

Festive season resource pack

From Friday 10 November

Written by TfGM, in partnership with Manchester City Council and Salford City Council

Black Friday update added: 22 November 2023



Every journey. Every day.

Black Friday update

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) are forecasting the busiest Black Friday in recent years, especially within the city centre. Over the Black Friday weekend [Friday 24 to Sunday 26 November], footfall in the city centre is estimated to increase by over 30% on Saturday, compared with a typical weekend. We are also expecting football at the [Etihad](#), concerts at the [AO Arena](#), as well as other event activity to attract 755,000 extra people to event venues over the three days of the weekend.

Please see below for a summary of the latest insight and advice that will support journeys into, around and out of Greater Manchester this weekend. **The information from page four onwards in this pack is from our main Christmas resource pack. The additional details specific to the Black Friday weekend above are intended to support the general advice below.**

Added key messages

- We will be advising the public that **the busiest time on the transport network will be after 2pm on Saturday**, due to Black Friday shopping, Manchester Christmas Markets, football at the Etihad, a potential protest in the city centre and an event at the AO Arena. Roads will be as busy as a weekday evening at peak rush hour.
- Our messaging will reinforce the advice for the public to **not drive into the city centre, and encourage use of tram, bus and rail park and ride locations**. If people have to drive, try to retime journeys to leave the city centre before 2pm. Or alternatively, there is ample parking at the 24 tram park and ride sites, and this means people can avoid the congestion and search for a space in the city centre.
- To aid pedestrian safety and improve traffic flow there will be an inbound closure of Corporation Street between Hanover Street and Balloon Street from 11am on Friday 24 to 7pm on Sunday 26 November.
- We will be promoting tram travel as the quickest way to get from A to B, with trams running all the way through until 1am on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Added ways that we are keeping Greater Manchester moving

- We are enhancing monitoring of the highways and transport network during the festive period from TfGM's Transport Control Centre. TfGM have extra Control Centre and traffic signals engineers over the weekend dedicated to monitoring the city centre, managing congestion, and reviewing the traffic signal timings.
- We will be using VMS to advise of car park congestion disruption and hotspots.
- We will be deploying customer service representatives at key stops on Metrolink and Travel safe officers patrolling franchised buses to assist customers.

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- We will be updating live navigation devices in real time with road closures and incidents.
 - We will be re-routing buses around closed roads and placing customer advice on affected stops.
 - On Friday [24 November], TfGM are holding a media opportunity in our Control Centre, with local press, radio, BBC and Granada invited to amplify the travel advice for this weekend.
 - Paid social media to amplify the above messaging about this weekend's congestion and signpost the public to [TfGM's Christmas webpage](#).

Overview

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) are predicting the busiest festive season in recent years for the region, especially within the city centre, as more events, more shoppers and more festivities are going ahead.

In 2022, data showed that in November and December, city centre footfall on average 15% higher than outside the festive season. This rose to as high as 35% more than normal during events such as the first weekend of the Christmas Markets, Black Friday and the Christmas party season.

This year, with the 25th anniversary of Manchester Christmas Markets and a busy football, concert and theatre schedule, we are expecting there to be significantly more trips on the highways and transport network and are encouraging anyone travelling in or around Manchester city centre to plan ahead.

To enable the easy amplification of key transport messages over the festive period, we have summarised our travel advice for the most disruptive events over the course of November and December.

This is intended as a reference guide for transport-related messaging for the whole Christmas period. Our [Christmas webpage](#) will be continually updated with specific developments as they emerge. For more bespoke messaging for newsletter communications or social media, we would encourage you to contact us directly at events@tfgm.com and we can work with you to collaborate on a tailored travel advice plan.

Thank you for helping us to keep Greater Manchester moving.

General advice

We have created a one-stop shop travel advice webpage for the festive period that we will be directing the public to on social media and in other marketing activity. Visit our [‘Tis the \(events\) season’ webpage](#) for more information.

