

Section 4

Transport Assets and Infrastructure

Our transport network is a result of the borough's geography and economic history.

The borough benefits from important motorway and rail links, providing strategic national and regional north-south and east-west links, but it also suffers from unique and challenging transportation issues generated by complex local travel patterns.

Tackling these is critical to the economic, social and environmental well-being of our communities.

We recognise that there is significant travel between the Borough and its neighbours. Therefore, we need to build and strengthen partnerships with them, not only in Greater Manchester, but also in Lancashire, Merseyside, and Warrington.





Rail:

An extensive system of railways was developed in the 19th century and today the borough remains relatively well provided for although the quality of this service is an on-going issue, in terms of our station environments, train vehicles and service patterns.

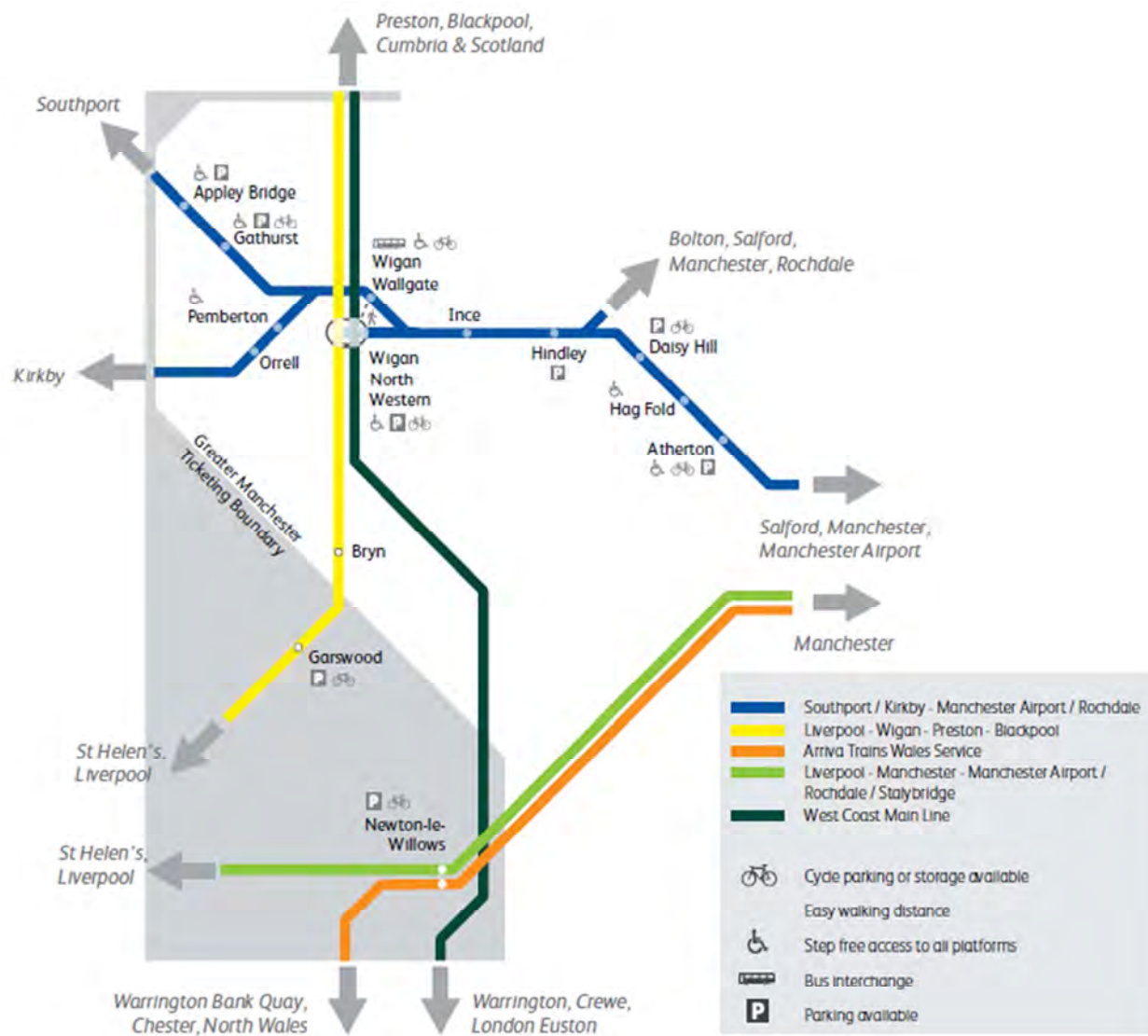
The borough benefits directly from eleven rail stations in total, two in Wigan town centre and nine other stations across the borough.

