

# Bee Network Equalities Newsletter June 2025

Hello and welcome to the third Bee Network Equalities Update, prepared for you by Transport for Greater Manchester's (TfGM) Partnerships, Engagement and Inclusion (PEI) team. In this newsletter you will find key transport-related updates and relevant news stories for anyone with an interest in our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

We'll be publishing an update quarterly. This newsletter covers the period April – June 2025. The next update will cover the period July - September 2025. You're receiving it as you've been identified as a key stakeholder to the PEI team, with a vested interest in promoting accessibility and inclusion.

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## Opportunities to have your say or get involved

We wanted to let you know how we're involving people in our future service design and delivery and highlight any opportunities to get involved.

Consultation and Engagement opportunities are shared on our dedicated webpage, including updates on recently closed projects or activities: [Consultations and engagement | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM](#)

Engagement is taking place with targeted groups on the following topics:

## Inclusive Museum of Transport event

On Sunday 31 August, the [Museum of Transport](#) is holding an event aimed at welcoming and supporting disabled visitors to get the most out of a visit to the museum.

Here's what is planned:

- There'll be a modern Bee Network bus on site all day – so if you're nervous about travelling by bus, come and try out a modern bus with ramp, audio and visual announcements, hearing induction loop, wheelchair spaces and anti-slip flooring – with no time pressure, and with staff on hand to help.
- A tour of the museum with a BSL (British Sign Language) interpreter – please check the Museum's [Facebook page](#) or contact [engagement@tfgm.com](mailto:engagement@tfgm.com) for further details
- Free heritage bus service to and from Shudehill Interchange on a 1999 accessible bus, Stagecoach 612.
- At 3pm when the museum usually gets quieter, bright lights will be turned off and the volume will be turned down on all video displays to create a more relaxed, sensory-friendly environment for those who need a quieter atmosphere to enjoy the museum.
- There will be Bee Network colleagues at the museum to answer your questions.

To make the museum as accessible as we can, that day there'll be no admission charge to visit the museum.

We expect more Blue Badge holders than usual to visit the museum that day. So if you can, please use public transport to visit the museum – either using our free heritage shuttle bus (some journeys will use buses that aren't suitable for wheelchair users), Metrolink to Queens Road or by frequent 135 bus.

If you have any specific needs, please contact the museum beforehand so they can provide the best possible experience for you.

If you're close to someone who'd benefit from this event, or if you know of a group that might like to come, please let them know – we'd love to see them (and you).

For more information, please check out the museum's [Facebook page](#).

## Access for All programme and Hindley TravelHub

The Access for All (AfA) programme was launched in 2006 to address accessibility issues faced by passengers when using railway stations in Great Britain. The programme has already delivered an accessible, step free route at more than 200 stations nationwide and in Greater

Manchester works were recently completed at Irlam and Daisy Hill Stations. You can read more about the Daisy Hill station opening [here](#), and read more about the opening of Irlam station [here](#).

An ongoing programme of upgrades will result in 63% of Greater Manchester rail stations being fully accessible by March 2028. Currently, fewer than half of the city-region's stations (43%) are accessible.

We are currently engaging with groups local to Flowery Field, Newton-for-Hyde and Levenshulme stations, and will be starting to engage with groups local to Woodsmoor, Bredbury, Davenport, Hall I'th Wood, Woodley and Broadbottom in Autumn 2025.

If you are interested in more information, or potentially providing feedback on your local station design, please contact [engagement@tfgm.com](mailto:engagement@tfgm.com).

## Race Equity Framework

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), all ten local authorities along with TfGM and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) have committed to tackling racial inequalities and embedding race equity across public services, policies, and employment.

This commitment is set out in the Greater Manchester Race Equity Framework, which outlines shared principles, goals, and priority areas including employment, leadership, health, education, and community engagement. The framework calls for change to be driven through partnership, accountability, and shared leadership – addressing the root causes of structural racism and working to embed race equity into systems and culture.

TfGM is responding to the Race Equity Framework and we are currently connecting with groups and communities to hear your thoughts on our emerging ideas – what works, what doesn't, and what needs to change.

