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TRANSPORT STRATEGY: METROLINK



Introduction

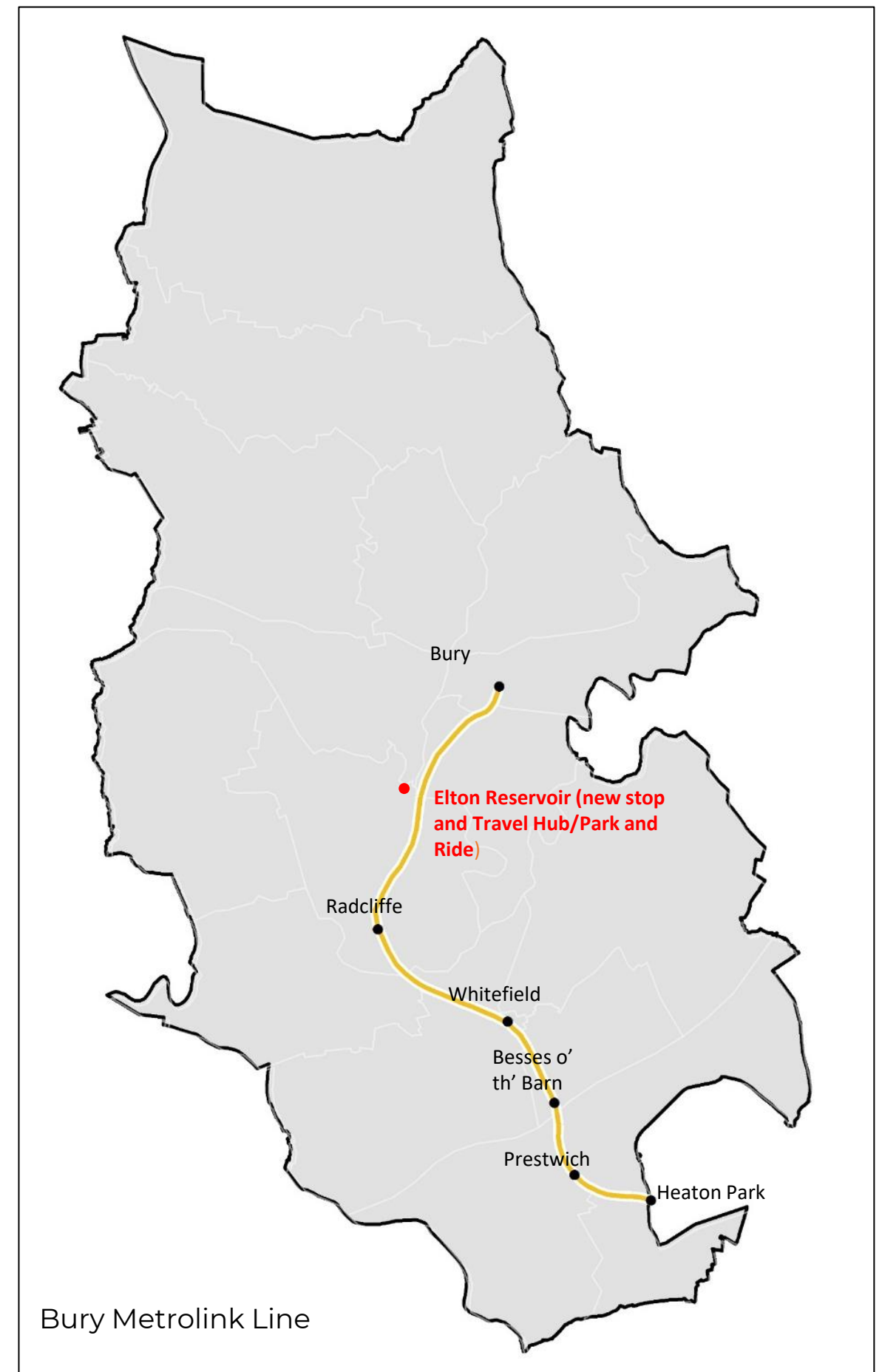
Metrolink services commenced in the Borough as part of the introduction of the initial Metrolink network in 1992. This converted the Altrincham to Bury heavy rail line to light rail operation and largely retained the heavy rail stop infrastructure.

Metrolink services connect Bury and Manchester via Radcliffe, Whitefield and Prestwich, enabling onward journeys into Greater Manchester and the wider northwest region. The Townships north of Bury town centre (Tottington and Ramsbottom) are served by bus with Bury Interchange providing access to Metrolink for onward journeys.

The Bury line has seen significant growth in Metrolink patronage and has become an important commuting and leisure route, particularly for those travelling to and from Bury town centre and Manchester city centre. However, they retain much of the previous heavy rail stop infrastructure and are considered less inviting, incur anti-social behavior and greater maintenance costs and include historic constraints compared to newer stops across the wider network.

Funding has been secured through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) to enable the Metrolink service offer in the Borough to be enhanced. This includes:

1. Redevelopment of Bury Interchange which will provide a modern, low carbon, safe and secure facility with improved access to surface level and a new step free access to the south.
2. Development of a new Stop and Travel Hub/Park and Ride at Elton Reservoir to provide an attractive, highly sustainable travel option for residents of the planned adjacent housing development.
3. An initial phase of prioritised improvements to a limited number of other stops on the Bury line. These will address specific problems and constraints associated with the stops and help to facilitate modal shift away from private vehicles and increase the reach of Metrolink services.



