

## HISTORY

### Introduction

Within a matter of only weeks of its opening, Metrolink became a huge success for Greater Manchester. It brought, not only to the Greater Manchester area, but to the United Kingdom as a whole, a new concept in public transport in the form of the country's first modern street operating light rail system. In its wake followed the construction and opening of the Sheffield Supertram system, West Midlands Metro and Croydon Tramlink, along with research in many other towns and cities looking at the viability of light rail.

- Infrastructure and assets of the system are owned by the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive.
- The system was operated and maintained initially by Greater Manchester Metro Limited, a private company whose shareholders comprised GEC Alstom Transportation Projects Ltd., John Mowlem and Company plc, Amec plc and Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive.
- In 1989 this consortium was collectively awarded a contract to design, build, operate and maintain (DBOM) Phase 1 (Altrincham to Bury) of the new light rail system. This contract included a two year period to design and build the system.
- A phased and high profile opening in took place 1992 culminating in a Royal opening by Her Majesty the Queen on 17 July 1992.
- 1997 saw a new contract awarded to the present concessionaire Altram (Manchester) Limited which included the financing, design and build of the new line to Salford Quays and Eccles along with the operation and maintenance of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the system. Altram (Manchester) Limited the new consortium comprises Ansaldo Transporti, Serco Investments Limited, Laing Civil Engineering and 3i. Serco Metrolink, a wholly owned subsidiary of Serco Limited, took over the operations and maintenance of the system on Monday 26 May 1997. The concession to operate Metrolink includes a comprehensive contract which dictates high levels of reliability and frequency.
- In March 2003, Serco Investments bought out its partners and Altram (Manchester) Limited is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Serco Investments Limited.
- The timetable used to introduce Metrolink to Greater Manchester included a 12 minute off peak service Monday to Saturday, but within a matter of weeks of opening passenger demand saw this increase to 6 minutes for a large part of the day.

Metrolink is unusual, because it incorporates features of both heavy rail and of trams. Whilst it has the discipline and speed of a traditional railway on the segregated lines from Altrincham and Bury, its design allows for flexibility of a tram through the city. The line from Cornbrook to Eccles via Salford Quays extends these benefits further by fully integrating with street running traffic along a large part of the route. This versatility has resulted in a high speed, frequent and convenient mode of transport which quickly won a phenomenal loyalty from customers. Metrolink is a hybrid (neither tram nor heavy rail) but it was quickly christened by the public and has since become affectionately known as a tram.

## CURRENT ROUTES

**Phase 1** of Metrolink was the beginning of what is seen as an expanding network. The line comprises of:

- 9 stops located on each of the Altrincham and Bury lines
- 7 stops in the city centre
- 15.9 km from Bury to Victoria
- 10.4 km from Altrincham to GMex
- 3.8km of city centre track.

Whilst the segregated line utilises existing ex British Rail stations, the city centre route has bespoke stops serving the major facilities including shopping, the commercial centre, theatres, China Town and the main line railway stations located at Piccadilly, Victoria and Deansgate (GMex).

**Phase 2** serves the new commercial development at Salford Quays with its prestigious office blocks and growing leisure industry. It carries on to the town of Eccles in the North West serving the residential area along Eccles New Road.

- The route is 6.5km in length.

## SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES

### Significant Dates in Metrolink's History

- **November 1984** GMPTE submitted Light Rapid Transit Bill in Parliament.
- **March 1987** the first light rail vehicle carrying passengers in Greater Manchester operated for 3 weeks at Debdale Park. **July 1987** Government Grant made available subject to private sector involvement.
- **January 1988** GMPTE authorised to invite tenders for phase 1 (Bury to Altrincham via the City Centre). **February 1988** Royal Assent received. **June 1988** Project launched under the name of Metrolink. **September 1988** Shortlist of 8 consortia for contract announced. **November 1988** Parliament Bill deposited for extensions to Oldham and Rochdale, Didsbury, Trafford Park and variations of Salford Quays.
- **March 1989** Service diversions began in Manchester City Centre and 3 consortia were selected for the second stage of tendering. **September 27, 1989** Announcement of successful consortium – GMA Group (GEC Mowlem, AMEC and GM Buses). **October 24, 1989** Michael Portillo Minister of State for Transport gives final approval for Metrolink. **December 1989** Work commences on main GMA contract.
- **March 1990** construction of street track section begins and the vehicle mock up is delivered. **April 1990** Royal Assent received for Parliamentary Bill for Salford Quays. **May 1990** Public open days for vehicle prototype mock-up. **June 5, 1990** Design, Build, Operate and Maintain (DBOM) contract signed with Greater Manchester Metro Limited. **June 6, 1990** Roger Freeman MP Minister for Transport lays the first new street tram rails in Great Britain at Long Millgate.
- **August 1991** the end of British Rail operation to Bury with the last Bury electric train ran Crumpsall to Bury.
- **April 6, 1992** Metrolink opens for passenger service from Bury to Victoria. **April 27, 1992** First street operation in the United Kingdom when passenger operation commences through Manchester City Centre to G Mex from Victoria and enters the Guinness Book of Records as England's only Street operated Light Rapid Transport System. **June 15, 1992** Metrolink opens for passenger service from G Mex to Altrincham. **July 17, 1992** The Queen officially opens Metrolink. **July 20, 1992** Metrolink Phase 1 is complete as operation to Piccadilly Rail Station commences.
- **October 21, 1996** Transport and works order made for Eccles extension from Broadway to Eccles. **November 8, 1996** Altram (consortium of Serco Limited, Ansaldo Trasporti, Laing Civil Engineering and 3I) is announced as the preferred bidder for Phase 2 of the contract.
- **April 25, 1997** work begins on Salford Quays and Eccles extension. **May 26, 1997** Serco Metrolink take over operation of the Bury to Altrincham line.
- **January 20, 1998** Construction work begins outside the entrance of Piccadilly Metrolink Station to enable trams to cross over the tracks before entering the station. **April 21, 1998** Beams lifted into place over the Manchester Ship Canal.

**April 27, 1998** Piccadilly Crossover on London Road becomes operational. **August 3, 1998** Minister of Transport Dr John Reid launches Integrated Transport Policy. **August 6, 1998** First street rail on Salford Quays and Eccles line laid by Glenda Jackson MP. **August 10, 1998** New Market Street island platform becomes operational replacing High Street and former Market Street stops. **August 1998** Transport and works order for the Ashton-Under-Lyne route made.

- **December 6, 1999** commencement of operations to Broadway.
- **July 21, 2000** start of operations to Eccles
- **January 9, 2001** the Princess Royal officially opens the Eccles line. April 2001 GMPTE issue bid documents for Phase 3.
- **March 31, 2003** Shudehill opens for service. **April 28, 2003** Transport Minister John Spellar MP officially opens Shudehill.

## SUMMARY OF FACTS

- The total network is approximately 37km route
  - Bury to Victoria 15.9km
  - Victoria to G Mex 3.1km and 0.7km (Piccadilly Spur)
  - G Mex to Altrincham 10.4km
  - Cornbrook to Broadway 3.0km
  - Broadway to Eccles 3.5km
  
- There are 37 stops
  - 17 former British Rail Stations
  - 17 new, open plan stops
  - 3 shared mainline stations (Victoria, Piccadilly and Altrincham)
  
- 32 Light Rail Vehicles
  - 26 T68 (purchased in 1991)
  - 6 T68a (purchased in 1999)
  
- Daily patronage of around 52,000 passenger journeys. Annual patronage of 18.8m passenger journeys
  
- Research has suggested that at least 2 million car journeys have been taken off the road each year along the Metrolink corridor