
Decision Session
– Executive Member for City Strategy

1 March 2011

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Traffic Arrangements at York Railway Station

Summary

- 1 This report provides the Executive Member with information on the progress made to date on the further investigations requested by the Executive, at its meeting on 30 March 2010, into reviewing the traffic arrangements at York Railway Station. In particular the concerns raised by Members in a motion to Full Council on 2 April 2009. The report responds to the continued discussions with East Coast and Network Rail, following the outcome of the East Coast Capacity Study, to see what medium and long term traffic improvements can be identified for the Railway Station Frontage.
- 2 It also comments upon emerging issues in connection with rail replacement and fleet coaches arriving at the Railway Station, along with actions to investigate improvements to bus signage within the Railway Station.

Recommendations

- 3 Following further investigations and discussions with East Coast and Network Rail into the traffic congestion issues in Tea Room Square it is recommended that the Executive Member:
 - (i) Notes the outcome of the discussions with East Coast and Network Rail that there is currently no funding in place to allow any changes to the highway layout to improve the traffic situation in the area of the Railway Station Frontage.

Reason: To note that there are no short term improvements which can be made to the situation.
 - (ii) To instruct offices to continue the discussions with East Coast and Network Rail in order to develop medium and long term aspirations for a revised highway layout in order to improve the traffic situation in the area of the Railway Station Frontage, such that these can be considered when the next rail franchise is developed and to enhance the route between the station and the Minster through the City Centre Area Action Plan.

Reason: To seek to progress over the medium and long term transport improvements in front of the Railway Station and improve pedestrian and public transport linkages and access within the city centre.

- (iii) To note that without significant changes to the layout of Tea Room Square it would not be possible to improve the right turn out onto Station Road.

Reason: In response to a request in the Motion to Full Council.

- (iv) To instruct officers to carry out minor changes to the road markings, as shown in Annex C, to improve the traffic flow around the Ftr stop.

Reason: To improve cycle facilities and traffic movement around the rear end of the Ftr.

- (v) To instruct officers to advise the Lead Members of the Motion to Full Council and the representatives of the Taxi organisations of the outcome of these investigations.

Reason: To complete the feedback on consultation.

- (vi) To instruct officers to continue discussions with East Coast to develop a signing regime to advise bus passengers leaving the Railway Station as to the best route to their bus stop and to put forward for consideration for funding in the Capital Programme for 2011/12.

Reason: To improve integrated travel arrangements at the Railway Station.

- (vii) To note the outcome of the coach trials undertaken to deliver passengers directly to the railway platform and instruct officers to continue to work with the rail and transport operators to see if this can be implemented on a more permanent basis.

Reason: To improve integrated travel arrangements at the Railway Station.

Background

- 4 The scheme to improve facilities at York Railway Station Frontage was outlined to Members of the City Centre Planning and Transport Sub Committee on 10 October 2002. It advised that an outline scheme had been developed to better integrate and manage the many activities that occur in front of the station, and enhance the visual integrity of the area. Members approved that a formal consultation be undertaken with residents, railway station users and affected parties regarding the remodelling of the Railway Station Frontage.
- 5 At the Planning and Transport (City Centre Area) Sub-Committee held on 6 March 2003, Members considered a report which sought approval to amend the location of the appointed public taxi rank outside York Railway Station and subject to the outcome of the legal process, enter into a licence agreement with Network Rail for works in Tea Room Square and the former Red Star Parcel Office. The report further advised that within the rail industry there was a formal procedure known as "Station Change Procedure" to be undertaken to ensure that all companies involved in the station, as well as the national rail bodies were informed of the proposals and were able to comment.
- 6 On 3 April 2003 Members of the City Centre Planning and Transport Sub-Committee received a report on the outcome of the formal consultation on the

moving of the station taxi rank, and sought approval to award and commence the proposed improvements to the Interchange Facilities at York Railway Station.

