

Challenges and opportunities

Chapter 3

3.1 Greater Manchester is a complex conurbation. The Regional Centre, which lies at the heart of the County and is the focus of road and rail networks, contains the largest concentration of employment, retailing, entertainment and educational facilities in the North West. Its continued well-being depends on its accessibility being maintained and enhanced. Our transport strategy gives emphasis to achieving this objective.



3.2 Good accessibility is also of critical importance to the other major town centres in the County. Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Ashton, Stockport, Eccles and Altrincham are all major retail and employment centres which generate significant numbers of trips and are the focus of local road and public transport networks.

Travel patterns

3.3 In developing the transport strategy that underpinned our previous Package Bids, we carried out a detailed analysis of travel patterns in the County and looked at how these had changed over recent years. Detailed data exists for 1976 and for 1991/92: while we recognise that this is in need of updating we are confident that the trends which they exhibited and the information on journey patterns contained within them both provided a sound foundation for our Package Bids and are still relevant. The key points were:

- *between 1976 and 1991 car ownership increased by 30% but car use increased by 70%*

- *in 1976 car accounted for 45% of all trips, by 1991 this had grown to 60%*
- *by contrast bus accounted for 21% of all trips in 1976 but had fallen to 14% by 1991*
- *the share of trips made by walking and cycling also fell between 1976 and 1991*
- *the share of trips made by rail, although small, remained fairly constant between 1976 and 1991*

3.4 The analysis of movement patterns is set out in Table 3.1. This demonstrates that the overall share of trips to and from the City Centre and other major centres declined slightly over the period. The proportion of short trips not to centres also declined slightly whereas there was a significant increase in the number of trips that were neither short nor to centres. These data emphasise the trend to greater decentralisation which has occurred in the County.

Table 3.1: The changing pattern of movement in Greater Manchester 1976 – 1991

	1976	1991	Change in number of trips, 1976 to 1991
Trips to and from Manchester City Centre	344200 (5.6%)	352300 (5.1%)	+8100
Trips to and from other major centres*	606700 (9.9%)	639400 (9.3%)	+32700
Not to major centres less than 2 km	2505200 (40.9%)	2408900 (35.1%)	-96300
Not to major centres over 2 km	2675600 (43.9%)	3461500 (50.4%)	+785900
Total number of trips per day in Greater Manchester	6131700	6862100	+730400

*Other major centres: Altrincham, Stockport, Ashton-under-Lyne, Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Bolton, Wigan, Salford Quays, Manchester Airport (source: GMATS, 1976 and 1991: all trips over 400 metres)

Challenges and opportunities

3.5 Taking into account a fairly tight boundary around each "major centre" we estimate that:

- **20% of travel in Greater Manchester was to or from the City Centre, town centres and major concentrations of employment – public transport can often compete with cars for these trips**
- **35% of travel in Greater Manchester was short and local – walking and cycling can often compete with cars for these trips**
- **the remaining 45% of trips were neither short nor to centres – cars dominate these trips**

3.6 Travel data collected since 1991 shows that the trend of increasing car use has continued. The number of car miles on Greater Manchester's roads has increased gradually over this period. Traffic on Greater Manchester's motorways, for example, increased by 20% over the period. Bus mileage has continued to decline with a reduction of 20% in bus trips. In contrast Greater Manchester has witnessed a revival in rail patronage in recent years largely as a result of the success of the Metrolink system. Including Metrolink there has been a growth of some 25% since 1991. Recent evidence from First North Western also indicates some 6% growth on the rail network.

3.7 We believe that these trends demonstrate both the scale of the challenge which we face in seeking to contain the growth in car usage, as well as the considerable opportunity which exists to develop an attractive, high quality public transport network. The evidence from Greater Manchester is that when a high quality public transport alternative is in place, people will use it in preference to the private car.