Investment priorities for Metrolink

With a network of lines across Greater Manchester, and 99 stops, six of which are in Bury, the Metrolink tram system is a key part of the Bee Network. Passengers will benefit from Bee Network improvements like the new Bee Network app and website, and the new Bee AnyBus + Tram tickets. New Bee Network bus services will be planned to link up with Metrolink and with the cycling and walking network to make it easier for people to travel around.

As part of our transport strategy, we have identified a number of Metrolink investment priorities for Bury, which we will work in partnership with TfGM to bring forward. These priorities are designed to help address the key issues on Metrolink in Bury including:

- An outdated transport interchange, which currently does not provide modern transport infrastructure that would facilitate modal shift.
- Poor quality tram stops on the Bury line, which have issues around lighting, accessibility and personal safety, and which are in need of investment.
- Poor environments leading to and around tram stops, which are often unwelcoming, not connected and not user friendly for all.

1. A new transport interchange in Bury Town Centre

2. Improvements to Metrolink stops on Bury line

3. Strengthened walking, wheeling and cycling connections to Metrolink stops

4. A new Metrolink stop and travel hub/park and ride at Elton Reservoir

5. Travel hubs at other Metrolink stops

6. A new tram-train link between Bury and Rochdale

Metrolink

Investment priority 1: A new Transport Interchange in Bury town centre

The Interchange is the transport hub for Metrolink and bus services in Bury town centre, providing visitors with frequent public transport services to Rochdale, Bolton and other nearby towns and to a wide range of destinations in Greater Manchester via Metrolink. Bury is the only town centre interchange in Greater Manchester yet to be redeveloped to modern standards.

The facility is now nearing the end of its operational life and is not representative of the modern, attractive and integrated transport interchanges that have been, and are being, delivered in other towns across Greater Manchester.

The current interchange does not support the Bury Town Centre Masterplan and is not ready for the patronage growth expected as a consequence of its role as a major northern public transport hub, serving new development sites such as Elton Reservoir and Northern Gateway, a large employment site identified within the Atom Valley Mayoral Development Zone.



Metrolink

Investment priority 1: A new Transport Interchange in Bury town centre

Key Interchange Issue: Deteriorating condition

The current interchange opened in 1980. It has dated infrastructure that does not meet the standard of modern facilities and is an uninviting arrival point for users; the roof is leaking; the heating is inefficient, and the lighting systems are inadequate.

The lift and escalator equipment are small and are life expired, the assets are subsequently unreliable and are frequently out of service – this creates accessibility barriers at the stop.

Key Interchange proposals

- To replace the facility with a modern, future-proofed, low carbon, safe, secure and accessible interchange.
- To deliver a new concourse building and brighter Metrolink platform which feels safe and secure.



Metrolink

Investment priority 1: A new Transport Interchange in Bury town centre

Key Interchange issue: Internal environment

The existing Interchange has poor internal space and offers a poor sense of arrival to the town centre. The large platform canopy creates a dark environment which creates safety and security concerns. Similarly, the internal design of the bus concourse has poor sightlines which create a poor perception of personal security.

There is a cluttered Metrolink platform which has bottlenecks to passenger movements and capacity constraints on the access route.

The design of the Interchange also causes issues with passenger flows and accessibility:

- The stairs are narrow and create bottleneck at peak times of the day.
- The escalator is unreliable and requires continuous repairs and maintenance, made difficult because of the age of the equipment.
- The lift is small and is not considered appropriate for use by modern wheelchairs, pushchairs or mobility scooters.

Key Interchange proposal

- To deliver a new vertical circulation core with an upgraded larger lift provision, escalator and improved stairs to support access for all.
- To refurbish the Metrolink platform with additional capacity and new shelters.



Metrolink

Investment priority 1:

A new Transport Interchange in Bury town centre

Key Interchange issue: External environment

The existing interchange layout has multiple bus stand buildings which requires users to cross carriageways in a number of locations, resulting in multiple bus and pedestrian conflict points.

The cycle hub is remote from the Metrolink and bus facilities and lacks capacity.

There is no access to the Metrolink platform to the south, and there are poor surface access routes into the interchange, severing connections to the south.

Underpass routes are unwelcoming and are magnets for anti-social behaviour and generate a fear of crime.

Key Interchange proposals

- To create a new arrangement for bus movement and waiting with significantly fewer conflict points.
- To improve all walking and cycling access routes with a strong sense of arrival and integration with the redevelopment of Bury town centre.
- To close underpasses which often act as hubs for anti-social behaviour.
- To deliver a new step free access from the south of the town centre to the Metrolink platform to encourage access from existing and proposed developments in the area.
- To provide a new active travel hub integrated into the interchange building with additional capacity for cycles, accessible cycles and e-bikes.



Metrolink

Investment priority 1: A new Transport Interchange in Bury town centre

Aspirations for a new Bury Interchange

Investment at Bury Interchange is critical to ensure that the growth and transport aspirations of the Council are realised and that the Interchange realises the vision for a truly integrated transport network.

The redevelopment will set ambitious carbon targets to ensure the design helps the Council achieve their carbon goals and reduce the impact of the development on our environment.