- **Over the festive season, it is essential for the public to plan their journeys in advance** – This may involve using a journey planner, the Bee Network app, or checking for disruptions via visiting [BeeNetwork.com](#) or your operator’s website.
- **The highways and transport network will be at its busiest from 4pm-7pm each day** throughout the festive period. At the weekend, journey times in the city centre are expected to increase significantly between 2pm and 8pm. As a result, we are strongly recommending that if you can, make your trip earlier in the day, to avoid significant delays and beat the queues.
- **Tram will be the best choice for any journey in and around the city centre this Christmas.** We are expecting roads to be busier than normal, particularly around event venues. As trams run on designated tracks, road delays are unlikely to impact service. We are also increasing capacity over the festive season, with more trams on the network and trams running until 1am on Friday and Saturday nights. We have a number of affordable travel options available, including a family travelcard allows two adults and up to three children (aged under 16) to travel by tram as many times as you like between Friday night and Sunday night for £9.50. Visit our [tickets and passes information](#) for more.
- **Travelling by public transport can help cut the costs this Christmas** - Customers can get on board with the Bee Network. With low-cost fares such as £2 adult single bus tickets, you can make an expensive time of year more purse friendly.
- **If people have to drive into the city centre, we would advise to park closest to your route out of the city centre.** You can visit our dedicated [car parking locations map](#) for more information on city centre car parks or alternatively you could drive to one many of park and ride locations and complete your journey by public transport. If drivers must cross the city centre, we urge them to take a route via the Outer Ring Road (M60). Driving across the city can add additional time to your journey and contribute to overall congestion.
- **Rail industrial action** - Strike action by ASLEF (the train driver’s union) is set to impact the rail network between Saturday 2 and Friday 8 December, meaning little or no rail services across large areas of the rail network. An overtime ban will also be in place from Friday 1 to Saturday 9

December. We will be encouraging rail passengers and transport partners alike to keep checking our [travel advice webpages](#) or the [National Rail website](#) on a regular basis for the latest updates.

Key dates

- Friday 10 November to Thursday 21 December – Manchester Christmas Markets
- Friday 24 to Sunday 26 November – Black Friday weekend, Manchester City v Liverpool and Hits Radio Live at the AO Arena
- Tuesday 28 November – Manchester City v RB Leipzig
- Saturday 2 December – The Christmas Markets, Christmas shopping and Peter Kay at the AO Arena
- Sunday 3 December – Manchester City v Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester Christmas Parade
- Wednesday 6 December – Manchester United v Chelsea
- Saturday 9 December – Manchester United v Bournemouth
- Tuesday 12 December – Manchester United v Bayern Munich
- Friday 15 and Saturday 16 December – Busiest days for Christmas parties
- Saturday 16 December – Manchester City v Crystal Palace and Disney on Ice at the AO Arena
- Sunday 17 December – Disney on Ice at the AO Arena

For the full list of major events taking place during this period, please see Appendix A.

Advice for travelling to Manchester Christmas Markets and into the city centre

Whilst transport in the city centre will be busy all November and December, we are anticipating that the most significant weekends for congestion will be:

- Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 November
- Friday 24 to Sunday 26 November
- Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 December
- Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 December
- Friday 15 to Sunday 17 December

Please see our advice below specifically for these events in conjunction with our general advice:

Travelling by tram

We are advising the public to take the tram wherever possible.

We are increasing tram capacity over the festive season, and on Fridays and Saturdays, there will be trams on the network until 1am. For live departure times from your stop, customers can use the Bee Network app, or you can also visit the dedicated stop webpages on [BeeNetwork.com](https://www.beenetwork.com); and city centre stops are linked below.

For customers who are travelling to the Manchester Christmas Markets, we are advising you to use the following stops:

- St Ann's Square and Exchange Street - [Exchange Square](#) stop
- Market Street - [Market Street](#) or [Piccadilly Gardens](#) stop
- King Street - [St Peter's Square](#) stop
- New Cathedral Street - [Exchange Square](#) stop
- Exchange Square - [Exchange Square](#) stop
- The Corn Exchange - [Exchange Square](#) stop
- Cathedral Gardens - [Exchange Square](#) or [Victoria](#) stop

During busy times, we will be advising customers to use [Piccadilly](#), [Deansgate-Castlefield](#) or [Shudehill](#) to reduce congestion at smaller stops.

