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(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation

Date of meeting: 23 March 2023

Subject: London Road Taxi Rank Trial (ETRO 87/2022)

Report by: Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration

Report Author: Jo Eldridge, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

Wards affected: Nelson

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the trial of the London Road Taxi Rank in North End following six months of operation.

2. Background

2.1 In September 2020, a review of Hackney Carriage stands was presented at the Licensing Committee and included a proposal for a 24-hour taxi rank on London Road, North End.

2.2 A number of locations were considered and following site observations, assessment and feasibility including highways designs, road safety audits and engagement with key stakeholders, a final location and operating details were proposed.

2.3 The proposed rank at the end of the bus lane close to the junction with Laburnum Grove (as shown in Appendix A) was approved at the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation meeting on 18 March 2022. This recommended that the rank be introduced as a trial under an Experimental TRO (ETRO 87/2022) to allow for the rank to be monitored during its operation, for 22 hours a day (9am to 7am).

2.4 Following the required technical work and stakeholder engagement, the ETRO (87/2022) came into effect 5 August 2022 and following the lining works and installation of signage, the rank was in operation from Tuesday 9 August 2022.

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- 2.5 The trial is such that the southern section of the bus lane is not operational as a taxi rank between 7am and 9am to allow buses full use of the bus lane in this peak period - marked with a red 'X' on Appendix A.
- 2.6 There is an existing night-time taxi rank located within the bus lane that operates between 7pm to 7am. This rank has remained operational during this trial - marked with a red line on Appendix A.
- 2.7 Appendix B, outlines the technical engineer's drawing. This depicts the bus lane, the existing night-time rank, the trial 2 car taxi rank and the nearby junctions.
- 2.8 A stage 1 / 2 Road Safety Audit was undertaken ahead of this trial going live. A detailed design was provided to the independent auditor which included the measurements and proposed operating hours. The issued report outlined that there were "No problems identified".

3. Monitoring the trial taxi rank

- 3.1 Ahead of proposing this location for the trial, there were a number of considerations on the impact on the immediate area and other road users and as such were areas to be monitored throughout the trial:
- Bus delays due to traffic waiting to turn into Derby Road
 - The turning movements required by buses exiting the bus lane and navigating the taxis present in the rank, especially if queueing vehicles are present waiting to turn into Derby Road
 - London Road being the highest cycle casualty route in Portsmouth
 - Bus lanes are shared with cyclists and rental e-scooters
 - Over-ranking by taxis or non-taxis stopping in the rank.
- 3.2 Data gathering and monitoring was carried out prior to installation and following installation to ensure the impact on user groups was measured.
- 3.3 Bus delays
There are two bus operators in Portsmouth, First and Stagecoach, both have services using this stretch of highway.
- 3.4 The trial rank installed is limited to two vehicles so as not to hinder buses as they exit the bus lane around waiting taxis. Through correspondence with bus operator representatives, both First and Stagecoach bus drivers have not had problems with this or with waiting traffic at the junction with Derby Road. The First bus representative has stated that the trial has had no adverse impact on their services.

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3.5 The stop-to-stop journey time data we have received from Stagecoach (buses run 19 hours per day from 05:00-23:00) shows the time taken to travel between the stop before and the stop after the taxi rank location. Public Transport Officers and bus representatives agreed that times exceeding five minutes would indicate disruption and should be investigated. Through retrospective CCTV observations, where possible, the five minute exceedances were reviewed - the data can be shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Bus journey time data

Month	Total buses in month	All clear	No. of instances where journey exceeds 5mins	% of journeys exceed 5mins	Taxi in Rank,	Other vehicle in Rank,	Taxi in Rank,	Other vehicle in Rank,	Unknown cause of delay
					Not the cause of delay	Not the cause of delay	Cause of delay	Cause of delay	
August (24 days)	442	437	5	1.13%	1	4	0	0	0
September (30 days)	570	566	4	0.70%	2	1	0	0	1
October (31 days)	589	584	5	0.85%	2	2	0	0	1
November (30 days)	558	544	14	2.51%	0	3	0	0	11
December (31 days)	549	534	15	2.73%	0	4	0	0	11
January (31 days)	578	570	8	1.38%	0	0	0	0	8

3.6 In all instances, the delays were not attributable to the presence of taxis or other vehicles in the trial rank or as a result of waiting traffic close to the Derby Road junction. Whilst not known, it is assumed that the delays might be due to high traffic volumes beyond the taxi rank, the presence of two signalised pedestrian crossings after the rank, or other issues south of Laburnum Grove.

3.7 Whilst Portsmouth City Council have not received data from First Bus as part of the monitoring, the regional representative has confirmed that their bus drivers have not reported delays as a result of the installation of the trial taxi rank.

3.8 Casualty data

3.9 Prior to installation, the accident data made available by Hampshire Constabulary showed three casualties classified as 'slight' in the area from 1 Feb 2018. The updated data made available recently shows there were a further three 'slight' casualties recorded close to the site ahead of the works on 8th August 2022. At the time of writing, the police data runs up until 31st December 2022 and shows there have been no recorded accidents since the trial began.

