

*grab a quick snack at Pumpkin café shop .....or sit and relax for a bit longer over a coffee and a bite to eat at Caffé Ritazza — Shudehill Interchange has it all and more”*. The café shop never opened and Caffé Ritazza closed within a few weeks through lack of custom. Compare this with Huddersfield bus station below at 11.35 on a Saturday morning. Together with a daily passenger throughput of 33,000+, it has thriving retail units and a very busy café especially popular with O.A.P’s. All the 31 pairs of automatic doors work here too! Note the large pair of overhead double-sided electronic departure boards.



Had the £28 million been spent on a grand central interchange at Piccadilly Gardens incorporating trams, buses and National Express, we should now have a facility that would have really enhanced the city and been popular with both passengers and bus operators. We believe the gardens are owned by the City Council so land acquisition costs would largely have been avoided and the £28 million gone so much further in providing a magnificent interchange. Instead of that we're stuck with a red brick office block, an ugly concrete wall, portable urinals at weekends and probably the worst city centre bus waiting facility in the country! Wouldn't you say a lack of foresight both by GMPTA/E and the City Council?

**BURY INTERCHANGE:** Automatic doors were fitted a few years ago to five stands (P to V) and were probably expensive. They've not worked for at least 18 months if that, and remain permanently open. On some the wiring is disconnected. Each has a red notice fixed to the glass: "**Danger: Do not cross the busway here.**" Weren't the doors fitted to prevent just that?

**OLDHAM BUS STATION:** At the top of a hill, the highest bus station in all of Greater Manchester and subject to high winds. When opened in 2005 none of the eight stands A-H had doors. These were fitted later at considerable cost, somewhere around £100,000 we believe. It is common for these to be open just like Bury. A bus driver commented, "They're always going wrong." There's a sizeable gap between the glass sides and roof so the place is cold, draughty and noisy from bus engines. The station has no overhead electronic destination boards unlike modern bus stations elsewhere throughout the country.

**ECCLES INTERCHANGE:** Following its opening in 2001 the poor design required westbound buses to make a circuit of the building. so a £250,000 "Supershelter" was erected for these services away from the main building and adjacent to the tram platform. Only eastbound buses now use the main building. We doubt if the bus operators were consulted over the design of the Interchange otherwise this expensive blunder would have been avoided.

**CITY CENTRE TRAM PLATFORMS:** We at Greater Manchester Transport Campaign have repeatedly asked at public meetings run by GMPTA that adequate shelters are provided over these platforms. Our pleas have been ignored. Bear in mind the platforms have been in this state since Metrolink started running in 1992. **PASSENGERS ARE BEING TREATED WITH NO LESS THAN CONTEMPT BY THE AUTHORITY,** yet it can spend £250,000 each on seven so-called "Supershelters", one of which was installed at Eccles Interchange above. There are another two at Atherton. The TIF money won't go far if it's squandered at this scale.



*£250,000 "Supershelter" at Atherton*

**URBIS:** Since Cannon Street closed three years ago large numbers of passengers use the stop by Urbis on Corporation Street. We have repeatedly asked for a shelter to be provided here only to be met with varying excuses but no action. Again, passengers are being treated with no less than contempt.

The TIF bid document also promises ‘extra bus vehicles’ and ‘some cross-city routes’. It adds, ‘there will be a significant increase in the quality of bus service delivery across GM through improvements in vehicle presentation and customer care’. Haven’t most of the main bus operators in Greater Manchester invested more heavily in new high specification vehicles over the last two years than at any other time? We would also like to know how new cross-city bus services are going to run bearing in mind that GMPTE and Manchester City Council between them have closed the majority of cross-city roads which the buses previously used thus causing considerable congestion in those that are left such as Deansgate. As regards vehicle presentation and customer care, the majority of fleets have clean, comfortable vehicles, especially new ones. It’s annoying that a small minority of passengers treat such facilities with a lack of care and respect.



*X43: Manchester’s most up-market bus service — superb !*



*Two of 36 brand new buses introduced by First seen here on X35 route at Stevenson Square. Real leather seats too*

**GREATER CONTROL:** The latest issue of *Interchange*, GMPTA’s newsletter, states that the Local Transport Bill, if passed by Parliament, will give authorities such as GMPTA the ability to decide where and when bus services run and what fares passengers pay, as well as setting high standards for punctuality and reliability.