Residents of Bury can expect an interchange which has taken inspiration from redeveloped facilities in neighbouring authorities in Greater Manchester, for example:

1. Wythenshawe Interchange.
2. Ashton Interchange.
3. Wigan Bus station.
4. Altrincham Interchange.



Metrolink

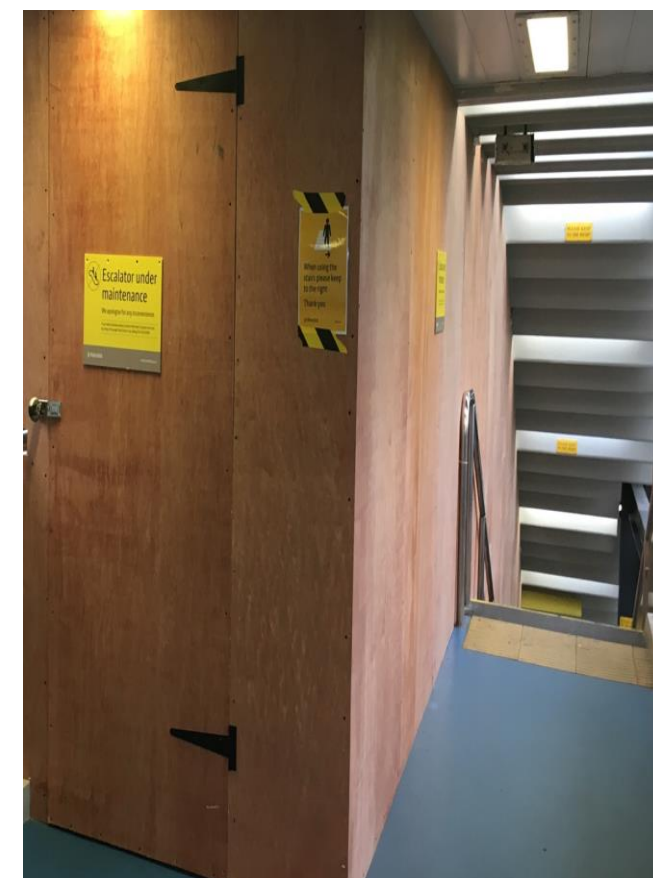
Investment priority 2: Improvements to stops on the Bury line

Phase 1 of Metrolink's expansion (1992) converted the Altrincham to Bury heavy rail line to light rail operation. The line conversion predominantly retained the heavy rail stop infrastructure. The Bury line stops are considered less inviting, incur greater maintenance costs and include historic constraints compared to more modern stops across the wider network. These issues are likely to be discouraging sustainable travel in Bury thus limiting residents access to opportunities across Greater Manchester.

Key stop issues

The Metrolink Stop Improvements Programme will seek to identify and prioritise improvements to address issues such as:

- Buildings which are in a state of disrepair.
- Poor platform accessibility, with access often via narrow steps with no step-free alternative.
- Stops which are not accessible for all, particularly not for mobility impaired users.
- Some stops having no lifts and where they do exist, they are unreliable and often out of service.
- Singular entrance/egress point from platforms that create crowded funnels and congestion pinch points for passenger movement.
- Dark and uninviting waiting areas and antisocial behaviour areas, leading to the perception of isolation and fear of crime.
- Many stops having virtually no street presence.



Metrolink

Investment priority 2: Improvements to stops on the Bury line

The table below highlights the poor standard of Bury line stops compared to more modern Metrolink stops across the network. A key priority will be to use the Metrolink Stop Improvements Programme to prioritise a levelling up of the transport infrastructure offered in Bury compared to the rest of Greater Manchester. The images on the right compare stops on the Bury line against modern stops (using the Didsbury line as an example). These images show a stark contrast from stops that are dark, closed and have limited accessibility, to stops that are light, visible and more accessible.

Current Bury Line

Aspiration



Heaton Park - Step access



Firswood Stop - Step access



Bury Metrolink - platform canopy



Firswood Stop - platform canopy



A typical Bury line track with no track crossing



Firswood Stop – step-free track crossing

Bury line Metrolink Stops	Performance of key aspects of Bury line Metrolink stops in comparison to modern stops (for example those delivered on the Trafford Park or Airport Lines)				
	Platform visibility from and to surrounding area	Standard of lighting	Multiple access points to the stop from the surrounding area	Alternative ramped access should the lift not be working	Shelters/canopies that allow natural light to flood onto the platform
Bury Interchange	X	✓	X	X	X
Radcliffe	X	✓	✓	N/A	X
Whitefield	X	✓	✓	N/A	X
Besses o'th' Barn	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Prestwich	X	X	✓	N/A	X
Heaton Park	X	✓	X	X	X
Bowker Vale*	X	✓	X	N/A	✓

* Indicates stop is located in Manchester City Council area

Metrolink

Investment priority 2: Improvements to stops on the Bury line

To bring the stops on the Bury line up to modern standards, enhance the stop environment and provide a space that feels more accessible, welcoming and safer for all users, the following interventions will be considered at all stops where there is opportunity to do so and subject to budget availability.

Access to stops

- New ramp access to stops which currently have limited step-free access options.
- New access routes and track crossings to improve journey times.
- New accesses will look to enhance the Metrolink stop catchment so more residents can easily reach Metrolink.
- Accessibility improvements at platforms to improve step free access.

