



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Highways and Transportation Scrutiny Committee

11 December 2002

The impact of bus priorities on other road users

Report of the Service Director, Highways and Transportation

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To consider the impact of bus priorities on other road users.

2 Summary

2.1 Hard evidence about the impact of bus priorities is extremely difficult to come by, because of the number of variables involved and the dynamic nature of the transport network. In order to understand the effects of bus priorities better, the Department for Transport has recently commissioned research from the Transport Research Laboratory on this very subject.

2.2 A cursory examination of the more recent bus priority schemes in Leicester, together with an analysis of the impact of the Central Ring Road scheme (not a bus priority measure) suggests that the impact of bus priorities varies according to the design of the scheme, its impact on road capacity for other users and its association or otherwise with other investment in buses and park and ride.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Scrutiny is asked to consider the report.

4. Headline Financial and legal Implications

4.1 There are no financial or legal implications arising from this report.

5. Report Author/Officer to contact: Mike Pepper - Head of Traffic (6520)

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 Report

1.1 Background

1.2 Over the past few years, the City Council has introduced a number of bus priority measures. This report examines the likely impact of the following schemes.

- a) Uppingham Road/Humberstone Road
- b) Saffron Lane
- c) Sanvey Gate
- d) Welford Road
- e) Hinckley Road
- f) Melton Road
- g) Star-trak

1.3 Uppingham Road/Humberstone Road. Saffron Lane.

1.4 Both schemes were capacity neutral. In other words, the number of lanes for general traffic at traffic signal stop lines was unaffected. The most significant effect on other traffic has been, therefore, to lengthen queues which previously occupied two lanes by putting part of them into a single lane. No effect on the journey times of other traffic is thought to have happened as a result of the bus priorities.

1.5 Sanvey Gate. The bus priorities at this junction in themselves were similarly capacity neutral. However, safe cycling and pedestrian crossing facilities, which were introduced at the same time, did result in a reduction in capacity. This could have led to some of the effects described in paragraph 1.7, but may not have done so because the capacity of Northgates and Northgate Street is, in any case, regularly adversely affected by local delivery and loading activities.

1.6 Welford Road. The bus priorities in Welford Road have had an impact on other traffic, which was known, following the construction of the parts on the City Centre side of the Outer Ring, to have reduced journey times and speeds for other traffic. However, since then, the County Council has extended the scheme to Wigston Magna, and the overall detailed impact is not known.

1.7 However, it can be expected to be similar to the impact of the Central Ring Road scheme which similarly reduced capacity for general traffic, though on this occasion to improve the environment, rather than provide bus priorities. What happened in this case was that a number of motorists switched from using the western side of the Central Ring Road to using the eastern side, and numbers of motorists chose to travel in the hours immediately outside the peak hour, rather than in the peak hour itself.

1.8 Hinckley Road. As with the Uppingham Road/Humberstone Road and Saffron Lane schemes, this was also capacity neutral. However, unlike those schemes, in the inbound direction at least, the bus priorities were very comprehensive and attached to

them was a new park and ride car park and bus service. The effect of the scheme was to speed up journey times for both buses and general traffic. The park and ride scheme is heavily used and has taken motorists out of their cars on Hinckley Road, thus freeing capacity for other road users. The proposed Leicester West scheme which is currently out to consultation, will be designed according to the same principles.

- 1.9 Melton Road. The new traffic signals at the junction of Lanesborough Road which allow buses in the Melton Road bus lane to jump to the head of waiting queues has also had no impact on the journey times of or the capacity of the road available to other traffic. What the scheme has done, however, by relocating queues into the dual carriageway, is to reduce levels of pollution in the shopping and residential areas of Melton Road and Belgrave Road.
- 1.10 Star-trak. Most recently, bus priorities are being delivered through the bus real-time information system. Increasing numbers of signals are being fitted with equipment that allows a green aspect to be shown to late-running buses to help them get back on schedule. In theory, this help should also have no impact on other traffic, as any green time taken from other traffic to help a late-running bus can be returned immediately afterwards. However, this does depend on the bus operators using the running time information provided by star-trak to write realistic timetables so that only a small proportion of buses are normally running late.
- 1.11 As well as the more obvious direct effects on other road users, it should not be forgotten that the reason for introducing bus priorities is to help make bus services more attractive, and so encourage people who might otherwise have made their journey by car to make it by bus. The City Council has not only been investing in bus priorities to help buses, but has also been investing in level access at bus stops and the provision of real-time information at bus stops. At the same time, both the big operators have invested in substantial numbers of new low-floor buses.
- 1.12 Over the past few years, the number of passengers on Leicester's buses has been growing, after fifty years of declining patronage since the late 1940's. It is not possible to ascribe these increases in numbers specifically to bus priorities, but it may well be that without them, the bus companies would not have invested in new buses and that the number of people trying to drive along Leicester's road network would be even higher than it already is. Hopefully, the study recently commissioned from the Transport Research Laboratory by the Department for Transport may shed further light on these issues.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

3. Legal Implications

3.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

4. Other Implications

4.1

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References With Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	No	
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly / People on Low income	No	

Background Papers

5.1 Report to Cabinet March 2002

6. Details of Research & Consultation

None, other than the background papers.

7. Report Author

7.1 Mike Pepper, Head of Traffic, extension 6520