We should point out that, according to official national statistics, during the period 1974 to deregulation in 1986 when Passenger Transport Executives had total control, fares increased and patronage went down more than at any other time in the bus industry. It should be noted that GMPTA sets the fare levels on Metrolink which it owns, yet the fares on Sheffield’s trams owned by Stagecoach are much lower in comparison.

**STOPS USED BY EAST LANCASHIRE SERVICES AT ALBERT SQUARE AND DEANSGATE:**

Burnley & Pendle and Lancashire United operate the most up-market bus services ever seen between East Lancashire and Manchester. Their reliability, quality and customer service are outstanding. It's resulted in ever increasing patronage from people using the bus instead of driving into Manchester. Has GMPTE matched this excellence by improving the waiting facilities at these two busiest stops in the city centre over which both bus companies have no control? No. Large numbers of passengers have to queue in the rain because neither stop has a shelter.

**LIFT TO MAIN STATION FROM METROLINK PLATFORM AT PICCADILLY:**

We have lost count of the number of complaints we have received about this lift not working. We understand GMPTA owns the lift and is responsible for funding its repair which is carried out by Metrolink. For anyone who is disabled, has heavy luggage, or even worse is confined to a wheelchair, this lift is vital. Without it, one is forced to use a long passage on to London Road, cross two sets of tram tracks and walk to the Fairfield Street entrance to access the main lift. On Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> November, whilst waiting for a tram to Bury,



one of our members saw this elderly man with a walking-frame (above) through a gap which allows a view of the arrivals platform. He had just got off a tram, could barely shuffle and was going in the direction of the lift. Knowing it wasn't working, our member dashed round to help. Fortunately two Metrolink staff had appeared. Even so, this poor man still had to struggle out on to London Road supported by the staff using the route described above. Our member managed to take two photographs, one of the man in the passage and one of the route he would have to take over the tram tracks as far as the bus stop on London Road.



**REAL TIME INFORMATION:** is still not available at stops where display units have been fitted though some have been up at least two years. They just display GMPTE and the current time yet even this is sometimes incorrect. Why



so, when a private individual can buy a reliable radio-controlled clock which keeps perfect time for less than £10? Look at the photograph above taken at Leeds. West Yorkshire have got ‘real time’ up and running. They’ve also had the good sense to enable local bus services get as close to the rail station entrance as possible. That’s real integration. It would have been possible at Manchester Piccadilly had the pavements not been widened to the extent that even the short shuttle buses have to reverse and coaches be even more difficult to turn round.

**BOLTON INTERCHANGE:** In 2006 the long shelters on Newport Street by the railway station were demolished and replaced a new glass concourse at considerable cost. The old facility was used by very few passengers and they do not appear to have increased since it was replaced by the new one, so why change it? Buses from only a few routes pull up alongside the glass concourse because they can only make a left turn into Trinity Street. The majority of bus

routes which continue straight along Newport Street and across the junction with Trinity Street use a stop and ordinary shelter on Newport Street. Their passengers therefore cannot wait in the concourse. Under the TIF proposals, a £25 million bus/rail interchange is planned for the triangle of land currently used as a car park between the station and Great Moor Street. So why build this glass edifice in Newport Street in the first place? Was it a case that there was some money available and might have been lost if not spent, so planners had to find a way of spending it regardless of whether the end result represented good value and of real benefit? GMPTA's latest issue of *Interchange* states "Bolton Interchange is the third most used station in Greater Manchester—after Manchester Piccadilly and Stockport. Passengers make nearly 2.3 million journeys to and from it every year". We don't doubt that number use the railway station, but we'd certainly like to know the percentage of those who use the glass bus-waiting facility outside it.