Safety

- Better lighting and CCTV, shelter renewals so that people are safe and feel safe, particularly when travelling alone, late at night or during the winter months.
- Removing dark enclosed spaces to promote a more open environment and provide more natural light and surveillance.
- Additional TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers (TSEOs) to provide passengers with reassurance and help tackle anti-social-behaviour.

Welcoming environment

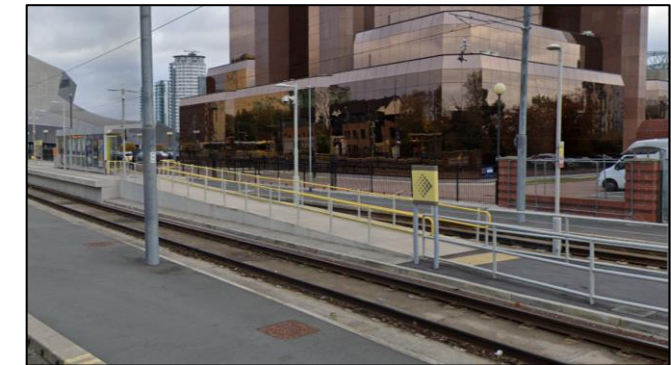
- Repainting of handrails.
- Replacing damaged poster cases.
- Application of coating to platform surfaces to make them brighter and cleaner.
- Installation of flower beds.

Welcoming Metrolink Stops



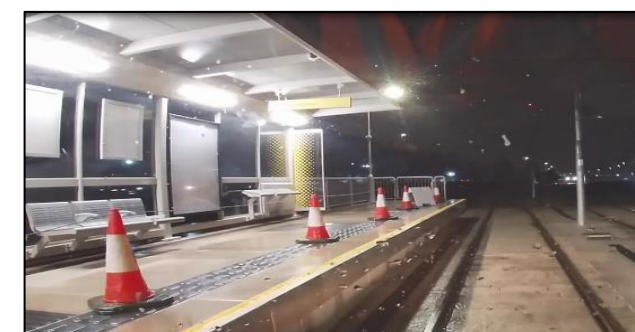
Deansgate and Trafford Centre Metrolink Stops

Accessible Metrolink Stops



Trafford Park Line Accessible Metrolink Stops

Metrolink Stops Lighting



Tram Cam Images of Bury Interchange compared to Barton Dock Road Metrolink Stop

Metrolink

Investment priority 3: Connections to Metrolink stops

Strengthening existing walking, wheeling and cycling connections to Metrolink stops along the Bury line is a key priority for the Bury Local Transport Strategy. Many of the Borough's Metrolink stops are in cuttings hidden from view due to their historic heavy rail design. Visibility and accessibility to key infrastructure must be enhanced and prioritised so that everyone can feel safe on their way to Metrolink stops at all times of the day.

Wayfinding from Metrolink stops to key destinations within our town centres is currently poor and needs to be enhanced to guide users to their destination. High quality public realm needs to be extended and delivered around Metrolink stops to create a sense of arrival and a continuous pedestrian environment for visitors.

Improving walking, wheeling and cycling connections to Metrolink stops, such as better road crossing facilities, new cycleways and improved cycle parking, will support ambitions to encourage lower carbon journeys over shorter travel distances.

Junction improvements are required to provide better road crossing facilities where junctions sever access to Metrolink stops for pedestrian and cyclists. An example of the type of crossing facility that could be implemented is the cyclops junctions recently delivered at the Market Street junction with Angouleme Way in Bury town centre, which has made it safer for pedestrians and cyclists to access the Metrolink service at Bury Interchange. This cyclops junction allows for the safe crossing of approximately 9,000 students for Bury College and Holy Cross College.

There is limited cycle storage at several stops along the Bury line which restricts the option of being able to cycle to and from Metrolink stops. Improved cycle facilities at stops, such as Cycle Hubs, to support users travelling by bike will be provided to better integrate Metrolink with walking, wheeling and cycling.

Strengthening walking, wheeling and cycling connections to Metrolink stops should foster modal shift which would lead to air quality improvements whilst supporting individuals' health and wellbeing. Measures that support cleaner air in our communities are in line with national, regional and local policy targets on climate change.

Hidden Metrolink Stops on Bury Line



Besses o'th' Barn



Heaton Park

Wayfinding Improvements



Improved Accessibility For Cycling



Barton Dock Road Stop



Cyclops Junction, Bury

Investment priority 4: A new Metrolink stop at Elton Reservoir

Elton Reservoir has been identified as a strategic allocation in the *Places for Everyone* Plan. The proposed site will deliver around 3,500 new homes and supporting physical and social infrastructure, including two primary schools and two local centres with retail, health and community facilities.

