land acquisition, there were savings elsewhere and this was all accommodated within the risk and contingency budget.

A key learning outcome was that planning the costs early on, with the contractor involved from the start, was important for keeping costs predictable. This detailed exercise ultimately helped mitigate against cost creep throughout the project as there was an early and clear understanding. Having the contractor involved early also reduced financial risks by making sure the contract price and potential risks were transparent to all parties in the delivery process.

The management of risks, particularly the risk profile and understanding of residual risks, was important to provide confidence that the scheme was deliverable within the overall budget. The application of lessons learnt from previous Metrolink extensions was beneficial for cost management, including the monitoring and reporting of the delivery cost and risk budgets.

What contributed to the successes and are there any lessons to be learnt?

Discussions with the project team indicated that the value management exercise was key to delivering the required Metrolink extension within budget. For example, this had an impact on how the line interacted with the highway network at Parkway and Village. Even though the design phase took longer than expected, it was crucial for finishing on time and within budget. Changes to the design did, however, have some influence on the impact of the scheme. For example, the redesign at Parkway resulted in the stop being a short walk from the Park & Ride facility but it was felt passengers would be willing to walk the short distance if the facility was within sight of the stop.

Good communication and teamwork were vital for the Trafford Park Line's delivery success. Many team members had worked together on previous Metrolink projects, so already knew how to collaborate effectively with established communications and trust built between Transport for Greater Manchester and the contractor. This experience also helped to manage risks and share progress smoothly, both internally and with stakeholders. Furthermore, the project team drew upon and

¹ At the time of creating this report, full reconciliation of property agreements has yet to be concluded. These typically take many years to resolve for a major scheme such as Trafford Park Line.

applied many lessons from past Metrolink projects to the Trafford Park Line. For example, the joint utilities approach used in the Second City Crossing helped reduce work time and minimise disruption for travellers by coordinating with utility companies.

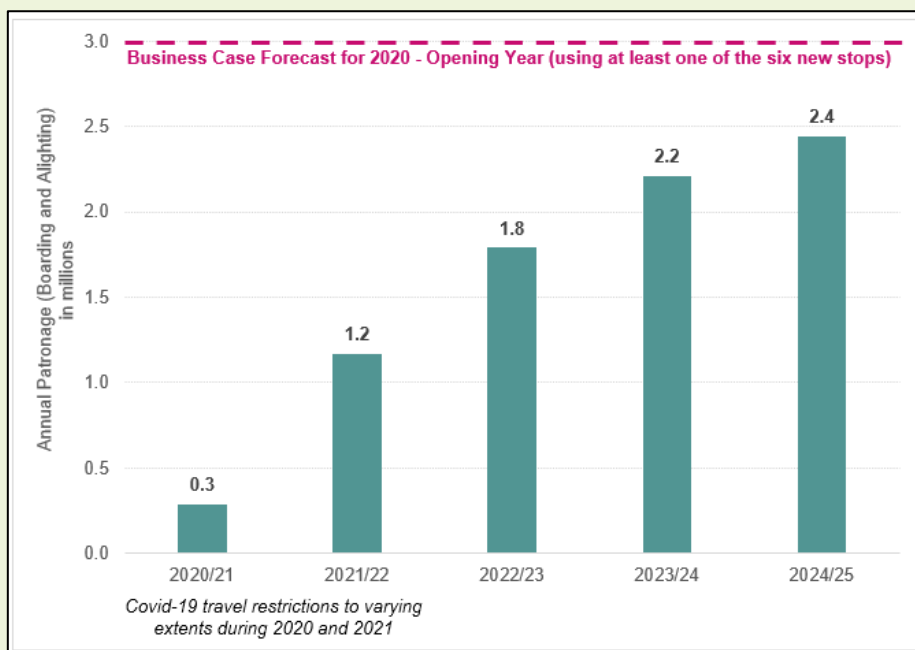
Ultimately, the delivery of the Trafford Park Line resulted in the scheme winning three British Construction Industry awards in November 2020 for: (1) Transport Project of the Year, (2) Health, Safety and Wellbeing Initiative of the Year, and (3) Project of the Year.

Scheme Impact

Who uses the Trafford Park Line and how were passengers previously travelling, if at all?

Figure 2 presents the annual Trafford Park Line patronage since opening in March 2020. Patronage in the figure is defined as any trip using one or more of the six stops on the Trafford Park Line to board or alight. The figure shows an increase from 0.3m in the first year to 2.4m in 2024/25.

