

Traffic Congestion Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Committee Interim Report

Background

1. This topic was originally registered by Cllr Tracey Simpson-Laing in April 2005 in an effort to access the draft of the second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) prior to its submission. It was envisaged that the scrutiny process would ensure that LTP2 met the aspirations of the Planning & Transport Panel and allow time for the Executive Member to be questioned on issues of concern. A decision was taken to defer the topic and LTP2 was subsequently submitted.
2. In November 2006 Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) reconsidered the topic registration together with a draft remit suggested by Cllr Simpson-Laing. After due consideration, SMC agreed a timeframe of six months for the review, and the following amended remit was agreed:

Aim

To identify ways including the Local Transport Plan (LTP1), the second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) and other evidence, of reducing present levels of traffic congestion in York, and ways of minimising the impact of the forecast traffic increase.

Objectives

Having regard to the impact of traffic congestion (based on external evidence and those measures already implemented in LTP1 or proposed in LTP2), recommend and prioritise specific improvements to:

- i. Accessibility to services, employment, education and health
- ii. Journey times and reliability of public transport
- iii. Alternative environmentally viable and financially practical methods of transport
- iv. Road Safety
- v. Economic Performance
- vi. Quality of Life
- vii. CO² Emissions
- viii. Air Quality, in particular looking at the five hotspots identified in the LTP2

3. On 19 February 2007 a formal meeting of the ad-hoc scrutiny committee was held to agree a timetable for the review. Due to the scale of the objectives, it was agreed that it would only be possible to deal with the first objective i.e. 'Accessibility to services, employment, education and health' prior to the election.
4. The ad-hoc scrutiny committee have subsequently held two informal meetings on 6th and 21st March 2007 to look at this objective:

Accessibility to services, employment, education and health

Consultation

5. As the Councillor who submitted this topic for review, Cllr Simpson-Laing provided her reasoning behind this particular objective and a direction for the enquiry:

To look at why people use their cars and not public transport. Are the current links to these services available only 9-5pm Monday to Friday, is it understood that we are a 24/7 society and that public transport should be available every day at the same regularity. Take for example food shopping, if you only have Sunday to do this for many the only option is to use the car. If CYC want to extend transport provision what 'tools' are there for CYC to insist bus providers provide better service.

6. Two informal meetings were held to consider this first objective (6th and 21st March 2007). Members considered information provided by the Head of Transport Planning and information contained within LTP2.

Information Gathered

7. The issue of providing 24/7 public transport provision is a very large and wide ranging subject. The majority of the bus services in York are run on a commercial basis by the bus operators. In order to provide a service to the community, CYC subsidises routes and evening and weekend services to infill demand where a commercial service is not viable. However funding for this has to compete against many other functions that the council carries out and is budget led. Although bus routes are currently reviewed every five years it may be beneficial to do this on a more regular basis in order to react to changes in the location of services etc.
8. Twenty years of bus deregulation has caused difficulties which may not be resolved without further legislation. Currently the subsidised services that City of York Council let, gives the opportunity to specify standards. Under current legislation Local Authorities have the powers to insist that bus operators provide a better service in the form of a Quality Contract Scheme but it is recognised that this is difficult to obtain. An application has to be made to the Secretary of State and must include detailed proposals, demonstrate that it is necessary as the only practicable way of delivering the Council's bus strategy, provide evidence that it meets best value requirements to be economic, efficient, and effective, be consistent with central and local Government's

shared priorities of improving accessibility, congestion, road safety, and air quality, include proper plans for an orderly transition, and show integration and linkages with other Local Transport Plan policies.

9. The Secretary of State for Transport will only give his permission where it has been demonstrated that this is the “only practicable way” to implement elements of the LTP bus strategy, that the proposal satisfies all the conditions and is in the interests of the public. To date this test has been too difficult for local authorities to achieve and although some Quality Contracts are under consideration, none have been implemented or formally applied for. Government guidance indicates that combining a Quality Contract proposal with proposals for congestion charging will improve the chances of an application being successful.
10. Competition would be a very useful tool to drive up standards. Other bus companies could be encouraged to tender for contracts but there are recognised positives and negatives to having more than one provider. For example, one provider can offer a ticket providing travel throughout the city over a fixed time period. If some routes are provided by a different bus company, more than one ticket would have to be purchased resulting in travel costs being higher. Alternatively, if there is only one provider, they will have a monopoly allowing them to set travel costs at a higher rate.
11. LTP2 highlights the key issues around improving accessibility for all:
 - f. Approximately 12% of the economically active population (aged 18 to 65) in York are disabled. It is imperative that the transport environment improves accessibility to jobs for these groups.
 - g. The property price boom over the past decade has made it increasingly difficult to live near to places of employment. The need to relocate to more peripheral locations has necessitated longer journeys to work, which are often less suited to non-car options.
 - h. Journeys, particularly outside the main urban area, are becoming increasingly more difficult to serve by public transport due to the varied nature of journeys serving a wider number of origins and destinations, along with reduced opportunities to satisfy needs locally.
 - i. Expansion of the night time economy will increase the demand for trips that are often more difficult to be satisfied economically by public transport
 - j. More than one in four York households do not own a car. This can have a significant impact on the ability to access education, training and employment opportunities in some areas.
 - k. The main accessibility barriers to people with learning disabilities are poor transport information and harassment on public transport.
 - l. Further education and new job starters find travel costs hard to meet
 - m. Improvements in information would improve confidence in using public transport (or walking and cycling).
12. Consultation with York residents on LTP2 found that improving access to services for all was the second most important priority after reducing congestion.

