

Motorcycle Bus Lane Trial

Date: 24th June 2021

Report of: Director of City Development

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- This report updates members on their recommendation, to establish a trial of motorcycle access to bus lanes, at a site in Leeds, made by this board on 4th September 2019. The recommendation was for officers in conjunction with the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) to determine the most favourable location in Leeds to trial the usage of bus lanes by motorcycles. The A65 from Abbey Road to the city centre, passing through Kirkstall was selected as the most favourable location.
- Officers have developed a scheme and proceeded to consult with key stakeholders. Kirkstall Ward members, whose ward is mostly affected by this proposed change, are unable to support the introduction of the trial. Without local Ward Member support officers are unable to fulfil the recommendation of the trial at this time.
- Since the board met in September 2019 significant changes have occurred to national guidance on cycling. This guidance cautions that allowing motorcyclists into bus lanes used by cyclists is likely to be a deterrent to cycling and increase conflict. This guidance makes clear that if motorcycles are to be mixed with pedal cycles in a bus lane, the bus lane should have sufficient width (4 metre minimum, ideally 4.5 metres). The A65 is the only bus lane in Leeds meeting this criteria. Following the guidance, thus leaves few other options.
- Members of this committee are therefore requested to provide direction on how officers should implement the 4th September 2019 recommendations of this board.

Recommendations

- a) Scrutiny Board members are requested to note and consider this report.
- b) Members are invited to consider expressing a view on which of the options outlined at points 23-26 they consider a favourable course of action.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 At the Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth) meeting dated 4th September 2019, the existing policy to not permit motorcycles to use bus lanes was discussed. Due to the uncertainty and lack of definitive evidence supporting a change in policy, it was recommended as an initial step to trial motorcycle access at a selected site in

Leeds. Any further roll-out would be informed by the success of the trial and by appraisal of site specific contexts of the different bus lanes across the Leeds District.

- 2 The proposal aligns with the WYCA 2040 transport strategy which made it a goal to promote motorcycling in West Yorkshire and committed at a district level to roll out phased motorcycle access to bus lanes if deemed appropriate.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: Kirkstall, Little London & Woodhouse

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 3 The impact of the proposal is unclear. The introduction of a trial was intended to inform any future policy decisions related to motorcycle access of bus lanes and enable officers to learn about what impact this change would have and the parameters that enable such a change to be successful.
- 4 There has always been uncertainty around the possible impacts the trial would have. From a motorcyclist perspective the trial was considered to be supporting the safety of a motorcyclists by allowing them to use bus lanes on the A65 instead of congested and much narrower general traffic lanes. Motorcyclists are classed as vulnerable road users as they suffer a highly disproportionate rate of casualties relative to distance travelled. The decision was also hoped to improve the sustainability of transport choices on the corridor. The time-saving motorcyclists would be able to benefit from, would encourage a take up in motorcycling, reducing carbon emissions relative to car use. Alleviating congestion by encouraging mode shift away from single occupancy car use was another anticipated positive impact of the scheme.
- 5 Possible negative impacts on the scheme were potential delay to buses from the extra traffic in the bus lane, which would be highly damaging on a flagship quality bus corridor with a service every 10 minutes as the A65 corridor has. The other principal concern was impediment of the safety and perceived safety and comfort of cyclists. Impacting on the cities promotion of cycling which has seen substantial investment, including in 2020 the A65 having segregated cycling facilities installed as a trial into light segregation.
- 6 As noted in the report of 04.09.2019 the other area of concern, was a possible increase in road traffic collisions as a result of allowing motorcyclists use of the bus lane. Other cities when trialling such schemes as London, have in some cases seen an increase in both motorcyclists speeding and collision rates for motorcyclists, and in some cases an increase in pedal cyclists injured in collisions with motorcyclists.
- 7 Since the original decision four developments to note are as follows. Firstly the council has published a draft transport strategy which sets out the cities ambition to be a city where residents do not need to own a car. And instead, responds to the climate emergency by planning a lower carbon future, in which residents mobility needs are met by a drastic increase in public transport use, active travel and developments in shared and micro-mobility services.
- 8 Secondly in 2020 government issued cycling guidance with much higher standards, Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20), accompanied by the 'gear change' document which states these standards "will be enforced by a new inspectorate, Active Travel England". Of particular relevance to bus lanes is section 6.61 "[Bus Lanes] do not provide an environment attractive to a wide range of people and should therefore not be regarded as inclusive. Some bus lanes also allow taxis and motorcycles to use them, which can

significantly increase traffic flows, thereby acting as a deterrent to cycling while also increasing risk of conflict.”