Challenges

3.8 Our LTP sets a transport policy framework within which Greater Manchester can:

- **become more successful economically**
- **provide more opportunities for all its citizens**
- **continue to grow in the future in a more sustainable way**
- **become a healthier and safer place in which to live and work**

3.9 If we are to achieve these goals we need to address past trends and to meet a number of key challenges. In particular we need to:

Address the current deficiencies in the public transport network by:

- **developing more high quality, high frequency services**
- **more effectively addressing the needs of the 'transport poor' by making the network more accessible to all**
- **improving the availability and quality of public transport information**
- **making interchange easier**
- **improving ticketing arrangements**

Contain the growth in car use and the environmental damage which it can cause by:

- **making public transport more attractive**
- **introducing appropriate demand management measures which support our broad economic and social objectives**
- **promoting walking and cycling as healthy and sustainable transport options**



Make the transport network as a whole safer and more secure by:

- *developing more effective speed management measures*
- *improving walking and cycling facilities*
- *enhancing personal security both on public transport and in the waiting environment*

Improve environmental quality by:

- *slowing traffic and giving priority to those who live or work in an area rather than those that are just passing through it*
- *implementing new highway improvements where these meet wider objectives*

3.10 Our approach also involves concerted action in the following four areas:

- *creating a socially-inclusive transport system*
- *delivering a better quality of life for our residents*
- *developing key links*
- *getting best value out of our transport system*

Creating a socially-inclusive transport system

3.11 Many Greater Manchester residents have very limited travel choices. While car ownership has been a liberating force for many, for others it has meant that the local facilities on which they rely have declined and their ability to access shops, entertainment and employment has been reduced. People with mobility difficulties require a transport system which is made progressively more accessible and which is designed to meet their needs.

3.12 In Greater Manchester we have begun to address these issues. Our comprehensive public transport network provides a good basis on which to build. Our approach of concentrating investment and activity in key centres means that we are beginning to counter past trends of dispersal and are making facilities more accessible to those without cars. We will continue to support socially necessary bus services at those times of the day or week, and to those places, not served commercially. At the same time we will explore new forms of provision such as shared taxis and the role of community transport, carefully evaluating the success of such schemes.

3.13 Greater Manchester has a valuable and popular door to door transport system which operates across the whole County for people who have difficulty using conventional public transport. Ring and Ride currently carries over 1.2 million passengers per year and continues to grow. We also operate a taxi voucher system which enables disabled people to travel in taxis at a discount. We will monitor these schemes and evaluate how the services offered to people with disabilities can be improved as part of the PTA's Best Value review programme.

Challenges and opportunities

Delivering a better quality of life for our residents

3.14 While an effective and efficient road system is fundamental to our economic success, growing traffic levels bring problems for the environment of our town centres and residential communities and for people's health and safety.

3.15 Assessment work undertaken for the Greater Manchester Air Quality Management Strategy indicates that, if present trends continue, acceptable levels of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and particulates (PM₁₀) are likely to be exceeded in parts of Greater Manchester by 2005. Since traffic contributes an estimated 60% of NO_x and over a third of particulate levels – as well as 20% of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the primary cause of global warming – a solution to this problem clearly involves significant changes in past transport trends.

3.16 Our Local Transport Plan aims to check the growth in road traffic and we have set ourselves challenging but deliverable targets. We will also work with other agencies to improve emission standards.

3.17 Improving road safety is an important objective. We will concentrate on improving conditions in residential areas and on busy local roads in town centres. Creating better local environments involves making them safer through re-routing traffic, enforcing lower speeds, or encouraging car drivers to switch to public transport, walking and cycling.

Developing key links

3.18 The challenge which Greater Manchester faces to contain and reduce the impact of traffic whilst maintaining economic prosperity and meeting people's needs is most evident in the case of freight. Allowing access to industrial and retail premises is a key function of the transport network – but many such locations are close to residential areas, so we need to minimise the impact of lorries ensuring access from the primary route network is as direct as possible.

3.19 Without careful management, growth in freight traffic will have increasing impacts on local environments. Although the total number of lorries has reduced since 1980, each makes more and longer journeys – and numbers of light goods vehicles / vans under 2.5 tonnes have risen significantly. Rail freight was in decline until a small recovery in recent years; activity on the Manchester Ship Canal upstream of Runcorn remains at a low level; and air freight at Manchester Airport is growing fast.

3.20 Greater Manchester requires a transport infrastructure capable of carrying increased volumes of people and goods into and out of key economic and employment locations. But in developing the County transport system we also need improvements in key links to other regions and countries.

