



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY
SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Waddington (Chair)

Councillor Batool
Councillor Whittle
Councillor Porter

Councillor Dawood
Councillor Osman
Councillor Rae-Bhatia

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22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr O'Neill.

The City Mayor and Deputy City Mayor for climate, economy and culture also gave apologies.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair asked members of the commission to declare any interests in the proceedings. Cllr Porter declared that he actively campaigned against the introduction of 24/7 bus lanes in Aylestone ward.

24. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair highlighted that there were no outstanding actions from previous meetings and that all information requested has been circulated to Members of the Commission.

It was also noted that the Cllr Osman had provided apologies for the meeting on 21 September and requested this be amended in the minutes.

AGREED:

- Subject to the above change, it was agreed that the minutes for the meeting on 21 September 2023 were a correct record.

25. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

26. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

27. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair noted that for procedural reasons, as the papers were not published five clear working days in advance, the items for discussion were classified as urgent.

28. BUS LANES UPDATE

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation introduced the item highlighting that bus lanes have been a feature in the city for up to fifty years. It was noted that lots of cities have introduced bus lanes over many years as they are an integral part of strategies for public transport and in responding to climate change by way of reducing congestion and improving air quality.

The City Transport Director presented the item. It was noted that:

- Bus priority comprises of bus gates and bus lanes. The bus lane network comprises of thirteen key routes across the city serving all 44 main bus services.
- The purpose of bus priority measures is to improve punctuality and reduce journey time, therefore increasing patronage by becoming an attractive alternative for modal shift. This allows for more efficient usage of road space and the management of traffic flow on the network.
- Many improvements have been seen following the introduction of bus lanes as data included within the agenda pack indicates for Groby Road, Abbey Park Road, Aylestone Road and Melton Road.
- Leicester is the eleventh highest for bus journeys outside of London, with 33% of households not having access to a private vehicle.
- The majority of bus services in the city are commercially operated which enables the Authority to subsidise strategic routes such as Park and Ride, Hop and Orbital.
- Research by the Department for Transport suggests service reliability and cost are the key barriers to bus usage. Local surveys have also found that people want punctual buses, they believe bus lanes help reliability and want more frequent day time services. The £2 bus fare cap is helping with affordability and the role of the Authority is to improve service reliability.
- The Enhanced Leicester Bus Partnership was established with a

vision to improving five key service areas: electric, frequent, reliable, easy and great value. Bus lanes support the frequent and reliable areas. The Partnership has enabled strong investment from bus operators within the city.

- Increasing use of cars on the transport network is creating congestion and pollution. Modal shift is therefore important to encouraging bus use, preventing congestion, and improving pollution with carbonised buses.
- There is no evidence that bus lanes cause pollution, and the use of 24/7 bus lanes cause less confusion. Some existing bus lanes that operate during specific times will therefore require review.
- All monies received through enforcement of bus lanes is reinvested into the transport network. When new cameras are installed, contraventions of a bus lane will initially receive a warning before fines become operational. The appeals process follows national guidance.
- Conclusions by the Bus Lanes Scrutiny Review in April 2016 outlined within the presentation remain true today regarding increasing car usage, bus punctuality, journey time and patronage.
- Congestion is mainly caused at junctions reaching capacity and this is likely to worsen as car usage increased. Bus lanes end before junctions to allow vehicle to queue and traffic to flow which was demonstrated via a video.

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation highlighted that further guidance is anticipated following the Government's recent announcement on the 'Plan for Drivers' which includes reference to bus lanes. It was noted however that the timeframe for additional guidance for transport authorities was unclear presently.