- 9 The national bus strategy has been published by the DfT with a key message that government “...expect to see plans for bus lane on any roads where there is a frequent bus service, congestion, and physical space to install one¹...”. The same document makes clear that opening bus lanes to extra users is not welcome “We will not support opening bus lanes to electric cars or vans, which would quickly erode their benefits to bus users.”
- 10 The last interlinked development is Leeds has become part of a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). A mayor has been elected and has spoken strongly in favour of investment in buses across West Yorkshire. By the end of October 2021 each Local Transport Authority will need to publish a Local Bus Service Improvement Plan. Amongst other components this will include “How traffic management and investment are used to prioritise buses. In Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) this will include the extent of the MCA’s role...and how that is used to prioritise bus services².”
- 11 These interlinked changes mean another impact to be considered, is the possibility of promoting motorcycling in bus lanes, impacting not just on the councils established targets of having quality bus networks and increasing uptake of cycling; but also of impacting on the goals of the DfT, the Mayoral Combined Authority and the cities ambitions to prioritise bus services and bus users.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 12 Non-statutory engagement has been carried out across a range of stakeholders.
- 13 Consultation responses received from current bus lanes users were as follows;
 - Hackney Carriage Operators – Stated they had no objections currently, and felt the trial would need to take place before they could give an informed comment.
 - Cycle Forum – Leeds Cycle Sub Group – No objections were given but a preference was expressed for a trial at a site where there are segregated facilities for cyclists such as the A647 corridor.
 - Bus Operators Group – No objections have been received but concerns were noted of possible impacts on bus service reliability.
 - Accessibility Group – Similarly to Hackney Operators, expressed a desire to comment further once impacts of the trial could be appreciated.
 - Emergency Services - No objections received.
- 14 The Motorcycle Action Group strongly support the trial.
- 15 Ward member consultation was carried with members from the two wards directly affected. No objections have been received from the members of the Little London & Woodhouse ward. There has been extensive engagement with members from the Kirkstall Ward. Despite ongoing discussion and ward members doing additional engagement on social media Kirkstall Members have confirmed they do not support the proposed trial on the A65.

¹ **Bus Back Better** – the National Bus Strategy for England, Page 46

² **Bus Back Better** – the National Bus Strategy for England, Page 41

- 16 The objections from Kirkstall Ward Members include the mixed evidence from existing trials elsewhere, that if the trial was to go ahead it should take place elsewhere in Leeds, and that the trial would be of detriment to cyclists.
- 17 Kirkstall member's objections centre on the perceived unacceptable risk to cyclists that would be caused by allowing motorcyclists the use of the A65 bus lanes which are well used by cyclists. Furthermore as noted the A65 is the only bus lane in Leeds which conforms to the widths specified in LTN 1/20, because of this Kirkstall members question the utility of a trial which would not be able to inform the other bus lanes in Leeds, a trial could only inform a position on the A65. Therefore they see the risk inherent in a trial which could only have limited use in informing future policy as being unsupportable, with any benefits motorcyclists may accrue, not to be worth discomforting and deterring cyclists, nor risking injury to cyclists.

What are the resource implications?

- 18 Implementing the scheme at the purported trial site of the A65 was estimated to cost approx. £20000. This would have covered the staff time, the need for new signage, accompanied by modifications to the current Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and monitoring and evaluation that would have been required. This was to be funded through the Local Transport Fund (LTP).

What are the legal implications?

- 19 No known legal implications other than a requirement to amend the existing Traffic Regulation Order.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 20 Key risks were the potential downsides to the trial, i.e. some perceived potential for road safety to worsen, potential for cyclists to feel unsafe, potential for bus users to be delayed. Officers were planning to develop a communication and promotion pack about the changes in order to mitigate against any rider behaviour concerns. A monitoring and evaluation package was also planned to assess bus journey time reliability, focus groups with a variety of road users and ongoing review of collision records. A pre-scheme risk assessment was planned to be completed around the possible road safety implications of the changes.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 21 The council and city have very strong ambitions to increase the mode share of sustainable transport, to address the climate emergency by substantially reducing carbon emissions. In the councils draft Transport Strategy by 2030, cycling is targeted to increase 400%, bus patronage by 130% and car usage to decrease 30%. Promoting motorcycling as an alternative to private car usage supports the goal of reducing car usage, however concerns have been raised over how compatible the promotion of motorcycling is with the ambitious goals the city has for increasing people cycling and using public transport.