If you'd like more information or to get involved in shaping this work, please contact: [engagement@tfgm.com](mailto:engagement@tfgm.com)

## Staying informed

### Updates on Disability Design Reference Group (DDRG) activity

The Disability Design Reference Group (DDRG) is our pan-impairment advisory group, who provide advice based on their personal experience of travelling on the Bee Network. The DDRG work collaboratively with us in designing an integrated, accessible public and active travel network.

The group meet formally every three months, and their focus is primarily on projects and workstreams which are particularly strategic or significant.

A summary of current work is included below.

## **June quarterly meeting**

### **Bury Interchange redevelopment – design influence**

The Bury interchange team have been working on a concept design for the new interchange based on best practice principles and learnings from previous projects such as Stockport Interchange. They asked for the group's perspectives on various design themes such as seating, boarding and waiting areas, circulation, toilets, customer information and potential provision of a quiet room. Their feedback will be considered as part of the design development.

### **TfGM shelter provision**

TfGM plans to improve shelters and stops across the bus and tram network, with a focus on accessibility, safety, and comfort for all passengers. DDRG were asked to give their thoughts on what parts of current shelters are working well, and where improvements could be made. They reflected on what they would prioritise in the design and function of new or refurbished bus and tram shelters.

### **Participation and remuneration policy**

TfGM and GMCA are working together to produce a participation and remuneration policy to set out a consistent approach to recognising someone's time, skills and expertise when they contribute their lived experience to support the development of the Bee Network. DDRG views were sought in relation to key principles, preferred methods of payment, different types of participation activity, concerns about impact on tax and benefits.

## **Update on Bee Network GoodMaps trial**

As updated in the previous edition of this newsletter, and shared in this [press release](#), TfGM recently ran a 3-month trial of inclusive, indoor navigation and wayfinding Technology – GoodMaps.

The official trial period ran from March until the end of May, although you can still find Bee Network locations mapped within the GoodMaps app whilst we are in discussions about future use.

On Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, we invited guests from various GM representative groups to test the technology at Shudehill interchange, where we were joined by GoodMaps Chief Commercial Officer, Neil Barnfather.

Over 20 people joined us at the site visit, including Bee Network Committee Disability Champion, Cllr Tracey Rawlins. Attendees were generally very positive about the technology and encouraging of the trial. It was also a valuable opportunity to explore areas where the mapping data could be improved, and pass feedback to GoodMaps for consideration in future app updates.

We also hosted an online feedback survey to run alongside the trial period. The survey is now closed and we received a total of seven responses. Whilst this number is low, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with all respondents agreeing that they would be likely to be a regular user of the technology if we adopted it across the Bee Network, and the majority of respondents keen to see us add the mapping option to as many further locations as possible.

The Customer and KeolisAmey Metrolink teams are analysing the technology usage data and engagement feedback, to inform decisions about future use. Further updates will be shared in due course.

## Inclusive Bee Network videos

The TfGM social media team have been out and about meeting with GM residents to showcase how we are making the Bee Network accessible for everyone.

Visit our website to read case studies from Anne, Nathaniel and Damian about the impact recent improvements to make local railway stations step-free has had on them personally. You can also find a case study with Councillor Tracey Rawlins, Bee Network Disability Advocate, as she talks about some of the ways we're working to make public transport in Greater Manchester as accessible as possible.

Link here: [Meet Tracey | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM](#)

There is a longer video of Councillor Tracey Rawlins at Shudehill Interchange available to watch on Instagram [here](#).

## Coming soon: Travel Training resources

As part of a wider initiative to support young people across Greater Manchester (GM), the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) – in partnership with TfGM, GM Police, young people, families, schools, local authorities, and the GM Travel Training Forum – has led the development of a comprehensive suite of travel training resources.

These materials are designed to support young people on their journey towards independent travel, promoting well-being by helping them build confidence and develop essential skills at their own pace. They include:

- A **Greater Manchester Independent Travel Guide**, along with an Easy Read version, offering practical guidance on journey planning, ticketing, staying safe, overcoming common challenges, and accessing further support.
- A series of **four short films** featuring young people from GM, covering how to travel by bus, tram and train, and how to buy tickets.

The resources were co-created with individuals with additional needs, in partnership with Manchester's **Digital Independent Specialist College** (DISC) for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and **SEND Code**, a Manchester-based digital agency that empowers talented young neurodivergent creatives.

These resources will be available on the Bee Network website later this summer. We will include a further update in the next Equalities newsletter in October.