3.10 Near Miss Data - where a 'Near Miss' is defined as an unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness, or damage – but had the potential to do so.

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- 3.11 Cyclists who experience a near miss while cycling on Portsmouth's roads can record the near miss incident on the PCC Travel Portsmouth online form, which can be found here: <https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/schemes/near-miss/>.
- 3.12 From April 2018, in the period prior to installation, 13 near misses were recorded in the area close to the junction of London Rd and Laburnum Grove.
- 3.13 Following the start of the trial in August 2022, one near miss has been reported. The non-deliberate incident occurred in October 2022 and involved a cyclist travelling south along London Road and a private car turning right into Laburnum Grove. It has not stated that parked taxis were nearby, so deemed not to have occurred as a result of the taxi rank.
- 3.14 Safety Assurances
- 3.15 Prior to initiating the trial, an independent Road Safety Audit was undertaken and the report identified no concerns with the proposal for a 22 hour rank in the specific location.
- 3.16 As part of the ongoing monitoring of the trial, a follow up RSA3 was instructed to assess the scheme whilst live and in operation. The results concluded there were no problems identified.
- 3.17 Non-compliance
- 3.18 Under the trial, the taxi rank is not permitted to be used by hackney taxis between 7am and 9am to ensure buses can make use of the full length of the bus lane during the peak morning period.
- 3.19 For one week prior to installation, CCTV footage was reviewed to observe any vehicles stopping between 7am and 9am. Within that week, 17 vehicles used the section of the bus lane including delivery vans, private cars and minibuses.
- 3.20 This monitoring has continued for six months since the trial went live. Over the 17 weeks, 305 vehicles were observed with 209 staying for less than 3 minutes and 40 of these staying for longer than 10 minutes. Of these, 19 of the vehicles were hackney taxis (approximately 1 per week). The total of 305 vehicles equates to an average of 17.9 vehicles per week, similar to the 18 vehicles recorded pre-installation. Tables 2 and 3 show the CCTV observations monitored between 7am - 9am.

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Table 2 - CCTV vehicle observations pre-trial

Pre Installation - for 1 week before trial	
Minibus/Coach	5
Car	4
Delivery vehicle	3
Roads maintenance	2
Refuse vehicle	1
PHV	1
Security van	1
Ambulance	1
	18

Table 3 - CCTV vehicle observations during trial

Post installation - for 17 weeks into trial		Equivalent per Week
Minibus/Coach	104	6
Car	64	4
Delivery vehicle	49	3
Maintenance	13	1
Refuse vehicle	8	0
PHV	24	1
Security van	7	0
Iceland	16	1
Postal van	1	0
Hackney Taxi	19	1
	305	17

3.21 Parking Enforcement observations

3.22 The city council's parking enforcement team patrol the city and have included monitoring the trial taxi rank for unauthorised vehicles parking in the trial rank. Over the six month period of operation, they have not issued any Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) nor have they been made aware of issues of non-compliance at this location.

3.23 The Traffic Management Centre operators have made 109 CCTV observations at random times of the day throughout the six months since installation and have recorded the following usage:

Table 4 - Taxi rank usage observations

Month	All Clear	Number of Hackney Taxis in rank 9am - 7am	Total
August	22	2	24
September	19	1	20
October	15	2	17
November	12	1	13
December	13	1	14
January	18	3	21
Grand Total	99	10	109

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3.24 The data in Table 4 shows that of the observations recorded, taxis were present in the rank on slightly less than 10% of the time.

3.25 Officer observations

3.26 Transport officers undertook observations of the section of London Road between Stubbington Avenue and Laburnum Grove and the usage of the rank by cyclists, rental e-scooters, buses and taxis on Tuesday 7th February and Saturday 11th February.

Table 5 - Bus lane usage by cyclists and e-scooters (private and rental)

Date	Time	Bicycles using the bus lane, navigating around buses/taxis	E-scooters using the bus lane, navigating around buses/taxis	Bicycles in carriageway (remained outside of bus lane)	E-scooters in carriageway (remained outside of bus lane)
07/02/2023	09:00 - 10:00	5	2	4	0
	10:00 - 11:00	8	1	0	0
	11:00 - 12:00	7	0	2	0
	12:00 - 13:00	6	0	0	1
	13:00 - 14:00	20	4	1	0
	14:00 - 15:00	22	3	3	0
	15:00 - 16:00	18	4	0	0
	16:00 - 17:00	36	5	1	0
	17:00 - 18:00	39	6	1	0
		161	25	12	1
11/02/2023	09:00 - 10:00	9	3	0	0
	10:00 - 11:00	8	0	1	0
	11:00 - 12:00	4	0	0	0
	12:00 - 13:00	15	0	0	0
	13:00 - 14:00	10	1	2	0
	14:00 - 15:00	5	0	2	0
	15:00 - 16:00	23	2	0	0
	16:00 - 17:00	15	2	1	0
17:00 - 18:00	13	1	1	0	
		102	9	7	0

3.27 The data in Table 5 above shows usage by cyclists and e-scooters. In all instances where a cyclist or e-scooter rider began using the bus lane, they overtook stationary or slow buses and returned to the bus lane.