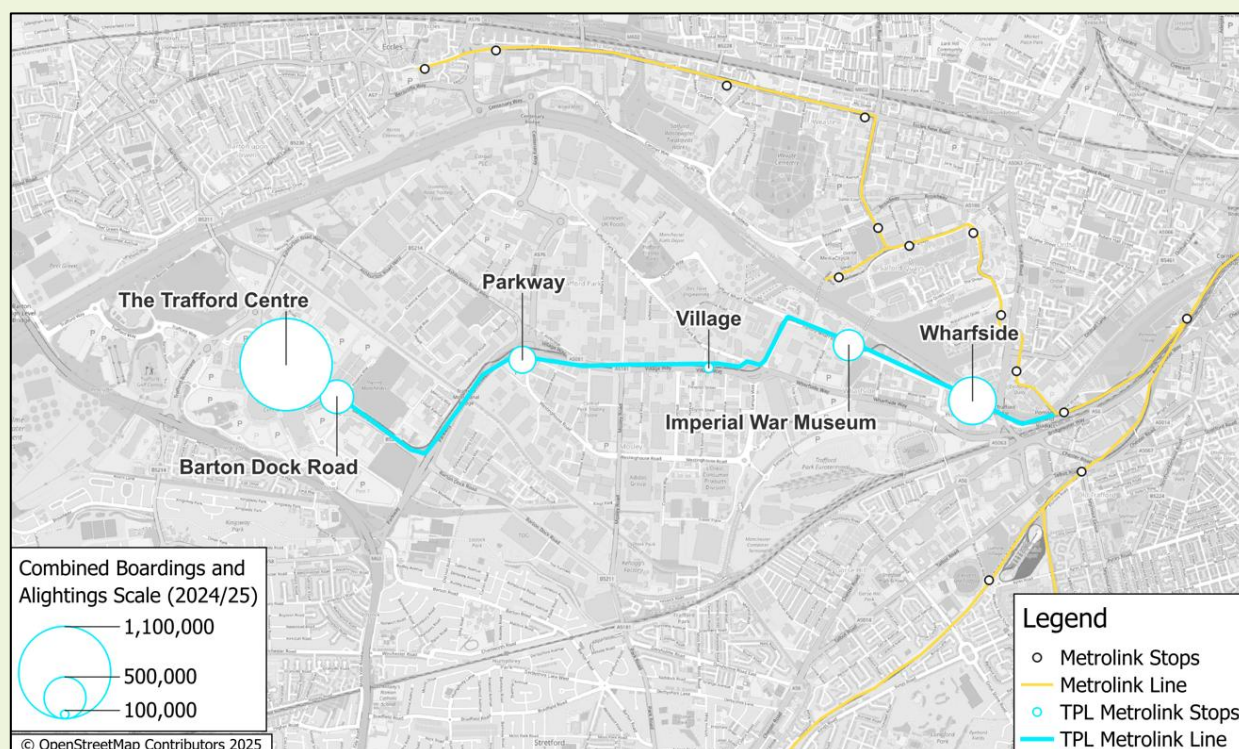
Figure 2: Annual patronage (2020/21 – 2024/25)



Source: TfGM.

The business case forecast 3.0m trips would use at least one of the six new stops on the Trafford Park Line in 2020. **Figure 2** shows the annual patronage in the opening five years has not reached this level yet but is steadily increasing. Given the wider socio-economic context during this period, particularly the restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to recognise the line opened in circumstances which could not have been foreseen.

For the 2.4m journeys undertaken in 2024/25, **Figure 3** shows the proportion of users at each Trafford Park Line stop. This highlights the Trafford Centre was the busiest of the six stops, accounting for 38% of patronage, followed by Wharfside (20%) which is the closest stop to Old Trafford football stadium. These two stops dominate patronage along the line at present, largely due to the existing attractors of the Trafford Centre and destinations surrounding Wharfside. While the industrial park lies between these stops, it takes time for development densities around stops to build.

Figure 3: Annual patronage, by stop (2024/25)

Source: TfGM.

Analysis of Metrolink stops used to start/end trips highlighted that almost half (49%) of trips had an origin or destination in the City Centre zone (including Cornbrook), with 18% of trips using another stop on the Trafford Park Line. One quarter (25%) of trips had an origin or destination in the southern or western side of the Metrolink network (*namely Airport, Altrincham, East Didsbury and Eccles Lines*), while 8% had an origin or destination in the northern or eastern side of the Metrolink network (*that is Ashton, Bury, Oldham-Rochdale Lines*).

Of surveyed respondents using the Trafford Park Line (on a non-match day at Old Trafford football stadium), there was an equal split of women (49%) and men (50%) and a good spread of age groups with 56% aged 16-34, 25% aged 35-54 and 19% aged 55+. The majority of respondents (77%) were residents of Greater Manchester and, of those, the greatest proportions travelled from the Manchester (22%), Trafford (19%) and Salford (14%) local authority areas. The most common journey purposes on the survey day were for shopping (33%), commuting to/from work (33%) and social/leisure (17%).

