Metrolink

Work continues on the massive expansion of the network after successful completion of city centre track replacement
Welcome back to Momentum. In our first edition last summer, I explained our desire to communicate transport news more effectively and use Momentum to keep you informed about the major transport projects that Greater Manchester is involved in. Promoting effective relationships is essential to the work we do, and it’s vital that we understand your interests, so please continue to let us know your views on any of the subjects we cover as well as the publication itself.

2009 was an extremely busy year for us. Work begun on the Metrolink expansion, incorporating the replacement of tracks in Manchester city centre, the renewal of the stops at St Peter’s Square and Piccadilly Gardens, the launch of a new identity, and the introduction of new ticket vending machines.

Trams started running again in the centre of Manchester in November after a period of closure to enable track replacement work to be carried out. This was necessary to prepare for the doubling in size of the network, and has made journeys smoother and quieter. Orders were made for 40 new trams, the first of which were introduced on to the existing network before Christmas. Read more about the Metrolink expansion project further on in Momentum.

As part of our guest writer series, Mike Emmerich, Chief Executive of the Commission for the New Economy, sets out the role of transport in city economies, illustrating how an effective, integrated public transport system is critical to securing economic growth and increased productivity.

On page four, there’s a piece about the Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre, published in January. The strategy outlines the major transport initiatives to support the city-region’s economy, maintaining Manchester’s position as a place where people choose to work, shop and live.

Finally, over 80% of public transport journeys in the city-region are made by bus, and the feature about buses in this edition explains how continuous investment alongside our work with operators is helping us provide a better, more reliable service.

Enjoy Momentum and once again, stay in touch with us through momentum@gmpте.gov.uk.
A Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre

Supporting the competitive edge of current and future employers, making it easier for employees to get to work, providing better access to cultural offerings and leisure and shopping opportunities, delivering a low-carbon economy, and making best use of the Manchester’s transport assets

These are the aspirations of the Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre, produced by Manchester City Council in close co-operation with GMPTE. It aims to support the city-region’s economy, maintaining Manchester’s position as a place where people choose to work, shop and live.

Manchester City Council and its partners recognise the critical need to maintain and develop effective transport to, from and within the city centre. The Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre provides a framework for this.

The purpose of the strategy is to accommodate the predicted rise in employment in the city centre over the next ten years through provision for all modes of transport. In particular, public transport capacity and quality as well as conditions for cyclists and pedestrians will be strengthened.

In order to avoid congestion and improve the public realm, we need to ensure that the volume of cars entering the city centre remains at around current levels. This will be achieved through a combination of measures: initiatives to prevent through trips; improving public transport quality and capacity; enhanced park and ride facilities; introducing schemes to increase car occupancy; and more provision for cyclists.

Segregated cycle lanes will be introduced on Oxford Road, the busiest cycling corridor in the city, and access for cyclists through the city centre will be improved. We also intend to develop cycle centres with secured parking facilities at key locations in the city centre.

The Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre is based on a set of key principles, which are consistent with local, regional and national transport policy objectives promoting a ‘safe, efficient and integrated transport system to support a strong and prosperous economy’.

The strategy incorporates the following funded schemes, including those which will be delivered through the £1.5 billion Greater Manchester Transport Fund, announced by AGMA last May:

- Metrolink schemes currently under construction: to MediaCityUK at Salford Quays, from Victoria to Rochdale railway station via Oldham, Piccadilly to Droylsden; and Trafford Bar to Chorlton
- Additional Metrolink schemes funded from the Greater Manchester Transport Fund: from Chorlton to East Didsbury; Droylsden to Ashton; Chorlton to Manchester Airport via Wythenshawe; and Oldham and Rochdale town centres
- Increased park and ride facilities at Metrolink stops and railway stations
- The cross city bus package linking Boothtown/Ellenbrook, Middleton and Parrs Wood to and through the city centre by means of bus priority measures along key streets
- Additional rolling stock, funded from the government’s rail capacity programme, to increase the quality and capacity of train services coming into the city centre
- These schemes, most of which will be completed by 2016, will dramatically increase the amount of people coming into the city centre by public transport.

In addition, increased tram services will require a second route across the city centre. The preferred route for this is from Victoria station via Corporation Street and Cross Street to G-Mex.

Potential traffic conflicts at key junctions will need to be managed and pedestrian safety, facilities for cyclists and public realm schemes such as those around St Peter’s Square and Victoria Street, will also have to be improved.

The strategy recognises that Manchester and its city centre are competing internationally. As capital is global and investment decisions are partly based on the perception of what a place is like, factors such as a distinctive cityscape and public realm, business diversity, the cultural offer, alongside high quality public transport and accessibility will ensure positive perceptions of Manchester, for both investors and residents. This will help Greater Manchester achieve its overall vision for the city centre.

