

Marple Bus Services

Summary

1. The arrival of Bee Network on 5 Jan 2025 is to be welcomed as is the retention of the £2 single fare, hopefully long term. The quality of the new buses is excellent. We should look forward to further improvements such as on bus real-time information on stops. We should lobby for real-time screens at major bus stops
2. The main Marple bus service, 383/384 (Stockport-Marple-Romiley-Bredbury-Stockport circular) is a good service but frequencies should be restored to 15 min daytime frequency and 30 min evening frequency.
3. 358 (Stockport-Marple-New Mills-Hayfield) is also a good service with an hourly frequency throughout the day until midnight, providing good connections not only to Stockport but also to New Mills and Hayfield.
4. 385 service (Mellor-Marple-Stockport) is a vast improvement on the 375 service that it replaces.
5. 394 (Glossop-Marple-Stepping Hill Hospital) is a struggling two-hourly service, Monday-Friday only. It serves a route not covered by other services but usage is poor. We need to consider ways of increasing use of this service, as suggested below.
6. Marple needs a 'Town Service' bus to enable people living in the outer districts of Marple public transport access to Marple town centre. Details of a possible route and timings are given below.
7. Request SMBC/TfGM/Bee Network to consider ways of helping increase bus use by Marple residents. Eg (a) what can be done to give buses higher priority during peak times where present journey times are some 60% longer than off-peak, (b) extend car parking charges to encourage bus use.
8. Rose Hill/Hyde Loop was, with the Glossop/Hadfield line, in Phase 1 (start Dec 2026) of a Bee Network plan to incorporate local train services into Bee Network. The latest TfGM statement has replaced Rose Hill/Hyde Loop with Stalybridge-Victoria. We should do everything we can to get Rose Hill/Hyde Loop reinstated in Phase 1.
9. We should also campaign for a more train-bus co-ordination and through ticketing eg Manchester-Mellor via tram, train and bus on one ticket.

Existing Services

383/384 (Stockport-Marple-Romiley-Bredbury-Stockport Circular; 383 anticlockwise; 384 clockwise): run by Stagecoach

This is the principal bus service through Marple, running throughout the day, seven days a week. Until mid-2010s this service ran at 15 min clockface intervals until mid-evening and then half-hourly until late. Since Covid it has run at 20min intervals until 1929, then half-hourly for an hour until 2004 and then hourly until 0004. Frequency and time-keeping have always been affected by traffic congestion into and out of Stockport in the morning and afternoon peaks such that the service is both slower (up to 40%) and less frequent in both peaks.

Sunday service is half-hourly, clockface, until 2017 and then hourly until 2317.

Journey time Marple-Stockport Interchange: 21 mins (off-peak) to 38 mins (am and pm peaks)

358 (Hayfield-New Mills-Marple-Stockport): run by Stagecoach

A long-standing, reliable and well-used service that runs hourly from early morning until past midnight Mon-Sat and runs hourly 1000 until 2330 on Sundays. It takes a slightly more direct route into Stockport than 383/384, with a marginally shorter journey time. For Marple-Stockport journeys it can be considered as an additional bus every hour. In the evenings, when the 383/384 service goes to hourly it is timed with 358 to give a half-hourly Stockport-Marple evening service. 358 is a fine way to get to New Mills and Hayfield and is much valued by residents of those Derbyshire towns (DCC part subsidises this service).

Journey time Marple-Stockport Interchange: 25 mins (off-peak) to 34 mins (am and pm peaks).

385 (Mellor-Marple-Hawk Green-Bosden Farm-Stockport): run by Diamond (from their Eccles garage!)

This service is a huge improvement on its predecessor, 375, which ceased running on 5 Jan 2025. It runs from the very top of Mellor via Longhurst Lane and Brabyns Brow to Marple. It then does a loop via Hawk Green back into Marple and then to Stockport via another short loop through Bosden Farm, then Lisburne Lane, Dialstone Lane, Nangreave Road and A6 into Stockport. The outbound service follows the same route, including the loops through Bosden Farm and Hawk Green. It continues to serve Mellor as before but usage on the Marple-Mellor leg remains very low, averaging 1.5 journeys per trip in each direction.

It could be further improved by shifting the Hawk Green loop to a 'Marple Town Service' detailed below. This would cut the Mellor(Devonshire Arms)-Stockport time by 9 mins to a much more attractive 40 mins compared to 70 mins on its predecessor, 375

Unlike 375, this service no longer serves Stepping Hill Hospital.

Journey time Marple-Stockport: 34 mins (consistent all day). Without the Hawk Green loop the Marple-Stockport journey time would reduce to 25 mins. One could then run this service via SHH, which would restore the Marple-SHH link without excessively increasing the overall journey time.

394 (Glossop-Marple-Hawk Green-Stepping Hill Hospital): run by High Peak Buses

This service is now the only bus running directly from Marple to Stepping Hill Hospital (SHH). It is jointly subsidised by TfGM and Derbyshire County Council (DCC) and is run by High Peak buses. All other bus services in Marple are now run under the Bee Network banner, except this one. Does this mean it does not have a long-term future?

In 2015 this service was threatened with full withdrawal but an agreement was reached between TfGM and DCC to continue the service but reduce the frequency from hourly to 2-hourly. It runs only Monday-Friday. The first bus from Marple to SHH is at 0705. After that bus it runs clockface 2-hourly at xx09 from Marple until 1709, with each bus returning from SHH at xx35, arriving in Marple at xx55.