Although Daisy Hill rail station lies within the Bolton district, it provides an additional local station for residents in western areas of Atherton and northern areas of Hindley Green.

The borough also relies on rail stations outside the borough and outside GM control, including Newton-le-Willows and Garswood in Merseyside.

It is clear from the map that there is a clear lack of rail connectivity in the south east of the borough.

The Borough's Rail Network



Newton-le-Willows is a very popular choice for residents to the south / south east of the borough, as it provides direct rail services to Manchester, but also Liverpool, Warrington and Chester. This adds to the number of car based journeys in this part of the borough and along the A580 East Lancashire Road as people do not have realistic alternative public transport choices to access Manchester or Liverpool.

Effective station catchments are typically 10 minutes travel time: one kilometre for walking, three kilometres for cycling and five kilometres for buses. Therefore, given that a significant proportion of the population live within this travelling distance of a station, the borough is well placed to see improvements in services and infrastructure result in higher usage.

Rail Destinations and Journey Times



Wigan is well-placed for travelling to lots of destinations by train, with a combined off-peak frequency of 15 trains an hour from Wallgate and North Western Stations. The figure below provides an indication of our rail connectivity and the quickest time it takes to travel by rail to key destinations.

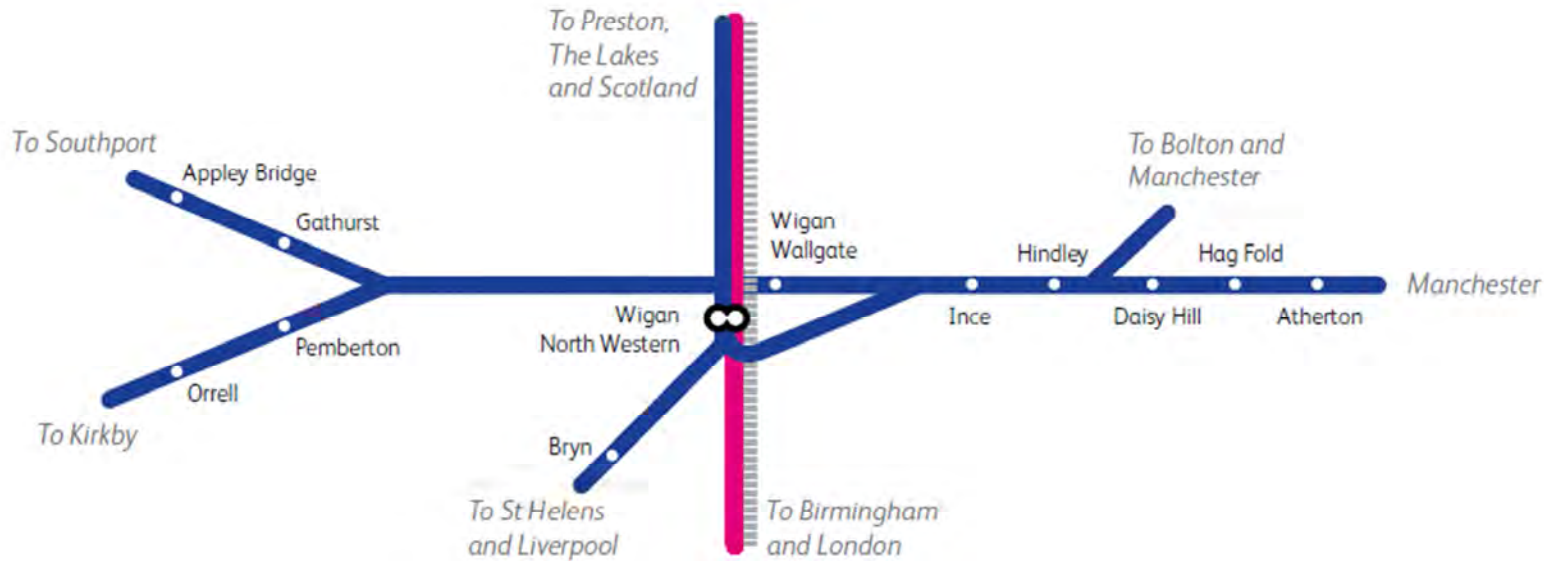
West Coast Mainline services at Wigan North Western station, and it is acknowledged that the borough has not fully exploited this strategic asset, providing access to Glasgow and Edinburgh, and London within 2 hours.