While the economy has slowed down over the last 18 months, the city-region must prepare for better days ahead in order to maintain its position as a global player. The Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER) shows that the city-region, and the city centre in particular, is well placed to recover from the current recession and return to long-term growth, stating that employment in the city centre could increase by over a third by the early 2020s.

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The ten-week consultation period for the scheme started in January and will close on 21 March. The consultation document is available on the Manchester City Council website at http://tinyurl.com/tfmcnc and everyone is encouraged to have their say. We are keen to consult as wide a range of stakeholders as possible, which ultimately, will help us produce a strategy that is relevant to all our partners.
Transport will be critical to Greater Manchester achieving economic growth and increasing productivity

A groundbreaking piece of research demonstrates transport’s key role in the regional economy

Mike Emmerich
Chief Executive, Commission for the New Economy

2009 was an especially eventful year. The state of the economy continued to make headlines across the globe as governments, businesses and individuals grapple with the prospects of recovery after a tumultuous period of decline. Closer to home, work has continued apace to galvanise Manchester’s economy in the face of constrained finance and likely public sector retrenchment.

Last year, Manchester took major steps forward to achieve statutory city-region status and the Greater Manchester Strategy, Manchester’s policy blueprint for the next ten years, was unveiled. The evidence set out in the Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER), published in the summer.

Transport is a critical area within the MIER, permeating many of the findings as well as the reviewers’ recommendations, and the review stresses the importance of a coherent transport system to facilitate economic growth. An efficient, accessible intra-city-region transport system can both reduce the costs of increased density and increase the benefits of such density. Costs refer to congestion and pollution; benefits are about people being able to get around easier and quicker. The provision of an efficient transport network within the city-region would make it more convenient for people to get to work, allow firms and individuals to share ideas and network with greater ease, and render the city-region a more desirable destination for inward investment.

The MIER concludes: ‘Inadequate transport networks within the Manchester city-region are an important cost of increasing the size of the city, and [transport] improvements would provide the largest economic payoff’. This corroborates many of the transport programmes currently underway, such as the Metrolink expansion, which will help Manchester deal with the opportunities and challenges that a growing city will encounter in the future.

The Metrolink project is a response to market demand for a more extensive network, which in turn, will bring about increased productivity. And it will reduce the costs of economic growth, curbing congestion and pollution. The review is in favour of such targeted initiatives, though stresses that effective planning and traffic management should always prioritise the desires of residents and commuters.

An assessment by Volterra Consulting about gains from the proposed Metrolink extension found potential productivity benefits as a result of agglomeration of £259 million to 2026. It also reported possible house price gains of between £246 million and £351 million across the entire network, incorporating the four lines currently being built.

The subject of high speed rail remains topical. Although the MIER provides clear evidence to support the possible benefits to Manchester residents and businesses, it concluded that ‘transport within the Manchester city-region is the first and much more important priority’.

This does not mean that there are no economic advantages from a high speed link with London, but that building infrastructure within the city should remain the priority of the city-region. The review emphasises the importance of work being undertaken by GMITA and partners to maintain capacity on trains. It is essential that we attempt to minimise the problems of overcrowding on the rail network and that people can travel to and from work safely and in comfort.

The MIER also supports the financing of improvements being made to the Manchester Hub. This refers to the network of eleven radial routes converging in the centre of Manchester, the track and signals and all the passenger and freight services that operate on them. Manchester Hub also includes the series of factors which slow down services, limits capacity and threatens economic growth in the north of England. Described by the Northern Way as ‘the single most critical infrastructure investment in rail for the whole of the north’, it is in the best interests of all businesses in the north that the government commits to funding improvements to this project.

The schemes within the accelerated transport package announced by AGMA in May 2009 – after the MIER was written – are based on the principles outlined in the review. In other words, transport investment has been premised on achieving maximum economic benefit for the city-region, including individuals and businesses alike.

However, it is also clear that transport initiatives should not come at any price. The MIER concludes: ‘Addressing the balance between the costs and benefits of economic growth is key to ensuring long-term success in Manchester, with a small improvement in the balance of benefits and costs having a big impact on growth, productivity and living standards.’

It is in this way that Greater Manchester can ensure it capitalises on an upturn in the economy when it happens. The principles of the MIER should be used as a starting point, ensuring that the city-region remains focused on value for money and sustainable growth in more financially restricted years ahead.
The future’s bright for Metrolink

Metrolink passengers travelling through Manchester city centre are experiencing a flavour of the future for Greater Manchester’s light rail network following a major investment programme.

