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MEETING	TRAFFIC CONGESTION AD-HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	17 JULY 2007
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS MERRETT (CHAIR), HOGG, HUDSON (VICE-CHAIR), MOORE, MORLEY, PIERCE, SIMPSON-LAING AND MR M SMITH (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBER)
IN ATTENDANCE	MATTHEW PAGE – INSTITUTE FOR TRANSPORT STUDIES, LEEDS UNIVERSITY

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## 6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Merrett declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 (Interim Report for Traffic Congestion Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Committee) as an honorary member of the Cyclists' Touring Club and a member of Cycling England.

Councillor Hogg declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 (Interim Report for Traffic Congestion Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Committee) as his work for the National Railway Museum did involve contact with EWS.

## 7. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 19 June 2007 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

## 9. INTERIM REPORT FOR TRAFFIC CONGESTION AD-HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members considered a report, which updated them on the work completed to date on the Traffic Congestion Scrutiny Review. The report included the following annexes:

- Annex A** – Programme for carrying out mapping works
- Annex B** – Evidence of the soft measures presently in place to encourage a reduction in car travel in York

- Annex C** – Statistics showing vehicle fleet in use in York  
**Annex D** – Paper on alternative environmentally viable and financially practical methods of transport  
**Annex E** – Paper on City of York Council's view on journey times and reliability of public transport.

Consideration was also given to an additional sheet, circulated at the meeting, prepared by the Transport Planning Unit, which outlined further points on bus reliability.

The following representatives from the bus companies and the Quality Bus Partnership were in attendance:

Jonathon Stewart	- First
Colin Newbury & Paul Adcock	- Arriva
Peter Dew	- Toplevel Travel & Veolia
Geoff Lomax	- Coastliner
John Carr	- Quality Bus Partnership

The Chair confirmed that the aim of the meeting was to understand the topic area and the issues involved. It was not proposed to make judgements or criticism but to find potential solutions to improve traffic congestion in the city for recommendation to the Executive.

The Head of Network Management, City Development and Transport, referred to his briefing notes at Annex D and E and he indicated that a lot more work was still required in relation to journey times and reliability of public transport. He asked Members not to draw conclusions from the two bus surveys undertaken on Services 2 and 10. He drew attention to the patterns and indicated that a possible solution to improve bus reliability may be for the timetable to more closely reflect journey times particularly at peak times. He confirmed that the Authority did also have some part to play in assisting the companies.

Members questioned certain aspects of the report and made the following points:

- Questioned the legal status of bus timetables, it was confirmed that if the timetable was not consistently met the Traffic Commissioner could impose sanctions. The Commissioner expected 95% of services to be on time.
- Referred to foreseen difficulties affecting journey times e.g. pavements, delivery vehicles in the town centre etc.
- Rawcliffe Bar Park and Ride where additional stops had now been added which resulted in a bus service rather than a high frequency express service this change had not been made clear to the public.
- Problems with bus services on Eastfield Lane on the Haxby/Wigginton route not adhering to the 20mph speed limit.
- Steer Davies Gleave, Consultants report had also examined the reliability of the bus services and the reasons leading to unreliability which included dwell time, ticketing, congestion of the road network and money in the capital programme.

- Agreed that six years on from the above report, the issues relating to bus service unreliability were still very much the same.
- Questioned the length of time taken to install BLISS (Bus Location and Information Sub System) and BLISS enabled vehicles.
- Questioned variations in peak traffic flows during school holidays, which it was confirmed was between 8-10% lower than usual, but which made a significant difference to reliability.
- Felt that the relocation of large delivery vehicles to transshipment centres could create problems elsewhere.
- The attractiveness of the bus package was not helped by bus stops not having timetables or shelters or by passengers crossing the city having to purchase different tickets.
- Raised the relative cheapness of the Park and Ride fares relative to local bus services creating a perverse incentive for local residents in Rawcliffe to drive to the Park and Ride site.
- Questioned the views of Officers and the industry on the expansion of the Park and Ride services.
- Number of buses in operation that were still not Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant.
- *Impact of tour buses on congestion.* ★

John Carr, Chair of the Quality Bus Partnership (QBP), confirmed that the Partnership was shortly due to be relaunched. Referring to the Highway Infrastructure side he flagged issues over waiting restrictions and enforcement (or lack of it). He stated that there was a perception that the Police were not active in keeping traffic flow running smoothly and he felt that more Police input would be useful in the discussions and they could do with being represented on the partnership. He stated that roughly calculated it appeared that around 10% more buses were used in York to cope with traffic congestion. He stated that York had had great success in persuading people to purchase tickets in advance and he felt that this would continue to improve, but that operators could do more to reduce boarding times. The Partnership would like traffic management operators to examine the amount of their investment in such things as vehicle tracking, BLISS and dynamic bus priority systems which gave buses priority at junctions and a clear run. The Partnership was also looking to tackle congestion issues as part of the proposed Quality Improvement Partnership (QIP).