Travelling by bus

Whilst roads within the city centre will be busier than normal, measures have been introduced to prioritise bus journeys. We are asking the public to allow extra time for their journey if they know that

they are going to be travelling on an evening or a weekend. You can find live departure information on our [dedicated bus webpage](#) or Bee Network app.

Travelling by road

From 2pm driving in the city centre on a weekend is likely to be at least as busy as a weekday evening rush hour. For quicker journeys, we are suggesting to travel earlier in the day and are advising to avoid the period between 4pm and 7pm.

Our advice includes checking our events webpages to see if there is a major event taking place within the city, as the festive fun means more people are travelling on the roads. More information about travelling to key events destinations is on pages 7 and 8 of this pack.

Based on analysis of previous road use during the festive period, roads around **the Manchester Arndale, Printworks, Victoria Station, AO Arena, The Great Northern Warehouse, The Opera House, Deansgate, Blackfriars or Chapel Street (Salford)** have been identified as key hotspots. This will be a key theme in our messaging.

On weekends, evenings and key event dates, we are urging drivers to park outside the city centre and to allow extra time if motorists need to drive into the city centre.

If customers are enjoying a Christmas party, we will be further encouraging people to use public transport, or a taxi to get home and never drink or drug drive. Over festive period the police will be conducting special operations to help keep the roads safe.

Walking

Our messaging will include encouraging the public, where possible, to walk when in the city centre, as they may find this is the quickest way to get to where they need to be and is a great way to soak up the festive atmosphere. This will be accompanied by messages of safety, encouraging use of well-lit routes through the city.

Travelling to events at the Etihad, Old Trafford and the AO Arena

Please see our advice to use specifically for these events in conjunction with our general advice:

Getting to the Etihad

We will be encouraging the use of tram and making it clear for customers that it will be the best way to avoid festive congestion around the stadium.

During peak times (Mon-Fri 7am to 8pm and Sat 9am to 6.30pm), there will be trams every six minutes between the city centre and the Etihad Campus, and we will be encouraging the use of Ladywell, Ashton Moss, Ashton West, Parkway, Sale Water Park, Radcliffe or Whitefield park and ride locations.

There is a signed, lit walking route from Manchester Piccadilly to the stadium direct to the stadium that takes 30 minutes.

We are expecting the most significant road disruption to come with the match against Crystal Palace on Saturday 16 December, due to it being the last weekend before Christmas, and the three Disney on Ice shows at the AO Arena. As a result, we are urging the public – whether they are going to the match or just getting out and about – to consider using the motorway network to get to the stadium and avoid routes via the inner ring road or expect to add a significant amount of extra time onto their journey. Alongside roads messaging, we will also be encouraging park and ride use (mentioned above) as an alternative.

We would strongly suggest customers plan their journey and **there is more information about getting to the Etihad on the dedicated webpage**.

Getting to Old Trafford

Traveling by tram will also be the best way to get to Old Trafford. With peak services (Mon-Fri 7am to 8pm and Sat 9am to 6.30pm) to Old Trafford and Exchange Quay and four tram stops within 15 minutes of the ground, customers are least likely to face delay to their journeys.

We will be encouraging use of the Parkway park and ride on the Trafford Park line, Sale Water Park on the Airport line and the Ladywell park and ride on the Eccles line.

As evening and weekend trips to the nearby Trafford Centre increase, we are expecting traffic off the M60 onto Chester Road, Parkway and Trafford Boulevard to be higher during the festive period.

Similarly, we are anticipating increased journey times on Bridgewater Way, Regent Road, Chester Road and Trafford Road due to an increased number of vehicles leaving the city centre.

We would strongly suggest customers plan their journey and **more information on getting to Old Trafford can be found on [our website](#)**.