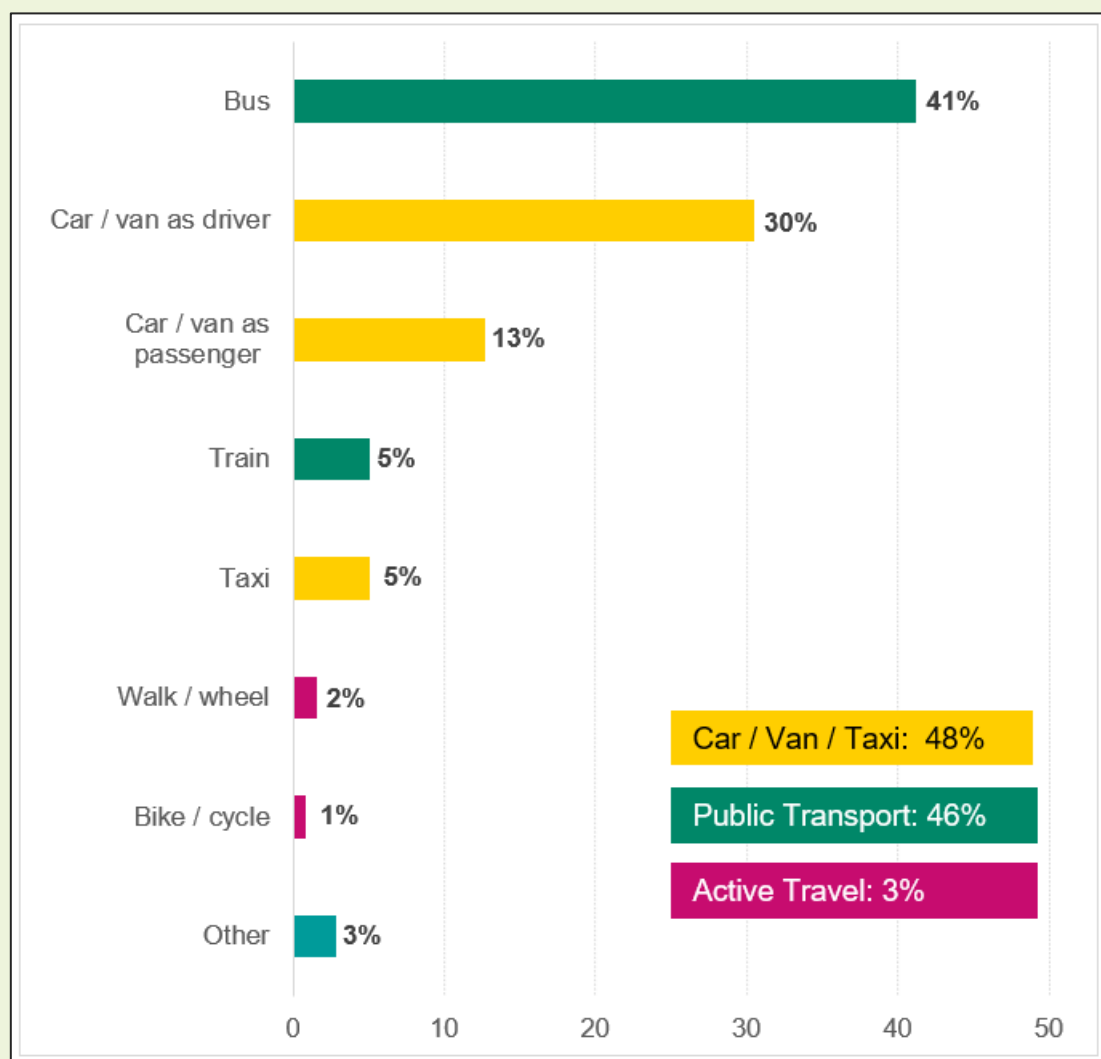
44% of the people surveyed stated that they were making the same type of journey as they did before the Trafford Park Line opened. Of these, 19% had used a different Metrolink line to make their journey before the Trafford Park Line opened, while 81% had used a different mode of travel. **Figure 4** shows the different modes used before the Trafford Park Line opened and highlights that 48% of respondents previously travelled by car/van/taxi. This demonstrates a positive move to sustainable travel along the corridor. While other factors will have contributed to the modal shift, for example the cost-of-living crisis and cost/availability of parking, the opening of the Trafford Park Line is likely to have been a critical factor, particularly with 90% of respondents agreeing that the line provided an attractive alternative to the car.

Figure 4 further shows that 46% used other public transport modes (41% *bus*, 5% *train*) before the line opened. The shift from bus to Metrolink likely reflects the perceived attractiveness of the line and may be partly influenced by the change in bus services in Trafford Park. Prior to the construction of the Trafford Park Line, four bus services operated between Manchester City Centre and the Trafford Centre with the X50 the most frequent service and this operated as an express service. During the

period considered for the evaluation of the Trafford Park Line, there were reductions to the frequency of the X50 service as well as changes to the routing.

Less than half of the surveyed respondents had not made the journey they were making on the survey day before the line opened. While the Trafford Park Line may not have been the primary factor for making the journey, it will have had an enabling role and for some of these respondents may have been an important factor in addressing actual or perceived accessibility constraints prior to opening.

Figure 4: Mode used before Trafford Park Line opened (only for those switching from a different mode of transport)

