



Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 26th March 2026
Subject: Access for All Programme Update
Report of: Simon Elliot, Network Director Rail, TfGM

Purpose of Report

At the request of the GM Mayor and Committee members at the December BNC meeting, this report provides an overview of TfGM's Access for All (AfA) Programme. Summarising the background to the current prioritisation, progress to date and the proposed strategy for delivering future schemes.

Recommendations:

The Committee are requested to note and comment on the content of the report.

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

The Access for All (AfA) programme aims to address the challenges encountered by passengers with a disability or mobility restriction when using Greater Manchester railway stations in. All station schemes follow the Network Rail Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) process used to assess how a project or decision could affect people with protected characteristics.

Risk Management

No direct implications from this report.

Legal Considerations

Although the funding for the accessibility works is devolved through GM, responsibility for accessible stations remains with the infrastructure owner, which in most cases is Network Rail.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

No direct implications from this report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

No direct implications from this report.

Number of attachments to the report: 1

Appendix A: GM Priority List

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

12 December 2025 – On the Right Track for Growth: The GM Rail Vision to 2050

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. Improving the accessibility of the Bee Network is an essential element of the Greater Manchester Strategy's objective to create a transport network for a global city region. Accessible public transport is vital for enabling all residents, including disabled people and those with mobility challenges, to participate fully in economic, social, and community life.
- 1.2. The Metrolink network has set a high standard for accessibility, with step-free access at all stops, demonstrating the region's commitment to inclusive travel. Bus franchising has enabled accessibility improvements allowing GMCA and TfGM to specify bus accessibility standards including additional wheelchair spaces, low-floor bus entry, audio-visual announcements, clearer signage and dedicated driver training.
- 1.3. Building on this, Greater Manchester's ambition is to significantly enhance the accessibility of rail stations across the area, ensuring that everyone can benefit from integrated, seamless journeys. Currently only 58% of GM rail stations are step free.
- 1.4. Historically, improvements to rail station access have depended on ring-fenced funding from the Department for Transport, with station prioritisation informed by local intelligence but ultimately determined at a national level. This remains the case for DfT controlled Access for All funding. However, Greater Manchester's devolved Integrated Settlement and Bee Network Rail Integration provide the opportunity to prioritise and direct investment to improve rail station access based on local priorities.

2. National Access for All Funding

- 2.1. Delivery of Access for All (AfA) schemes has traditionally been funded through the UK Government's long-running rail accessibility investment programme. Administered by the Department for Transport (DfT), the national Access for All programme, launched in 2006, has delivered step-free access at over 270 stations across Great Britain.
- 2.2. The programme operates through periodic national nomination rounds, which require an element of local match funding, with DfT funding allocated in 5 year 'Control Periods'.

- 2.3. In 2018, TfGM undertook a comprehensive prioritisation exercise to identify the stations in GM most in need of step free access. Key factors included:
- Whether stations had steps or steep ramps (with greater priority given to stepped stations, noting that steps create a more significant barrier to users);
 - Station patronage from ORR (Office of Rail and Road) footfall;
 - Proximity to hospital and schools;
 - Proximity to next available step free method of transport; and
 - Areas with high levels of disability related benefit claims.
- 2.4. This exercise resulted in a prioritised pipeline of AfA schemes for GM's inaccessible rail stations and this was used to inform bids to DfT for funding. See Appendix A for the full list.
- 2.5. For the funding period 2019-2024 GM was successful in securing DfT funding for three of the ten stations submitted; Walkden, Daisy Hill and Irlam stations.
- 2.6. For the period 2024-2029, GM secured DfT funding for Flowery Field, Newton for Hyde and Bredbury stations. Unlike previous rounds, funding was only awarded for initial feasibility work and it was only in January of this year that (almost 2 years after the initial announcement) DfT confirmed funding for the stations to conclusion of detailed design with a ministerial decision to be made in late 2027 on which schemes would progress to delivery.