Suggested Marple Town Bus service

Until 2017, Marple had a group of services – 303, 304 and 305 - that each ran one or two days a week in a series of loops around Marple serving outlying areas not well served by the main scheduled services. They were designed to enable residents who lived more than 800m (considered the reasonable maximum walking distance) from Marple centre and who do not drive, a way to get to Marple town centre for shopping etc. Use of these services was variable and all were withdrawn in 2017 with the only bus alternative being Ring & Ride.

Wider Marple is a town of almost 30,000 inhabitants. Parts of Marple are quite a distance from the centre and it is hilly. Many towns smaller than Marple have 'Town Service' buses and, if we are to get more people into the town centre by public transport, Marple should have such a service. To my knowledge (and we should research other small town bus services) Stone, Staffs (pop 15,000), Ludlow (pop 11,000) and New Mills (pop 11,000) all have hourly, daytime 'Town Services'. Marple should have one and below are my proposals.

This 'Marple Town Service' proposal is based on the routes and timings of the defunct 303/304/305 services and thus comfortably achievable.

Each 'mini-loop' of the service would start from the Navigation bus stops in central Marple outside The Hollins shops. On the main roads normal stops would be used; elsewhere the service would be 'Hail and Ride' (ie it will stop anywhere that boarders/alighters request)

Navigation dep: xx00

Run via: Arkwright Rd, Brabyns Brow (up), Winnington Rd,
Jessop Dr, Beacon View, Winnington Rd, Grosvenor Rd,
Oakdene Rd, Norbury Dr, Bowden Lane (for RHPS), Dale Rd,
The Turnpike, Marple Hall Dr, Stockport Rd, The Drive, Rose Lane,
Cross Lane, Peacefield, Woodville Dr, Hibbert La

Navigation arr: xx20

Navigation dep: xx22

Arkwright Rd, Brabyns Brow, Lower Fold, Glossop Rd, Cote Green Road
Green La, Ernocroft Rd, Compstall Village, Compstall Rd,
Lower Fold, Brabyns Brow

Navigation arr: xx38

Navigation dep: xx40

Hibbert La, Hawk Green Rd, Church La

Navigation arr: xx49

This sequence of loops could be repeated on an hourly basis throughout the working day

Marple to Stockport (and to SHH) Journey Times

The best times on each route, usually off-peak

To/from Stockport

383/384	Marple to Stockport	28 mins
358	Marple to Stockport	25 mins
385	Marple to Stockport	34 mins

To/from SHH

394	Marple to SHH	23 mins
385	Marple to Offerton Fire Station + walk	35 mins
384 + 192	Marple to SHH	estimate 45 mins
Old 375	Marple to SHH	21 mins

How Marple bus services could be improved

General

The transfer of services to Bee Network is to be welcomed. The quality of the brand-new buses is excellent. If the example of London is to be followed, then we shall soon have information on all buses of the next stop etc (the screens are in place on the new buses). Bee Network should be pressed to reverse the TfGM policy of having no real-time bus information screens at bus stops. Printed timetables are displayed and updated efficiently but there is no real-time bus info. Real time information on bus times at major stops is essential. London has it and so should G Manchester. One third of households do not have access to smart phones.

Rose Hill is one of eight rail lines that Bee Network wishes to take over, starting in Dec 2026. The service would be improved to a 30 min frequency, with 15 min frequency long term. Can we lobby Bee Network to think of co-ordinating bus times with trains to give connections to outlying parts of Marple eg Rose Hill to Mellor?

383/384

Bee Network should be pressed to restore the 15min clockface daytime service. 15 min frequency is a 'walk-up' service; 20 min frequency is not. SMBC should work with TfGM/Bee Network to increase priority for buses into and out of Stockport during the morning and evening peaks to bring journey times, frequency and reliability up to off-peak levels.

The half-hourly evening service should be restored.

358

The hourly frequency on 358 is reasonable and its running late into the evening is excellent. This service should be left substantially unchanged

385

A huge improvement on the 375 service that it replaced on 5 Jan 2025. It could be further improved by shifting the Hawk Green loop to a 'Marple Town Service' detailed below. This would cut the Mellor(Devonshire Arms)-Stockport time by 9 mins to a much more attractive 40 mins compared to 70 mins on its predecessor, 375

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A major campaign must be launched to encourage Mellor residents to use this service to access Marple as their local centre. The Mellor-Marple part of old 375 had the highest subsidy/passenger of all TfGM bus services. Pre-Covid patronage was 1.5 passengers/journey and unless this can be increased this service is not sustainable long term.

394

This service may struggle to survive as the only local bus service outside Bee Network. It is jointly subsidised by TfGM and Derbyshire CC and is presently run by High Peak with old buses. It provides the only through service from Marple to Stepping Hill Hospital (SHH), and the only bus service from Marple to High Lane. It takes 21 mins from Marple centre to SHH but this is poor, considering it takes a direct route via Hibbert Lane, Windlehurst Lane and A6.

There was a plan in 2020 to use a government grant to restore 394 to an hourly service. This foundered with the Covid pandemic. We should now pressure Bee Network to resurrect this plan but it will be complicated by the joint TfGM/DCC subsidy of the service

Our main thrust on 394 should be 1. to ensure it comes under the Bee Network banner. 2. Lobby to get the service restored to an hourly frequency. 3. Lobby for the service to be extended to include a Saturday service. 4. To get more people from High Lane to use the bus to get to Marple (discounts at cafes by showing bus ticket?); 5. To get more Marple people to use this bus to get to SHH. 6. Press for the service to be speeded up.

Submitted by Craig Wright to Marple Civic Society, August 2025