
**Decision Session - Cabinet Member for
Transport, Planning and Sustainability**

16 January 2014

Report of the Director of City and Environmental Services

Better Bus Area Fund – Clarence Street Bus Improvement Scheme

Summary

1. This paper reports the progress made with the Better Bus Area Fund scheme to improve bus journey times on Clarence Street, and proposes a scheme to take forward to consultation with local residents, businesses and other stakeholders in February/ March.

Background

2. Historically, bus services have suffered substantive delay inbound, often queuing the entire length of Clarence Street from the Haxby Road/ Wigginton Road junction to the junction with Lord Mayor's Walk. The problem is exacerbated by levels of delay which are very variable, even within short spaces of time so, for example, an observation of bus journey times undertaken in March 2013, showed that, during a 30 minute period in the AM Peak (0830-0900) some buses took up to 4 minutes to cover the distance between the bus stop outbound from York St John University and the Clarence Street/ Lord Mayor's Walk junction, whilst others took only 35 seconds. This is a particular problem for bus operators who must build slack into their timetables to accommodate the journeys which have the longest travel times. As such, bus services using Clarence Street (which include three (services 1, 5 and 6) of York's five most frequent non park and ride services) often have to wait time at the Theatre Royal, Rougier Street or the Rail Station, delaying passengers who wish to make cross city journeys, and requiring bus operators to devote extra resources to operating services because they must cover long journey times.

3. Initial analysis undertaken to support CYC's Better Bus Area Fund bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) supported an intervention on Clarence Street. Both serious delay on the link for some services, plus a trend of many buses arriving early in the centre of York (because timetables were configured to the slowest services, but variable running times meant many services ran faster than this) could be observed in the real time data analysed for to make the business case. As a result, a capital fund of £250,000 has been allocated to providing a measure on Clarence Street. Design work has been ongoing through the life of the BBAF, alongside consultation with key stakeholders, such as the bus companies and the College of York St John. Initial design and assessment work suggested that a nearside bus lane with a signal controlled bus gate 50 metres back from the current stop line at the Clarence Street/ Lord Mayor's Walk junction would save an average of 2 minutes per bus, although in practice this was mainly made up of making bus journey times more consistent – for example, a bus which currently ran over the section in 35 seconds would see almost no benefit, whilst one taking 4 minutes, sees a benefit of 3 to 3.5 minutes.
4. Since 27th August, the restriction of traffic on Lendal Bridge has substantially changed traffic flows on Clarence Street during the time the restriction is in place (1030 to 1700). For bus services, it should be observed that for many services (including services 1, 5 and 6) the restriction has achieved extensive decongestion of a number of key links across the city centre – for example, it has significantly reduced traffic volumes and journey times on Clarence Street, Gillygate, St Leonard's Place, across Lendal Bridge and through Rougier Street/ onto Queen Street, with some services also seeing an additional decongestion benefit from the improvements in enforcing the restrictions on Coppergate. As such, initial indications suggest some inbound services appear to be running 6-7 minutes faster across the city than they were beforehand (on the basis of "wheel-turning" time, which nets out any time spent waiting at stops and stands in the city centre), with a correspondingly improved level of reliability. Most of this benefit is on the section of route between York St John and the Theatre Royal (comprising the section of Clarence Street which would be effected by the bus lane and Gillygate), where

services can travel through the section in 4 to 5 minutes less time than at this time last year, a level of benefit which is significantly higher than the 2 minute journey time benefit forecast as resulting from the Clarence Street bus lane. It should, however, be noted that the benefits are seen only during the time period when access on the bridge is restricted, so that during the morning peak, for example, delays suffered by buses are little different to how they were before traffic was restricted.

5. Furthermore, modelling work on the Lendal Bridge restriction suggests that the amount of traffic queuing to turn left from Clarence Street into Lord Mayor's Walk increases when access onto the bridge is restricted, so there is still a rationale for the highway realignment work which forms part of the Clarence Street scheme, because this increases the currently very restricted circulatory space for traffic at the junction head and allows installation of improved traffic signals and a straight ahead cycle feeder lane.
6. In programming terms, this presents us with a quandary. Whilst the Bridge restriction is in place, there appears to be a weaker case for the bus lane, as much of the daytime benefit is being realised by other means. There is, however, a rationale for progressing the associated junction improvements as they improve the situation for other road users by making it easier for them to turn left onto Lord Mayor's Walk. They also benefit bus services by reducing blocking of their way by vehicles held up in left turning traffic. There are also benefits to cyclists from the increased carriageway width and to other vehicle users by separating slower moving cyclists out of the main traffic stream.

Options

7. In order to make progress with the scheme within the Department for Transport's timescales for delivering Better Bus Area Fund projects, it is necessary to consult stakeholders (local residents, businesses, bus operators, the emergency services etc) in January/ February. Consequently, the cabinet member is asked to consider the following options for an improvement scheme on Clarence Street:
 - Option 1: Build of the originally proposed bus lane scheme, as

attached at Appendix A.

- Option 2: Build of a modified scheme, consisting of the increase in highway width, as set out in Appendix A, but omitting the bus lanes, bus gate and bus signals, with a decision on these aspects of the scheme held until a decision is made on the future restriction of Lendal Bridge after the end of the trial period, and after further consultation. This option is shown in Appendix B to this paper.
 - Option 3: A do-nothing option, where Clarence Street is left in its current condition.
 - Option 4: An alternative option which the member may wish to suggest.
8. This paper recommends that Option 2 is the most appropriate option, being a balance of meeting the DfT's timescales for enacting the scheme, with maintaining the flexibility to take a view of the need to provide a bus lane, depending on the impact of the junction improvement and outcome of the Lendal Bridge restriction trial.

Consultation

9. Consultation has so far focussed on York St John University, who are adjacent to the proposed widening, with local bus operators consulted through the Quality Bus Partnership. If the Cabinet member supports option 1 or option 2 above, local residents and businesses will be consulted about the proposals.

Council Plan

10. The potential benefits for the priorities in the Council Plan are:
- Get York Moving – improvements to the junction and highway will improve traffic flow for both bus services and other road users, including cyclists. This includes for emergency vehicles travelling westbound from York District Hospital (for example, to respond to emergency calls). If a bus priority scheme is subsequently developed, the scheme will confer an advantage on bus users over

car users.

Implications

11. This report has the following implications:

Financial

12. Provisional cost estimates suggest that the proposed works can be delivered within the allocated budget of £250,000, all of which is provided by the Department for Transport element of the BBAF. The cost will be reviewed when a firm estimate has been received for the utilities costs at the junction of Clarence Street and Lord Mayor's Walk. Other costs (for example, kerb works, signals costs) are known quantities.
13. **Human Resources** - none
14. **Equalities** - none
15. **Legal** - none
16. **Crime and Disorder** - none.
17. **Information Technology** - none.
18. **Land** - all land lies within the adopted highway.
19. **Risk Management** - no significant risks are associated with the recommendations in this report have been identified.

Recommendations.

20. That the Cabinet Member gives approval for option 2 of the options set out above.

Reason: To progress the Clarence Street scheme.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

There are no specialist implications.

Wards Affected: Guildhall (site of scheme), Clifton Ward **All**
(adjacent to scheme)

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Annexes:

Annex A Proposed bus priority scheme (option 1)

Annex B Proposed highway widening scheme (option 2)