

Traffic Congestion Review – Covering Report

Background to Scrutiny Review

1. This topic was originally registered by Cllr Tracey Simpson-Laing in April 2005 in order 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 without any pre-decision scrutiny.
2. In November 2006 Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) reconsidered the topic registration suggested by Cllr Simpson-Laing, together with a draft remit for a revised scrutiny review focusing on tackling traffic congestion. 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 Local Transport Plans 1 & 2 (LTP1 & 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), to recommend and prioritise specific improvements to:

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

Consultation

3. In order to fully investigate and understand the affects that congestion has and the improvement areas identified within the remit above, a series of meetings were held between November 2006 and June 2008, as detailed in Annex A, paragraph 3.
4. The Committee agreed early on the crucial need to engage the wider York community as well as particular interested parties in the debate on future transport policy, given both the difficult and critical choices to be made, and that the solutions involved can only be achieved with York residents and businesses positive co-operation.
5. Therefore, having identified what the real strategic choices facing the city were the Committee produced and circulated a leaflet and questionnaire to all York residents and businesses.

Information Gathered

4. Members have spent a long time gathering information to support this review as detailed in the draft final report shown at Annex A. Since the last meeting of this Committee further information from various national Government publications from the Council's mid term report on LTP2 (November 2008) and public survey regarding cycling has become available which has a bearing on the findings from this review. This additional information and its potential policy implications are shown in Annex A, paragraphs 19, 20, 29 & 56. Members are asked to consider this information in particular, and confirm their acceptance of its inclusion in the review's final report.

Review Conclusions

5. The Committee have comprehensively reviewed the Council's current transport policies as expressed through LTP2 and the 'Access York' initiative, and their impact on meeting anticipated traffic growth (including from the continued economic success and housing expansion of York) against the objectives of this review and against the views of York residents. They also noted that transport policy figures very little in the current Sustainable Community Strategy vision, despite its importance in delivering much of its ambitions, and in terms of the feedback from York resident's surveys on the importance of tackling congestion.
6. The Committee acknowledged the continuing priority that York residents place on tackling congestion, their mixed views on adopting differing solutions, and the need for continuing substantial engagement with residents and businesses to gain mutual understanding of:
 - the potential future problems
 - what may or may not work, and scale of benefit
 - what the appropriate policy trade offs may be
 - the need to act in advance given ongoing traffic growth and delivery time lags

7. The Committee have recognised that whilst many positive initiatives and measures are being undertaken, they will not be sufficient to avoid significantly worsening traffic and congestion problems over the next decade or so, which could both adversely affect quality of life in York and undermine the City's future economic success and well-being. Also, the anticipated growth in motorised traffic and congestion, despite vehicle efficiency improvements and modal shift, will lead to a continuing increase in greenhouse gas emissions, against the recent government act target of an 80% cut in emissions by 2050.
8. The Committee have therefore concluded that the broad overall solution to both congestion and the climate change challenge is a concerted approach using the following hierarchy of measures:
 - i. Reducing the need to travel (through IT, video conferencing and other solutions like encouraging workers to live closer to work)
 - ii. Undertaking more of the journeys that still need to be made by green and environmentally less damaging modes
 - iii. Improving engine efficiency and switch to lower / non-carbon based fuels
 - iv. Undertaking a greater proportion of car based journeys on a shared basis
 - v. Improving driving standards (for fuel efficiency and safety, and to make roads safer and more attractive to green travel modes)
 - vi. Reducing congestion delays and fuel wastage in traffic queues.
9. Whilst bullet point (iii) above is primarily nationally driven, all of these approaches can be progressed locally to varying degrees and with 56% of York's commuting journeys being less than 5km, there is clearly a lot of room to move in terms of bullet points (ii), (iv) and (vi).
10. There is also a need to persuade individuals to make socially informed choices too, with the 'Smart Choices' approach being key. This will need a very specific on-going public engagement and promotional strategy around 'Smart Choices', including reinvigorating the Green Travel Plan approach with York employers and institutions.

Recommendations Arising From Review

11. The Committee have drafted a number of recommendations as result of their investigative work on the objectives of this review. These have been split into two parts, those recommendations that in the Committee's view need to be implemented in the short term, and those that make up a strategic response to tackling congestion from LTP3 onwards.