The Wigan/Bolton corridor carries 32% of Manchester bound passengers during the morning peak and 33% during the off-peak and overall, these figures have increased by 81% and 176% respectively since 1991. This growth is a positive reflection on the accessibility of rail travel to key education and employment sites outside of the borough. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that overcrowding is one of the key issues for rail travel.

Journey times to Liverpool, Salford and Manchester City Centre will reduce by approximately 15 minutes following the completion of the electrification programme and transfer of TransPennine services via Wigan using electric rolling stock. Further improvements to the rail network will provide benefits to the borough's rail connectivity on completion of the Northern Hub.

Franchise	Stations Affected
InterCity West Coast	Wigan North Western
Northern	Bryn, Pemberton, Orrell, Ince, Hindley, Atherton, Appley Bridge, Gathurst, Hog Fold, Walkgate
Trans-Pennine	(services to run through Wigan North Western starting Dec 2013)

Schematic of Current Rail Operators



Key

- northern
- ScotRail
SCOTLAND'S RAILWAY
- First
TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS
- virgin
trains
Love every second

From Dec 2013

North Western station is currently operated by Virgin Trains with our other stations being operated by Northern, causing communication and information sharing issues for rail passengers. Through the franchise process, we will be working with the potential bidders to help improve physical and informative integration to provide a better experience for rail customers.

Although there have been some recent improvements that have helped to lift the interior appearance of our stations, the general passenger experience does not portray the image of high quality, strategic, and important services that it deserves, and it does not support the status as key gateways for passengers entering or leaving the borough.

The Government is currently considering proposals to give TfGM and northern Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) a greater role in the letting and management of franchises, and work has been carried out to understand the benefits for this group to take over the management of rail stations.

Potentially, the refranchising process provides one of the greatest opportunities for influencing change to railway operations and services. We need to work with potential bidders to ensure that a sufficient level of service is provided and that the infrastructure is brought up to date and maintained to support the growth anticipated on all our strategic rail connections.

In January 2013, the Government announced the preferred route of the second phase of the High Speed Rail network proposed for Great Britain. The preferred high speed alignment directly affects Wigan as it passes through the Borough to connect with the existing West Coast Main Line (WCML) railway, and it is also proposed to construct a maintenance depot in the borough.

We understand that journey times will be reduced to London and Birmingham from Wigan North Western station, however we need to work closely with TfGM and HS2 in order to better understand the benefits and implications for the borough as this nationally significant project progresses.

With regards to rail freight, operators compete for traffic both with each other and with other modes of transport, principally the road haulage sector. Since 2004, intermodal rail freight (as measured in tonne-km) has grown by 61% (7% per annum) against a decline in road freight of some 14%. Rail freight has therefore grown by some 3.5% per year faster than road freight over this period (nationally).

It is important to consider modal choice for the movement of goods and well as people. Rail freight has been improving its competitive offer, particularly on cost given factors such as rising fuel costs and likely future productivity improvements, but also with respect to service quality and reliability resulting from terminal and network investment. A number of intermodal terminals are currently in the planning pipeline and these will play a role for our businesses and freight movements in the future.