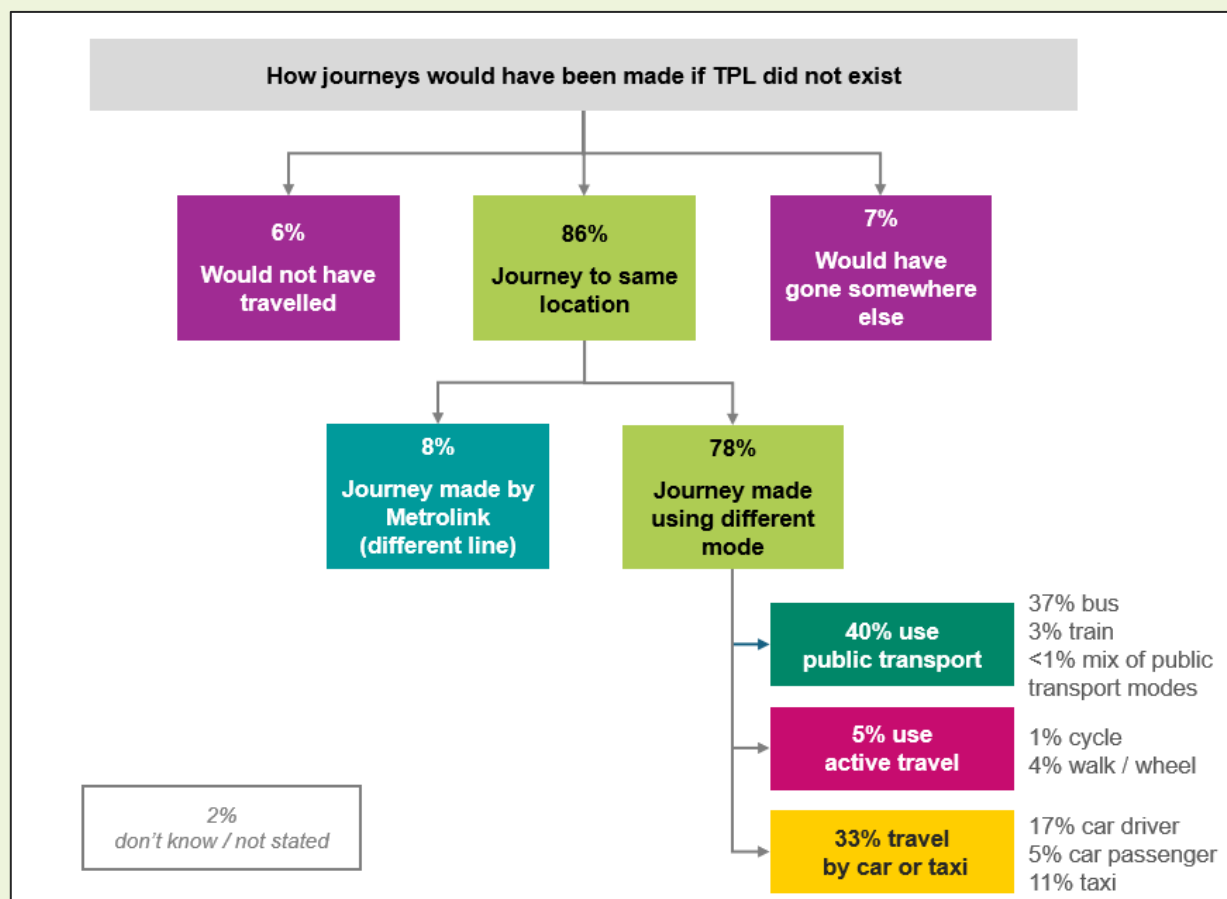


Source: Trafford Park Line passenger survey (Base: 426) and match day survey (Base: 127), those who switched from a different mode of transport. Question: "If you previously used a different type of transport for this journey, which type did you use?" (if more than one type used, the type used for the longest part of the journey was selected). Totals above 100% due to rounding. Results weighted using a 89.3% weighting for the passenger survey and 10.7% weighting for match day survey.

While the previous results compared how respondents travelled before the Trafford Park Line opened with their travel on the survey day, respondents were also asked to consider a hypothetical scenario of how they would have travelled on the survey day if the line did not exist. This sought to further understand the potential contribution of the Trafford Park Line to mode shift. In this hypothetical scenario (**Figure 5**), 37% said they would have travelled by bus while a third (33%) would have travelled by car or taxi. The latter supports the finding that the Trafford Park Line has supported modal shift from private car to Metrolink.

There were notable variations between match day and non-match day survey respondents to this hypothetical scenario. Amongst match day survey respondents, there was a higher proportion indicating they would have travelled by car/van (38% compared with 19% of those surveyed on a non-match day). Meanwhile, the proportion stating they would have travelled by bus was considerably higher amongst those surveyed on a non-match day (40%) compared with the match day (11%).

Figure 5: Journey made if the line did not exist



Source: Trafford Park Line passenger survey (Base: 1,258) combined with match day survey (Base: 339). Question: "If the Trafford Park Line did not exist, how would you have made this journey, if at all?" (if more than one type used, the type used for the longest part of the journey was selected). Please note this question asked respondents what they would do in a hypothetical scenario and therefore is very different to Figure 4. Results weighted using a 89.3% weighting for the passenger survey and 10.7% weighting for match day survey.

The Trafford Park Line serves several locations that generate 'event-based' demand, most notably Old Trafford football stadium (football matches and concerts), and also the Lowry theatre and MediaCityUK/The Quays. The profile of those using the line during events will reflect those attending the events, with a match day survey undertaken with Trafford Park Line users when football matches at Old Trafford football stadium were taking place.

A higher proportion of match day survey respondents (19%) made the same journey before the Trafford Park Line opened but used a different Metrolink line compared with the passengers surveyed on non-match days (5%). Furthermore, the proportion of match day survey respondents that said they had not made the journey on the survey day was notably lower (23%) than the passengers surveyed on non-match days (47%).

Amongst match day survey respondents, it was interesting to note that a greater proportion used the Trafford Centre to park rather than the Park & Ride site at Parkway. It is not known if this was due to a lack of awareness of the Park & Ride site, limited capacity at Parkway or because people were also visiting the Trafford Centre before/after the match. Discussions with stakeholders during the study did, however, highlight increased visitors to the Trafford Centre on days where there are matches at Old Trafford football stadium.

Finally, it should be noted that modal shift to the Trafford Park Line for these journeys is for the last part of the journey, so the car km removed is limited to the short leg which has been substituted by Metrolink.

