

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Traffic Arrangements at York Railway Station.

Summary

- 1 This report updates Members on the progress made to date in reviewing the traffic arrangements at York Railway Station and in particular the concerns raised by Members in a motion to Full Council on 2 April 2009. The report identifies key issues arising from initial investigations and sets out possible improvement options for further consideration. It recommends further work takes place with East Coast and Network Rail to investigate possible short, medium and long term improvements and that this be co-ordinated with the Capacity Study being undertaken for East Coast.

Background

- 2 The scheme to improve facilities at York Rail 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, rail station users and affected parties regarding the remodelling of the Railway Station Frontage.
- 3 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.
- 4 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.

- 5 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.
- 6 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.
- 7 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.
- 8 The detail design was completed and works were constructed during 2005/6, with the scheme coming into full operation in spring 2006.
- 9 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."

Consultation

- 10 To explore the concerns reported in the motion about the problem at the station a number of meetings were convened and inspections made.
- 11 Contact was initially made with Cllrs Wiseman and Gillies who advised on the information they had received about the length of time taxis were experiencing travelling round Tea Room Square, resulting in a £5.00 tariff being on their meter before they entered the highway, at peak times. Part of the problem seem to be the single arch into the station's short stay car park which cannot accommodate two way traffic. This causes tail backs in either direction. 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. Various possible options for improvements were explored such as:

- Exchanging the Station's Executive Parking with the Short Stay Car Park at the back of Tea Room Square, as this would reduce the volume 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.
- 12 These suggestions were carried forward to a meeting with a number of representative from Network Rail and East Coast. It was acknowledge that there are congestion problems at the Rail Station in peak times and on days with special events. East Coast have recognised this and have tried to reduce the affect with a Parking Warden, but this did not prove satisfactory. They have now commissioned a Capacity Study, to be carried this spring, on all the stations on the East Coast mainline and the car parking arrangements at York will be reviewed as part of that study. Issues, relevant to this report, to be considered in that study are:
- 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 Comment was also made about the parking of the FTR and on occasions the difficulty in viewing to the right when exiting Tea Room Square because of its presence.
- 14 Council staff have 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.

- 15 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.
- 16 From these visits and observations, a number of peak time issues have been identified:
 - The pedestrian crossing in front of the Hotel carries a high flow of pedestrians walking to the 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.
- 17 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 though 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 .
- 18 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. There 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 buses, as they indiscriminately park at bus stops displacing the regular services, which further contributes to the traffic congestion in the area.
- 19 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

has recently been past on to First and instructions have been 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.

20 A review of the accidents which have occurred in the area has been 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 have been 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. However, there are two issues which may need addressing which are discussed in the options section below at paragraphs 23 and 24.

Options

- 21 There are a number of options and actions which could be initiated following these investigations and these are detailed below for Members to consider.
- 22 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. One fundamental issue to creating any significant changes, will be the outcome of the Capacity Study to be undertaken by East Coast. It is suggested that a working group made up of East Coast, Network Rail and Council officers is set up to review short, medium and long term initiatives. These discussions would include those points discussed in paragraphs 11 to 20 and would take account of any elderly and disabled access needs.

- 23 It appears that a number of pedestrians leave the 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. It is proposed that discussions with East Coast take place to improve the signage inside the station in order to direct pedestrians to the two pedestrian crossings at either end of the Portico.
- 24 The other issue is to review the docking position of the FTR and the lane markings alongside it, so as to improve the view for drivers exiting Tea Room Square.

Analysis

- 25 The investigations to date have raised numerous issues about traffic congestion in Tea Room Square and the route 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 will be the outcome from the East Coast Capacity Study.
- 26 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 suite. 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.
- 27 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 any changes are proposed to the present layout, these should only be done following full consultation with all user groups and interested parties.

Corporate Priorities

- 28 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

29 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 this issue will 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 revised.
- **Crime and Disorder** - No impact
- **Information Technology (IT)** - No impact
- **Property** - No impact
- **Other** -

Risk Management

30 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.

Recommendations

30 Following the investigation into the traffic congestion issues in Tea Room Square it is recommended that Members authorise officers to:

- (i) Engage in discussions with 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) Following the outcome of East Coast Capacity Study continue discussions with East Coast and Network Rail to see what medium and long term traffic improvements can be identified and take a report to an Executive Member for City Strategy Decision Session, with those finding.
- (iii) Explore what options are available and could be implemented to improve the visibility to the right, when exiting Tea Room Square.

Reason: To overcome the concerns raised about traffic congestion in the Tea Room Square area of York Railway Station.

Contact Details

Author:

Ray Chaplin
Head of Engineering
Consultancy

Tel No. 01904 551600

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Richard Wood
Assistant Director - City Development &
Transport

Report approved

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Specialist Implications Officer/s

None

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."

Annexes

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

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