



Manchester, United Kingdom

Manchester has a population of approximately 452,000 and is situated within the wider Greater Manchester Urban Area, which has a population of about 2,240,230. It is the United Kingdom's third largest conurbation.

In a poll of British business leaders published in 2006, Manchester was regarded as the best place in the UK to locate a business. A report commissioned by Manchester Partnership, published in 2007, showed Manchester to be the "fastest-growing city" economically. It is Manchester's economic success that has become its "Achilles' heel" in that the prosperity of business and economic growth are the main causes of one of its greatest problems and future challenges: congestion.

Why was urban road user charging proposed in Manchester?

The aim was to draw on resources from the Government-backed Transport Innovation Fund (TIF). The congestion charge scheme would have been part of an investment package of £2.7 billion (€3 billion) in transport schemes and improvements in the Greater Manchester conurbation.

Key components of the proposals included: expanding the bus network for Greater Manchester; bus feeder services to rail and Metrolink stations (up to an additional 35km of Metrolink line including new stops in Rochdale and Oldham town centres, Ashton under Lyne, East Didsbury, Manchester Airport, Trafford Park and the Trafford Centre); and more capacity on local trains.

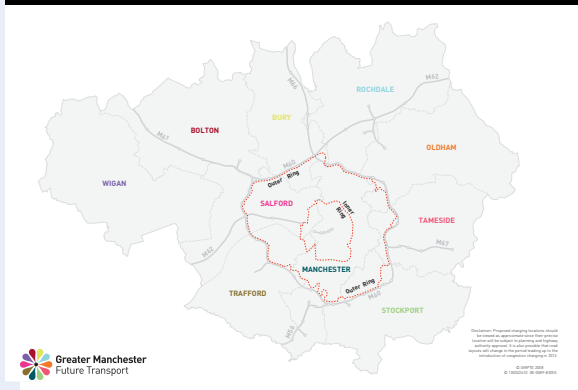
The package, which had been agreed by the Department for Transport (DfT), would have delivered a transformed public transport system for Greater Manchester funded in part by a limited peak-time-only congestion charge.

What were the features of the proposed Manchester scheme?

The proposal for the congestion charge involved two cordons as seen in the figure on the next page.

Motorists would have been charged to enter the city — £2 to cross the outer ring and £1 to cross the inner ring during the morning (7.00 to 9.30) and £1 to cross the inner ring and £1 to cross the outer ring to leave in the afternoon (16.00 to 18.30) peak periods.

Proposed charging area



Unlike the London all-day congestion charging scheme, the Manchester plan would have targeted motorists on the busiest routes at peak times during weekdays.

The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) had agreed a 100% discount which would have been applied to certain motor vehicles. Proposals to support low-income workers (based on statutory minimum wage) with a discount of 20% on the congestion charge and on public transport fares at peak times, were considered in public consultation. The AGMA also proposed that, until public transport improvements could be put in place (expected by 2016) workers based at the Trafford Park industrial area would have received a 100% discount for any outer ring charges.

The proposed technology included both “tag and beacon” and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (APNR) for vehicles without tags. Where possible vehicles would have been fitted with a special tag which would have been read automatically as the vehicle passed into and out of the charging zone. Regular users would have registered to a franchised agent and payment would have been debited as the car passed the active charging point. The toll reader would have been placed inside the car’s windscreen and would have had a slot for a smart card (much like London’s Oyster card). Occasional users would have been able to pre-pay before passing active charging points.

How was the Manchester scheme developed?

The scheme was overwhelmingly rejected in a referendum on December 12, 2008. On a turnout of just over half the electorate (53.2%), more than three quarters (79%) rejected the proposals. On Friday December 19, 2008, the AGMA officially agreed to stop proceeding with the TIF proposals.

A two-ring scheme had been planned to become operational from 2013. There were a number of preconditions



that were established by the AGMA for proceeding with the TIF bid — known as the AGMA tests — which were:

- There had to be significant investment in public transport improvements, including Greater Manchester’s light rail network, Metrolink. Crucially, enhanced capacity would have been in place prior to the introduction of any traffic-restraint measures.
- Measures had to complement the competitiveness and inclusion priorities of the City Region and would not have been allowed to undermine the competitiveness of the Regional Centre or the town centres in the area.
- Any (proposed) measures would have had to have been acceptable to both the public and business community.
- Measures would have been relevant to where congestion existed or where it would have emerged in the future, notwithstanding the advent of public transport improvements.

Conclusion

The AGMA always maintained that it would not have gone ahead with congestion charging unless it had the support of the public and business community. Before the public referendum, three out of the 10 local metropolitan borough councils (Trafford, Stockport and Bury) had made clear statements that they opposed the planned scheme.

It is difficult to categorically state the reasons for the negative referendum result in December 2008 but some practitioners and commentators have offered reasons. These include issues relating to confidence in the scheme itself — the scheme was hypothetical and the public had not seen any of the proposed public transport investments actually delivered; a lack of trust in the (national) Government to deliver its promise of investment; and a general misunderstanding amongst the public and some businesses about the benefits that the proposed scheme would bring.