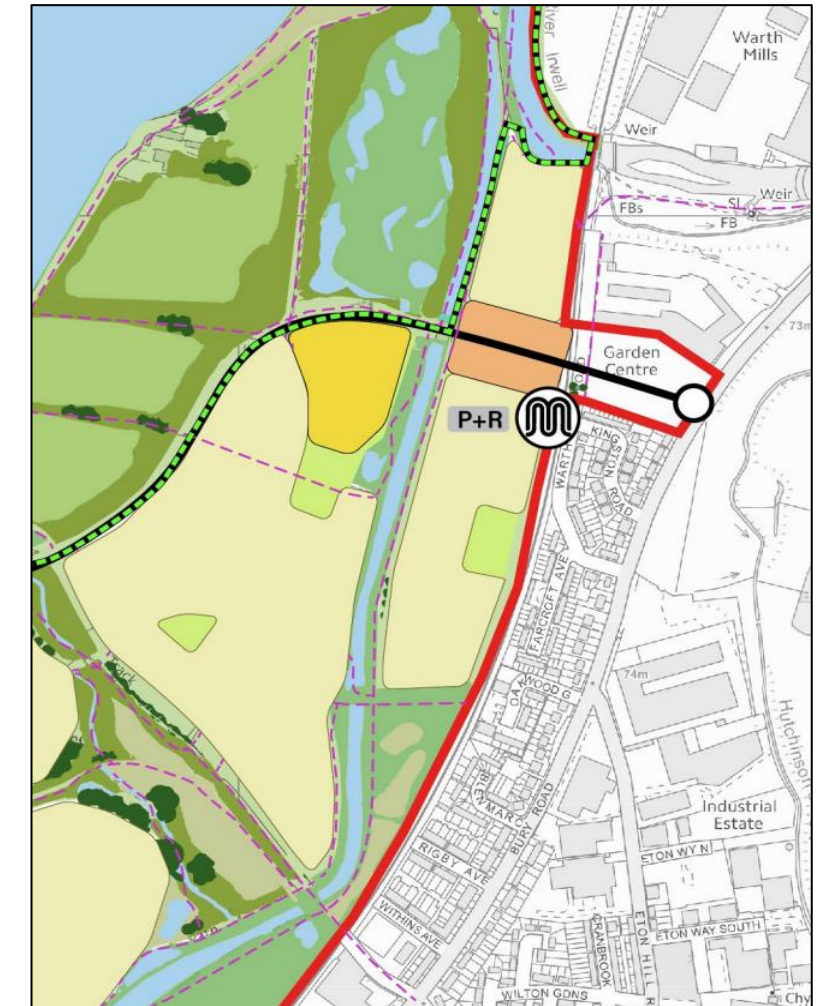
As part of the Elton Reservoir proposals a new Metrolink Stop and Travel Hub/Park and Ride facilities will be needed. The Metrolink stop is intended to encourage a large proportion of trips generated by the site to be made by sustainable modes and will support Bury in contributing to the region's Right Mix target for half of all journeys to be made by sustainable modes by 2040.

To achieve maximum accessibility of the stop, a Travel Hub and Park and Ride will be delivered. This will ensure that those who can access the development by active modes have safe and attractive opportunities to do so. The Park and Ride will widen the catchment area for those living further away and make it easier for people to switch longer car journeys, such as journeys to Manchester city centre, to more sustainable modes.

Key elements of the Travel Hub will include secure cycle parking, drop-off pick-up and taxi bays, shared mobility spaces, EV charging points and potentially parcel lockers. The new stop will contribute to the place making of the new development, providing a vibrant and integrated space with local facilities in line with the Travel Hub principles. The Elton Reservoir stop will also increase the attractiveness of the reservoir as a leisure destination and provide better access to greenspace in the south of Bury.

There is funding in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement to start to develop the proposed new stop and Travel Hub/Park and Ride. We will work with TfGM and the developer to determine an appropriate funding and delivery strategy for the new stop.

The allocation of this site for residential development falls outside the scope of this Transport Strategy and the new Metrolink Stop and Park and Ride/Travel Hub will only go ahead should the *Places for Everyone* Plan be formally adopted.



Proposed new Elton Metrolink Stop, Travel Hub/Park and Ride

Metrolink

Investment priority 5: Travel Hubs at other Metrolink stops

In Bury, the 'Travel Hubs' approach aims to bring together Priority 2 (improvements to Metrolink stops) and Priority 3 (connections to Metrolink stops) into a holistic view, focussed on increasing Metrolink patronage by overcoming barriers to public transport use.

