
MEETING	TRAFFIC CONGESTION AD-HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	4 SEPTEMBER 2007
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS MERRETT (CHAIR), HUDSON (VICE-CHAIR), MOORE, MORLEY, PIERCE, SIMPSON-LAING AND SMITH (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBER) AND MR M SMITH (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBER)
IN ATTENDANCE	MATTHEW PAGE – INSTITUTE FOR TRANSPORT STUDIES, LEEDS

APOLOGIES	COUNCILLOR HOGG
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10. 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.

11. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 17 July 2007 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- i) The addition of the following bullet point under points raised by Members:
 - Impact of tour buses on congestion
- ii) The deletion of the word "bus" and its replacement with "road" in the example in the final sentence of the first paragraph on page 7.

12. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting from Councillor A D'Agorne.

Councillor D'Agorne referred to the information in Annex D particularly in relation to freight transshipment centres which he confirmed was fair but he stated that he felt the report did not go far enough in acknowledging other points.

He stated that the Local Transport Plans (LTP) included details of the Air Quality Management Area in the city centre, within which the annual average nitrogen dioxide levels had been exceeded at 5 locations and for which the target of reduction was by 2005. He also quoted from Annex I of the LTP on the Freight Strategy and to the proposal to establish Low Emission Zones, which aimed to cut polluting vehicles from certain area of the city. This had envisaged a 5-year action plan but he felt that this proposal did not go far enough. Reference was also made to Annex U of the LTP report, the Air Quality Action Plan, and the table relating to HGV emissions and their reduction with the use of transshipment centres. He also referred to the figures quoted in relation to HGV's having a disproportionate impact on air quality. In particular to the figures quoted of 11-18% from emissions on major roads from HGV's, which could be eliminated by transshipment sites thereby having a significant impact on air quality in the central area. He stated that a freight strategy did not appear to have a high priority in the report and he referred to the Freight Partnership formed in 2006, which could be engaged to assist with any works in this area.

He also raised points on the British Retail Consortium and delivery curfews, possible charging for out of town shopping centres and the need to consider economic factors in the longer term.

He stated that the scale of development now proposed in the area required a more radical approach.

New members questioned where they could view the findings referred to in the Local Transport Plan Reports. Officers confirmed that these were available on the Council's website.

13. 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. This included information gathered on the following areas recommended for improvement:

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

At the last meeting consideration had been given to the City of York Council's view on journey times and reliability of public transport (Annex E) and further consideration of the remaining appendices A to D below had been deferred to this 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

Members and Officers made the following comments in relation to the various annexes

Annex A – Programme for carrying out mapping works

Reference to staffing issues and training on 'Accession' and drawbacks to 'Accession' as it focussed mainly on public transport.

Considered that "Improved interchange points in the city centre" would improve access and questioned why the Scutiny Committee on 4 April 2007 had not considered this point as essential.

Officers view that there was a staffing resource problem in this area.

Annex B – Smarter Choices Actions

Officers confirmed that Smarter Choices were considered a powerful tool and that they would like to do far more work in this area. It was confirmed that there was no longer a budget for this work so they were no longer in a position to promote large campaigns.

Members confirmed that smart choice work appeared to be more effective than physical measures on their own.

There was a strong Officer view that Smarter Choice Actions were an important means of changing travel behaviour and achieving modal shift.

Annex C – Statistics showing vehicle fleet in use in York

Members questioned the information contained in this report and Officers confirmed that they would

- check the area covered by the figures provided,
- obtain national comparison figures
- provide details for the missing years
- provide Euro level information

Consideration of this Annex deferred for further consideration to the next meeting.

Annex D – Alternative environmentally viable and financially practical methods of transport

Members commented that this briefing note contained some controversial points which had been included to elicit discussion on traffic congestion and the alternative methods of transport. They stated that it should be made clear that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) information superseded some of the facts set out on page 29.

Members questioned the PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} limits and the implications for the City. Officers confirmed that the government objectives were 35 exceedences allowed per year for PM₁₀ but that this was likely to be reduced in the future. At present York had 10 to 15 exceedences of PM₁₀ but that PM_{2.5} was measured at a national level and not by Local Authorities at present. Officers confirmed that, if required, they could undertake a short term project at minimal cost to measure levels of PM_{2.5} in the city.

The Committee agreed that unless there were major changes in York that the levels of PM₁₀ were at an acceptable level.

