
Report of the Director of City Development

Scrutiny Board (City Development)

Date: 12 January 2010

Subject: CITY CENTRE TRANSPORT REVIEW UPDATE

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet
Beeston and Holbeck
Hyde Park and Woodhouse
Richmond Hill
Burmantofts

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of work in progress to review and prepare a future transport strategy for Leeds city centre, including the examination of future options for the road network and use of road space. The workstreams are explained in the wider context of the Transport For Leeds strategy development programme and as such substantive findings have not yet been reached.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 This report provides an overview of study work to identify future transport strategy options for the city centre.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 This report originates from a request from the Board for an understanding of work planned to consider and review the highways strategy for the city centre. Members have previously been aware of the draft Local Development Framework draft Area Action Plan (AAP) which identified the possible need to extend the City Centre Loop or otherwise provide for improved traffic circulation in areas outwith the present route and of the 2008 city centre visioning exercise that identified issues such as connectivity from the railway station.

2.2 Since the January 2008 City Centre Vision Conference the Council working with Metro has secured funding from the Government's Transport Innovation Fund to support the researching of congestion and the development of a future transport strategy, known as the Transport For Leeds (TfL) project. This work has reached approximately the halfway point with all the major background analytical work

nearing completion. Most recently, in November 2009, a new City Region transport strategy has been published which has longer term implications for the transport services with Leeds city centre.

- 2.3 A new multi-modal transport model for Leeds is expected to be delivered at the beginning of March 2010 which will facilitate more detailed further analysis of transport options. As such the work so far has not reached the point where firm conclusions can be drawn.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Arising from the draft Area Action Plan published in 2007, the 2008 City Centre Vision Conference and analysis arising out of the initial stages of TfL, a range of transport possibilities for the city centre have been identified and have formed the central basis for strategy investigations and analysis. It is stressed that at the time of writing the analysis remains directed to developing an evidence base upon which sound policy advice and choices can be made in the future.

- 3.2 The key areas of interest are:

- Expansion of the city urban realm by:
 - Extensions of the pedestrian core area.
 - Reduced traffic on some key streets within the core area.
 - Adding City Square to the core pedestrian area.
 - Increasing the areas of green space with connections to and from these areas
- The implications for the present Public Transport Box and City Centre Loop Road of any changes to the urban realm.
- Connectivity from City Station into City Square and Boar Lane for pedestrian visitors to the city.
- Facilities for bus and taxi interchange, especially in the vicinity of City Station, including:
 - Options for increasing bus interchange capacity and stopping facilities at the station so as to expand the coverage of service destinations
 - Examination of ways in which provision for taxis and their customers might be improved
 - Improving the efficiency of the PTB and bus stopping arrangements to speed up the throughput and capacity of bus services
- Making provision for all bus services to be fully accessible to passengers.
- Interchange and stopping facilities for bus services.
- Accommodating longer term expansions to the proposed NGT trolleybus network and the future possibility of street running by Tram-trains.

- Enhancing the connectivity of the cycle network within the city centre and their integration with the proposed Cycle Point (planned for Spring 2010)
- Traffic movements in an enlarged city centre area and around the fringe area, more specifically:
 - Holbeck Urban Village.
 - Hunslet Road and environs.

3.3 In terms of the highway network it is worth recapping on the key traffic routes within and around the city centre, which are also shown on Figure 1.

- i) Leeds Inner Road (LIRR) provides a continuous route from the M621 junction 2 around the city centre from the West initially using the Ingram Distributor Road and to the East using the recently completed Inner Ring Road Stage 7 scheme which rejoins the M621 at junction 4. Built over a period of 40 years, around half the route is grade separated (i.e. no surface junctions) and is largely a two lane dual carriageway except at the busiest locations such as Wellington Bridge. There are major at-grade junctions at Armley Gyratory, Burmantofts Street and East Street/Crown Point
- ii) The M621 motorway effectively completes a full inner ring road route around the south side of the city, but is part of the national strategic road network under the control of the Highways Agency. This road is a mixture of two and three lane dual carriageway with hard shoulders throughout, although these are generally below modern standards.
- iii) The City Centre Loop Road (CCLR) was established between 1992 and 1999 using mostly existing highways to provide an inner circulatory route in a clockwise direction. Traffic lane numbers vary throughout the route and frequent junctions provide access to all the business and retailing areas of the city centre. For the most part bus services are segregated from this route.
- iv) The Public Transport Box (PTB) was created alongside the CCLR to provide direct access to bus stops within the heart of the city centre adjacent to the core pedestrian area. This route is two way and replaced a number of one way streets which formerly led to the separation of inbound and outbound bus services in a way which was confusing to passengers. Taxis and other vehicles have permitted access for delivery purposes.

3.4 So far as achieving transformational change within the city centre over a longer term period, changes to the existing highway as the principal public space and thoroughfare will remain an important opportunity for the city. It is also, of course, recognised that individual major developments will continue to present special opportunities for extending the scope and quality offer of public realm that can be complementary to careful street design and traffic management.