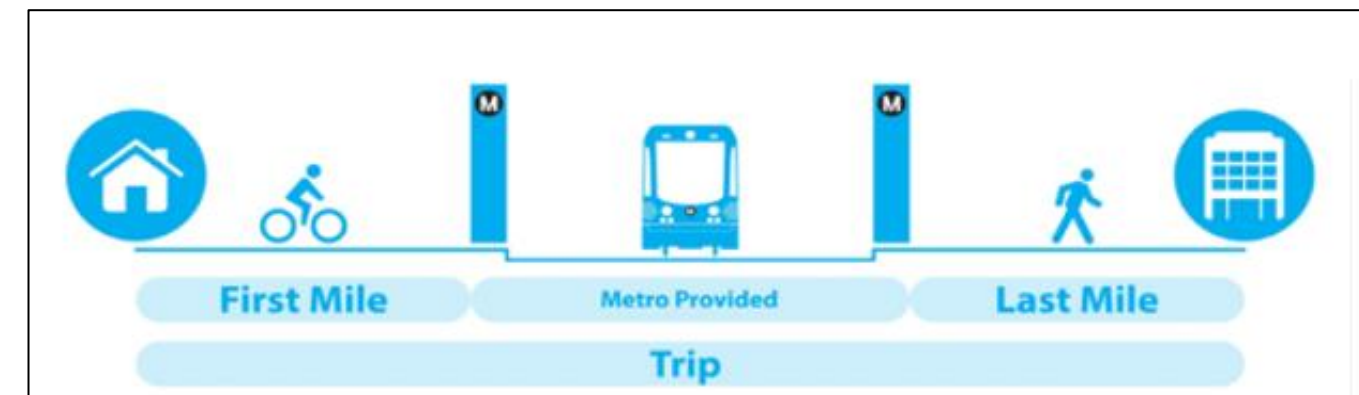
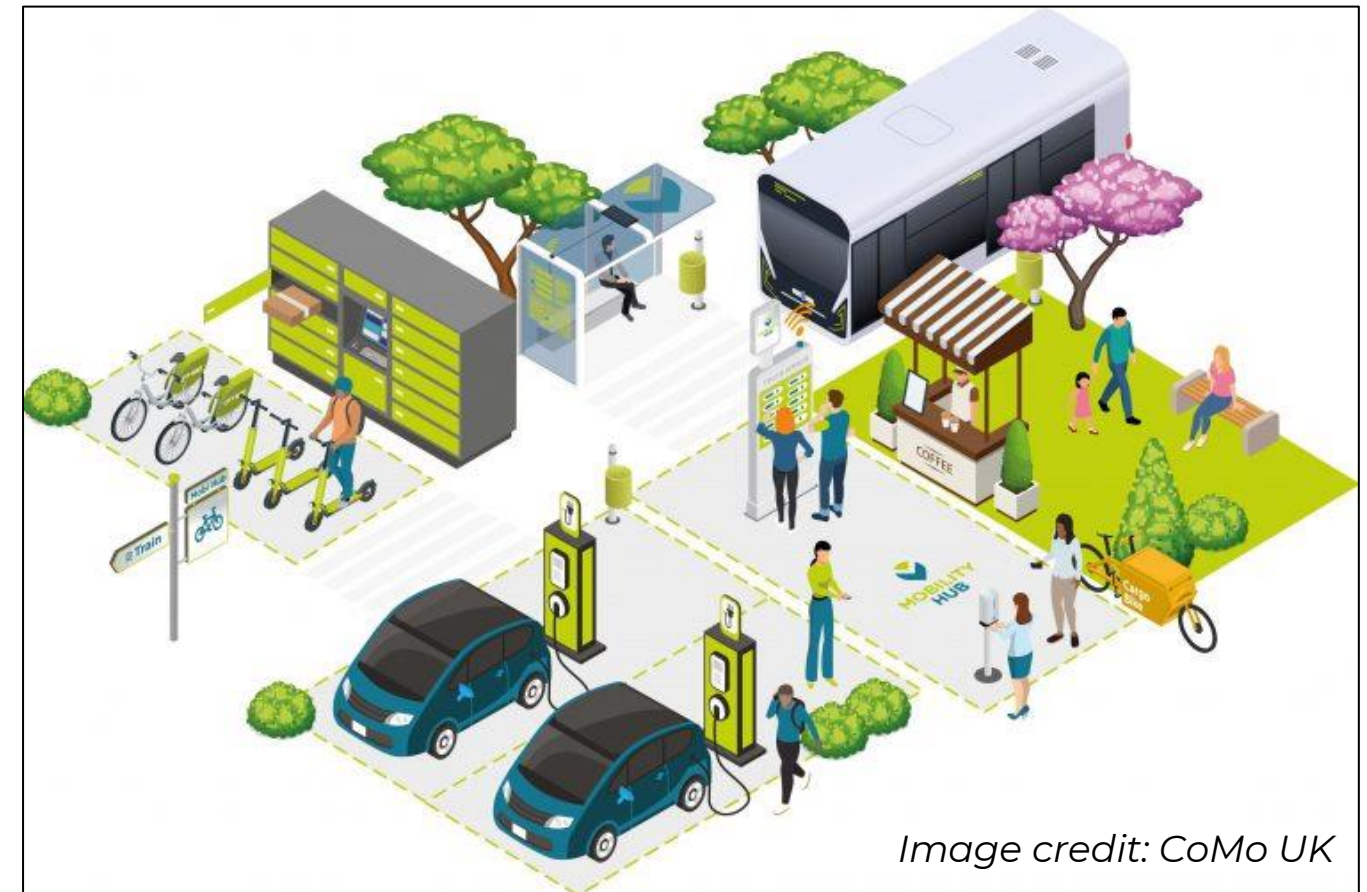
In addition to the measures set out in Priority 2 and Priority 3, the Travel Hubs approach will consider the full range of modal integration – including bus, taxi, park-and-ride, drop-off/pick-up and shared mobility (such as car clubs and bike hire) with active modes.

Other facilities such as electric vehicle charging infrastructure, parcel lockers and commercial opportunities will be considered to improve the overall customer experience – and to generate vibrant spaces that play their full role in place-making, whilst integrating with adjacent developments.

Bury Council will continue working with TfGM to identify potential locations to apply the Travel Hubs approach in Bury. This will include existing Park and Ride sites, such as Radcliffe and Whitefield.

In Prestwich, plans are being developed for a Travel Hub as part of the regeneration of the town centre. The Prestwich Travel Hub will be a new multi-story facility located close to the Metrolink stop off Fairfax Road. As well as car parking spaces, the new facility will contain electric vehicle charging points, cycle storage and parcel lockers.

Bury Council will also continue to explore with TfGM the potential for a pilot scheme to allow bikes on board Metrolink trams, including potentially on the Bury Line, as set out in Dame Sarah Storey's Active Travel Mission Statement.