## Inclusion & Equalities Annual Report published

We're pleased to share that the most recent edition of our Inclusion & Equalities Annual Report, covering activity in 2023-2024, has now been published.

This report forms part of our four-year Inclusion & Equalities Strategy (spanning 2022-26) and provides an update on the progress we're making against our long-term commitments.

The report highlights not only what has been achieved over this period but also showcases how we're working collaboratively across the organisation to drive positive change and deliver meaningful impact for communities across Greater Manchester.

To make sure that the report can reach as many audiences as possible, we have published in standard, British Sign Language, Easy Read and plain text formats.

The link to all formats is [here](#).

This year's report shows:

- How we've delivered against our equality objectives
- The progress we've made
- What still needs to be done to ensure the Bee Network works for everyone
- How we're responding to data and insight as an employer

At the heart of the report is our commitment to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion across all nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as well as our growing work to address socio-economic inequality. These are not just categories—we recognise they represent real people, real experiences, and real barriers that we have a duty to remove.

**We'd love your help spreading the word.** Please share this report with your networks to help us reach as many people as possible.

We also welcome conversations with anyone interested in discussing the topics raised. If you'd like to talk or find out more, please get in touch at [engagement@tfgm.com](mailto:engagement@tfgm.com)

## Latest updates on the Bee Network/ wider transport:

### Cycle Training and Bike Maintenance Courses

A great range of Bee Network cycling courses are available for people living or working in GM over 16 (or aged 12 accompanied by an adult).

Whatever the stage of cycling experience, there is a course to fit everyone, and people can work through the courses to build their skills and confidence. All sessions are delivered by a qualified instructor and are either free (cycling skills) or subsidised (cycle maintenance). Participants learn in small groups with other people at the same level at venues across the region. There is the option to and bring your bike or borrow one. 1-2-1 sessions are available for on-road cycle training, Starling Bank bike hire users, and family sessions.

You can find out more about the available courses [here](#).

If you need any more information about the courses, please contact: [cycle.training@tfgm.com](mailto:cycle.training@tfgm.com)

## New e-bikes added the Starling Bank Bike hire scheme

In May, 300 new e-bikes became available for people to use as part of GM's Starling Bank Bike hire scheme.

The new bikes mean that half of the city-region's bike hire fleet will be electric, providing scheme users with more choice on the type of bike they'd like to hire.

So far, Starling Bank Bike users have clocked up 1.23m rides, with 1,698 rides being made per day in April 2025. A record number of rides were made in the final week of April with 15,492 users clocking up rides, an average of 2,213 rides per day.

More information about the Starling Bank Bike hire scheme is available in the [press release](#).

## New and improved TravelSafe Live Chat

A new dedicated TravelSafe LiveChat, allowing Bee Network passengers to report concerns while travelling, will launch in October as part of increased efforts to improve safety and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on public transport. Building on the existing Greater Manchester Police (GMP) LiveChat, the enhanced integrated 24/7 service will allow people to quickly and discreetly report crime and other issues onboard buses, trams and surrounding stops and get advice from a team of trained call handlers within minutes.

TravelSafe LiveChat will act as a single point of contact for passengers wanting to report an issue. Specialist officers from Transport for Greater Manchester's (TfGM) 24/7 Operational Control Centre will work with GMP to determine the appropriate level of support. The announcement has received coverage in Manchester World, Stockport Nub, and Salford Now. You can find out more in the press release [here](#).

## Transport for the North - Rail Station Accessibility

Transport for the North (TfN) asked over 2,000 people across the region to share their experiences using rail stations – especially those living with health conditions or disabilities. From this research TfN found that most stations in the North are difficult or impossible for many people to use; fewer than half the stations in the North have step-free access, more than six-in-ten stations don't have fully accessible waiting shelters and nearly a quarter have no public address systems.

TfN analysis shows that at the current rate of investment the North's rail stations would not all be step-free until the 22nd Century. Poor accessibility means many passengers are in need of support and assistance to travel with confidence – yet over half the North's stations are completely unstaffed. And inadequate lighting and CCTV mean that station environments often feel unsafe, especially to women and girls in particular.

