

Annex 5: Updates on franchising in other areas

This document presents recent developments related to franchising in other regions since the publication of the Bus Report. Each summary is derived from official statements, news sources, or local authority webpages accessed in September 2025.

Area	Update
Greater Manchester	The region has recently experienced significant industrial action by bus drivers over pay and conditions, affecting a majority of franchised services. The strikes are not a result of franchising itself, but relate to pay negotiations with the private operators contracted under the Bee Network model. Mayor Andy Burnham has pledged to introduce a standard minimum pay rate for all Bee Network drivers by 2028 [1] .
Liverpool City Region	Liverpool City Region is actively implementing bus franchising, with the first franchised services set to launch in September 2026. The full transition to a franchised network is planned to be completed by the end of 2027 [2] .
West Yorkshire	West Yorkshire is progressing towards a fully franchised, publicly-run bus network, with the first franchised services expected to start in 2027 and full rollout the following year. Preparations include major investment in depots, fleet, and a new integrated “Weaver Network” for seamless travel across bus, tram, and train. The first contract procurement round is due to launch in October 2025 [3] .
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	As of September 2025, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough’s bus franchising programme is moving forward under the leadership of high-profile transport experts. The first franchised services are expected in late 2027 [4] .
South Yorkshire	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority confirmed in March 2025 that it will move to a franchised bus model, following overwhelming public support. The first tranche of publicly controlled services is expected from September 2027, with full rollout by July 2029. Preparations include depot redesigns and significant capital investment in fleet and infrastructure [5] .
West Midlands	The West Midlands Combined Authority approved bus franchising in May 2025, with the first franchised services expected to begin in late 2027 and full implementation by 2029. The region will be divided into nine local franchises, with a phased rollout and investment in fleet, depots, and network planning [6] . The Combined Authority considers that purchase of depots is central to achieving the stated aims of the franchising scheme.

<p>North East</p>	<p>The North East Combined Authority has published a formal notice of intent to prepare a Franchising Scheme Assessment as of July 2024. The assessment process is expected to take around 2.5 years, with the aim of launching the first franchised services before 2028, subject to legislative changes and assessment outcomes[7].</p>
<p>Wales</p>	<p>The Welsh Government is progressing with a nationwide bus franchising model, aiming for full implementation by 2030. The Bus Services (Wales) Bill was introduced in March 2025, with a phased roll out of franchising set to begin in 2027 and completed by 2030[8].</p>
<p>York and North Yorkshire</p>	<p>York and North Yorkshire has been selected to lead the UK’s first rural bus franchising pilot, announced in the June 2025 Comprehensive Spending Review. Backed by a share of £750 million per year, the pilot aims to address severe service gaps in rural areas—some of which currently see only one bus per week. The Combined Authority will conduct in-depth studies across urban, rural, and coastal communities to develop a scalable franchising model tailored to rural needs[9].</p>
<p>Cheshire West and Chester</p>	<p>Cheshire West and Chester has also been selected to participate in a bus franchising pilot, announced in June 2025 with a share of the £750 million in funding. The pilot is linked to the emerging Cheshire and Warrington strategic authority, which may take on wider transport powers. The council has already developed a robust Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and operates an Enhanced Partnership, but sees franchising as a way to better align services with community needs, particularly in underserved rural areas[10]. The authority is also located between Wales, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester Combined Authority, all of which are intended to be franchised areas.</p>

References

- [1] [Bus drivers strike in Burnham’s patch | Workers' Liberty](#)
- [2] [Publicly owned, passenger focused: Mayor unveils day one bus upgrades](#)
- [3] [West Yorkshire Combined Authority](#)
- [4] [Two leading transport figures appointed to drive Cambridgeshire and Peterborough connectivity ambitions - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority](#)
- [5] [South Yorkshire confirms move to bus franchising](#)
- [6] [West Midlands latest to opt for franchising](#)
- [7] [Bus Reform North East](#)
- [8] [Bus franchising | Transport for Wales](#)
- [9] [York and North Yorkshire to lead national pilot on rural bus franchising](#)
- [10] [Cheshire West and Chester area set for bus franchising pilot - BBC News](#)