Metrolink

Investment priority 6: Metrolink and tram-train technology

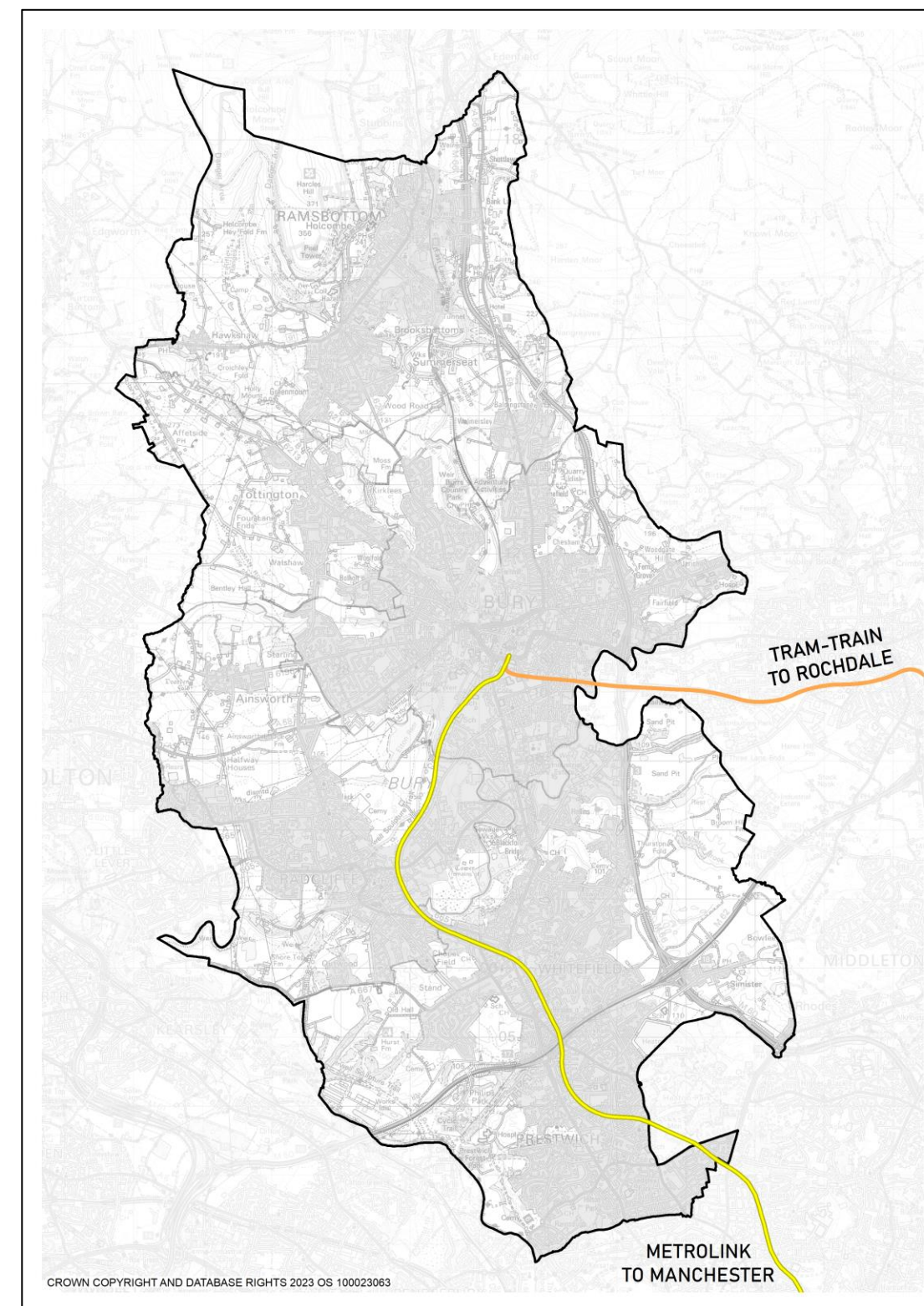
TfGM are developing plans that would see a rail link between Heywood, Rochdale and Oldham using tram-train technology. They are also exploring the potential for a connection between Heywood and Bury, with the longer-term aim of linking to the existing Metrolink networks in the north of Manchester and improving connectivity to the Calder Valley Line.

The focus of the project will be to create the next generation Metrolink vehicle, tram-train infrastructure and to run a pilot “Pathfinder” service. This will provide:

- A service stopping at all stations/stops along the route.
- Enhanced modal integration at Bury Interchange & Rochdale Railway Station.
- Enhanced connectivity to Bury, Heywood, Castleton Rochdale and Oldham.

The ultimate proposal will provide new technology that will allow Metrolink vehicles to operate on existing heavy rail lines as well as the Metrolink lines.

As well as providing public transport improvements between Bury and Rochdale, and beyond, the proposals would also help to provide sustainable public transport connections into the proposed Northern Gateway site.