- 7 On 26 January 2004 the Disabled Persons Advisory Group were briefed on the proposals for changes to the frontage of the Railway Station, comments were made and these were reflected in the design of the scheme.
- 8 The main change to the proposals from those that Members had previously seen was the retention of the traffic flow through the Portico in its existing direction. In earlier proposals it had been intended to reverse the traffic flow through the Portico, at the request of GNER, so as to remove heavy good vehicles and traffic to the Railway Station Short Stay Car Park from having to pass through the Portico. That layout ultimately did not satisfy the taxi and bus operators who foresaw problems following their detailed analysis of the layout.
- 9 On 3 November 2004, following a lengthy investigation and consultation period, the Executive Member for Planning and Transport and Advisory Panel received an "Update report on Improvements to the Facilities at York Rail Station, and approved the layout shown as Option 1 in Annex A. The purpose of that report was to advise Members of the changes made to the layout of the scheme following concerns raised by various operators and to seek approval; to proceed with Option 1, make changes to the taxi arrangements in front of the station, complete agreements with Network Rail and GNER, and make provision to award the civil engineering contract.
- 10 The detail design was completed and works were constructed during 2005/6, with the scheme coming into full operation in spring 2006.
- 11 At Full Council on 2 April 2009 it was moved by Cllr Wiseman and seconded by Cllr Brooks that :

"Council believes that the traffic layout, signposting and related infrastructure at York Railway Station concerning the entrance/exit to the short-stay, the gyratory known as Tea Room Square, and the entrance/exit onto Station Road are congested and therefore cause difficulties for all road-users attempting to negotiate this area. The Council moves to request the Executive to investigate in detail the issues related to this area, with a view to improving the access and traffic flow in and out of this part of the station."
- 12 In response to this motion further investigations were undertaken and meetings held with Members, East Coast, Network Rail and representatives of the Taxi organisations about the highway problems being experienced at the Railway Station. The issues raised were in connection with:
 - The length of time taxis were experiencing travelling round Tea Room Square. Part of the problem seemed to be the single arch into the station's short stay car park which cannot accommodate two way traffic.
 - Also that the headlights on the FTR could be difficult to see past at night for drivers looking right as they exit Tea Room Square.

- Congestion problems at the Rail Station in peak times and on days with special events.
 - Location for Premier Parking.
 - Possible expansion of long stay parking by providing an extra deck.
 - Taxi provision and location.
 - Flow of traffic in Tea Room Square.
 - Traffic control at entrance/exit to Tea Room Square.
 - Management of Race Day and special event traffic.
 - HGV parking regime and lay-by damage.
 - Pedestrian flow.
- 13 To investigate these issues Council staff visited the site during peak times to view the operation of Tea Room Square and the Long and Short stay Car Parks. A camera was also installed to view traffic flows in Tea Room Square and take photographs at regular intervals. This was complemented by recordings of the highway network from the CCTV cameras on the road junctions at Blossom Street / Queen Street and Station Road / Station Rise.
- 14 At peak times there is significant traffic flow on the highway network in this area of the City. The Urban Traffic Control (UTC), which manages the traffic signals around the City, is managed by officers within the Council's Network Management Section. They have fine tuned this system to keep traffic flowing as efficiently as possible, however some minor intervention is possible to deal with particular incidents by rephrasing the timing for the traffic signals if necessary.
- 15 From these visits and observations, a number of peak time issues were identified:
- The pedestrian crossing in front of the Hotel carries a high flow of pedestrians walking to the Railway Station and regularly interrupts the flow of traffic on Station Road, causing long queues back towards Blossom Street. This has a detrimental affect on traffic leaving Tea Room Square as it prevents left turning traffic from exiting. However, it was noted that the yellow box on Station Road was generally respected, so right turning vehicles can exit Tea Room Square.
 - High pedestrian flow across the pedestrian crossings between the Hotel and Station Portico, interrupts the traffic flow round Tea Room Square and causes queues to form in Tea Room Square.
- 16 The entrance to the short stay car park at the rear of Tea Room Square is via a single vehicle width arch, but has to accommodate two way traffic. This causes major problems when traffic is entering/exiting at busy times causing tailbacks

in both directions. This is further compounded by passengers being dropped off just through the arch and blocking it. Travellers looking for a space in the short stay car park at peak times, either wait causing a tailback or leave straight away, to park elsewhere, adding to the volume of traffic in Tea Room Square.