3. Use of Devolved Funding

- 3.1. The protracted delays and continued uncertainty with regard to national funding poses an ongoing risk to the AfA programme. The scale of national funding to date has not matched Greater Manchester's ambition for improving rail station access, and funding awards have often not aligned to local priorities. For example, stations such as Swinton and Levenshulme have not been awarded national funding despite featuring near the top of GM's prioritised list.
- 3.2. In response, GMCA has allocated £94m of funding, from CRSTS and the Integrated Settlement, over and above that allocated by the DfT through AfA, facilitating the development of six packages or 'tranches' of work with a total of 19 schemes that are currently being progressed through design and delivery. Of these schemes, 15 are funded from CRSTS and the Integrated Settlement allowing a greater degree of autonomy and efficiency; and providing the certainty and flexibility needed to

develop schemes at pace; and avoid long pauses between heavily competitive national funding rounds. In addition, this also allows TfGM to engage the wider supply chain through a pipeline of future schemes, to maintain momentum, enable efficiencies and realise opportunities for innovative solutions to be developed.

- 3.3. The remaining stations in the pipeline will be progressed through design development and delivered in priority order when funding becomes available.

4. Access for All Tranches

- 4.1. The tranches below set out the phased access for all rail stations delivery programme:

- 4.2. **Tranche 1:** Daisy Hill and Irlam station schemes were delivered in early 2025. Walkden Station is being delivered by Network Rail, due to its added complexity, and has experienced delays due to the discovery of historic mining seams underneath the station footprint. Following progression of a number of mining and risk reports and liaison with the Coal Authority, Network Rail now have approval to continue with the development of the scheme.
- 4.3. Network Rail and TfGM continue to provide regular updates on Walkden’s progress to local councillors, MPs and the City Mayor as the scheme advances through its design and assurance stages.



Daisy Hill Station



Irlam Station

- 4.4. **Tranche 2:** includes Swinton, Reddish North, Hindley and Bryn. A build contract has been awarded and construction started at the end of 2025 at Bryn with the others to follow during early to mid-2026. These schemes are currently forecast to be complete in Spring 2027.
- 4.5. **Tranche 3:** includes Newton for Hyde, Flowery Field and Levenshulme. A design-and-build contract has been awarded and the contractor is now progressing detailed design, with construction currently forecast to start in early 2027, with a currently planned completion date of early 2028.
- 4.6. **Tranche 4:** includes Bredbury, Woodsmoor and Davenport. These schemes are currently revisiting the Option Selection Reports that were done in 2022 to ensure the proposed designs are still feasible. A contract to develop Outline Designs is scheduled to be awarded in June 2026, with schemes currently forecast to be completed in 2029.
- 4.7. **Tranche 5:** includes Broadbottom, Hall I' Th' Wood and Moorside. A contract to develop Outline Designs is scheduled to be awarded in November 2026.
- 4.8. **Tranche 6:** includes development and delivery of Hattersley station, in addition to development to detailed design for Woodley, Hyde Central, Patricroft and Brinnington stations. These schemes will be ready to progress through to delivery when further funding is secured.
- 4.9. There are currently 58% of GM stations that are step free. Following delivery of the above tranches this figure increases to 70% by 2029.

5. Maintaining Accessibility

- 5.1. The Metrolink network has set a high standard for accessibility for the Bee Network, with step-free access at all stops, but maintaining that standard is dependent on the reliability of the 36 lifts, spread over 28 stops, that are in operation across the Metrolink network
- 5.2. Lift reliability is relatively high across with lifts on average in service for 87% of operational time, however reliability is variable. Anti-social behaviour damaging doors and control panels in addition to some lifts suffering water ingress remain the most significant causes of lift outages. We have seen some instances of both lifts on some stops being out of service at the same time.

- 5.3. This has resulted in several high-profile complaints from passengers with disabilities or mobility issues, and BNC members also raised concerns at the meeting in December when accessibility was discussed.
- 5.4. Several of the lifts use parts that are life-expired or have limited availability in the supply chain which occasionally results in lifts being unavailable for prolonged periods whilst the maintainer sources parts and undertakes repairs. Other lifts are showing a deterioration in performance and will require intervention over the next 5 years.
- 5.5. To address these issues a lift renewal programme is underway with 8 of the 36 lifts (Heaton Park, Dane Road, Brooklands, Firswood, Hollinwood, Failsworth, Freehold, Chorlton) due to be replaced between Summer 2026 and the end of 2027. The remaining 28 lifts are planned for replacement between 2027 and 2032.
- 5.6. Whilst lift renewal work is being progressed, on-stop passenger communication is being improved. Vinyl transfers highlighting the several contact methods that customers can use are being added outside of the lifts, and to the on-stop call points. TfGM is working with our operator to implement a lift remote condition monitoring trial at several locations which will provide real-time alerts into the control room when lift errors occur. Should the trial be successful, TfGM would look at how that information could be shared with passengers, including possibly via the app.
- 5.7. The Metrolink operations and maintenance contract is currently being tendered, with a scheduled commencement date of July 2027. The new contract will include enhanced maintenance and response obligations for the passenger environment, including lifts and escalators.

