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Metrolink expansion halfway with Rochdale opening

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Expansion of the Manchester Metrolink tram network through the 'Big Bang' set of projects has now reached the half way mark.

From Thursday (28 February), tram services will be extended to Rochdale railway station, continuing along the north west Oldham branch which opened as far as Shaw & Crompton in December 2012 (TB 8966).

The latest extension covers 7.4km (4.6 miles) and also serves the former railway stations at Newhey and Milnrow plus all-new stops at Kingsway and Newbold. It continues the conversion of the former Oldham Loop heavy rail line, which closed in 2009 (TB 6261), to light rail.



The first in-service tram from Rochdale station will leave at 0559 while the first tram to Rochdale will depart Manchester Victoria at 0608. Trams will operate every 12 minutes, calling at key employment centres at Kingsway, Shaw & Crompton, Oldham Mumps, Central Park and Manchester city centre.

Cllr Andrew Fender, chair of the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee, said: "The Metrolink expansion continues apace. People in Rochdale now have the best of both worlds: inter-regional and local rail services, and local tram services. Rochdale is undergoing great change and Metrolink's arrival is a great symbol of a bright future."

Tickets from Rochdale station to Shaw & Crompton, and all stops between, will cost £1.80 for a peak anytime single and £2.60 for a peak anytime return. The same tickets from Rochdale to stops between Derker and Failsworth, including Oldham Mumps, will cost £2.10 and £3.60. Similarly, tickets to all stops in Manchester city centre (including Piccadilly and Deansgate-Castlefield) will cost £4.10 and £6.20 respectively.

The 7.4km Rochdale extension brings the total size of the Metrolink network to 69km (43 miles) and Transport for Greater Manchester says it signals the midway point of a massive expansion of the network that is now well under way. Thales, VolkerRail and Laing O'Rourke are contracted to deliver the extensions.

Remaining work includes the completion of new lines to East Didsbury (set for summer 2013), Ashton (winter 2013/14), Oldham and Rochdale town centres (2014) and Manchester Airport via Wythenshawe (2016). When complete the network will cover 95km (59 miles): more than three times the original 30km (18.5 mile) network that opened in 1992. Funding has also been secured for a second, 1.6km (1 mile) route through Manchester city centre.

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