As well as the replacement of the city centre tracks, this massive project comprised the redevelopment of the stops at St Peter’s Square and Piccadilly Gardens and the installation of new, high-quality street finishes including York stone paving and granite.

The first of the new generation of trams have also been operating passenger services since the end of last year. Their modern design and distinctive yellow and silver colours both inside and out make the trams strikingly different from the original fleet.

Councillor Keith Whitmore, Chair of GMITA, said: “As passengers experience the range of improvements we’ve introduced, I’m confident they’ll agree that it was worth the wait.”

“The benefits of more comfortable, smoother and quieter journeys, coupled with the enhancements to the two most heavily used city centre stops, and a new look for the network, offer a real step change in the quality of service for customers.”

Able to carry over 200 people, the new trams have a lighter, brighter and more spacious interior, wider doorways and aisles for accessibility, and clearer information displays.

Eight of the new vehicles will run on the existing Metrolink lines and will, in due course, form part of a fleet of 40 that will be used across the extended network.

At St Peter’s Square, the stop has been widened and the platform heights modified to allow level boarding for all passengers. The Piccadilly Gardens stop has also been broadened and new canopies have been installed to provide better shelter.

New state-of-the-art ticket machines, which accept cards as well as cash, have also been installed at these stops. They will be introduced at all stops across the network by the spring.

Track in central Manchester, the most heavily used stretch on the network, was replaced last year. Work finished in November. Trams pass over it up to 350 times a day and this figure is set to increase to 400 times a day when the new lines are completed.

GMPTF is expanding the Metrolink network significantly, with work taking place to construct four new lines to Oldham and Rochdale, MediaCityUK in Salford, Chorlton in South Manchester, and through East Manchester to Droylsden. Extensions are also being developed to Ashton, East Didsbury, Manchester Airport, Oldham town centre and Rochdale town centre. There will also be a second tram line across central Manchester.

In readiness for the new line to Chorlton, and the new Trafford tram depot, new connections have been built at the Trafford Bar stop. At Cornbrook, the track layout has been extensively remodelled to accommodate the new MediaCityUK tram services and to provide greater operational flexibility and service availability for all lines.

Work to convert the Oldham Loop Line to Metrolink is now underway. The last heavy rail services ran on the line on 3 October and a special package of enhanced bus services, together with strengthened peak-time train services on the Rochdale and Huddersfield lines, are in operation to cater for former Loop Line passengers.

All the overhead cables on the Altrincham line have been replaced together with improvements to stops along the line. In particular, the underpass at Old Trafford stop has been replaced with a crossing, and the length of the platforms has doubled.

Councillor Whitmore concluded: “2009 was quite a year for Metrolink and 2010 looks set to be just as busy. We’re proud of what’s been done to improve what is one of the country’s most successful tram systems. As all the projects come to fruition, the travelling public of Greater Manchester can look forward to a much larger network and better quality of service.”

Figures

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<tr>
<td>500 TONNES OF STEEL</td>
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<td>covering 9,000 linear metres of track</td>
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<td>1,400 TONNES OF CONCRETE</td>
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<td>299,000 SETS OF PAVING STONES</td>
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<td>215,500 HOURS OF WORK</td>
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The Age of the Bus

Buses may not have the profile of Metrolink or enjoy the status of rail, but they account for 80% of all public transport trips in Greater Manchester. That’s nearly six times as much as local train and Metrolink combined and well over 200 million journeys annually. Buses are ideally placed to meet the twin challenges of stimulating economic growth and mitigating climate change, delivering enhanced accessibility while moving around large volumes of people without increasing congestion.

Over the past ten years, GMPTA and GMPTA have reinvested significant amounts of capital, political, and government investment to improve bus services, bolstering the economic performance of Greater Manchester. Over £80 million was invested in the successful bus corridor schemes that run throughout the conurbation, linking the centre of Manchester with other districts.

This has resulted in more reliable and in some cases, swifter bus services which has led to increases in patronage, as commuters and residents realise the advantages of buses.

To complement these schemes, bus operators have introduced new vehicles to their fleets. GMPTA has also invested significantly in modernising and rebuilding bus stations such as Hyde, Shudehill and Middleton. A three-month consultation on a new £50 million cross city bus scheme recently concluded, and you can find more information about it at www.gmptagmpc.com.

This scheme forms part of the accelerated package within the recently created Greater Manchester Transport Fund. It will deliver highway measures to improve bus services along key routes in the city-region, enhancing access to employment, reducing bus travel times and making services more reliable. Access will be improved to Manchester and Salford city centres and other parts of the region where new jobs will be created in the future, such as Oxford Road to the south of Manchester city centre. Many of the area’s higher education and healthcare facilities, as well as a large number of employers, are located in this area.