3.21 The key links into and out of Greater Manchester are the motorway network, Trunk Roads and routes proposed for de-trunking; the West Coast Main Line including Manchester–Preston, the Warrington/Liverpool lines and Trans-Pennine routes. All the rail lines are at or near capacity and we need to work with regional and industry partners to ensure they receive the investment required: upgrading the West Coast Main Line will be only the start.

Getting best value out of our transport system

3.22 Environmentally sustainable growth requires us to shift away from reliance on cars, vans and lorries towards public transport, walking and cycling. Attracting new activity to urban centres means improving accessibility and reducing the impact of motorised traffic. But maintaining an effective highway network is integral to our aspirations for access and economic efficiency – as well as a major contribution to meeting Best Value in transport.

3.23 Greater Manchester already has a well developed motorway network and a good set of strategic local roads serving the Regional Centre and most of the district centres. But it suffers from a substantial maintenance backlog: visual surveys currently underway indicate that as much as 50 percent of the local network may need urgent repair. Similarly, many highway and railway structures are in urgent need of strengthening, and we have designed a priority assessment strategy to deal with these.

3.24 Improvements to the capacity of the road network will only be considered when they are the best way to meet regeneration and environmental objectives, contribute to sustainable centres or provide better access.

Opportunities

3.25 We now have an opportunity to address past trends and develop a transport system which meets Greater Manchester's future needs. In particular we have

- ***a transport strategy which commands widespread support***
- ***government commitment to working with us in the long term to address our transport problems***
- ***a land use planning framework which is entirely consistent with our transport objectives***
- ***vital partnerships with the private sector to deliver our transport strategy***

3.26 Our vision for Greater Manchester will see a reversal of the past trends of dispersal of population and activity. The County's urban cores will attract significantly increased levels of investment and activity supported by a more attractive and sustainable transport system. We will ensure that the best use is made of the existing highway and public transport networks by improving the operation of existing traffic control systems and working to improve the quality and frequency of existing services.



Challenges and opportunities

3.27 Greater Manchester already has a comprehensive public transport network that provides a sound basis for future enhancement and development. The Regional Centre and town centres throughout the County provide a focus for the network and ensure that services and facilities remain accessible to people who do not have access to a car.

3.28 We have an extensive rail network, parts of which are currently under-utilised. While there are capacity constraints on some services, particularly at peak times serving Manchester City Centre, there is considerable spare capacity on large parts of the network and further investment and improvements in reliability are likely to be rewarded with further increases in patronage.

3.29 Metrolink has been our biggest success story over recent years and the opening of the Salford Quays - Eccles extension will see this continue. Realisation of the wider network proposed will enable the Greater Manchester authorities to establish a world class public transport network.

3.30 We have identified 200 kilometres of key bus routes as Quality Bus Corridors in the Greater Manchester Quality Partnership Agreement (QPA). Further routes are being brought forward and there is a shared and determined aspiration amongst all the partners to extend the benefits throughout the wider network. Shared taxi, taxi bus schemes and other innovative solutions will also be developed to enhance the network.

3.31 The QPA is part of the Greater Manchester Integration Project. This is the ideal vehicle to further the public transport elements of our transport strategy. It has already been an essential element in supporting the recovery of the City Centre and the rebuilding of the bomb-damaged core. The principal aim is to get all partners involved in public transport to work more closely together to develop a single, integrated and high quality network for the County. The Agreement involves the ten district councils, GMPTA/GMPTE, the bus operators, Altram, First North Western, Railtrack, the Highways Agency and Manchester Airport plc.

3.32 Achievements to date include the provision of quality passenger information through printed timetables for all bus services and a high frequency service guide, a website journey planner, the launch of a multi-modal telephone information service, improvements to the waiting environment and the introduction of standards for information provision, maintenance and cleanliness in bus stations. It also means that the introduction of schemes through our bus-led approach to corridor initiatives is made easier.

3.33 An effective highway network is integral to all of our transport aspirations, including accessibility to the rail network for passengers and freight. Greater Manchester is fortunate in having a well developed motorway network and a good network of strategic local roads. By introducing measures to promote public transport, walking and cycling, together with the judicious targeting of improvements, the ability of the network to meet the needs of all of Greater Manchester's residents, businesses and visitors will be maintained and enhanced.