*Note the bus on Newport Street (right). It will cross the junction and pass to the right of the church as do most services. The few which pull up by the concourse are only able to turn left into Trinity Street. Since this view was taken a new bus stop with a shelter has replaced the grey shelter just forward of the taxi*

**INFOTILS:** Do you know what an 'Infotil' is? If so, have you tried to use one? GMPTA has had at least 25 of them installed, mainly at bus stations. Each consists of a screen and a keyboard rather like a computer. Some when first installed were even able to supply a printout on paper. Whilst they might

be effective if used by experienced staff in an office situation, they are definitely not suitable for use by all and sundry in open situations on bus stations. In practice they are a target for vandals. Spitting on the screen and keyboard is a common occurrence. Other individuals just want to play with the keyboard and experiment with the touch-sensitive screen. It is rare to see anyone genuinely trying to obtain information. At Radcliffe and Rochdale they are free-standing, outside, open to the elements. When our members photographed them, the outer screen at Rochdale was smashed; Radcliffe's had no power, was showing signs of rust and the screen had been badly etched. At Eccles Interchange the screen was completely shattered. At Hyde, a search for *Manchester Piccadilly Gardens* produced the helpful answer "*We were unable to find any journeys matching your search criteria*". All these photographs are stored and dated in our archive.



It might be expected that the Infotil inside Shudehill Interchange and in the wall of the new TravelShop in the red brick office block by the tram platform at Piccadilly Gardens would be working. Not so. Shudehill Infotil has had a black screen for at least a month, the same at Piccadilly Gardens for two weeks and probably more for only then did we become aware of its existence. It was still in the same state Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November.



Even when working they can be temperamental and often display misleading information. Frequently they are either not working at all, or the keyboard or touch-sensitive screen will not respond. Surely, commonsense should have dictated that these Infotils would be a disaster and a waste

of money. We wonder how much they have cost to install; they don't come cheap. If they are rented as has been suggested why aren't they kept in working order?

**SMART CARDS:** At least for the last ten years GMPTE has been about to introduce smart cards "next year". In the meantime other transport authorities such as Lancashire County Council have introduced smart cards but as usual in Manchester we lag way behind other authorities.

## We wonder whether members of the Authority ever question the practicalities or cost of the proposals put before them.

In view of all these examples of poor management and lack of foresight, would you consider GMPTA/E a suitable organisation to spend £3 billion, more than half of which would be done on borrowed money in the hope of recovering it through the unknown quantity of congestion charging?

Page 4 of the latest GMPTA newsletter 'Interchange' carries a bold heading:

### Putting Passengers First: Improving public transport



We note that although GMPTA's finances are claimed to be severely restricted, they have nevertheless been able to move into 60,000 sq ft of new palatial offices opposite Piccadilly Station. The words "Putting Passengers First" will have a hollow ring to the passengers who get soaked on the city centre tram platforms, queue outside Urbis and at the East Lanes bus stops at Albert Square and Deansgate, or the person in a wheelchair struggling over the tram tracks on London Road because the lift from the Metrolink platform isn't working.

### On a happier note . . .

Northern Rail organised a Stakeholders' Seaside Special to Morecambe on 22<sup>nd</sup> July as a thank-you to station adopters and various voluntary groups involved with the railway. One train started in Hull and the second in Chester; both were coupled at Preston. Everyone enjoyed the fun and entertainment on board.

On arrival we were met by a brass band, before being welcomed by the Mayor and Mayoress at the former Promenade Station (now converted for events) where we sat down to a delicious buffet. We were even entertained by a live orchestra during our meal. The weather was perfect . . . . just a perfect day all round. Thanks, Northern, you really made it day to remember!



*Members of GMTC posing with Eric Morecambe's statue on the promenade. "Bring Me Sunshine"— he certainly did that day, it was so clear we could see the Lake District hills behind across Morecambe Bay.*

Amongst our members we have at least nine station adopters (5 on the Committee). We were pleased to recently welcome on board the newly formed user group **Friends of Hindley Station**. We wish them every success for the future.



Month &  
year joined

No.

# Greater Manchester Transport Campaign

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Please send this completed form together with  
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**Janet Cuff, Treasurer GMTC  
33 Tatton Road North  
Stockport SK4 4QX**

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the purpose of internal administration and not divulged  
to any third party.*



*We are always pleased to hear or receive the comments and ideas of members for publication, and we will also willingly publish details of our user group members and their activities. Please contact our Publicity Officer.*

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