3.5 City Square has been a particular focus of work to-date because of the pivotal role this space provides as a focal point for visitors to the city. Taking the square as the centre of the city and working outwards, the major thoroughfares of Boar Lane, Park

Row and the Headrow, all now restricted to public transport, taxis and access traffic as part of the PTB, remain busy, although all have relatively long standing traffic management plans and treatment of their urban realm. Further out, the northern edge of the city centre is effectively bounded by the Inner Ring Road and the university campuses and so the city centre has expanded to the South of the rail station and across the river into the Holbeck Urban Village area and towards Hunslet.

- 3.6 City Square has the capacity to be developed further into a major Square comparable to those found in the larger European cities. Its urban realm is already an iconic part of the city scene but arguably is not being maximised due to the 24,000 vehicles per day that pass through it. Its position adjacent to a major rail station and the need for good interchange with bus and in due course the NGT trolleybus means that the location will also need to be a focus for public transport. However, if it could be achieved, the removal of the majority of general traffic and the expansion of the present high quality urban realm along with more comprehensive bus/rail interchange options would transform the experience of arriving in the city.
- 3.7 The transport modelling and analysis so far has revealed the following:
- Reducing or removing general traffic in City Square will impact on up to 2,600 vehicles per hour in the peak period; around 25% of this flow is through traffic with no destination in the city centre.
 - The majority of traffic that would be diverted by measures in the city centre would divert onto the routes around the South West and West of the city centre (i.e. Ingram Distributor, Armley Gyratory and through Holbeck Urban Village).
 - There are lesser impacts on the Inner Ring Road to the East of the city centre that can be accommodated within the new Inner Ring Road Stage 7 scheme but which could become more of a pressure point in the future.
 - Any significant improvements or changes within the city centre would need the CCLR to be relocated:
 - Changes affecting the Southern sector, such as the pedestrianisation of City Square or Boar Lane, would need to consider alternative routes through Hunslet and Holbeck.
 - Changes to the North, such as the pedestrianisation of the central Headrow, would lead to buses sharing the Loop and traffic being displaced onto the LIRR.
 - Within Holbeck itself, the draft City Centre AAP identified the potential desirability of creating extensions to the CCLR to manage traffic flows in this area and potentially within Hunslet as that area is developed.
 - The work so far shows that the most significant impacts in these areas would arise from changes elsewhere within the core of the city centre.
 - There is a range of traffic impacts that Holbeck could experience which, depending upon the interventions considered, could be negligible rising towards 400 plus vehicles passing through the area per peak hour.

- Diverting the CLLR to the South could also increase flows in the Whitehall Road area where significant development is planned, but this could conceivably be improved by encouraging traffic to use the Ingram Distributor perhaps by providing improved linkages to this route elsewhere.

- 3.8 Figure 2 provides an indication of the areas where increased stress on the network might be expected to arise from the type of measures discussed above.
- 3.9 The single most important investment measure whatever strategy is adopted in the future is the improvement of Armley Gyratory where future scenarios could increase traffic levels by circa 15%. An appropriate scheme would both enhance the general traffic capacity at this location to offset reductions elsewhere as well as providing for improvements to the priority given to public transport and enabling easier movements for cyclists and pedestrians.
- 3.10 The Northern section of the Inner Ring Road from the West Street junction to Burmantofts Street is likely to be a constraint on some strategy scenarios, especially where expanding pedestrianisation in the vicinity of the Headrow might be desirable. Because it is built entirely within cuttings and tunnels the provision of any extra physical capacity for traffic displaced from other routes would be problematical. In addition, because of its condition and form of construction, a continuing and increasing level of heavy repair and renewal work is anticipated to be needed over coming years.
- 3.11 The new Leeds Transport Model (LTM) will enable key pieces of work to be updated which have of necessity been analysed so far using the existing modelling suite which although effective for highway traffic cannot directly model the interaction with public transport. This updating process will plug into the current state of option development in the TFL project and in terms of the city centre workstreams and will take place over the spring and summer period of 2010.
- 3.12 Members of the cross party Transport Strategy Group are due to meet on the 1 March 2010 to review progress made with the Transport for Leeds project so far and to agree a timetable for working on the next stages of the project.

4 Legal And Resource Implications

- 4.1 This report raises no specific legal and resource implications. These matters will be considered further as the identified strategy is finalised and details of individual projects are worked up.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 This report has described work that remains at an early stage of development and is being progressed as part of the wider Transport for Leeds strategy development, which is now approaching the end of the initial model building and analytical stage. Initial work has been undertaken to evaluate potential options using the Council's existing transport model, which is due to be replaced in the spring of 2010. A number of potential options for the city centre loop road have been examined commensurate with supporting the future development of urban realm space in the city centre, especially City Square and with future possibilities for improving bus service interchange including at the rail station, accessibility and routing.

- 5.3 The principal findings so far are that the road network to the South West of the centre is a critical factor to any successful change in the use of road space in the centre. Any significant changes to the use of City Square will require additional capacity / routing in the Holbeck area and improved connectivity to, and utilisation of the Ingram Distributor route and improvements to the Armley Gyratory junction.
- 5.4 Further work is required before any definitive strategy advice can be provided on these matters.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are requested to:
- i) note and comment on the contents of this report; and
 - ii) seek a further report to update progress when it is possible to provide more substantive results from the work programme.

7 Background information

- 7.1 There are no background documents relating to this report.