Short/ Medium Term Recommendations

12. The following key priorities for the Council should be set:

Overall

- i. Continue work in support of the 'Access York' initiative and implement Phase I
- ii. Fund the development of a comprehensive 'Smart Choice' package including personalised journey planning to maximise modal shift,

- including a re-invigoration of 'Green Travel Plans' and ensure they are implemented, monitored and periodically updated
- iii. Commission a detailed study of a future Transport Strategy to 2021 and beyond based around scenario X as detailed in paragraph ? (*X to be determined based on survey responses etc*)
 - iv. Adopt an on-going public engagement strategy in terms of the future transport strategy and solutions for the City
 - v. Identify underused bus services and look at ticketing and marketing measures for all services, to improve usage
 - vi. The role of city centre car park availability and fee levels in influencing modal choice to again be recognised and explicitly considered when fee levels are examined as part of the budget process. Or, more radically, taken out of that process entirely and set as part of a longer term policy based approach to both transport and the city centre economy, recognising the importance of both imperatives

Public Transport

- vii. Undertake an urgent review of the Council's bus strategy to see how the current stagnation in overall bus usage, decline in non-concessionary usage, and in the conventional bus network can be reversed
- viii. Renew focus through the Council's Quality Bus Partnership, on undertaking those measures that would most effectively stop the current decline in bus usage i.e. holding down bus fare levels, increased non-concessionary bus priorities, influencing public attitudes and tackling outstanding issues from the 2001 Steer Davies review
- ix. Support City Strategy and bus operators in re-invigorating the Quality Bus Partnership
- x. Quality Bus Partnership to be requested to examine and action ways of improving bus boarding times, whilst avoiding penalising occasional and less well off bus users
- xi. Undertake an early comprehensive review of the current bus network in terms of appropriate changes to match changing development patterns and gaps etc, since the 2002 review
- xii. Council to undertake with bus operators and the Police a joint review of loading and parking restrictions and their enforcement on bus routes
- xiii. Executive Member to prioritise the provision of timetable displays and bus shelters at all bus stops
- xiv. Ensure the extension of Park & Ride services to include York District Hospital
- xv. Local bus companies to be requested to continue to revise bus timetables to provide more accurate and credible timings and work to them
- xvi. The Executive Member to review the operation and delivery of the BLISS real time bus information display system and agree a comprehensive programme for its early roll out across the whole network, with local bus operators
- xvii. Ensure positive promotion of bus network and bus usage including passenger information
- xviii. Improve the quality of interchange points between public transport modes and between routes with designated interchange stops, and co-ordinate bus timings

Walking & Cycling

- xix. Tackle road safety issues and help to make roads more attractive to green modes by undertaking 'Considerate Road User' campaigns
- xx. The Council should reinvigorate cycling in York using the 'Cycling City' initiative and funding by:
 - tackling key gaps in the network and difficult locations i.e. bridges, key radials and junctions, as identified by the 2003/4 cycling scrutiny review but as yet not implemented
 - improving planning processes to ensure adequate consideration is given in new designs to cycling
 - relaunching the Cycling Forum with a view to giving stakeholders the opportunity to shape future cycling policies and proposals, and to encourage partnership work
- xxi. The Cycling Champion for York to:
 - ensure cycling measures are focused around what will make a difference
 - promote considerate road user behaviour (including by cyclists)
 - engage the business community to encourage the provision of cycling facilities for both employees and visitors/customers

Air Quality

- xxii. Undertake a review of the Air Quality Management Plan with a view to taking more radical action to eliminate the health risks associated with York's NO₂ hotspots, by the EU deadline of 2010. This should include examining the potential benefits of low emission zones, queue relocations using ITS/UTMC, further tightening of the Euro-emission vehicle requirements on the Council's own and its partner's vehicle fleets, tendered transport services and licensed vehicle services, given that buses account for 42% of road traffic emissions, and of introducing a local freight transshipment centre
- xxiii. Undertake a short term project to measure the levels of the most harmful PM2.5 carcinogen carrying particles to understand if there is a problem in York