On top of these big capital investments, GMPTA provides revenue funding of over £150 million on year to support the concessionary fare schemes and fund bus services in communities that operators cannot run commercially.

Our vision for buses incorporates the development of a network that is stable, reliable and high-quality. It should be complementary to other modes and meet the needs of passengers. We have used our capital and revenue investments to secure this vision, notwithstanding the difficulties that deregulation imposes. It is now clear that the current system of deregulation has made the job of planning and co-ordinating bus routes, timetables and delivering a straightforward and integrated ticketing system extremely difficult. Another consequence of bus deregulation has been to isolate buses from other modes of transport, limiting the extent to which operators can co-ordinate services.

What we have learned from this experience is that it is essential for public transport to be collaborative. If it is not, many of the benefits to the public cannot be fully secured. It is no coincidence that there have been relatively modest patronage rises in buses over the last ten years, in comparison with the very substantial increases in rail, Metrolink and private car use. This indicates that much work remains to be done before bus services reach their full potential. GMPTA has strengthened its relationships with bus operators to deliver better services. In Greater Manchester, we have forged a partnership with the many operators in the city-region, using provisions outlined in the Local Transport Act 2008. These partnerships will enable us to maintain a stable network of services and drive up standards.

We would also like to see public sector investment fully matched by continuous fleet improvements, mindful that the quality of vehicles has a profound effect on passengers’ perceptions of buses. Another very important task for the partnership will be the implementation of a much simpler fares and ticketing system. Currently, the plethora of tickets offered by individual bus companies is confusing, with research indicating that would-be passengers tend to believe fares are higher than they are. By simplifying fares, evidence suggests that substantial patronage growth can be expected. This is even more likely when it is accompanied by a smartcard similar to the Oyster card, which has been enjoyed by London passengers for some years.

Furthermore, it will be the responsibility of the partnership to encourage more people to use the better bus services, generating a virtuous circle whereby extra revenues are reinvested into more frequent and higher quality services.

However, if the partnership proves unable to deliver the necessary improvements or if it cannot provide the scale of benefits consistent with the scale of public sector investment, then we will investigate whether bus franchising, known as quality contracts, represents a better way of raising the standards of bus services.

Buses have a central role in any metropolitan transport system, bringing cities to a stand-still when they do not work. However, over the last twenty years, they have been perceived as the preserve of young people, the elderly and the poor. We are working with operators to improve the quality of the service and, in places, to improve the affordability of the all passengers in Greater Manchester.

Analysis

Mark Threapleton

Mark Threapleton, managing director of Stagecoach Manchester, the region’s second largest bus operator, has enjoyed a career in public transport which already spans more than three decades. He tells us a bit about himself and gives his views on some of the big questions the industry faces.

What drew you to public transport?
I started looking for work when I was eighteen and got a job as a clerk at the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport executive. I suppose I drifted into transport, but soon discovered that I liked it. It’s challenging, frustrating, but extremely rewarding.

What are the greatest challenges facing public transport today?
By far the biggest is getting more people to use it and start seeing it as a reliable alternative to the car. More and more people are concerned about the environment and it goes without saying that travelling by bus, train or tram are sustainable ways of getting around. But, it’s essential that the sector is sincere in its approach towards the environment. We need to take it seriously, be vigorous in the way we tackle it and honest in how we communicate the environmental benefits of public transport.

How successful is Stagecoach in getting more people to use its services?
We carry many more passengers on buses than we do on Metrolink. We have invested significantly in modernising operators which compete with the many operators in the city-region, using provisions outlined in the Local Transport Act 2008. These partnerships will enable us to maintain a stable network of services and drive up standards.

New initiative to allow free travel for home buyers
GMPTA has received approval from Rochdale Council for a new £11.5 million interchange project next to the proposed Greater Manchester Metrolink stop. Replacing the existing bus station, it will be situated in Rochdale town centre on Smith Street by the River Roch.
Numbers in the News

GMPTE aims to make public transport the preferred choice in Greater Manchester. The following will give you a numerical overview of transport in the city-region.

All figures used are annual and the latest available.

Over 278 MILLION passenger journeys were made by bus, train and tram.

236 MILLION journeys were made on buses.

23 MILLION journeys were made on Local Train Services.

Metrolink patronage is 20.3 MILLION.

23.3 MILLION Passenger Journeys were made on GMPTE subsidised services.

440,000 Concessionary Passes were re-issued as part of the introduction of the National Concessionary Travel scheme.

The Metrolink expansion is expected to take 5 MILLION CARS off the road each year.

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www.gmpte.com
momentum@gmpte.gov.uk