What were the effects of the Trafford Park Line on the highway network?

While the line is largely segregated from highway traffic, which minimises the effect on the highway network, there are several crossings which do impact highway traffic. It was expected that the scheme would lead to some localised re-routing of traffic within Trafford Park. In addition, the modal shift from car to Metrolink was also expected to contribute to a reduction in traffic flows and resulting decongestion benefits.

Between the baseline (2016) and four year after opening study (12 months to April 2024), traffic growth on locally managed roads across Greater Manchester was generally low (0.5% in total)². In comparison, at sites in the Trafford Park study area, the results generally indicated a reduction in traffic flows. There was some evidence of localised re-routing for westbound travel from Trafford Wharf Road – which the line runs along - to the parallel A5081 Village Way. The general reduction in traffic flows observed in the study area differed to the Greater Manchester trend and was also in contrast to the increased flows on the M60. While this was in line with expected decongestion benefits associated with modal shift, the contribution of the Trafford Park Line to these changes is likely to be relatively small owing to the economic changes in the study area and wider contextual changes in working patterns accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The scheme also included a large Park & Ride site at the Parkway stop and it was recognised that this could result in re-routing of traffic to access the Park & Ride provision. The limited availability of traffic count data in the vicinity of the stop prevents a finding being made on the localised change in traffic flows near Parkway.

What were the scheme impacts on Metrolink and Trafford Park Line users?

The opening of the Trafford Park Line had the following key impacts on Metrolink passengers:

Increased Metrolink coverage: The expansion of the Metrolink network with the Trafford Park Line has increased light rail coverage in Greater Manchester, which broadens the catchment of potential users. As the service does not currently operate through to Crumpsall, it has not increased capacity through the city zone as anticipated in the business case.

Improved perception of Metrolink & public transport to Trafford Park: An intended outcome of the Trafford Park Line was the anticipated improvement in the general perception of Metrolink, in terms of connectivity, affordability and reliability. The findings from the passenger survey suggest that this outcome has been met, for example, the key reasons for switching from other modes of transport to the Trafford Park Line were stated as an 'easier journey' (57%), 'reduced journey time' (44%) and 'reliability of journey time' (20%). Among car drivers who had switched to using the Trafford Park Line for their journey, 'easier journey' was the most frequently cited reason, though 16% did state it was a 'cheaper or more cost-effective means of travelling'.

Overcrowding: The scheme also intended to reduce overcrowding, particularly on the Bury Line between Crumpsall and Manchester City Centre. At the time of the four year after opening study, the service terminates at Deansgate-Castlefield, rather than Crumpsall, so this benefit has not had an

² Source: TfGM

opportunity to be realised. Nonetheless, stakeholder feedback recognised the line has helped to alleviate demand pressure on the Eccles Line for journeys to/from MediaCityUK.

Quicker & more reliable public transport journey times: The Trafford Park Line has benefitted users through providing public transport services, segregated from general traffic, with journey times that were predominantly quicker and more reliable than comparable bus services at baseline and also four years after.

- Outbound journeys (towards Trafford Centre) four years after the line opened were quicker by Metrolink than the comparative journey by bus, with a saving of around 6 minutes in the AM peak and almost 12 minutes in the PM peak.
- Inbound journeys (towards Manchester City Centre) were notably quicker by Metrolink compared with bus four years after the line opened, particularly in the PM peak when there was a saving of around 11 minutes.

The comparison between the forecast and observed Trafford Park Line journey time between Pomona and the Trafford Centre provides confidence in the forecasting accuracy. Transport for Greater Manchester has noted that forecast Metrolink journey times for recent Metrolink extensions have previously, in part due to on street running, been overly optimistic on some lines.

The findings from the passenger survey indicated passengers perceived quicker journey times using the line, with 44% of respondents who switched from other modes of transport referring to 'reduced journey times' as a reason for doing so. Of those who switched from bus to Trafford Park Line, 68% stated a 'reduced journey time' was the main reason for changing modes.

Journey time reliability has also improved when comparing the results at baseline by bus and the four year after results by Metrolink. This was most pronounced in the PM peak, which was also when patronage trends showed there was greatest demand.

The connectivity impact for Metrolink and Trafford Park Line users has been the change from a bus alone to an additional Metrolink option along the corridor which in turn has provided journey time and reliability benefits in most time periods, particularly the PM peak.

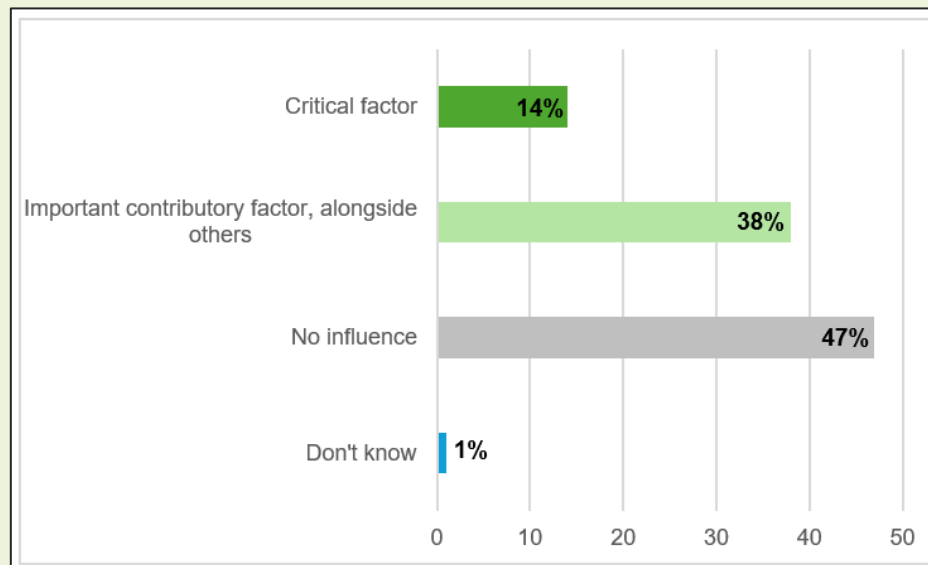
Has the scheme resulted in improved connectivity, particularly to employment opportunities?