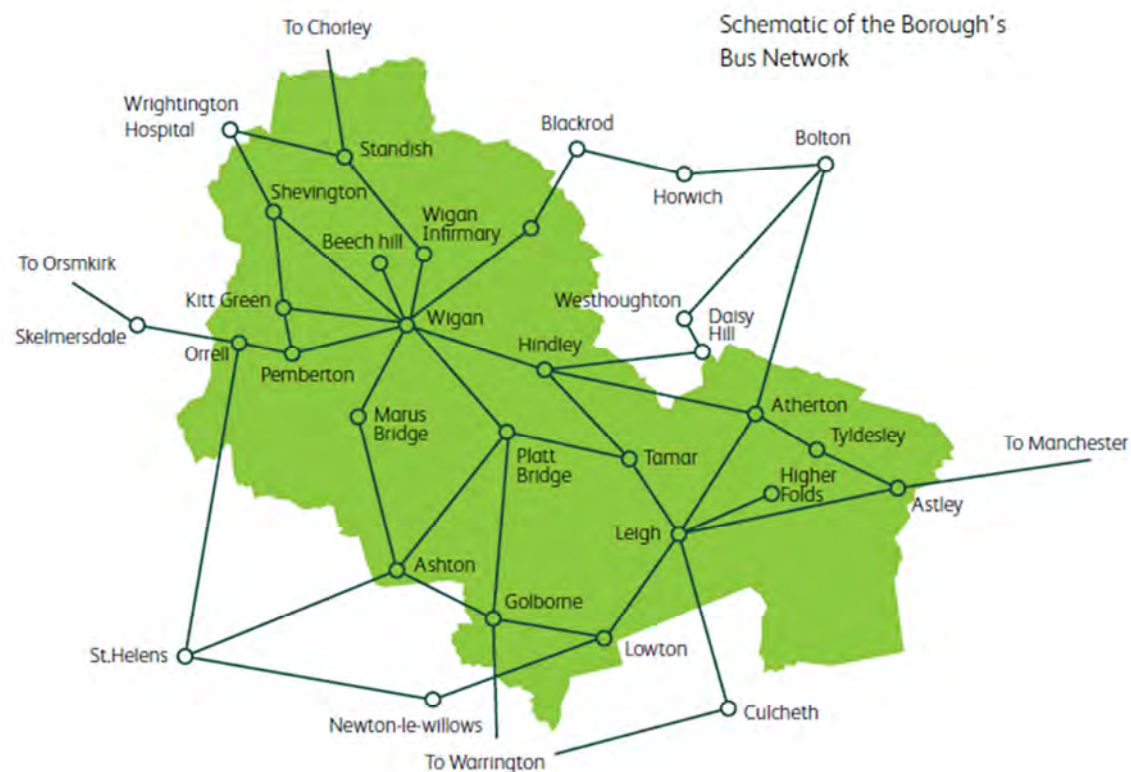


Bus:

Every year, approximately 200,000 million trips are made by bus across GM, however in comparison, more local evidence shows that the borough suffers with levels of bus patronage. Citizens' Panel questionnaire results in 2011 suggested that there is the potential to double bus patronage levels, and more than triple bus patronage levels for commuting trips. Approximately 10,000 trips made by bus passengers in each morning peak, taking thousands of cars off the roads across the borough, in addition to the hundreds of pupils on school services.

Wigan Borough has the largest fleet of Yellow School Buses across Greater Manchester (24 in total) which equates to about 30% of the total GM fleet (81 buses). The borough's fleet includes five 'green' school buses, which utilise hybrid technology. Significant growth has occurred (20%) on Quality Bus Corridors, but bus use is declining overall across the Borough and this declining trends is also a concern across Greater Manchester.

There are bus stations in both Wigan and Leigh town centres with networks of services radiating out to our other town and local centres and town centres in adjacent districts, as shown in the map opposite.



Reliability of bus services is improving, with frequent services in the borough being the best in Greater Manchester. However, we know that punctuality is still an issue, especially in the evening peak. Passengers tell us that punctuality is their number one priority for improvements, following by increased service availability (i.e. services starting before 6am and running after 11pm) and frequency (especially at weekends).

The bus network is critical for providing accessibility to destinations for those without access to a car (28% of households in the borough), but also the additional 44% of households with access to just one car, where families travel to different destinations.

Children and students are also dependant on buses to travel to education and training. In Wigan, we know poor connectivity is a significant barrier to people using buses; we need to make it easier for people to choose bus travel and key to this is improving the interchange experience. While complex and difficult to understand, the bus network itself creates barriers for potential new passengers, particularly with regards to information availability, details of fares, interchange between different bus services and perceived levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Bus fares are becoming a bigger issue as they are rising quickly at a time when many existing passengers are already facing difficult financial circumstances. In a national survey, passengers put value for money ahead of service frequency when asked about priorities for improvement. TfGM are developing a smartcard system (initially for Metrolink) to be rolled out across the bus network by 2013.



The borough benefits from services provided by a number of bus operators, however three of the major operators include Arriva, South Lancs Travel and more recently Stagecoach, following the acquisition of the Wigan business of First Manchester. Stagecoach are providing better quality vehicles and lower fares to encourage more people to choose bus travel in the borough and across GM and Arriva have worked with the Council to promote and encourage bus travel.



Motor Vehicles:

The borough benefits from direct connections to the M6 and M58 on its western boundary and the A580 East Lancashire Road on its southern boundary. It is also closely connected to the M61 to the east and the M62 to the south. The borough therefore has excellent connectivity to the national motorway network with the M6 and the M58 which provides a route straight into Liverpool docks being especially important. The road network in the borough is based largely on the 19th century network with single carriageways, 30 mph speed limits and relatively few new routes or significant widening schemes. Along key routes and at certain key locations congestion is a problem at peak times.

These relatively poor internal links restricts the ability to capitalise on the external connections. For example there are four junctions to the M6 in the borough, but the road links in the borough constrain the opportunities that businesses could make from them. Equally borough residents do not fully take advantage of the employment opportunities outside of the borough because of the poor connections to the motorways.