Political leaders in the North want the Government to share their commitment to make investment in accessibility and safety of railway stations a priority. Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester and Chair of the TfN's Rail North Committee, has written to the Secretary of

State for Transport Heidi Alexander asking for an additional £400 million over five years. This would help address some of the accessibility issues. More information can be found in the full article [here](#).

## Government announces £2.5 billion transport investment for GM

On Wednesday 4 June both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Transport joined Mayor Andy Burnham in Rochdale to announce devolved 'Transport for City Regions' funding for regional transport infrastructure. The Chancellor's announcement confirmed that Greater Manchester is set to receive £2.5 billion of a national £15.6 billion pot – the full amount set out in the previous government's indicative allocation in October 2023.

This funding runs from March 2027 until March 2032 and will form part of Greater Manchester's Integrated Settlement, to be used alongside other funding streams to deliver outcomes agreed with Government. 'Transport for City Regions' is the new name for the 'City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement' (CRSTS) which has previously been used to support major transport infrastructure projects, such as the development of Stockport Interchange.

The £2.5 billion announced will form a major part of our 10-year investment pipeline in projects and will be used to:

- **Create an all-electric local public transport network:** A thousand new EV buses will form a 100% electric fleet serving communities. Alongside trams powered by renewable energy and e-bikes for hire, it will deliver an emission-free network. This will build on progress already made to cut CO2 emissions and improve air quality.
- **Bring rail into the Bee Network:** Local rail lines will be integrated with the Bee Network, with Greater Manchester communities the first outside London to be served by fully joined-up bike, bus, tram and train travel by the end of the decade. The move will see major improvements to stations, including making more fully accessible, as well as capped fares.
- **Support ongoing maintenance of key transport assets:** This will include highways maintenance and Metrolink renewals and enhancements.
- **Deliver major projects to drive green growth:** A pipeline of transport projects will support the delivery of thousands of new homes, skilled jobs and green growth.

Including:

- In Stockport, Greater Manchester will begin construction of a new Metrolink line, bringing Bee Network trams to the town centre
- Oldham, Rochdale, Heywood and Bury will be connected to each other as we begin delivery of new tram-train services
- North Manchester, Bury and Oldham will receive new Metrolink stops to support delivery of thousands of new homes
- Leigh and central Manchester will see the creation of new transport interchanges, with Bury's new – and the city-region's first operationally carbon neutral – interchange completed
- Town centres across the city region (e.g. Ashton-under-Lyne, Bolton, Middleton, Stretford) will see new public transport and active travel infrastructure to support ongoing regeneration

You can read more in our press release [here](#).

## Travel advice and guidance

### Metrolink engineering works

The rolling programme of engineering works to maintain and improve the Metrolink network continues across several sites, ensuring tram journeys in GM remain safe, reliable, and accessible.

**City Centre Works** – This summer, essential engineering work will take place to renew Metrolink tracks between Piccadilly Gardens and Piccadilly:

- **Piccadilly Delta Curves** – works will take place from Tuesday 3 June until Friday 20 June.
- **Portland Street** – works will take place from Sunday 22 June until Thursday 17 July.
- **Aytoun Street** – works will take place from Saturday 19 July until Monday 10/11 August.

Due to these works, from Tuesday 3 June until the end of service on Sunday 10 August, no tram services will operate via Piccadilly Gardens. During this time, trams on the Altrincham/Bury lines will not serve Piccadilly Gardens or Piccadilly and will instead travel directly between Altrincham and Bury via Market Street. All tram services from Ashton-under-Lyne and Etihad Campus will operate to Piccadilly, whilst services to Eccles (via MediaCityUK) will operate from Victoria via Market Street. Tram services will resume their normal service pattern from Monday 11 August.

For those connecting between Market Street/Piccadilly Gardens and Piccadilly, customers can take a short walk/wheel or access the nearby Free Bus 1 & 2 services.

A dedicated Metrolink replacement bus service is planned to be in operation before the Free Bus services start, and after the Free Bus services end, as the operational hours of the Free Bus services do not correspond exactly to the usual operating hours of Metrolink.

The most up to date information on the city centre works including exact tram service patterns, Free Bus Services information, and walking routes can be found on the dedicated webpage [here](#).

### Events and travel alerts

The latest travel disruption information can be found on our website.

Events information: [Events | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM](#)

Travel alerts: [Travel updates | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM](#)

Planned engineering works: [Planned engineering works | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM](#)