

The process - The Greater Manchester journey to franchising

The process for setting up a franchising scheme is set out below along with timelines for each stage, based on Greater Manchester's experience, as well as identified areas where time could be saved in the future:

Actions	Timeline based on Greater Manchester experience	Potential to save time in the future
1 Preparation of an assessment of the proposed franchising scheme (akin to a business case). The authority can obtain data from incumbent operators to develop this assessment	June 2017-June 2019	The length of time taken at this stage can, to some extent, be attributed to first-mover disadvantage. The experience and lessons learnt from Greater Manchester could result in a speedier process for those that follow. A proportionate approach, simplification and frameworks to support assessments would be helpful in reducing the time taken.
2 Key elements of the assessment are assured by an independent auditor	June 2019-October 2019	
3 The LTA consults on the proposals	First consultation (October 2019 – January 2020) 86% of respondents support bus franchising Government announces measures to deal with COVID (March 2020) Second consultation conducted to explore how COVID may affect the proposals and business case (December 2020-January 2021) 82% of respondents support bus franchising	The consultation period would usually be 3 months. The second consultation was related to COVID impact assessment.

4 Decision taken by Mayor or authority to implement franchising.	Decision announced (March 2021) Two operators submit claims for judicial review centred around how COVID may affect the case for reform (March 2021) High Court rules that the decision and process to franchise bus services was lawfully carried out (April 2022) One bus operator seeks leave to appeal, which is granted on two technical points. Court of Appeal rejects the appeal (April 2022-July 2022)	Without COVID we can reasonably estimate that the Manchester decision would have been made in March/April 2020 (allowing 2-3 months to analyse consultation responses).
5 Procurement and award of contracts	First operators to be awarded contracts announced (December 2022)	The period up to the awarding of contracts is the procurement process, the length of which depends on LTA procedures. In the case of Greater Manchester, this took around five months.
6 Mobilisation and transition period (minimum of six months) to allow incumbent and new operators to adapt to the franchising arrangements	December 2022-September 2023	In Greater Manchester, the assessment process determined that 9 months was required.
7 Franchising implemented	First franchised buses enter service (September 2023) Tranche two enter service (March 2024) Tranche three enter service (January 2025)	