13. Members acknowledged that a 'Citywide Accessibility Strategy for York' had already been developed as part of LTP2, in partnership with land-use planners, healthcare providers, education bodies, Jobcentre Plus, retail outlets, transport operators and community groups. As a result, a remit was agreed to look at:

<u>Access To:</u>	<u>Access By:</u>	<u>Access For:</u>
Health	Bus	Young
Education	Rail	Elderly
Employment	Bicycle	Mobility Impaired
Retail	Foot	Rural Inhabitants
Leisure & Culture	Mobility Scooter / Wheelchair	Ethnic Minorities
	Taxi	Job Seekers
	Car	All

14. In order to identify local needs and objectives, the first stage of the Accessibility Strategy was to carry out a strategic audit. Some early mapping work was completed and this identified the priority service and geographic areas and groups within York. Action plans were developed containing a range of solutions and available options for improving accessibility in key areas. The Head of Transport Planning gave a presentation on these key areas:

- **Access to York Hospital** – mapping identified the time taken to travel by public transport to the hospital from different areas of the city;
- **Transport information** – mapping identified that improved real-time information together with better publicity of the bus route network would improve public confidence. Also improved signage would encourage the use of walk / cycle networks;
- **Access to out-of-town centres** – mapping identified a demand for responsive transport. A contribution from developers and the introduction of orbital / cross city bus services was required;
- **Rural accessibility problems** - mapping identified a demand for responsive transport and an improved public right of way network. It also recognised the need to support cross boundary services; and
- **Access to education** - mapping identified the time taken to travel by public transport to secondary schools across the city.

15. The presentation attached at Annex A, included information on the following:

- What is being done now and what improvements are planned to improve accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users
- Planned improvements in rail links and taxi services
- Introduction of a city centre shuttle and car clubs
- Improved working arrangements with Partners
- Schemes included in the LTP Capital Programme to improve accessibility

16. The presentation also detailed the role Accessibility Mapping plays in analysing alternative public transport scenarios and how the 'Accession' system works.

Issues Arising

17. Members acknowledged that the mapping work completed to date had been limited but having considered the information provided, were able to identify other factors which could further affect a modal shift in travel. These included:
 - Extending the Park & Ride services outside of peak hours and particularly to improve access to York Hospital
 - Identifying under used bus services and reasons for that under use
 - Increasing the number of buses in use during 'school run' times to reduce gaps in service
 - Improved interchange points in the city centre
 - Improved safety features in all modes of sustainable and public transport to make them more attractive e.g. CCTV
 - Sustainable Tourism – a tourist tax with monies collected being used in total to deal with accessibility issues
 - Access to all education establishments i.e. safe routes or public transport
 - Publicising good practices by employers across the city i.e. Green Travel Plans
 - Ensure the implementation of the Council's own Green Travel Plan
 - Through ticketing between different providers of public transport
 - Enforcement of priority measures for sustainable transport e.g. bus lanes, yellow boxes and cycle lanes
 - Demand management measures

17. Members also agreed the need to consider local measures in priority areas:
 - A more regular overall review of the bus network to take into account new business locations, new housing and changing patterns of demand
 - Re-location of bus stops
 - Identifying bottlenecks
 - Regulation and enforcement of delivery vehicles
 - Additional bus lanes on key roads into the city
 - Effective and more efficient use of existing road space

18. Members recognised that in order to investigate ways of making a positive change in the public's attitude to public transport and to look at the additional factors identified above, more mapping work would be required than originally planned and this would have an impact on resources.

Options

19. Having regard to the aims and objectives of this topic remit Members may wish to request that additional mapping work be carried out over and above that which is already planned as part of LTP2. Also, Members may choose to extend the timeframe for this review to allow for full consideration of each objective.

Recommendation

20. Members having looked at only one of the objectives, have identified factors which could affect positive change in more than one of the objectives set out in the remit above. Therefore it is recommended that
- a. additional mapping work be carried out to investigate the affects of all of the factors identified above;
 - b. a clear prioritised programme of works be agreed for carrying out this additional mapping work together with that which is already scheduled
 - c. the timeframe for this review be extended by six months to allow for full consideration of all the objectives

Reason: To ensure full consideration is given to ways of improving accessibility in York which in turn will help to reduce congestion.

Implications

21. Financial - It is recognised that more mapping work would be required than originally planned to fully investigate the suggestions made above. This would require additional Financial and HR resources - Information to follow.
22. There are no Equalities, Legal or other implications.

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**Interim Report
Approved**



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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Local Transport Plan 2

Annexes

Annex A – Presentation on LTP2 Action Plans