Appendix A – GM Priority List

Non Step Free Stations

Green – Completed schemes

2018 Priority	Rail Station	Local Authority	Funding Source	Funding Stage
1	WALKDEN	Salford	DfT CP6	Delivery
2	SWINTON (Manchester)	Salford	CRSTS	Delivery
3	DAISY HILL	Bolton	DfT CP6	Completed
4	IRLAM	Salford	DfT CP6	Completed
5	REDDISH NORTH	Stockport	CRSTS	Delivery
6	HINDLEY	Wigan	CRSTS	Delivery
7	BRYN	Wigan	CRSTS	Delivery
8	FLOWERY FIELD	Tameside	DfT CP7 AfA	Delivery
9	NEWTON FOR HYDE	Tameside	DfT CP7 AfA	Delivery
10	BREDBURY	Stockport	DfT CP7 AfA	Delivery
11	Mossley	Tameside	Delivery by TRU	DfT Funded
12	GREENFIELD	Oldham	Delivery by TRU	DfT Funded
13	Manchester Oxford Road	Manchester	Industry Led Scheme	DfT Funded
14	HATTERSLEY	Tameside	TCR / s106	Delivery
15	LEVENSHULME	Manchester	CRSTS	Delivery
16	WOODSMOOR	Stockport	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Delivery
17	MOORSIDE	Salford	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Delivery
18	BROADBOTTOM	Tameside	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Delivery
19	DAVENPORT	Stockport	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Delivery
20	Hall I' Th' Wood	Bolton	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Delivery
21	WOODLEY	Stockport	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Design Only
22	HYDE CENTRAL	Tameside	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Design Only
23	PATRICROFT	Salford	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Design Only
24	BRINNINGTON	Stockport	CRSTS/ Integrated Settlement	Design Only
25	Westhoughton	Bolton	Funding not yet identified	TBC
26	ORRELL	Wigan	Funding not yet identified	TBC
27	Kearsley	Bolton	Funding not yet identified	TBC
28	RYDER BROW	Manchester	Funding not yet identified	TBC
29	Ince (Manchester)	Wigan	Funding not yet identified	TBC
30	GODLEY	Tameside	Funding not yet identified	TBC
31	HYDE NORTH	Tameside	Funding not yet identified	TBC
32	ASHBURYS	Manchester	Funding not yet identified	TBC
33	TRAFFORD PARK	Trafford	Funding not yet identified	TBC
34	ECCLES (Manchester)	Salford	Funding not yet identified	TBC
35	FAIRFIELD	Tameside	Funding not yet identified	TBC
36	BELLE VUE	Manchester	Funding not yet identified	TBC
37	MIDDLEWOOD	Stockport	Funding not yet identified	TBC
38	ARDWICK	Manchester	Funding not yet identified	TBC
39	REDDISH SOUTH	Stockport	Funding not yet identified	TBC
40	DENTON	Tameside	Funding not yet identified	TBC

Steep Ramp Station

Note that these stations are step free. However, they have ramps that are not to current accessible standards

2018 Priority	Rail Station	Local Authority	Funding Source / Deliverer	Tranche No.
1	APPLEY BRIDGE	Lancashire	Funding not yet identified	TBC
2	Bromley Cross	Bolton	Funding not yet identified	TBC
3	HEATON CHAPEL	Stockport	Funding not yet identified	TBC
4	ROMILEY	Stockport	Funding not yet identified	TBC
5	Lostock Parkway	Bolton	Funding not yet identified	TBC
6	HAG FOLD	Wigan	Funding not yet identified	TBC
7	GATHURST	Wigan	Funding not yet identified	TBC
8	PEMBERTON	Wigan	Funding not yet identified	TBC
9	GORTON	Manchester	Funding not yet identified	TBC
10	HEALD GREEN	Stockport	Funding not yet identified	TBC
11	BRAMHALL	Stockport	Funding not yet identified	TBC
12	FARNWORTH	Bolton	Funding not yet identified	TBC
13	MOSES GATE	Bolton	Funding not yet identified	TBC
14	Strines	Stockport	Funding not yet identified	TBC