In response to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- The use of 24/7 bus lanes provide clarity as they restrict unauthorised vehicles at all times. Signage can also be clearer and does not need to list additional information to avoid confusion and possible contravention.
- The infographic contained within the agenda pack shows that a full bus is equivalent to thirty vehicles using the transport network. This can be seen regularly during peak times but the average for Leicester is around 17, although some routes have less and others more.
- A comprehensive survey was conducted with bus users as part of developing the Leicester Bus Partnership where a large response was received identifying reliability, cost and frequency as key priorities. This is reflected in the overall vision to make the bus network electric, frequent, reliable, easy and great value.
- The 18% increase in bus usage on Aylestone Road is indicative of the years following installation in 2013. There has been changes following the pandemic that make it difficult to compare.

It was agreed that information will be circulated to Members on this.

- Sequencing of signals at junctions are not automatic but rely on various algorithms. This means junctions will not have a set time before changing but a time range depending on load of a junction. Area Traffic Control monitor traffic flow in the city and will manually adjust sequencing if congestion is increasing, for example if there has been an accident, roadworks or a junction is underperforming.
- Every street in Leicester is very different and each scheme is therefore unique and has a specific design as opposed to implementing a national standard approach. Each scheme is also subject to consultation with the public, stakeholders and scrutiny to understand the local context and consider possible changes before implementation.
- Over 95% households are within walking distance of a bus stop – defined as 400metres. The density of our city and bus network with bus stops enables good access to routes compared with other cities.
- The frequency of buses was a priority for most people when surveyed and therefore the base standard contained within the Bus Plan is to ensure 24 core corridors are served every 15 minutes during the day and 30 minutes during evenings and Sundays.
- Earlier services would be beneficial to some. More people need to use buses to become commercially viable for operators to increase services but to do that it is important to ensure they are reliable, punctual and attractive.
- Bus operators are commercially driven and do not receive subsidies on commercial services. They do however provide family tickets, costing £10 for a family all day on one operator or £12 all day for multiple operators, this is usually reduced to £10 during school holidays. This is deemed reasonable when compared with individual £2 fares per journey.
- Automated ticketing now involves less interaction with bus drivers, but the latest survey of bus satisfaction shown an increase in satisfaction associated to bus driver behaviour.
- Zebra funding was received for electric buses only and matched by commercial operators. No funding was attributed from the Authority. We bid and secured funding based on the plan for improving bus priority, including bus lanes, ticketing, real time information boards etc. Leicester has over 90 e-buses currently and expected to be over 150 by next summer. This is way ahead of most other cities and demonstrates the good partnership with operators.
- Bus lanes are designed and implemented where key pinch points are identified to ensure suitability of the network and not a matter of installing long lengths of bus lanes that are not required.
- During off-peak periods where buses may be ahead of time,

layovers are required to adhere to timetables which are legal requirement for bus registration. It can be difficult to calibrate timetables for different times throughout the day to match running times and traffic flow as congestion at junctions are variable.

- Bus lane enforcement data is contained on the open data platform, and it was agreed that this would be made available to Members. Monies received through enforcement are redirected on the network. The appeals process complies with national guidance and cases are considered.

Cllr Osman proposed the Commission establish a Task Group to look in further detail at 24/7 bus lanes. This was seconded by Cllr Porter and was carried following a vote. The Chair noted a discussion would take place with lead officers concerning inclusion of this in the annual work programme.

AGREED:

- The Commission noted the report.
- The Commission be provided with the additional information requested.
- The Commission recommended a Task Group be established to look in further detail at 24/7 bus lanes.

29. TRO - A6 CORRIDOR BUS LANE SCHEME REPORT

The Director for Planning, Development and Transportation introduced the item to highlight that the revised process enabled proposed TRO reports to be considered by the Commission instead of the Planning Committee. It was further highlighted that comments made by Members would be considered by the Director alongside consultation responses to determine whether to proceed or make changes.

The Team Leader for Central Area presented the item, and it was noted that:

- The proposal is to introduce a series of 24/7 bus lanes in both directions along the A6 corridor, between Burleys Way and Red Hill Circle. It is identified as a strategic route into the city whereby punctuality standards of the three main services are currently below the standard expected.
- Traffic modelling has taken place along with discussions with bus operators to identify where most congestion arises in order to locate sections of bus lane in the most beneficial locations to improve reliability and punctuality.
- The TRO was advertised in July 2023, leaflets were delivered directly to around three thousand homes and was publicised via social media and local news. Over 100 responses were received opposed to scheme along with some general support. Most

themes identified within comments opposing the scheme related to congestion, pollution and not requiring bus lanes out of peak hours.