The analysis has not shown a large change in the residential catchment with access to public transport services following the opening of the Trafford Park Line. However, it is important to note that the X50 bus service operated along the same route prior to the opening of the line. Consequently, the change in connectivity has largely been driven by:

- The perception of Metrolink compared with bus, for example, some people may be more willing to travel by Metrolink than bus;
- The onward connectivity provided by Metrolink compared with bus; and
- Changes in bus services during the evaluation period which have also had an influence, alongside the opening of the line.

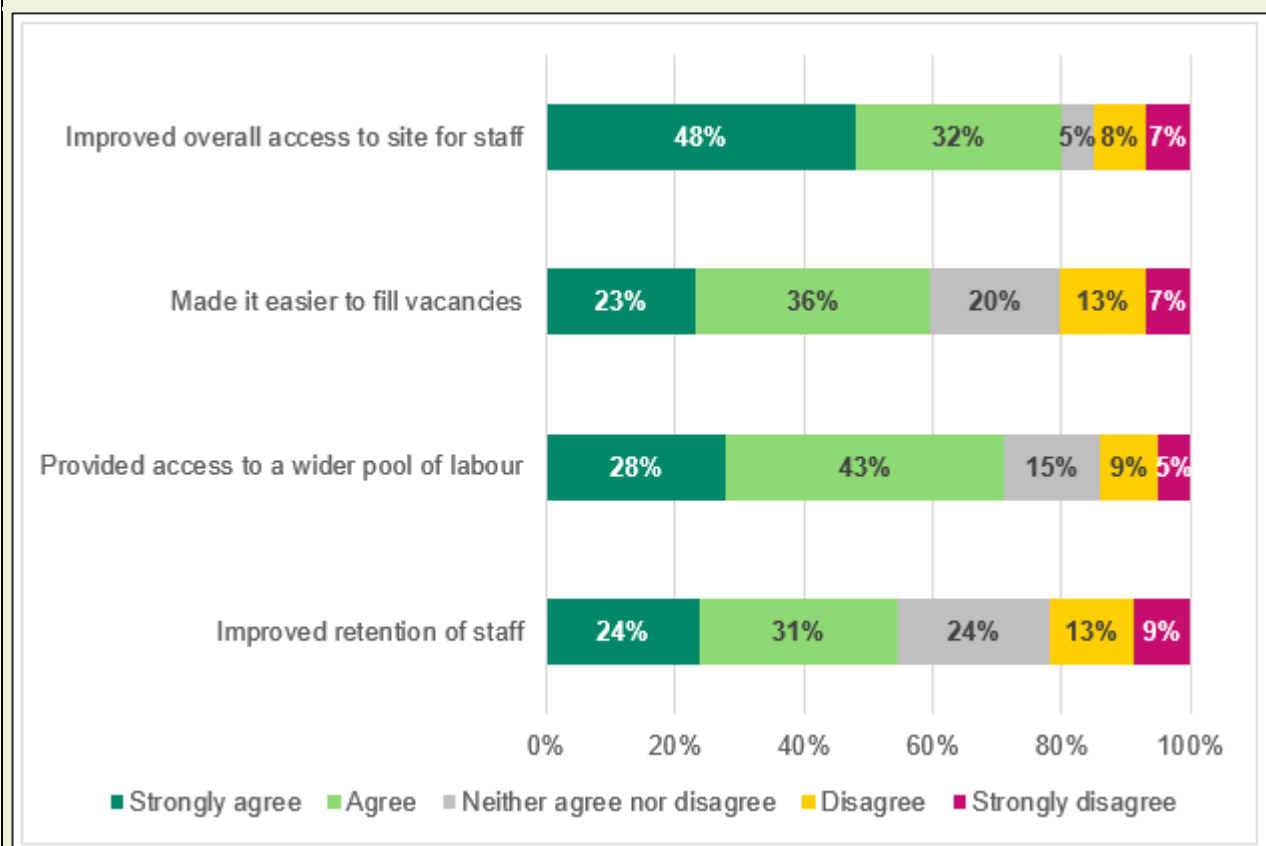
Primary research has shown a perceived strengthening of connectivity and improved access to employment amongst commuters and local businesses. For example, 22% of commuters who travelled to the same location before the Trafford Park Line was introduced said they previously used car/van/taxi. This modal shift to public transport demonstrates greater connectivity to employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the passenger survey asked those who had started a new job since the Trafford Park Line opened whether the opening of the line had influenced their decision to take up a new job. **Figure 6** highlights just over half (53%) felt the line had influenced their decision with reasons given including 'easier commute' (86%), 'reduced commute time' (45%) and 'more reliable commute time' (33%).

