

March 2024

Frequently Asked Questions: Bee Network school bus services

What is the Bee Network?

The Bee Network is Greater Manchester's vision for a joined-up London-style transport system. Eventually it will offer safe, seamless and affordable end-to-end journeys across public transport and active travel (cycling, walking and wheeling).

Through the Bee Network we are gradually bringing all local bus services under local control through a system called 'bus franchising'. This is a major step on Greater Manchester's journey to delivering a joined-up transport system.

What is bus franchising?

Franchising is the system used to procure and co-ordinate bus services in London, many cities across Europe and the rest of the world.

A change in the law means that city regions with a Metro Mayor outside London, including Greater Manchester, now have the power to franchise bus services in their areas. Under the Bee Network, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is responsible for:

- Planning the bus network to make sure it links up with other transport.
- Choosing bus operators and deciding where buses run, how often and at what times.
- Setting targets for buses to be reliable, run on time, and meet high standards.

In practice, this will see TfGM, as the transport authority, enter into contracts with bus operators to deliver specified routes and services, with revenue risk and public accountability remaining with TfGM.

Given the importance of buses to the people and places they serve, customer focused performance targets, including punctuality and reliability of services and levels of customer complaints, are central to operators' contracts and help us to deliver continuous improvements to the bus network.

What are the timescales for bus services joining the Bee Network?

24 September 2023: The first bus services came under local control in Bolton and Wigan, as well of parts of Bury, Salford and Manchester.

24 March 2024: Bee Network bus services launch in Oldham, Rochdale, and parts of Bury, Salford and north Manchester.

5 January 2025: Bus services on routes in Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, and the remaining parts of Manchester and Salford join the Bee Network. Every bus service in Greater Manchester is part of the Bee Network.

[See a full list of current and future Bee Network bus services.](#)

How can I help make pupils and their parents aware of these changes to the Bee Network and school services?

We have a [new webpage](#) to help give information and advice about school services in areas joining the Bee Network. Please can you send parents this link, post it on your website, or send pupils home with a print off: beenetwork.com/school-bus-services

More generally, we suggest that it would be helpful to point to our school travel pages on your website, if you don't already: <https://tfgm.com/travelling-to-school>

What does the Bee Network mean for school bus services?

'Franchised' Bee Network school services in Oldham, Rochdale, parts of Bury, Salford and North Manchester will start on Monday 25 March 2024. These services will either be operated by Go North West, First, or Stagecoach.

Some services will use the current fleet of Yellow School Buses, some will use the operators' own vehicles, and some will use Bee Network branded buses. All will display the Bee Network logo.

How will this impact school bus service numbers, routes and timetables in my area?

Your pupils will be able to continue using their school bus services as normal.

From day one (25 March), some service numbers and timetables may be slightly different to meet new school start and finish times. But most routes and timetables will closely resemble the existing network. This is to provide clarity and continuity for pupils and parents during a period of significant change to the way bus services are planned and delivered.

Some school bus services have been renumbered to avoid duplication of route numbers with other bus services within Greater Manchester. The new numbers should also better identify which buses are school bus services to make clearer which tickets and fares can be used on these services.

- 125 will become 803: Mottram - Blue Coat School
- 126 will become 816: Houghton Green - Blue Coat School
- 127 will become 849: Gee Cross - Blue Coat School
- 480 (School day only journey) will become 908: Canon Slade High School - Walshaw (PM Journey only)
- 558 will become 822: Diggle - Blue Coat School (AM journey only)

- 721 will become 715: Strangeways - Co-Op Academy North Manchester
- 795 will become 809: Middleton - Crompton House School
- 805 will become 832: Norden - Blue Coat School
- 884 will become 892: Caldermoor - Kingsway Park School
- 885 will become 800: Smallbridge - Falinge Park School
- 893 will become 900: Ringley - St Monica's RCHS
- 894 will become 848: Littleborough - St Cuthbert's High School

How can my school request timetable changes in future?

In future, we're asking schools to get in touch with the relevant bus operators rather than TfGM to agree if ad-hoc, one off timetable changes can be accommodated (e.g. end of term early finish). However, TfGM will help with these conversations as we move towards the new way of working. Any permanent change requests (e.g. service start/finish times) should be discussed with the bus operator and TfGM, as they will require changes to the published timetable and may require a contract change to be negotiated by TfGM.

