

Trial of motorcycle/PTW access to bus lanes on the A65 corridor

Date: 12 January 2022

Report of: Principal Transport Planner

Report to: Chief Officer of Highways and transportation

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

- Motorcycles are not currently permitted in bus lanes in Leeds and historically this has been established practice throughout West Yorkshire. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) in 2017 published their '2040 Transport Strategy' and pledged, where possible, to a phased roll out of motorcycle access to bus lanes, across the five districts. This roll out started, with a pilot scheme in the Wakefield district on one corridor within Wakefield. The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) have a longstanding ambition for motorcyclists to be permitted in bus lanes throughout the Leeds district. This report sets out plans for Leeds to trial access for motorcyclists to the bus lanes on the A65.
- The issue has been considered at some length by the 'Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth' scrutiny board. The board has considered a wide range of issues relating to the potential benefits and potential downsides of a trial of allowing motorcycle access to bus lanes. The scheme being proposed aligns with the recommendations of the board.
- The report also describes the monitoring and evaluation that will be undertaken to allow the impact of the trial on motorcyclists, and on other road users and groups, to be reviewed. As the trial is planned to be conducted under an Experimental Traffic Order, at the conclusion of the order, a decision would need to be taken to make the order permanent or to terminate the trial.

Recommendations

- a) Note the contents of the report.
- b) Give authority for the design and implementation of the trial, inclusive of the detailed design of suitable signage and drafting of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.
- c) Consider and approve the monitoring and evaluation package for the trial.
- d) Give authority for the costs, of approximately £40,000, to be funded from the Local Transport Plan Capital Programme.
- e) Give authority to request the City Solicitor to advertise an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order(s) as required, and if no valid objections are received, to make, seal and implement the Order(s) as advertised.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The proposal is being put forward to support the promotion of motorcycling and to support the safety of motorcyclists who are considered a vulnerable road user. However, because clear evidence has not been established that allowing motorcyclists into bus lanes, does necessarily result in increased safety for all vulnerable road users, the scheme is being put forward as a trial, to allow the impacts to be evaluated.
- 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, where it would be appropriate considering local road conditions. The proposal further aligns with the recently published Connecting Leeds 'Transport Strategy' which on page 44 states *"Motorcycles have a role to play in the city, they require less space than a conventional car however they still emit carbon emissions and need to decarbonise. We will provide new parking facilities in the city centre and work with stakeholders to bring forward a trial of motorcycles in bus lanes."*

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected: Kirkstall, Little London & Woodhouse

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 3 The scheme is a trial and thus the impacts are uncertain. The positive benefits of the scheme are hoped from a motorcyclist perspective to be supportive of the safety of 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 scheme was also hoped to improve the sustainability of transport choices on the corridor. The time-saving motorcyclists would be able to benefit from, could encourage a take up in motorcycling, reducing carbon emissions relative to car usage and further as motorcycles occupy less road space than cars could also potentially reduce congestion on the corridor.

The possible negative implications of the trial 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 high frequency services as the A65 corridor has.

As noted in the report to the 'infrastructure, investment, and inclusive growth' scrutiny board 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 such as London, have in some cases seen an increase in both rates of motorcyclists speeding and collision rates for motorcyclists, and in some cases an increase in pedal cyclists injured in collisions with motorcyclists.

The other interlinked concern that has been raised, is the possible impediment of the safety and perceived safety and comfort of cyclists. This could impact 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 the light segregation of cyclists from traffic.

There will be a careful review of the success of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and the trial usage to see if it maintains the safety of all road users. If the trial is considered successful it will have the impact of informing possible further roll out in Leeds of motorcycle access to bus lanes.

The impacts on equality have been considered through a 'Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) screening, this has been included as Appendix B. Consideration was given to existing users of the bus lane, who may have protected characteristics. Currently it is not anticipated that the trial will have negative differential impacts. And consultation with stakeholders has shown a feeling that the trial would need to go ahead for any impacts to be appreciated. However because there are acknowledged concerns, that for instance, some groups of cyclists such as women and children are more likely to be inexperienced cyclists who could potentially find sharing the bus lane with motorcyclists to be a deterrent, these type of concerns will be considered through the monitoring and evaluation of the trial.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 4 Extensive consultation and engagement have taken place.
- 5 Non-statutory engagement has been carried out across a range of stakeholders. 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 Subgroup – 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.