Other

- xxiv. Council to seek an agreed traffic enforcement strategy with North Yorkshire police for the York area to address issues including bus priorities, road safety, on-street parking, school no parking zones, considerate road user campaigns, across all modes, together with establishing an on-going delivery partnership arrangement
- xxv. Council to drive through early implementation of full DDA compliance for all Council vehicles and council procured bus services, and CCTV in taxis and private hire vehicles
- xxvi. Strengthen the place of transport policy in future versions of York's Sustainable Community Strategy to recognise its importance in the life of the city

Long Term Strategic Recommendations

13. The Council and Local Strategic Partnership to adopt the following long-term vision for transport in the City, complementing the city's Sustainable Community Strategy, giving a clear direction to what the city's transport will look like in the future (three suggestions for this vision are shown at paragraph 92 of Annex A)

' insert preferred vision?'

14. Given the key importance of public transport within the above, the following subsidiary vision for public transport should be adopted:

' insert subsidiary vision?'

15. Once the agreed visions and recommended long term strategy for 2021 and beyond have been established, ensure Council and its partners work consistently towards their implementation

16. In regard to buses, the Council to:

- Ensure outstanding comprehensive 5-yearly review of the bus network is carried out to optimise the network and service frequency, to take into account new housing and other developments

17. In regard to freight, the Council to:

- Continue to keep the issue of providing a freight transshipment centre for the City under review if a suitable site and funding mechanisms come forward
- Lobby government (national and EU) to improve standards for HGV engine efficiency and emissions
- Ensure council owned and partners vehicle fleets, and tendered delivery vehicles move rapidly towards the most up to date emission and efficiency standards

Corporate Priorities

18. The implementation of the recommendations arising from this review will support the delivery of the following corporate priorities:

- 'Reduce the environmental impact of council activities and encourage, empower and promote others to do the same'
- 'Increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport'.

Options

19. Members may choose to make changes to the draft final report shown at Annex A and support all, some or none of the conclusions and

recommendations arising from the review, prior to agreeing the final report for its submission to Scrutiny Management Committee.

Recommendations

20. Having considered all of the information in this covering report, the draft final report shown at Annex A and its associated Annexes, Members are asked to:
- a. Agree to the inclusion of paragraphs 19, 20, 29, 34, 35 & 58 which contain information and recommendations that has not previously appeared in any of the interim reports
 - b. Agree any additional information to be included in the final report, prior to it being finalised
 - c. Agree any amendments to the presentation of the information contained in the final report and its annexes
 - d. Confirm which (if any) of the combination scenarios shown in Annex A they would like to recommend should be tested (see Annex A paragraph 90)
 - e. Agree a long-term 'Transport Vision' to support the Sustainable Community Strategy (see Annex A, paragraph 69)
 - f. Agree a subsidiary 'public transport' vision (see Annex A, paragraph 71)
 - g. Agree the questions to be included in the consultation document (see Annex A, paragraph 72)
 - h. Amend as necessary and agree the recommendations in paragraphs 12-17 in line with points (c) – (e) above and the findings from the residents survey

Reason: To progress this review and enable the survey of residents as referred to in Annex A, paragraph 72.

Implications

The implications associated with the recommendations arising from this review will be thoroughly analysed once the residents survey has been completed and the final report updated in line with the findings.

Contact Details

Author:

Melanie Carr
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Services
Tel: 01904 552063

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Dawn Steel
Democratic Services Manager

Final Draft Report Approved

Date 28 April 2009

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Traffic Congestion Interim Reports dates 28 January, 17 April, 21 May and 12 June 2008 and 'Broad Strategic Options' Briefing Paper dated 27 February 2008

Annexes

Annex A – Draft Final Report

Annex Aa – Maps showing congestion levels in 2005, 2011 & 2021

Annex Ab – Information on Other Impediments to Traffic Flow

Annex Ac – LTP2 Strategy for 2006-11

Annex Ad – Summary of Regional and Local Transport Policy

Annex Ae – Broad Strategic Options - Individual Scenarios To Complement LTP2

Annex Af – Information on Other Cities' Progress in Implementing Road User Charging & Its Capacity to Attract Investment

Annex Ag – Broad Strategic Options – Combination Scenarios To Complement LTP2

Annex Ah – Matrix of Committees findings, possible solutions, impact & corresponding recommendations

Annex Ai – Road User Charging Presentation by Capita Symonds