How many of our residents own a car?

Our borough has a total road network of 1,159km however approximately 25% of this relates to strategic corridors, the remaining 75% comprise mostly residential roads and 'quiet' lanes. However, the historical development of mining communities in our Borough means that most of our busy classified roads are still fronted by houses and schools.



Congestion impacts adversely on the perception of the borough for economic investment and effects amenity and environmental quality. Conditions for walking and cycling on or adjacent to congested routes are generally poor. Traffic calming measures have been implemented in numerous residential areas in an attempt to reduce the negative impacts of cars and goods vehicles avoiding congestion by 'rat-running' through these residential areas.

The Strategic Route Assessment Plan (STRAP) is a programme of improvements to the road network has begun to aid traffic flows at our key congestion hotspots but these benefits will be eroded in the medium to long term if traffic levels recover. With public finance budget pressures set to remain, there is and will continue to be a need to ensure that the asset that is our internal road network (both main roads and residential areas), does not become a financial liability due to the increasing burden of constant maintenance and re-engineering as a result of car dominated traffic.

The borough's strategic location suggests that it should be able to take advantage of opportunities for road and rail freight, but at present these are not particularly well developed. Between 1993 and 2005, the increase in light van mileage was 54% and HGVs increased their mileage by 22%. Businesses are talking to us about their plans to explore opportunities for transferring road freight on to other modes.

Tonne for tonne, rail freight produces 70% less carbon dioxide than road transport and an average freight train can remove 50 HGVs off the road network. The efficient movement of freight is vital to the borough's economy and compared to other vehicles, lorries are much more affected by congestion. Freight improvements need further consideration as part of our strategy to support our businesses and local economy.





Walking:

Walking is an important element of getting to places, even when we have used other modes for part of the journey. Information, incentives, support and help is already available to encourage and promote walking, including travel planning advice, walking maps, journey planners, and organised walking activities for families and / or keen walkers.

70% of the borough is countryside and access to it from our towns and villages is good. There is an extensive public rights of way network with 1126 rights of way totalling 470km of paths. In addition there are many areas of open access including woodlands and wetland sites.

The Council continues to develop and promote access to the countryside and recreation sites through for example its Greenheart project and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) and works in partnership with the Local Access Forum.

Some disused and abandoned rail routes, such as the former Whelley Loop Line, now form off road routes for walking, cycling and horse-riding, (National Cycle Network Route 55, NCN55), connecting Chorley, Adlington and Haigh in the north, to the eastern boundary with Salford.

A strong reminder of Wigan's industrial heritage is the prominence of canals, with the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, which follows the River Douglas southwards and Bridgewater Canal cutting across the borough, and linking the country parks at Haigh and Pennington Flash.

All routes and networks above provide a firm foundation and provide major steps in the right direction for developing the pedestrian network. At present many routes do not connect, frequently being physically cut by roads, railways, buildings or other developments, and important key destinations often lack safe and direct pedestrian routes.

Although the existing and potential routes described in this section provide pedestrian access to most of the urban areas across the Borough, one of the outcomes of this strategy will be to develop these routes to improve connectivity and develop a network that interlinks communities with local facilities.

In addition we need to ensure that walking routes to our transport interchanges are safe and legible to help make public transport more attractive.





Cycling:

Increasing participation in cycling brings many environmental and health benefits. The borough has a well-developed cycleway network, but there are still many gaps, particularly at busy road junctions that remain unattractive and create physical and perceived barriers to lots of 'would be' cyclists.

The recreational network is good with attractive routes through the countryside, but we need to improve and promote the overall network to make it more attractive for commuters and students.

Across the whole of Greater Manchester, cycling levels increased by 17% between 2005 and 2009 compared to a target of 6%. In Wigan, there have been pockets of even greater success, with annual growth on the Whelley Loop Line at about 25% over this time.

However, cycling for commuter trips still only represents about 1% of all traffic, even though two thirds of all journeys are less than five miles. At the current rate of growth, it would take almost 20 years to double this share to just 2%, so we want to investigate ways of substantially increasing growth, at much higher rates than in the past.



We need to ensure that we make best use of our historical assets (disused railway lines and canal towpaths), vast open spaces, and relatively flat terrain, to provide the routes and information to connect communities to education and employment opportunities.

Given our industrial legacy, the borough has lots of opportunities for better facilities for cyclists. However we need to develop parking, changing facilities, showers, and lockers, to make it easier to integrate cycling with everyday activities, and improved training and driver awareness, to ensure people have the confidence to encourage more people to cycle more often.