Head of Network Management confirmed that there were some areas that the City of York Council, as the Highway Authority, could control or prohibit but heavy goods and delivery vehicles were not one of them. Measures that could be taken included lorry bans in the town centre, additional bus lanes although problems had been found with a number of routes into the city and he felt there was limited scope for additional ones. Officers stated that the enforcement of waiting restrictions was not carried out by the Police but by the Council as Highway Authority. He also confirmed that the Authority had no powers relating to moving traffic offences. He indicated that nationally the Police had been taken away from road policing and that North Yorkshire Police carried out no highway policing even for planned events e.g. York Races, only emergencies. The Authority unfortunately had no powers to enforce or direct vehicles.

The bus company representatives made the following points:

- There was no such thing as “early running” on Service 2 as it was a high frequency service which met its criteria of running 6 bus’s per hour at not greater than 15 minute gaps between services but it was confirmed journey times could vary within this.
- In terms of the extra stops on Service 2 these had been added at the request of Norwich Union.
- The Park and Ride services were shortly due for renewal so there was little that could be done with the contact in the short term. Confirmation that in the longer term expansion of the service could form part of discussions with the QBP, including investment in new sites.
- Indications that the Park and Ride Service did have a negative side e.g. unnecessary local journeys by car to Park and Ride sites causing more congestion.
- Park and Ride services had resulted in reduced numbers using normal service buses.
- Congestion of A19 Fulford Road entry to the city at peak back to Escrick, sometimes even Riccall and the need to address with bus lanes.
- The speeding of buses was a serious health and safety issue and would be examined. Members were asked to report any incidents to the bus company concerned.
- Confirmation that cross ticketing would be reviewed.
- Final deadline for DDA compliant vehicles was not for a number of years, which all companies confirmed that they were on target to meet.
- Jonathan Stewart circulated a plan at the meeting showing First’s perceived hotspots for congestion in the city. He confirmed that he would be happy to work through this list to prioritise and help resource.

Officers confirmed that the authority were heavily involved in traffic management with the use of virtual bus lanes, queue relocation systems and the city was possibly more advanced in this than other cities. However they were limited to what could be achieved when the system was running close to capacity as in York. Then the solutions were either to increase capacity or reduce the loading on the system. They confirmed that, in line with the Transport Planning Units notes on bus reliability, there were problems for which a radical solution was required. In answer to a question they confirmed that the cost of installing the BLISS system on one bus route was in the region of £10,000.

The Chair thanked the Head of Network Management for all his work on traffic and transport issues in the city and wished him a long and happy retirement. He also thanked the representatives of the bus companies for their attendance and for their open and helpful contributions. He stated that their comments would be welcomed on the final draft report and recommendations of the Committee.

Mike Smith confirmed that he disagreed that York was doing well in respect of traffic management, as there were still some areas for improvement. He stated that York had the first generation BLISS system and that further developments had been made which the Authority could take up. Improved journey times was he felt the next step together with deterring other vehicles from using frequent user bus routes e.g. *bus vehicle* \* pricing focussing on heavily used routes.

Members indicated that the plan circulated by First was incomplete and that there were a number of additional hotspots for congestion in the city. Members agreed that it was appropriate for a review of the congestion hotspots to be undertaken by Officers.

Owing to the lateness of the hour Members agreed to defer consideration of the remaining appendices to a further meeting to be arranged prior to the September meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the following items be considered at the next meeting:

- Annex A** – Programme for carrying out mapping works
- Annex B** – Evidence of the soft measures presently in place to encourage a reduction in car travel in York
- Annex C** – Statistics showing vehicle fleet in use in York
- Annex D** – Paper on alternative environmentally viable and financially practical methods of transport

REASON: To ensure full consideration of all the objectives and progress the scrutiny of traffic congestion in York.

\* *as amended at the Traffic Congestion Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee meeting on 4 September 2007.*

CLLR D MERRETT, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 8.20 pm].