Figure 6: Influence of the Trafford Park Line on uptake of new job

Source: Trafford Park Line passenger survey. Base: 229. Those who had taken up a new job since the opening of the Trafford Park Line.

A survey with local businesses asked them to consider what impact the opening of the Trafford Park Line had on the recruitment and retention of staff. **Figure 7** provides a summary of these results and highlights that the majority of businesses surveyed (80%) agreed with the statement 'the opening of the Trafford Park Line has improved overall access to site for staff' while 15% disagreed with the statement. There was also a high level of agreement amongst businesses that the scheme had 'provided access to a wider pool of labour' with 71% agreeing with the statement and just 14% disagreeing. Finally, with regards to the scheme 'improving retention of staff', 55% agreed and 22% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 7: Impact of the line on local businesses

Source: Trafford Park Line business survey. Question: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the potential benefits of the Trafford Park Line for your business...". Base: Improved overall access to site for staff (Base: 291), Made it easier to fill vacancies (Base: 274), Provided access to a wider pool of labour (Base: 277), Improved retention of staff (Base: 270).

Has the scheme had a positive impact on the development of land in the area of influence?

Overall, the four year after opening evidence shows positive outcomes in relation to development activity in the Trafford Park area – particularly in the number and value of development applications made since the line opened. For example, there has been notable growth in the number of residential development planning applications, particularly around MediaCityUK and the Wharfside Metrolink stop. While the MediaCityUK stop is not on the Trafford Park Line, the Salford Quays and MediaCity footbridges provide connectivity from the line to the MediaCityUK and Salford Quays area. Understanding the contribution of the line to changes in planning applications is difficult given wider influences and trends, it is reasonable to assume the increased connectivity the line provides has had some influence – particularly the Wharfside Metrolink stop which was the second most used Trafford Park Line stop with regards to patronage in 2024/25 (**Figure 3**).

Discussions with stakeholders highlighted the ability to connect into the wider Metrolink network was seen as a key benefit of the Trafford Park Line. Reference was made to developers refining masterplans and development sites to take advantage of access to the line including through maximising frontage to face the stops and proposing public realm improvements between the stop and sites. Despite development interest and activity outcomes showing positive signs of being realised, much of the planned development is yet to emerge, and employment and population growth in the Trafford Park area to date remains at a similar rate to that before the opening of the line. Notwithstanding this, passengers, businesses and stakeholders in the area are all experiencing accessibility benefits as a result of the Trafford Park Line, resulting in improved employment

opportunities, efficiencies/productivity improvements and an increased customer base/footfall. These outcomes should deliver a positive contribution to local economic growth; however, as has been demonstrated, quantifying this contribution or even the relevant importance is challenging.

What were the positive and negative effects and are they likely to occur on other schemes?

A summary of the key positive effects of the Trafford Park Line were:

- Increased Metrolink coverage in Greater Manchester, widened catchment for Metrolink and improved public transport reliability are directly attributable to the physical presence of the line.
- Positive perception of the scheme amongst Trafford Park Line passengers, for example 90% of survey respondents agreed that the line provides an attractive alternative to the car. This positive perception supports modal shift to Metrolink for journeys to the Trafford Park area, with evidence of modal shift provided with 33% of surveyed passengers stating they would have made their journey by car or taxi on the survey day had the Trafford Park Line not existed.
- Improvements to walking, wheeling and cycling provision alongside the line were also felt to have led to an enhanced perception and safer walking, wheeling and cycling in the vicinity. An Intercept Survey with pedestrians and cyclists found very high proportions indicating it was pleasant to cycle (92%) or walk (89%) along. Early planning for active travel infrastructure to complement public transport could further support this to encourage greater uptake of walking, wheeling and cycling.
- A survey of passengers found that a third of passengers are using the Trafford Park Line to commute to work, and that the line has facilitated access to new employment opportunities, particularly among the less wealthy population sub-groups. While wider external factors will have influenced the decision to taken up new opportunities, just over half who had taken up a new job said that the opening of the line had influenced their decision.
- Of businesses reporting a material effect of the Trafford Park Line on business performance, the majority reported changes in sales (70%), profitability (69%) and productivity (76%). Almost all of this change was reported as positive for sales (94%), profitability (96%) and productivity (95%), with c. 3% identifying no increase or decrease and the remaining (1-4%) stating there had been a decrease. With a relatively low sample size, the results should be interpreted as indicative.
- There were positive signs for development interest and economic activity, with positive perceptions amongst local businesses and stakeholders, but changes in secondary economic datasets did not evidence a marked increase.

There were limited negative effects of the scheme captured within the study. However, it should be noted that the absence of the direct service through the city centre to Crumpsall (as planned) is likely to have constrained the full benefits being realised as intended. Transport for Greater Manchester analysis has highlighted that the extension of the service to Crumpsall could add c. 20% to those benefits expressed in money terms.

The socio-economic geography of Trafford Park is unique which influences the likelihood of benefits observed as a result of the line being seen elsewhere with similar schemes. Nonetheless, the broad trends associated with the new light rail service are likely to be seen with similar schemes, particularly the positive perception of the service, modal shift and patronage. It is too early to consider the longer-term impacts of the Trafford Park Line and, therefore, the extent to which these would be seen on other lines.