- 17 In order to get a view from the Taxi Operators a meeting was held with their representatives, Cllrs Wiseman and Gillies and the report author. Their main concern was the length of time to travel round Tea Room Square, which apparently puts a significant fare on the meter before they get onto Station Road. This frustrates the passengers and does not give a good impression to visitors. They too also commented on; the high flow of pedestrians across the two pedestrian crossings, FTR headlights, problems turning left and right out of Tea Room Square, the problem of car passengers being dropped off in the short stay car park causing tail backs, all mentioned earlier. They report a significant problem with race day buses, special event buses and rail replacement coaches, as they indiscriminately park at bus stops displacing the regular services, which further contributes to the traffic congestion in the area.
- 18 They suggested a number of improvements to consider:
- Ask bus operator to turn off the FTR headlight whilst parked at the Station, to ease the situation for drivers exiting Tea Room Square. (This request was past to First and instructions were given to the drivers.)
 - Increase the splay on the left side of the exit to Tea Room Square so as to create a space to allow more vehicles to turn left .
 - Give Taxis priority to exit the Portico.
 - Provide a new lane into Tea Room Square, with the left lane dedicated to the entrance of the short stay car park.
 - Try reversal of traffic flow through the Portico.
 - Have a direct exit from the Portico onto Station Road.
 - Create box junction and put signal controls on the arch entrance to short stay car park.
 - Reassign the bus stops from under the Hotel and at the end of the Portico so the exit from Tea Room Square can be widened.
- 19 A review of the accidents which occurred in the area was undertaken. At the southern end of the portico, for a short period after the works had been completed, there were a few accidents which occurred between cyclists and vehicles entering the Railway Station. This led to minor amendments to the road markings and since then there has only been one more accident which was attributed to the driver failing to look properly. There were a number of accidents at the northern end, between the Portico and Hotel's vehicle entrance, but there seems to be no common theme and are typical of what could happen elsewhere in the City.

- 20 Various possible options for improvements were explored such as:
- Exchanging the Station's Premier Parking with the Short Stay Car Park at the back of Tea Room Square, as this would reduce the volume and frequency of traffic in Tea Room Square.
 - Review the use of the parking spaces in the centre of Tea Room Square, currently used by the Police, to create more space.
 - Review the crossing points for the pedestrians from the Hotel corner to the Portico.
 - Review the pedestrian movements around Tea Room Square or consider them entering the Station via the arch at the back of Tea Room Square.
 - Consider revising the entry arrangement to the current Long Stay Car Park, via Queen Street, past the Railway Institute building, and make modifications to the barrier system in the car park entrance.
- 21 In recognition of the parking issues at many of the railway stations on the East Coast Mainline, East Coast commissioned a Capacity Study, carried in spring 2010 and the car parking arrangements at York were reviewed as part of that study.
- 22 The outcome of these investigations were reported to the Executive on 30 March 2010 where it was resolved that, following the investigation into the traffic congestion issues in Tea Room Square, Officers be authorised to:
- (i) Engage in discussions East Coast and Network Rail to see what short term measures can be introduced to improve the traffic situation in the area of the Railway Station Frontage.
 - (ii) Continue discussions with East Coast and Network Rail, following the outcome of the East Coast Capacity Study, to see what medium and long term traffic improvements can be identified, and report those findings to a Decision Session of the Executive Member for City Strategy.
 - (iii) Explore what options are available and could be implemented to improve the visibility to the right when exiting Tea Room Square.

Consultation

- 23 Discussions about improvements to the traffic flows around Tea Room Square have taken place with East Coast and Network Rail, and they are keen to engage with the Council to see what can be done to achieve this. However the fundamental issue to creating any significant changes, was the outcome of the Capacity Study undertaken by East Coast. Unfortunately, this study concluded that there were sufficient parking facilities adjacent to the Railway Station for the current time. Hence no funding could be generated to change the parking

arrangements, which would be fundamental to revising the traffic arrangements in Tea Room Square.

