

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Transport held on Wednesday, 26 July 2023 at 4.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE (in the Chair)

Councillors Simon Boshier
Graham Heaney
Brian Madgwick

7. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

8. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Simon Boshier declared a non-prejudicial interest as he was part of the design team for the Uber Thames Clipper as mentioned in the report.

9. TRO 40/2023: City Centre North (Bus Gates, One Way, Speed Limit and Waiting & Loading Restrictions)

Aneta Scurtu, Senior Highways Engineer, presented her report, the purpose of which was to consider representations received during the consultation for the proposed bus gates, one way streets, speed limit and waiting & loading restrictions in the City Centre North, Portsmouth.

Deputations

A deputation was made by Marc Reddy, Managing Director, Stagecoach in favour of the proposal:

Buses play a vital part in all towns and cities and Portsmouth is no different. Buses are the most popular form of public transport in the UK and provides lifelines to employment and jobs, retail, education, health and so on, and in turn is an integral part of the economy. Buses are flexible and play a major part in helping tackle the effects of climate change. However, the greenest and cleanest vehicles in the world doesn't solve the congestions problem which is faced by bus operators. Whilst ultimately all the vehicles may be zero emission in the future, having those vehicles stuck in traffic delivers nothing for our cities in terms of economic growth etc.

I have been involved in operating buses in and around Portsmouth, on and off, for over 22 years and the challenge of operating bus services between Commercial Road South and Commercial Road North has been and remains challenging, due to the nature of the road layout. Of course, many decades ago, the buses probably served the entire stretch of Commercial Road before pedestrianisation.

The two key challenges are:

- a) coming into the city , we have a bus lane until St Agatha's church and then by virtue of the road width the bus lane stops and buses have to compete into the main road of traffic.*
- b) coming out of the city, Unicorn Gate can be a slow cycle of traffic lights just by the nature of the traffic demand in the area. Again, further manoeuvres are then required to serve Commercial Road North.*

So, this proposal to allow buses to passage behind St Agatha's church, into Charlotte Street and onto Commercial Road North will be a significant improvement for bus services and more importantly the people who use the buses. It should also save time for the bus, which is vitally important in making bus services attractive.

Stagecoach operates 24 buses per hour in this area, and other operators also operate a similar number of buses, so the proposed works really do offer great value by virtue of the amount of bus traffic these measures would provide.

Finally, Stagecoach has a great partnership with Portsmouth City Council and has done so for many years. We were delighted to see PCC be awarded significant funding from the transforming cities fund and also from the bus service improvement plan scheme. This clearly demonstrates what can be delivered with great partnership working.

I fully support the scheme.

A written deputation was also provided by Marc Reddy.

Simon Goff, Managing Director, Stagecoach provided a written deputation which was read out by the Chair.

Both written deputations can be found [here](#).

The Chair advised he had met with a representative from Uber who had concerns about private hire vehicles being placed at a disadvantage against Hackney Taxis using the Bus Lane. The representative was reassured that no taxis, either private hire or hackney would be able to use the stretch of Charlotte Street that is currently pedestrianised.

Members' questions

In response to members' questions, officers clarified:

- Hackney taxis will be able to use the bus lane in Charlotte Street but excluding the currently pedestrianised area leading to Commercial Road North. They would have to turn left into Eden Street
- There will be physical infrastructure changes on the element of Commercial Road North that is pedestrianised, to manage the risk from buses being introduced. These include the removal of the raised table with the carriageway being resurfaced and the introduction of a level

difference between the footway and carriageway. The physical delineation will particularly be helpful for visually impaired people. There will also be a variety of crossing points to channel pedestrians, including an eight-metre-wide elevated crossing point, and a new zebra crossing. This will assist people crossing from the NCP car park into Cascades.

- The very northern part of Commercial Road is being considered as part of further work in progress in order to mitigate the risks presented by buses potentially coming into conflict with other road users.
- The speed limit is being reduced to 20 miles per hour. The geometry of the road with a sharp bend will make it challenging to travel at that speed. A vehicle path analysis was completed as part of the design programme and concluded the speed will be lower than 20 miles per hour.
- There are 'give way' lines at the junction with Lake Road. At that point it will only be taxis incoming from the right hand side.
- The crossing on Charlotte Street will be an uncontrolled crossing with pedestrians needing to wait for the buses to pass. A survey had been undertaken to assess the number of pedestrians and an uncontrolled crossing was deemed suitable for the area.
- Pedestrians and cyclists will share the pathway at Unicorn Road and Marketway junction adjacent to Cascades. There is a very low pedestrian use in these areas.

Members' comments

Members were happy with the scheme as the precursor to further development in the area.

Decision

The Cabinet Member for Transport approved the City Centre North scheme and the implementation of the TRO 40/2023 for the introduction of bus gates, one way streets, speed limit and waiting & loading restrictions in the City Centre North, Portsmouth as advertised, following formal consultation.

The meeting concluded at 4.31 pm.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
Chair