What were the unintended effects and are they likely to occur on other schemes?

The following unintended effects have been identified during the four year after opening monitoring and evaluation:

- There has been an alleviation of demand/crowding pressures on the Eccles Line for journeys to/from MediaCityUK;
- While the rationale for the changes to bus services in the study area has not been explored in this study, the opening of the Trafford Park Line providing a Metrolink service on a very similar route to that of an existing bus service is likely to have had an influence; and
- Parking at the Trafford Centre was identified as being used as an informal Park & Ride on match days with people using the Trafford Park Line to complete their journeys. This has benefits with greater visitors to the Trafford Centre on match days which is positive for local businesses.

Is the service commercially viable?

The commercial viability considers whether the revenue generated by the line is sufficient to sustain the service without financial support. While it is too early to make definitive conclusions on the commercial viability of the Trafford Park Line, analysis of the financial performance in 2023/24 highlighted while in a small deficit, this was lower than that seen across the Metrolink network post-Covid.

Do the outturn costs and benefits demonstrate that investment in the project was justified?

A value for money assessment summarises impacts expressed in money and non-money terms of a scheme alongside the level of uncertainty in the analysis. This assessment is generally presented with a benefit to cost ratio - which indicates the level of benefit per unit of cost (that is, greater than 1 would therefore indicate the benefits outweigh the costs) and the implied value for money category according to the Department for Transport Value for Money Framework. Consideration is then made for any impacts which are not expressed in money terms and uncertainties in the analysis to determine if the value for money category needs to be adjusted.

An economic assessment of the Trafford Park Line was undertaken during the preparation of the business case and presented a benefit to cost ratio of 1.86, reflecting 'medium' value for money, and further benefits expressed in non-money terms were expected to generate enough benefits to improve the value for money category to 'high'.

An updated benefit to cost ratio of the Trafford Park Line was undertaken by Transport for Greater Manchester in 2024. This placed the benefit to cost ratio at around 1, lower than that forecast in the business case. This was largely due to the lower levels of patronage than forecast. Furthermore, the benefits expressed in non-money terms are also likely to be lower than expected, though a service through to Crumpsall could improve this. In the meantime, the provision of the Crumpsall turning facility has provided resilience on the wider network, for example, enabling more services to run during planned and unplanned disruption. Given this, the scheme is likely to have benefits that outweigh the costs, albeit perhaps not to the extent anticipated in the business case. However, when considering the wider socio-economic context within which the line has opened, it is likely to be too early to provide a definitive conclusion to this evaluation objective. It will be interesting to see in due course if the line has helped to facilitate a quicker recovery to the economic downturn compared with other areas.

Summary

The Trafford Park Line opened during a period of travel restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic which considerably shaped the early usage of the line due to the restrictions and as wider socio-economic behaviours have returned to a 'new normal' this will undoubtedly be reflected in the usage of the line, and could not have been foreseen during the planning for the line.

Four years after opening, it is apparent that the presence of the Trafford Park Line scheme has generated benefits; however, the usage of the line has not yet reached the levels that would result in the anticipated medium to longer-term benefits, particularly the regeneration and economic impact, being observed in full. These impacts will be revisited in a future study in due course.

Scheme objective: Reducing car dependency

Overall, the evidence indicates there has been reduced dependency on car travel to the Trafford Park area, particularly for retail/leisure journeys. More than half (53%) of the Passenger Survey respondents travelling for shopping or social/leisure purposes indicated they had made the same journey by car/van/taxi before the Trafford Park Line opened. Meanwhile, amongst commuters who had made the same journey before the line opened, 22% had previously relied on car/van/taxi to get to/from work. The impact on journeys to work was also echoed by businesses, with Metrolink the second most frequently cited mode (after car/van) that staff at the businesses surveyed used. While passengers and local businesses identified a reduced reliance on the car, changes observed on the highway network were less strong. The analysis indicated some reductions in traffic flows, but the extent to which this is due to modal shift with the Trafford Park Line opening is unclear.

Scheme objective: Connectivity

This objective sought to increase the potential employment catchment of Trafford Park by increasing its level of connectivity. The evidence indicates an improved perception of connectivity and enhanced public transport offer amongst users, local businesses and stakeholders. The Trafford Park Line generally provides a faster and more reliable public transport journey between the Regional Centre and the Trafford Centre compared with the bus. Analysis has found that there was a limited change in the number of residents within a 60-minute catchment of the Trafford Centre when analysing the latest Census data with the Trafford Park Line and a scenario without the line.

Scheme objective: Regeneration & growth

It is too early to draw conclusions on the impact the Trafford Park Line has had on regeneration and growth. There was consensus amongst stakeholders that the line has been a contributing factor in increasing the attractiveness of the area for investors. Similarly, development activity (and the associated employment it will bring) is increasing in the Trafford Park area, but much of the planned development is yet to be realised and employment growth to date remains at a similar rate to that seen prior to the line opening.

There was evidence that connectivity improvements provided by the Trafford Park Line are facilitating access to new employment opportunities, particularly among the less wealthy population sub-groups and those without access to a car. While wider external factors will have impacted the decision to take up new opportunities, there is evidence of the Trafford Park Line influencing this decision. There was also evidence that employment travel horizons have improved, with 42% agreeing that the range of easy to reach job opportunities has increased, although the Trafford Park Line will only have been one factor in this perception.