Rossendale City Valley Link

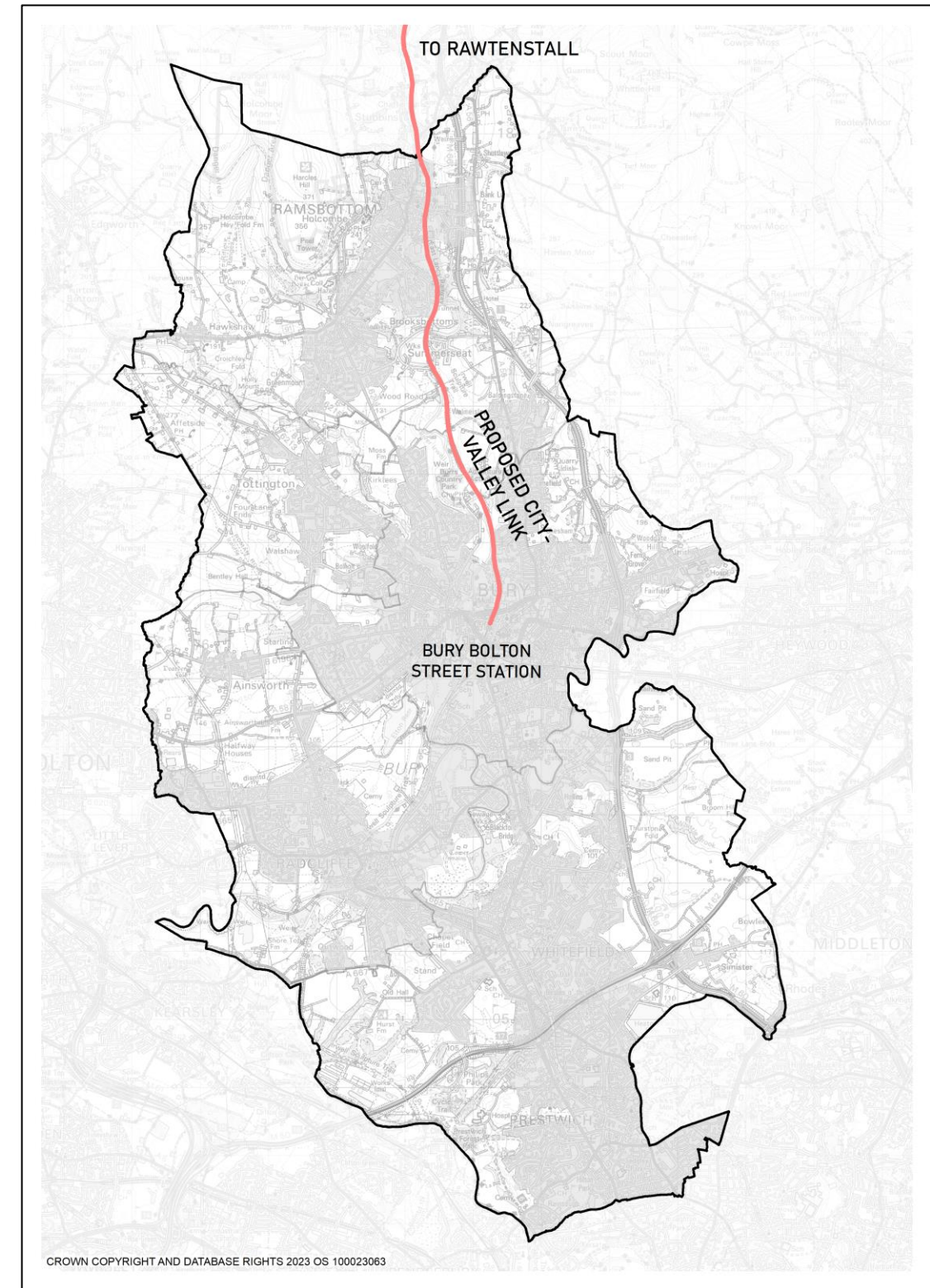
Rossendale Borough Council have long-held aspirations to establish a commuter rail link from Rawtenstall to Manchester.

These proposals centre on the existing heavy railway line that is currently operating as a Heritage Line run by the East Lancashire Railway company (ELR).

This is Bury's most popular visitor attraction and Greater Manchester's third highest paying attraction. It plays a key role in attracting visitor spend to the Borough's local economy, particularly in Bury and Ramsbottom. The ELR preserves the area's heritage and local distinctiveness and is the source of great civic pride.

Bury Council has clearly indicated that it would not support any proposal for a commuter service on the ELR line unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it would be able to co-exist with the Heritage asset and not negatively affect its operations.

As such, this is not considered to be an *'investment priority'* but has been included here to flag its longer-term potential. There will still need to be credible evidence to demonstrate that a commuter line and a heritage line can co-exist between Bury Bolton Street and Rawtenstall, and that the proposals are realistically costed, viable and deliverable.



Proposed City Valley Link from Rawtenstall to Manchester

Linkages to the GM2040 and BLTS Objectives

The table below demonstrates how our Investment Priorities for Metrolink contribute to the objectives of both the GM2040 and this Bury Local Transport Strategy.

BLTS Investment Priorities	GMTS 2040 Objectives				BLTS Objectives					
	Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth	Improving Quality of Life for All	Protecting our Environment	Delivering an Innovative City-Region	Supporting sustainable & inclusive growth and regeneration	Reducing the impact of transport on the environment	Supporting healthy and active lifestyles	Improving connectivity	Providing a well-maintained, reliable and resilient transport system	Providing a transport system that is safe, secure and accessible to all
Metrolink										
1. New Transport Interchange in Bury	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Improvement to Metrolink Stops on the Bury Line	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Strengthen Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Connections to Metrolink Stations	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. New Metrolink Stop and Travel Hub/Park and Ride at Elton Reservoir	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Travel Hubs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. New Tram-Train Links between Bury and Rochdale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