- 24 It appears that a number of pedestrians leave the Railway Station through the middle of the Portico frontage intending to use the bus stops on the opposite side of Station Road. Instead of using the pedestrian crossings at either end of the Portico, they cross the wide road leaving themselves vulnerable to traffic. Discussions are ongoing with East Coast to develop improved signage inside the station in order to direct pedestrians to the two pedestrian crossings at either end of the Portico and also the possibility of real time bus information.
- 25 As part of the discussions undertaken in this review comments have been made about the alignment of the Ftr when it is parked at the island in front of the Railway Station as its rear end overhangs the inbound cycle lane causing cyclist to move out into the traffic lane.
- 26 Officers are also engaged with East Coast on further improvements to the cycling provision at the Railway Station in respect of the potential; cycle hire, cycle maintenance and bike storage in the former Red Star Parcel Office.
- 27 The traffic congestion at the Railway Station frontage is exacerbated when Rail Replacement and Fleet Coaches arrive at the Railway Station and occupy the bus stops allocated to local bus services. To overcome this trials have been carried out with East Coast into routing a coach along Little Queen Street, through the Railway Institute grounds and into the long stay car park, depositing the passengers directly onto a station platform. This received positive feedback from the particular customer, a school, as the pupils would not have the health and safety issues associated with coming into contact with live traffic.

Options

- 28 Following these investigations there is only one option for the Executive Members to consider which is detailed below, but there are a number of actions detailed throughout the report which seek the Executive Members guidance and these have been included in the recommendations.

Option I. In the present situation of funding not currently being available from the rail operators, consideration could be given to the Council funding the improvements at the Railway Station Frontage through the Local Transport Capital Programme.

Analysis

- 29 The investigations to date have raised numerous issues about traffic congestion in Tea Room Square and the root of the problem seems to be the high volume of traffic using the short stay car park at the rear of Tea Room Square. This causes tailbacks out into Tea Room Square and occasionally all the way out onto Station Road, as well as within the short stay car park, due to the high demand for dropping off or parking. Fundamental to making any medium to long term improvements was the outcome from the East Coast Capacity Study into parking arrangements at the Railway Station. However, as the study

concluded that there is sufficient car parking facilities in the area it would not be feasible for East Coast to fund any works under the current franchise.

- 30 It is considered that to make any meaningful improvements to the traffic arrangement the cost of new construction work would be significant. The funding available to the Council from the Local Transport Plan capital programme have recently suffered a significant reduction and so it is not realistic to envisage a solution from this fund, to these issues, in the short term. Any solution could only be envisage in the medium to long term when a Conservation Management Plan is developed and a funding stream established. This plan may come up with proposals which may mitigate the issues at the Railway Station frontage and therefore any precious funding should be concentrated on the long term solution.
- 31 Officers are continuing the discussions with East Coast and Network Rail to develop the Conservation Management Plan which will include the medium and long term aspirations for traffic arrangements at the Railway Station to include; traffic out of the portico, Tea Room Square traffic circulation, the location of short term parking and better transport interchange arrangements. It is hoped this could be included in the bidding process for the next rail franchise. Discussions with the Department for Transport have given some encouraging signs that this may become a reality as they talk of “an appropriate approach might be to require the new franchisee to develop Station Travel Plans in conjunction with local authorities and other stakeholders”.
- 32 The land responsibilities in the area falls under the control of both the rail industry, through Network Rail and East Coast, and the Council as highway authority. Annex B indicates the respective areas. In drawing up any recommendations for change in the area this would have to be done with full consultation and agreement of the rail industry. To this end discussion have already taken place with both rail organisations about the Members concerns. Should any future recommendations be made to change any of the infrastructure in the area which resulted in a change to the land owned and occupied by Network Rail /East Coast then the existing agreement would have to be revisited and amended to suit. This is a complex issue and can take a considerable time to complete. It would require the engagement of the Council’s Legal Services department.
- 33 The original proposals took a long time to develop and wrestled with the conflicting interests/demands of the many user groups who have interests in the area. If/when any changes are proposed to the present layout, these should only be done following full consultation with all user groups and interested parties.
- 34 During this recent investigation representatives of the taxi organisations have sent in two further suggestions about options for traffic circulation in the areas of Tea Room Square and the former Red Star Parcel office.
- 35 The proposal for Tea Room Square introduced an exit only from the Portico for taxis and private hire directly onto Station Road, as shown in Annex D. There

are a number of issues with this proposal that would need careful consideration, in brief some of these are:

- How to deal with traffic at the mouth of Tea Room Square travelling across the inbound lane of Station Road in three lanes each in opposing direction to its adjacent lane.
- Land availability to create the 4 running lanes around Tea Room Square, where currently only three are available.
- The issues of creating a two way access into the Station Structure, which is a listed building.
- Realigning the pedestrian crossing point away from the desire line and with more traffic lanes to cross.
- The conflict for traffic at the immediate exit of the Portico with the taxis and private hire in the left lane needing to turn right and the general traffic in the right lane required to turn left.