In response to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- There had been a larger response to the consultation in comparison with other schemes with most opposed to the proposal. However, each scheme is very different and the number of responses received was low compared with the number of users of the route.
- An objectors meeting could be a potential option for consideration for further engagement regarding the scheme. It could also address common themes outlined within objections.
- The scheme is identified to be funded through the Transforming Cities Fund for which funding is allocated to specific schemes although not ringfenced.
- Traffic modelling has been undertaken when developing the scheme and visual examples of how the flow of traffic will operate can be illustrated.

As part of the discussion Members comments included:

- Further objector engagement should be considered by the Director for Planning, Development and Transportation as decision maker of the TRO proposal.
- The proposed design of sections of bus lanes would have an overall negative impact on people choosing to come to Leicester city centre and is likely to lead to more congestion and therefore pollution.
- The funding required for the slight improvement in bus journey times would not be worthwhile given the impact to other road users.
- The implementation of 24/7 bus lanes do not in themselves provide an attractive offer to encourage members of the public to choose the bus as an alternative to the private vehicle.
- The proposal of a red route and associated enforcement would prevent private vehicles being able to drop off, pick up or load.
- Bus lanes should be implemented at specific times as opposed to 24/7.

The Chair noted that she had read each response and it was evident that individuals had provided detailed explanations to outline their concerns to the scheme which must be properly considered by the decision maker.

AGREED:

- Members comments be noted by the Director of Planning,

- Development and Transportation.
- The Commission believed further engagement be considered by the Director of Planning, Development and Transportation regarding objections to the proposed TRO – A6 Bus Lane Corridor Scheme.

30. RALLY PARK ACTIVE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The City Transport Director presented the item to outline the initial details of the Rally Park Scheme following a successful £1.8m bid as part of Round 4 of the Active Travel Fund. It was noted that:

- The grant includes a target for the scheme to be under construction by April 2024. The service is currently designing the scheme with the intention to consult later in the year with a target to be on site during spring.
- The successful bid has been allocated specifically for the Rally Park Active Improvement Project. It has been identified as a strategic priority to provide access with the existing Connecting Leicester network.
- Rally Park currently has no dedicated cycling provision. The pathway is a shared space and in poor condition. There is also poor visibility and crime concerns in the area. The intention of the scheme is to provide better surfacing, desire lines and improve the Park as a green space and travel corridor to increase use.

Members were supportive of the scheme and requested further details be shared once the design had been developed. Other comments were made to be considered in the design process including:

- For trees not to be removed unnecessarily and if appropriate consideration be given to raising the canopy line. If trees are required to be removed, that they be replaced.
- Sufficient security and lighting be promoted to ensure safety and visibility.
- To identify whether there are any voluntary organisations that could enable a biodiversity gain whilst also making it an improved destination.
- Clear routes and focus to ensure there is not a conflict between open space to be enjoyed and a cycle-way.

AGREED:

- The Commission noted the report.
- Members comments be noted for consideration as part of design process.
- The Commission be provided with further details of the designed scheme.

31. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair noted a special meeting has been arranged for 16 November 2023 to discuss the Climate Change Strategy Plan to ensure comments by the Commission can be considered during the consultation period.

It was further highlighted by the Chair that three meeting dates had been arranged for a Task Group, in which all Members of the Commission are invited as agreed at the previous meeting, to look in more detail at 20mph streets. The meetings intend to review the scope, gather evidence from stakeholders and conclude with findings and recommendations. All meetings are to take place via Teams.

Members of the Commission were invited to inform the Chair of any further items to be considered for the Work Programme.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 19.40.