

Andy Burnham
Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Churchgate House
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Dear Andy,

Greater Manchester Bus Reform

As you are aware bus services in Greater Manchester and especially in Tameside play a huge role in everyday life: from accessing work, to linking with GP surgeries and hospitals, connecting people to leisure and making life better for all, each and every bus journey is vitally important.

Our bus services operate in a completely deregulated market, where the private operators decide themselves where they run services with profit at the crux of their operations. For the remnants, those that are a social necessity at weekend and outside the peak hours, Transport for Greater Manchester has to pick up the cost of running such services.

In many of our deprived Tameside wards, car ownership levels tend to be very low and for those fortunate enough to own a vehicle, cars often tend to be older and more polluting given the relatively low household incomes in these localities.

Tameside, whilst investing heavily in its own infrastructure including housing and employment provision, recognises the importance of the employment and other economic opportunities offered by the Regional Centre, areas such Trafford Park and the those in and around Manchester Airport. The current bus network, however, is not fit for purpose and only provides limited links to these locations from our borough. Direct cross city bus connections don't exist.

Furthermore, since deregulation the commercial operators operating in the borough have carved the area into two distinct zones. First Group have traditionally run north from Ashton towards Oldham and beyond and Stagecoach has a monopoly on services in the rest of the borough especially to the Regional Centre along the Ashton Old and New Roads. There is no incentive for the bus companies to work with each other, integrate their services or provide common ticketing for a multi operator journey within the current commercial environment. In Tameside this can make public transport by bus extremely expensive for relatively short journeys.

Even though as Greater Manchester we manage to subsidise some bus services, perhaps not as many as we would like, the lack of buses in many locations leave many with little choice but to use a car. For those less well-off this is relatively expensive commitment. Bus isolation also affects the elderly, the vulnerable and those with disabilities.

The ultimate aim of public transport is to provide a seamless service between all types of public transport, to discourage car use, especially with increasing concerns over global warming and increase economic activity for all.

As Leader of Tameside Council, I firmly believe that bus deregulation is not working for Tameside and indeed the whole of Greater Manchester. I feel directly managing our own bus network through a franchising model will help address many of the issues I have mentioned

We cannot see bus services decline and cars increasingly clog our roads with all the associated negative effects this causes.

We fully support the GMCA in its initiative to promote this model, something Tameside has long called for over many years and we look forward to working with the rest of Greater Manchester in making this happen.

Yours sincerely