Transshipment Centres

Members commented that major retailers, for example in Coney Street, which owned more than one store being able to take advantage of transshipment centres to contribute to reducing road congestion. They also questioned the effect of the growth of home deliveries and internet shopping on the road network.

Officers stated that the report could be more balanced but that was not to say that the Authority were not committed to investigating transshipment centres. Although these centres would be relatively easy to provide there were other issues to resolve other than air quality damage. They confirmed that as part of the LPT2 there was to be a major scheme bid to examine all traffic problems in the city however the real issues related to the impact of those solutions, which would require a government shift.

Members questioned the reference to “significant amount of evidence that transshipment centres were not self financing” Also questioned the environmental impact of transshipment centres and Officers confirmed that if these were sited in the correct place air quality would not be an issue.

Members stated that the management of deliveries would be a better option to alleviate large delivery vehicles causing congestion in the city centre and discharging fumes whilst queuing. Officers confirmed that Police had no authority over parking issues and that this was now the responsibility of the local authority as highway authority.

Draft recommendation that the provision of a transshipment centre was not a high priority but would not be dismissed and was worth examination in the future.

Public Transport

Mr Page reminded members that the information set out in the report covered a wide field and that there was significantly different information available in relation to some of the figures provided. He confirmed that

there was an enormous variation in emissions with different types of vehicles and that he disagreed with the statement that “ Buses in their present guise are thus clearly not any form of environmentally friendly transport.. “ as this depended on the numbers using the bus and how many car journeys had been displaced.

Members questioned the University of Tokyo data and if the figures referred to were European wide as this could have an impact as York had a higher standard for bus fleet emissions.

Members agreed that although buses were not the cleanest vehicles that continuing to try and keep fleets up to date, with low emissions and using optimum fuels was the best way forward.

Freight

Members referred to the multi drop approach which stated that there were three key impacts but they felt that there was also a fourth. This was the impact of empty vehicles returning to base following completion of their delivery.

Green Transport Fuels

Mr Page referred to tests on bio-diesel and stated that there was a significant amount of concern regarding this fuel. The increase in emissions was unknown and decisions were required on whether to save the planet or the local environment. He stated that there were transport solutions available now against those that could be available in the future.

Non powered solutions

The Chair circulated an article from Cycle Digest 2007 related to a study on Commuter Cycling and details of the mode share of cycling in other European countries. He stated that with the right policies and facilities there was significant potential for increasing cycling levels in York. To put the percentages in context Officers confirmed that the UK had a 1.5% share, York 13-15% and Cambridge 20% compared with The Netherlands at 27%.

Members made in following points in relation to non powered solutions and cycling

- Reference made to the use of cycling couriers in the city particularly those used by ANC.
- Cycling as a cultural choice (people not wanting to turn up for work wet)
- An examination was required on what the limitations in increasing cycling were.
- Was there a capacity in the network for the number of cyclists to increase?
- Important to make cycling more attractive.
- Because of severe traffic and parking problems in Cambridge there was a Regulation of the University, agreed with the City Council, that students were not allowed to keep a car or motorcycle in the city.

It was agreed to defer further consideration of the cycling issues to a future meeting.

Vehicle Group (a)

The Assistant Director of City Development and Transport stated that the vehicles included in this group, which included Conventional Light Railway or guided solutions, were he felt not appropriate for York which was a tight compact city. It was stated that this would not be a practical solution without a large subsidy. Officers referred to cultural and health and safety issues relating to sharing space which was a possible barrier.

Mr Page confirmed that the options varied in this group but that it would not be without large costs and the Chair confirmed that this would not be a practical option.

Members made the following points

- Way forward was the need to link demand management with environmental improvements.
- A major contributor to congestion was schools which drew their pupils from a wide area and it was felt that there was a need to examine the surrounding issues.
- Questioned the use of Park and Ride vehicles on bus routes 22 and 23 which at times were not fully utilised (other than during rush hour) when smaller powered vehicles could be used.

The Committee agreed that unfortunately they were only able to find local non powered solutions which narrowed the focus of the scrutiny. This included undertaking a more detailed examination of bus transport, investment in non powered solutions and from the demand management angle endeavouring to obtain government funding for the dualling of the outer ring road.

Members also referred to recruitment issues in the department and questioned whether there were sufficient staffing resources to carry out further investigative work. Officers stated that previously Consultants had been used for some of this work.

Members agreed that the opportunities were relatively limited and it was agreed to pursue with the Quality Bus Partnership the influencing of both freight and rail companies to use green transport fuels.

CLLR D MERRETT, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 7.30 pm].