Future significant changes to routes or times cannot be introduced at short notice, so it's important that you get in touch as soon as possible.

In the longer term a School Transport Review is being undertaken. This will support young people to get to school in more sustainable ways and provide a clear and consistent method for planning school services as part of the wider Bee Network.

Will fares and tickets be restructured?

Bringing bus services under local control as part of the Bee Network has allowed us to introduce consistent fares across all of our schools services. Under the Bee Network we are offering a simplified range of capped, value for money low bus fares. Fares are currently capped as follows:

	Single	1-day Bee AnyBus* Travelcard	7-day Bee AnyBus* Travelcard
Adults	£2	£5	£21
Children	£1	£2.50	£10.50

*Bee AnyBus tickets are available (and accepted) on Bee Network school services to support children travelling on the wider bus network in Greater Manchester. These can be bought on the Bee Network app, and also on any bus in Greater Manchester.

Bee Network school service fares also remain available at the following prices for pupils with igo cards. All the ticket types in the table below (with the exception of the £1 single fare) are only available and valid on bus services numbered 700 and above.

	Single	Return	Bee School Weekly Ticket	Carnet (10 single trips)

Adults	£1	£2	£7.60	£10
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How will joining the Bee Network improve school bus service performance?

Bringing bus services under local control as part of the Bee Network lets us introduce improved and consistent performance monitoring of services. This will be achieved through the following measures:

- Driver Standard Monitoring equipment and CCTV will be present on every bus.
- A new performance regime is in place which includes financial penalties for poor performance.
- A Driver Handbook has been developed to ensure a consistent standard of service.

Extensive performance management processes are introduced, to identify and resolve performance issues.

How will joining the Bee Network improve the school bus customer experience?

For customers, the Bee Network will mean more joined up, reliable services, simpler fares and ticketing (with a price cap so no one pays more than they need to), better information and customer service, and a single branded look and feel for the whole Bee Network.

There is now a new [Bee Network Customer Contact Centre](#) making it easy to get in touch with a point of contact for customers travelling in Greater Manchester.

We've also developed six key Bee Network [Customer Commitments](#), which set out what customers can expect when using the network: that it is safe, accessible, affordable, reliable, sustainable and accountable.

And the new [Bee Network app](#) is supporting customers in making seamless journeys. Customers can use it to plan journeys, get live departure times for local bus, tram and train stops and stations, buy from a range of buy bus and tram tickets, see travel alerts, quickly rate their journeys and get contact information.

Will bringing school services in my area into the Bee Network affect trips across the Greater Manchester regional boundary?

There are no school services in areas joining the Bee Network on 24 March (Oldham, Rochdale, and parts of Bury, Salford and north Manchester) which cross the Greater Manchester boundary.

However, some students will need to travel on general bus services open to other members of the public which do cross the boundary.

Like now, the discounted TfGM school weekly ticket and carnet tickets will not be valid on any general bus services (cross boundary or not).

Students can buy the following tickets to travel on [general Bee Network bus services](#) that travel outside of Greater Manchester:

- £1 single fare
- 1-day Bee Bus: £2.50 for children
- 7-day Bee Bus: £10.50 for children

If a student needs to start or continue their journey outside of Greater Manchester on a non-Bee Network bus, they will need to buy another ticket from that bus operator.

Why are school bus services in my area being changed on Monday 25 March, instead of after Easter?

We are making changes to school services as part of the wider introduction of general public Bee Network services across Oldham, Rochdale, and parts of Bury, Salford and north Manchester. These go live on Sunday 24 March for commercial services. You can [see a full list of affected services here](#).

Useful links

- Further general information on the Bee Network can be found here: <https://tfgm.com/the-bee-network>
- Travelling to school advice: <https://tfgm.com/travelling-to-school>
- Parent/Student FAQs on Bee Network school services: <https://beenetwork.com/school-bus-services>
- Download the new Bee Network app at the [Google Play Store](#) and the [Apple App Store](#).