The Motorcycle Action Group strongly support the trial.

Ward member consultation was carried out 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 this engagement and ward members doing additional engagement on social media, Kirkstall Members have confirmed they do not support the proposed trial on the A65. The objections from Kirkstall Ward Members included 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.

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 guidance, because of this Kirkstall members question the utility of a trial which would not be able to inform the other bus lanes in Leeds, perceiving 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.

Following the extensive engagement with the ward members, as noted in section 12, officers reported back to the Infrastructure, investment and Inclusive growth' scrutiny board, the board decided to establish a working group to consider the matter in substantial detail. At this working group, which was held on the 26th of July 2021, a Kirkstall ward member represented and spoke on behalf of all 3 of the Kirkstall members, and was able to inform the board directly, of their concerns. After hearing these concerns, the board ultimately decided to issue a recommendation for the trial to go ahead. Subsequently, the chief officer of Highways and Transportation has decided, in consultation with Cllr Hayden the executive member for Infrastructure and Climate, to endorse the recommendation reached by the scrutiny board.

What are the resource implications?

- 6 The trial is forecast to cost approximately £40,000, comprising approx. £20,00 for staff time, approx. £13,000 for the traffic order and signage, and £7,000 for a monitoring and evaluation package.
- 7 It will require input from a multidisciplinary team within Highways & Transport, in order to implement the changes and monitor the impacts.

What are the legal implications?

- 8 Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders as proposed in the body of the report may make any provision prohibiting, restricting or regulating the use of a road, or of any part of the width of a road, by vehicular traffic, or by vehicular traffic of any class specified in the order,— (a) either generally or subject to such exceptions as may be specified in the order or determined in a manner provided for by it, and (b) subject to such exceptions as may be so specified or determined, either at all times or at times, on days or during periods so specified. Where there is a requirement, modification or suspension may take place during the lifetime of the Order.

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

- 9 As noted in section 3, there are possible negative implications to the trial. It is intended to manage these risks, through the evaluation and monitoring package of the trial. Particular road safety risks are planned to be mitigated through signage. And through running communication campaigns, utilising the support of the Influencing Behaviour Team and Connecting Leeds.

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

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 10 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 city.

The trial has potential to help address the climate emergency by promoting mode shift to motorcycling from single-occupancy private car use. However, the timeline for motorcycles to decarbonise is uncertain, and so promoting the use of motorcycling, whilst this may help to reduce carbon emissions in the short term, is not necessarily as supportive of achieving net zero as other more sustainable modes. There is a risk that if the trial had negative impacts on active travel and bus usage, instead it would cause an undesirable increase in carbon emissions.

The scheme is also hoped to support the health and wellbeing of motorcyclists who are classed as vulnerable road users, through the safety benefits accrued from riding in bus lanes as opposed to general traffic lanes. However, analysis of the last 5-year accident record does not show any injuries to riders in traffic lanes adjacent to the A65 bus lanes, therefore the benefit may not be significant. As with the potential lower carbon emissions of motorcyclists, if a shift from single occupancy cars occurs from the promotion of motorcycling, lower emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter are to be expected compared to the average car, and lowering these emissions would have health benefits.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 11 Initially a study was conducted of bus lanes in Leeds to determine the most favourable trial site. Two main considerations were the width of lanes to allow safe overtaking and the frequency of side roads, as turning movements in or out of side roads, are a major cause of motorcycle collisions. The A65 was ultimately selected because it was unique in Leeds in conforming to issued guidance. Guidance on bus lane policy, issued by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to districts, recommended widths of 4.5 metres to ensure buses could safely overtake motorcyclists and cyclists. The bus lanes on the A65 comprise three discrete sections, of Kirkstall Road, Commercial Road and Abbey Road, of which the first two have a width of at least 4.5 metres and the latter has a width of approximately 4 metres. One option would therefore have been to not include Abbey Road as it does not conform to a 4.5 metre width. However, nationally the primary piece of guidance, from the DfT, 'The Use of Bus Lanes by Motorcycles - TAL 02/07' states "Bus lanes should be at least the minimum preferred width of 4 metres, or more wherever possible". And so because Abbey Road conforms to the DfT minimum and there are benefits to a corridor wide scheme, as highlighted by the DfT, "Ideally, once legitimately in a bus lane, motorcyclists should not have to check each subsequent section of bus lane to see if they are allowed to use it. A route which allows the intermittent use of bus lanes by motorcycles can be confusing to users and may pose enforcement difficulties for the highway authority and police." Therefore, it was decided that including all sections of the A65 was the best approach, to ensure as much clarity and continuity as possible, whilst maintaining at least the nationally recommended widths.
- 12 The working group of the 'Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth' scrutiny board, which convened on the 26th of July 2021, after officers reported delay to the trial on the A65 at the board meeting on the 24th of June 2021, considered possible alternative options including holding a trial at a location where cyclists would have access to segregated facilities and so would not be sharing a bus lane with motorcyclists. This proposal was not possible, owing to such facilities in Leeds either being under construction or under redevelopment, as part of new bus and cycling priority schemes and therefore could not be suitable locations for a trial.
- 13 The September 2021 meeting of the 'Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth' scrutiny board, made an additional recommendation, that "an initial indication be provided to Executive Board that in due course other segregated routes such as the A647 and A61/A639 should

similarly be considered as possible locations for powered two-wheeler access to bus lanes.” These routes were discounted as options owing to the substantial works programmed on these corridors, they could be options in the future if the results of the A65 trial proved motorcycle access to bus lanes, is both positive and if it was considered to be an effective use of the public money, that is required to change Traffic Regulation Orders, implement new signage and carry out Road Safety Audits.

How will success be measured?

14 The trial will be carefully monitored through a package of monitoring and evaluation as follows.

- Usage will be monitored across the three discrete sections of the A65. This will be undertaken before and during the scheme, at the 3 discreet sections of the A65. The monitoring will establish both the total usage by motorcyclists and will give a breakdown of how many motorcyclists use the bus lane and how many use the adjacent general traffic lane.
- Speed will be monitored before and after at 3 sites along the A65, to see if motorcyclists being allowed to use the bus lane, causes an increase in both average speed of motorcyclists and/or an increase in motorcyclists exceeding the speed limit.
- If detection technology allows, the extent of ‘weaving’ or lane switching between the bus lane across a solid white line into the adjacent traffic lane or vice versa will be monitored, as this is an acknowledged safety concern
- Collision statistics will be monitored and analysed by Road Safety officers. Collision statistics are normally viewed as trends over long terms period, often a minimum of 5 years; so, there will be a limit on the strength of trends and conclusions that will be possible to be drawn after the completion of the trial period.
- Any possible delays to buses will be monitored by analysing bus journey time reliability metrics.
- Effects on other vulnerable road users such as cyclists will be monitored either through user intercept surveys or through establishing a focus group.

15 At the conclusion of the trial, officers will prepare a report on the operation and performance of the trial. This report would inform the decision, that will be taken by the chief officer and the exec member, in deciding whether to make the ETRO permanent.

What is the timetable for implementation?

16 The trial is aimed to launch in the spring depending on the successful procurement of Traffic Engineering and road safety support, to allow the trial to commence within this aimed for timescale. This start date should allow the trial to align with the time of year that rates of motorcycling traditionally are observed to markedly increase with improved weather conditions and longer hours of daylight. To monitor the impacts across all four seasons, it is intended that the trial will last for at least 12 months.

Appendices

17 Appendix A - Guidance from WYCA, to the constituent district members including Leeds City Council on Bus Lane Policy

18 Appendix B - Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) screening

Background papers

19 '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>

20 West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040 can be accessed here;

<https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/2379/transport-strategy-2040.pdf>

21 Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy can be accessed here;

<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s226223/Connecting%20Leeds%20Report%20Appendix%20A%20111021.pdf>

22 Reports to the 'Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth' scrutiny board can be accessed as follows:

- September 2019 -
<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1112&MId=8611&Ver=4>
- June 2021 -
<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1192&MId=11569&Ver=4>
- September 2021 -
<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1112&MId=11684&Ver=4>