36 The proposal for in front of the former Red Star Parcel office would see the main pick up point for the taxis moved out of the Portico and relocated to this area. The taxis would muster in the Station Long Stay Car Park and the current one way entry into the Portico would be reversed to become an exit for taxis directly onto Station Road. There are a number of issues with this proposal that would need careful consideration, in brief some of these are:

- Provision of weather protection and queuing arrangement for passengers.
- Traffic entering the Portico to drop off passengers.
- Arrangements with East Coast to have significant occupancy of the long stay car park for the taxis.
- Possible conflict between Taxis and traffic entering/exiting the long stay car park.
- Dealing with users of the pedestrian crossing across Station Road

37 Unfortunately, due to financial constraints resulting from the unfortunate outcome of the Capacity Study, it was not possible to consider these options further at this time.

38 However, in the medium term officers will work with the rail operators to identify and assess how the short stay car parking could be moved from its current position to reduce the flow of traffic in Tea Room Square, and hence how the layout of the area could be revised to better suit all traffic using the Rail Station inline with those points discussed in paragraph 20. It is hoped that these proposals could be included in the proposals for the next rail franchise as this could release funds for such works to be carried out.

- 39 The long term aspirations for the inner ring road in the area of the Railway Station and across the River Ouse up to St. Leonard's Place and Gillygate are being developed through the Local Transport Plan and ongoing City Centre Movement and Accessibility Framework study which will both inform the City Centre Area Action Plan. The emerging proposals from this study support the changing of the allocation of road space in this area to encourage more sustainable transport modes and to enhance the environment for pedestrians and cyclists in line with the status of the route as a key link between the Railway Station and the Minster. When combined with the possible removal of the existing Queen Street Bridge, providing additional space, and changes to the location of the short and long stay car parking which could be progressed by the station operator it is anticipated that an enlarged area will be available for improved interchange between Public Transport modes and Taxis at the front of the Railway Station. In addition it is anticipated that access to the rear of the Railway Station will be improved as part of the York Central development reducing the demand at the existing interchange area.

Corporate Priorities

- 40 Any improvements to the area would contribute to the Council's priority in promoting a Thriving City by reducing the traffic congestion and improving the attraction of the City to Tourists. The reduction in congestion would make the City more sustainable by the reduction in vehicle emissions. The City would be a safer place by reducing the conflict and tension between drivers and pedestrians in the area of Tea Room Square.

Implications

- 41 This report has the following implications:
- **Financial** – No impact
 - **Human Resources (HR)** - No impact
 - **Equalities** – As this is an information report there will be no impact on equalities, however if any future works are promoted then equality issues would be considered at that time.
 - **Legal** - As this is an information report there will be no impact on legal issues, however if any future works are promoted then the agreements with Network Rail and East Coast, as successors to GNER, will need to be revisited.
 - **Crime and Disorder** - No impact
 - **Information Technology (IT)** - No impact
 - **Property** - No impact
 - **Other** - No impact

Risk Management

- 42 There is a risk to the Council's reputation if it does not engage in further discussions to try and identify improvements to the traffic congestion in the area of Tea Room Square.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Wards Affected: Micklegate

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

City Centre Planning and Transport Sub-Committee. - 10 October 2002
"Improvements to Interchange Facilities at York Railway Station."

Planning and Transport (City Centre Area) Sub-Committee. - 6 March 2003
"Improvements to Interchange Facilities at York Railway Station."

City Centre Planning and Transport Sub-Committee. - 3 April 2003
"Improvements to Interchange Facilities at York Railway Station."

Disabled Persons Advisory Group - 26 January 2004
"York Railway Station Frontage Environmental Improvements."

Executive member for Planning and Transport and Advisory Panel - 3 November 2004
"Update report on Improvements to the Interchange Facilities at York Rail Station."

Executive – 30 March 2010 "Traffic Arrangements at York Railway Station"

Annexes

Annex A - York Station Environmental Improvements, General Arrangements – Option 1.

Annex B - Plan showing Land ownership in the area of York Railway Station.

Annex C – Improvements to the cycle lane adjacent to Ftr Stop at Railway Station.

Annex D – Proposal for Tea Room Square as submitted by representatives of the taxi organisations.