Getting to the AO Arena

The AO Arena has a packed programme all the way up to Christmas. As a result, we will be urging event goers and commuters to re-think their journeys along Trinity Way and Great Ducie Street. On event days, these roads typically see journey time increases of 15 minutes and during the festive period, we are anticipating for road users to need to add a significant amount of extra time onto their journeys.

As the Arena is next to Victoria station, we will be encouraging event goers to take advantage of the excellent tram and train links that are just around the corner to the venue.

We are anticipating that for the transport network, the most impactful days will be Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 December, when there will be shopping, events in the city, last weekend of the Manchester Christmas Markets and three shows per day at the Arena for Disney on Ice.

You can find out more about getting to the AO Arena on [our website](#).

Advice for travelling into town centres and shopping centres

On our [dedicated Christmas webpage](#), there will be a section with advice related to travelling to other Greater Manchester towns and shopping areas. Our insight will develop through the season, so we encourage the public and partners alike to regularly check our [dedicated webpage](#) with handy hints for traveling to major shopping sites.

In the main, our messaging will focus on:

- Asking customers to use the tram, where possible.
- Urging customers to use the Outer Ring Road (M60) to travel between towns, if there is no choice other than to drive.
- To add extra time onto their journeys to allow for congestion when entering and exiting car parks.

What we are doing to keep Greater Manchester moving

Transport for Greater Manchester, the Local Authorities, event organisers, and the emergency services have all been involved in planning and delivery of the transport operation over the festive period.

To reduce disruption, we are collectively introducing the following key mitigations:

- ✓ From mid-November, Manchester City Council and Salford City Council will be restricting non-urgent roadworks within the City Centre and on major routes to maximise road capacity and maintain traffic flows.
- ✓ We are enhancing monitoring of the highways and transport network during the festive period from TfGM's Transport Control Centre, using CCTV and data sources to predict and manage congestion and improve traffic flows.
- ✓ Introducing traffic management on highway around the busiest shopping areas to improve traffic flows and speed up exiting from the car park.
- ✓ Collaborating with transport operators to provide a coordinated response to events and congestion.
- ✓ Deploying customer service representatives at key stops on Metrolink and on yellow, franchised buses to assist customers.
- ✓ Updating live navigation devices in real time with road closures and incidents.
- ✓ Using Variable Message Signs to advise of events and disruption at key points across the Greater Manchester road network.
- ✓ TfGM will be launching a co-ordinated social media communications plan, incorporating paid and organic social media messages and video content. This is supported by a one-stop shop webpage, with comprehensive information about each planned disruptive period.
- ✓ Amplifying message through press releases, weekly travel updates, regular stakeholder engagement and working with event venues and retail centres to advise and inform visitors.

Appendix A – major events around the Manchester city centre between Friday 10 November and Sunday 24 December

The major events are highlighted in the table below.

Event	Venue	Date
Christmas markets start until 21 Dec	Manchester City centre	10 Nov
Man Utd v Luton	Old Trafford	11 Nov
Louis Tomlinson	AO Arena	11 Nov
Man Utd women v Man City women	Old Trafford	19 Nov
Black Friday weekend	Greater Manchester	24 - 26 Nov
Man City v Liverpool	Etihad	25 Nov
Hits Radio Live	AO Arena	25 Nov
Man City v RB Leipzig	Etihad	28 Nov
Peter Kay	AO Arena	01 - 02 Dec
Man City v Spurs	Etihad	03 Dec
Christmas Parade	Manchester City Centre	03 Dec
Man Utd v Chelsea	Old Trafford	06 Dec
Northern Quarter event	Manchester City Centre	07 Dec
Man Utd v Bournemouth	Old Trafford	09 Dec
Madness	AO Arena	09 Dec
Man Utd v Bayern Munich	Old Trafford	12 Dec
Mad Friday and Saturday	Manchester City Centre	15 - 16 Dec
Man City v Crystal Palace	Etihad	16 Dec
Disney on Ice (three shows per day)	AO Arena	16 – 17 Dec