22 The trial could be said to support inclusive growth by increasing opportunity for those without a car to access education, training and employment in the city³. The trial would have hoped to address the climate emergency by promoting mode shift to motorcycling from single-occupancy private car use. As motorcycles emit less than half the carbon of cars⁴ the trial was hoped to reduce carbon emissions. There is a risk that if the trial had negative implications on active travel and bus use, instead it would cause an undesirable increase in carbon emissions.

Options, timescales and measuring success

23 In terms of the trial, all existing bus lanes were assessed. The A65 was deemed comfortably the most suitable site for key reasons relating to the DfT guidance on the appropriateness of allowing Motorcycle access to bus lanes. Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/07 encourages motorcycles to be allowed access to corridors rather than isolated elements of bus lane. The A65 from Abbey Road to the city centre provides a level of clarity for motorcyclist's superior to other sections of bus lane in Leeds, which suffer from being discontinuous or interrupted by guided busway. The guidance is generally not particularly prescriptive instead encouraging each bus lane to be evaluated on its own merits. However where the guidance is prescriptive is on lane widths. "Bus lanes should be at least the minimum preferred width of 4 metres, or more wherever possible"⁵. This is also reflected in Local Transport Note 1/20⁶ guidance for cycling which states "Where cyclists are using bus lanes, the lane should be at least 4m wide, and preferably 4.5m, to enable buses to pass cyclists with sufficient room. Bus lanes less than 4m in width are not recommended". The A65 is the only bus lane in Leeds to conform to these conditions being 4.5 metres for most of its length and at least 4 metres wide otherwise. Other bus lanes in Leeds are significantly narrower and fall in to the 3.2 to 3.9 metre range that LTN 1/20 states "widths between 3.2m and 3.9m wide should not be used". Another chief concern in evaluating the efficacy of allowing motorcycles in bus lanes is the frequency of junctions and side roads which could have a collision risk with turning movements, the A65 bus lanes have infrequent junctions so also comply with this condition.

24 Ultimately, due to the lack of support for a trial on the A65, three options remain.

25 The first is to consider an alternative trial location from the existing bus lanes in the Leeds district. Officers are of the view that due to current guidance around the recommended width for bus lanes, particularly where there is a variety of vulnerable roads users there a very few if any suitable sites. It is therefore hard to promote this option.

26 Colleagues have explored this and consider the next best route would be the A647 due to there being segregated cycle provision adjacent. However, the A647 is currently receiving major investment upgrading the HOV lanes to bus lanes with the provision of additional junction and signal works under LPTIP, to significantly enhance bus provision on this corridor. Therefore this site is not immediately available. Thus this option is to wait approximately 2 years, for the scheme to be completed in 12 months and for it to bed in for a further 12 month period; before progressing to a trial of motorcycles using the A647 bus lanes. A trial on this site would have the potential to inform a future policy position that in

³ Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/07 'The use of bus lanes by motorcycles' states motorcycling has the benefits of "offering a cheaper alternative to the car; providing independence and mobility; widening employment opportunities, especially where public transport is limited"

⁴ See p.26 in the draft Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy

⁵ Traffic advisory leaflet 2/07, p.4

⁶ Local Transport Note 1/20, Section 6.6.2

Leeds we support allowing motorcycles in bus lanes when both there are segregated cycle facilities and no other obstacles to preclude motorcycle access.

27 The last option is to consider withdrawing the recommendation to set up a time-limited trial of motorcycle access to bus lanes in Leeds.

a) How will success be measured?

28 N/A

b) What is the timetable for implementation?

29 N/A

Appendices

30 The report from the 'Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth' scrutiny board meeting of 04.09.2019 can be accessed here;

<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s194236/4%20Appendix%203%20Directors%20report%20-%20Motorcycle%20access%20to%20bus%20lanes%20final.pdf>

Background papers

31 'Bus Back Better' the national bus strategy can be accessed here;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf

32 'Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/07' can be accessed here;

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120606214004/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-2-07/tal-2-07.pdf>

33 The draft 'Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy' can be accessed here; [https://s3-eu-west-](https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/commonplace-customer-)

[2.amazonaws.com/commonplace-customer-assets/leedstransportstrategy/Leeds%20Transport%20Strategy_p11.pdf](https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/commonplace-customer-assets/leedstransportstrategy/Leeds%20Transport%20Strategy_p11.pdf)

34 'Local Transport Note 1/20' can be accessed here;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951074/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf