

Report of the Director of City Development

To: Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 18th December 2008

Subject: A660 Corridor Transport Issues

Electoral Wards Affected:

Headingley
Hyde Park & Woodhouse
Weetwood

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council
Function

Delegated Executive
Function available
for Call In

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call In Details set out in the
report

Executive Summary

The report outlines early work to identify interim measures for improving movement within the A660 corridor in particular for bus transit, pending the longer term development of proposals for the New Generation Transport system. More specifically the report summarises initial scheme proposals that have been developed to improve pedestrian facilities at the A660 junction with Clarendon Road and to address bus stop and priority issues at this site.

1.0 Purpose of This Report

1.1 This report outlines proposals for development of traffic and transport measures for the A660 corridor.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The A660 corridor has been identified as part of the proposed New Generation Transport (NGT) scheme which is being developed as a replacement for the former Leeds Supertram scheme. Phase 1 of this scheme has been endorsed by the Regional Transport Board for the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA), and Phase 2 which includes the A660 is due to be considered by the RTB in January 2009. However, if the funding is endorsed a start of construction is not likely before 2014 at the very earliest.

2.2 In view of the NGT timetable. Investigations are being undertaken to develop an interim package of measures that will provide early improvements, especially to the reliability and timing of bus services. These proposals will be designed to be compatible, as far as possible, with the ultimate NGT scheme.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 Studies assessing congestion on the major radials in the Leeds District have shown the A660 to be one of the most congested. Morning peak inbound traffic speeds were among the lowest of those studied and similarly the evening peak speeds outbound were the lowest in the district.

3.2 Peak traffic flows on this corridor are low in comparison to other major radials, however bus patronage is amongst the highest. Given the higher than average ratio of bus users to car users, there is potential for bus priority measures to be particularly effective on this corridor with significant benefits for existing and future passengers.

3.3 Issues of reliability and timing for the large number of bus services are a matter of continuing concern for passengers and the local community. These concerns are shared by the Council, Metro and the bus operators.

3.4 High flows of pedestrians and cyclists are also a feature of the inner sections of the A660 route. Surveys indicate over 100 cyclists traveling towards Leeds city centre in the busiest peak hour.

3.5 There are also a number of issues with regard to road safety with the junctions at Rampart Road, Hyde Park Corner, North Lane, Shaw Lane and the Ring Road identified in the Council's sites for concern listings. There is also a long standing aspiration to improve the provision for pedestrians at the junction with Clarendon Road and to address the very poor bus facilities at this location. In addition, a study for Leeds Cycling Action Group and funded by the area committee has identified issues relating to cycling.

3.7 Traffic surveys indicate the following key data in relation to this corridor:

- Bus flows – There are 27 service buses (34 south of Clarendon Road) scheduled each way in the peak hours along this corridor. Journey time data shows considerable variation at all times of day but particularly in the peak where variability is almost twice as high as the inter-peak. In the evening peak outbound buses have the lowest speeds on any radial route in Leeds, averaging well below 10mph for the entire length of the route. For example between Hyde Park Corner and Headingley centre buses take an average of ten minutes longer than at other times
- Bus patronage – Over 2500 passengers use services on the A660 during the morning peak with similar levels in the evening. Services are also very well used during the off-peak periods.

- Traffic flow – Whilst relatively low in comparison to other key radials, congestion has similar effects on journey time and public transport reliability to those experienced elsewhere on the network. Flows in the morning peak have reached 1897 vehicles, whilst the evening peak flows are slightly lower at 1726 vehicles.
- Cycle flow – Cycle traffic is relatively high on this corridor with around 175 cyclists observed throughout the morning peak, with similar flows in the evening albeit dispersed over a longer period.
- Pedestrian flows – There are heavy pedestrian flows along this corridor at peak periods particularly South of Headingley centre. All crossing points along the route are busy including (but not limited to) the main junctions at Hyde Park Corner and Clarendon Road. Morning counts indicate an hourly total of 634 pedestrian crossing movements at the Woodhouse Lane/Clarendon Road junction.

3.7 The delays and congestion affecting bus movements in this corridor are such that it is considered that there is a strong case in conjunction with the other issues identified to identify interim measures for introduction prior to the proposed NGT scheme.

4.0 Proposals

4.1 In order to address the issues identified above, initial desk top studies have been undertaken to identify where measures might have the greatest impact in reducing some of the key problems along this route. These key locations are identified on the plan provided on the route plan at Appendix 1 and discussed further as follows.

4.2 Whilst ideally the range of problems described above would be tackled as part of a single integrated scheme, their complexity is such that it may be more practical to bring forward proposals in a phased manner as their evaluation and development proceeds. At the present time approval has been granted for the fees needed to develop to a more detailed level the outline proposals identified below for the Clarendon Road junction and to take forward further investigation and development of solutions for the other issue identified later in this section.

Woodhouse Lane Clarendon Road (Section 1)

4.3 As a first stage outline proposals for the provision of improved pedestrian facilities at the junction of Clarendon Road and Woodhouse Lane including new controlled facilities across the Clarendon Road leg of the junction. This has been a long standing request. At the same time as part of the junction works, which require the reconfiguration of the traffic signals it is proposed to take the opportunity to address the sub standard bus stop facilities by providing a bus priority facility. Details of the outline scheme are included in Appendix 2 and identified as Section 1 on the route plan.

4.4 Elsewhere on the A660 corridor, using the data described in Section 3, a number of key locations are currently being examined further prior to bringing forward outline proposals for further discussion and consultation.

Hyde Park Corner area (Section 2)

- 4.5 This site and the adjacent Rampart Road junction are both identified in the Council's road injury sites for concern. At Hyde Park Corner there are long standing issues concerning the adequacy of the existing pedestrian facilities and also the present layout is not best suited to the movement of traffic with a number of conflicting turning movements. At the same time the traffic signal installation is dated and does not provide for the most efficient priority to be given to public transport movements. In terms of Rampart Road there are particular issues relating to the turning movements onto and off the A660 which could be addressed by the introduction of traffic signals integrated with improvements at Hyde Park Corner and the proposals for the Clarendon Road junction.

Hyde Park Corner to Headingley Centre (Section 3)

- 4.6 As identified earlier, in the outbound direction this location is a major source of delay to bus services. Taking a typically peak hour outbound flow of 1200 passengers, these extra peak delays with a cumulative cost to passengers of around 200 hours in travel time and in this context there is a compelling economic case for action, aside from the real benefits that could accrue to passengers. It is likely that the most effective measure would be the provision of an outbound bus lane which has been investigated. Such a proposal would have implications for the present cycle lane provision which would require to be modified and further advice is being taken on this matter.

Headingley Centre and Otley Road (Section 4)

- 4.7 A study is being undertaken to assess what steps can be taken to improve conditions in Headingley Centre in particular in terms of the bus queuing and stopping arrangements. Similarly the section of route between Shaw Lane and the Ring Road is being examined, including the junctions with Weetwood Lane and Church Wood Avenue. This work will form the basis for developing and consulting on possible solutions during 2009.

A6120 Ring Road junction (Section 5)

- 4.8 This location has been identified as requiring improvements as part of the NGT with particular issues relating to the need for improved public transport priorities, together with formal provision for pedestrians and cyclists across all legs of the junction. In this regard an outline bid for resources to be allocated from the Regional Funding Allocation has been submitted to the Regional Transport Board for the improvement of key junctions along the A6120 route including the A660. Subject to the development of detailed proposals and the approval of the Department for Transport this scheme could begin on site in 2014.

A660 North of the A6120 (Section 6)

- 4.9 Whilst the NGT scheme will include proposals for a park and ride site at Bodington and the associated priority facilities, at the present time the Council does not have sufficient resources from its core LTP funding to bring forward a scheme of this magnitude without specific major scheme funding. Therefore, work is being undertaken with the NGT project team to evaluate the options for bringing forward this scheme earlier. Any further decisions on this element of the scheme will need to await the decisions of the Regional Transport Board concerning the bid for Phase 2 of the NGT scheme.

5.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

5.1 Compliance with Council Policies

- 5.1.1 Environmental Policy: The proposals contained within this report are in accordance with the aims of the Policy in that the improvement works will reduce the number and severity of accidents thereby creating a safer local environment and will help encourage the use of public transport
- 5.1.2 Mobility: The provision of dropped crossings and pedestrian facilities will provide a positive aid to all pedestrians and ease pedestrian movement across the A660 Woodhouse Lane and Clarendon Road.
- 5.1.3 Local Transport Plan (LTP): The proposals contained in this report are in accordance with Primary Objectives of the Local Transport Plan: to improve safety, security and health in particular to reduce the number and severity of accidents thereby creating a safe environment, making public transport more accessible for the public, improve the highway network and provide facilities for each road user
- 5.1.4 Ethnic minorities, women and disabled people: This report has no implication for ethnic minorities or women.

5.2 Legal and Resource Implications

- 5.2.1 Funding: With the exception of the scheme at the Ring Road roundabout (which is the subject of a major scheme bid) it is anticipated that the potential capital costs of any measures agreed will be met from the Council's Local Transport Plan funding
- 5.2.2 Staffing: There are no additional staffing implications arising from these proposals.

6.0 Consultation

- 6.1 Ward Members have been consulted on the proposals for Clarendon Road and have supported the outline proposals. Members of the Area Committee have requested further discussion of these proposals especially with regard to the proposed bus measures and the proposals were presented to the Area Committee's transport sub group at its 11th November meeting. Funding for the final proposals will require a further approval once detailed consultation and design has been completed.
- 6.2 NGT Project Team: The preliminary scheme proposals have been fully considered with the NGT Project Team in order to ensure that any proposals implemented at this time would not be detrimental to future NGT proposals.
- 6.3 The development of the corridor generally is at very early stage with further detailed consultation planned with Ward Members, Area Management, Metro and the bus operators on the various elements set out in this report.
- 6.4 Residents, businesses and stakeholders: As the various proposals are developed, comments from local stakeholders and residents associations will be accepted and taken into account in the finalisation of any proposals and formal reporting of the proposals.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The initial assessment of the traffic and transport issues on the A660 indicates that a case exists for the early investment in the infrastructure of the route to provide improvements in the interim period before the introduction of the proposed NGT scheme. As a result of this work early improvements to the junction with Clarendon Road are being developed and consulted upon.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are requested to note and comment on the content of this report.

9 Background information

- 9.1 There are no background papers supporting this report.