Our transport objectives

3.34 Our objectives are compatible with the Government's 'overarching transport objectives' in the Transport White Paper and are in line with emerging RPG. Finally, through the public participation processes outlined in Chapter 5, they have received the support of local people.

3.35 Our transport objectives reflect the contribution which transport policy can make in achieving the core elements of our strategic vision. They include a mixture of long and short term aims. Some can be quantitatively monitored while others are less readily measured

3.36 Our objectives are designed to allow us to focus our strategy on the problems as shown in Table 3.2 overleaf. This process is charted more fully in Chapter 10.

3.37 In summary, the key problems which emerge from our analysis and which we are seeking to address are:

- *containing the growth in car use which causes particular environmental problems in parts of the County and at particular times of the day and week*
- *balancing the need for economic growth and increased prosperity with the impact of increased traffic*
- *using planning policy to reduce decentralisation*
- *reversing the decline in public transport use by increasing its overall attractiveness for people undertaking journeys where it can offer an alternative to the car and ensuring that it continues to meet the needs of people who are dependent on it*
- *addressing weaknesses in the current public transport network by making ticketing systems and interchange arrangements more attractive and information more readily available*
- *making our residential communities safer and more attractive places in which to live by reducing the impact of car traffic on them*
- *promoting walking and cycling as healthy and sustainable transport options, particularly for shorter local journeys*

We aim to do all this in ways that are consistent with our economic and urban regeneration objectives.

Challenges and opportunities

Table 3.2: Our transport objectives and the problems they address

Transport objective	Problems addressed
A To improve the environment, attractiveness and safety of the Regional Centre, together with the County's other town and district centres and key employment areas, without reducing their viability	Traffic congestion, competition from out of town, decline in public transport use, loss of population, air pollution, valuable land used for parking
B To reduce the impact of motorised traffic, improve road and community safety and increase the proportion of short trips made by cycle and on foot within residential areas	Danger from traffic, severance of communities, air pollution, use of car for short journeys, perceived danger to pedestrians and cyclists; crime and fear of crime; health impacts
C To develop complementary land use and transport policies which reduce the number of trips to non central locations and encourage development which can be served by a choice of mode	Out-of-town development, decline of centres, serving development by public transport, dispersal of population, need for quality in the urban environment
D To ensure that the County's transport system becomes increasingly sustainable and less environmentally damaging, whilst improving the quality of life and the health of the population	Air pollution, global warming, non renewable resources, accidents, sedentary lifestyles, noise
E To provide a high quality integrated public transport network to increase the attractiveness of travel by non car modes	Obtaining information, quality of waiting environment, ease of access, frequency and reliability of public transport services, ticketing, interchange
F To ensure that the County's transport system meets the needs of all sections of the community, promotes social inclusion and widens choice	Access for people with no car, social deprivation, access to employment areas, cost of public transport subsidy, particular problems encountered by women and other groups using the transport system
G To make the County's transport system more accessible to people with mobility difficulties	Access to vehicles, access to stations and stops, road crossings, parking and ease of movement around town centres
H To improve accessibility for people living in rural areas in ways which will reduce their dependency on car travel	Car dependency, social exclusion
I To manage the demand for car travel	Traffic congestion, demand for parking, decline in public transport patronage, air quality
J To provide for the sustainable movement of freight so as to support the economic development of Greater Manchester in ways which are consistent with the desire to reduce the impact of motorised traffic	Environmental impact of HGVs, traffic congestion barriers to transferring freight onto rail
K To provide for the movement of people and goods between Greater Manchester, the rest of the Country and the rest of the world in ways which are consistent with the other objectives	Access to global markets, cross-boundary travel, capacity constraints on key routes (West Coast Mainline, TransPennine Rail, M6, M62, M67/A628)
L To ensure that transport policy is integrated with and supports other relevant policies at the regional, County and local level	Transport implications of health, sustainability, crime and disorder and education policies, need for regional standards, cross-boundary transport links
M To maintain, improve and make the best use of the existing transportation infrastructure	Condition of road network and public transport infrastructure, accessibility of existing infrastructure, local traffic congestion