3.28 Approximately 14% of cyclists did not use the bus lane and remained in the main carriageway through this section on London Road.

3.29 There was one recorded instance of a hackney taxi using the rank during the observations. This was between 2pm and 3pm on Saturday 11th February.

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4. Stakeholder Feedback

- 4.1 The representative for the taxi trade has been involved throughout the planning and implementation of this trial. To gain feedback from the Portsmouth licensed hackney drivers, an email was sent to the distribution list asking for feedback on the trial and if they would like it to remain, specifically:
- Do you use the rank?
 - If yes, when do you use it?
 - What would encourage you to use this rank more often?
 - Any other comments?
- 4.2 From the emails sent, 34 responses have been received with 65% stating they use the rank and 71% would like the rank to remain.
- 4.3 In December, an email was sent to the Portsmouth Cycle Forum outlining the monitoring work being carried out and asking for their feedback on the rank given the shared use of bus lanes by cyclists.
- 4.4 Bus Operator representatives were involved in discussions on the proposals ahead of installation. Since the trial began, communications have continued through regular emails and PCC Public Transport officer led meetings and no issues have been raised.
- 4.5 In September 2022, five businesses close to the rank were visited to obtain their feedback on the trial. Whilst many were not aware of the trial, they all expressed that they had not noticed any behaviour change in their customers or staff and had no issues to report.
- 4.6 Four of the five businesses were asked recently for their feedback on the trial, with Iceland and Minutka both stating they felt their customers benefitted from the presence of the taxi rank. The Iceland employee stated that their customers find the rank convenient if they have lots of shopping to take home. They felt that customers use it on a regular basis and feel customers would be disappointed if it were to be removed.
- 4.7 Only one business provided a negative response to the rank, saying that their customers use private hire apps.

5. Responses to the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO)

- 5.1 Only one response was received to the ETRO during the six month consultation period.



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- 5.2 In February, six months following the installation of the trial, a formal ETRO objection was received from The Portsmouth Cycle Forum. Concerns were expressed over the Private Hire Vehicles in Bus Lane trial and the safety of cyclists using this section of bus lane and navigating around waiting taxis in the rank. An alternative location on the western side of London Rd, north of Derby Road, was also suggested.
- 5.3 The trial taxi rank is exclusively for use by hackney carriage taxis. Also, this section of bus lane is not within the current Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) trial and the specifics of the PHV trial do not permit PHV taxis to park within the bus lane. Any changes to the PHV trial or the taxi rank trial would be presented to the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation for a decision on the next steps. Information on the PHVs in bus lane trial can be found on our website: <https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/public-transport/private-hire-vehicles-in-bus-lanes-trial/>
- 5.4 In January 2022, an independent Road Safety Audit (RSA) was carried out which did not outline any safety concerns to cyclists using this existing bus lane. Accident and near miss data has been closely monitored and stakeholder feedback has been requested. No specific incidents have been identified during the trial period to date. Bus stops are located in the middle of this stretch of bus lane which would require cyclists and rental e-scooters using the lane to navigate around stopping buses. As part of the ongoing monitoring of the trial, a follow up stage 3 Road Safety Audit was carried out to assess the scheme whilst live and in operation. The report concluded that there were no concerns with safety in this location.
- 5.5 Prior to installation a number of alternative locations were considered, including the suggested area on the western side of London Road, with the chosen location being deemed most suitable. The recent closure of the Halifax bank and removal of the associated cashpoint may have had an impact on the use of this area, so further work is being carried out to re-assess the feasibility.
- 5.6 One of the main purposes of an experimental order is to assess the merits of the scheme over a period of time. We are proposing for the scheme to continue resulting in a final decision being made whether or not to confirm the order once the trial has been completed.
- 5.7 In line with this, the objection received will be formally considered at the end of the trial period.

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6. Next steps

- 6.1 The monitoring has shown that on specific occasions when bus delays were recorded and taxis were present in the trial rank, the taxis were not the cause of the delay.
- 6.2 Over the coming months, further work is planned, collaborating with the Licensing team, to understand the usage of the rank..
- 6.3 Council officers will carry out an investigation into the suitability of the area on the west side of the road given the changes to the businesses and a follow up report will be brought forward with any proposed changes to the trial.
- 6.4 The existing taxi rank will continue to be monitored through regular engagement with stakeholders and data gathering.
- 6.5 A report will be taken to the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation ahead of the end of the 18 month ETRO period with a recommendation on the next steps of the trial.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

- Appendix A - Location Plan
- Appendix B - Design drawing

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Proposed Taxi Rank London Road report for Cabinet Member for T&T - 18 March 2022	Proposed Taxi Rank London Road.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)

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PHV Trial information online	https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/public-transport/private-hire-vehicles-in-bus-lanes-trial/
Trial to allow Portsmouth City Council Licensed Private Hire Vehicles (PHV's) in specified bus lanes in Portsmouth - 5 July 2022	PHV trial in bus lanes report.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Private hire vehicles in bus lanes trial update - 23 March 2023	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation on Thursday, 23rd March, 2023, 2.00 pm Portsmouth City Council
Report a cycling Near Miss	https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/schemes/near-miss/

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: