

Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Transport decision meeting
Subject:	Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) in bus lanes
Date of meeting:	24 October 2024
Report by:	Felicity Tidbury – Assistant Director for Transport
Report Author:	Liam Norman - Project Manager
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Candlish, Cabinet Member for Transport
Wards affected:	Baffins, St Thomas, Charles Dickens, Central Southsea, Eastney & Craneswater, Fratton, Nelson, Milton, Hilsea, Cosham, Drayton & Farlington

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update and next steps on the Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) in bus lane trial following the undertaking of Road Safety Audits (RSAs) and casualty data analysis on 11 additional bus lanes.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Transport:

- 2.1. **Does not approve extending authorisation for Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) licenced by Portsmouth City Council (PCC) to use additional bus lanes at this time.**

3. Background

- 3.1. At the 5 July 2022 meeting of the Traffic and Transportation Cabinet Member, a trial was approved for a minimum of three months to allow access for PCC-licensed PHVs to use the following five bus lanes in Portsmouth (shown in Appendix A):

- Cavell Drive (Bus Lane 1),
- Marketway (Bus Lane 2),
- Mile End Road (Bus Lane 3),
- Queen Street (Bus Lane 4), and
- Bishop Crispian Way (Bus Lane 5)



- 3.2. These locations were brought forward following officer assessment, stakeholder engagement and independent Road Safety Audits (RSAs).
- 3.3. This trial was introduced to support private hire vehicles as an important transport mode for many, providing 24-hour on-demand travel across the city.
- 3.4. Bus lanes are traffic lanes reserved for the use of buses and other authorised vehicles. They provide a dedicated right of way, enabling buses to avoid queues of traffic and other sources of delay, and address the problem of bus travel times becoming longer and less reliable and attractive than those possible by private car.
- 3.5. Portsmouth currently has 32 bus lanes (53 sections of bus lane) in the city, providing a combined total of 9.8km of dedicated priority.
- 3.6. Portsmouth currently has 234 hackney carriages, and 1,300 private hire vehicles (PHVs) licensed by PCC.
- 3.7. The vehicle types permitted to use the bus lanes not included in the trial are specified in their respective Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). These currently include buses, hackney carriages, cyclists, emergency service vehicles travelling under blue lights, and rental e-scooters as part of the council's approved trial scheme.
- 3.8. Under the 1985 Road Traffic Act, the Local Transport Authority (in this case PCC) is accountable to the Traffic Commissioner for any action that it has taken which negatively impacts on bus punctuality.
- 3.9. This trial did not result in any significant negative outcomes arising. As a result, it was approved at the Transport Cabinet meeting on 20 January 2024 that PCC-licensed PHV access to the following trial bus lanes should be made permanent:
 - A. Cavell Drive
 - B. Mile End Road
 - C. Marketway
 - D. Bishop Crispian Way
 - E. Queens Street
- 3.10. In the January report, the outcomes of an initial review of all other bus lanes in the city was presented detailing additional bus lanes that may be further considered for authorised use by PHVs.
- 3.11. The further feasibility work includes independent Road Safety Audits (RSAs) for 18 of the city's remaining 27 bus lanes and further desktop review, considering bus lane layout, Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 and other relevant guidance issued

by the Department for Transport, and lessons learned from the PHV in bus lanes trial.

- 3.12. RSAs were not completed for nine of the identified bus lanes for the reasons outlined below:

Table 1: Bus Lanes for which RSAs were not conducted

Bus Lane	Reason RSA was not commissioned
Furze Lane	Road Safety Audits not recommended in January 2024 due to these five bus lanes not currently permitting use by Hackney Carriages.
M275 Bus Lane	
Ferry Road	
Southsea Esplanade Link Road to St Helens Parade	
The Ocean at the End of the Lane	
Isambard Brunel Road	Conflict with SEHRT (SEHRT) and BSIP (Portsmouth BSIP) schemes being delivered on site or in early stages of development. Until these works are complete, RSAs cannot be undertaken, so we are not currently able to make recommendations for these bus lanes.
Unicorn Road	
Lake Road	
Kingston Crescent	This bus lane forms part of the Mile End Road bus lane already made permanent following the initial trial.

4. Road Safety Audit outcomes

- 4.1. The RSAs identified concerns to be addressed for all bus lanes audited. This was as expected based on the prior experience of the five bus lanes in the earlier trial. The highlighted issues largely comprise signage changes, and improvements to surfacing.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 5.1. In regard to air quality monitoring, consideration of the sensor data monitored for the trial did not suggest that allowing PHVs in bus lanes is likely to have a positive or negative impact on local air quality, with the data tending to indicate the typical seasonal variability consistent with the wider network of sensors in the city.
- 5.2. As outlined in the January 2024 report to the Cabinet Member for Transport, data gathered on journey times, contraventions, and traffic counts indicated a negligible impact.
- 5.3. Since the commencement of the trial on 14 November 2022, there have been no casualties involving cyclists within trial bus lanes. However, there have been four near misses reported relating to PHVs in bus lanes. Following investigation, it was

determined that two were not at trial sites, one was at a trial site, and one was on the same road but with details unclear to whether it was within a trial bus lane or not.

- 5.4. A review of road traffic incidents near bus lanes has been conducted using data available from January 2018 to April 2024. All incidents recorded within a two-metre buffer of the edge line of these bus lanes were included. A map in Appendix B shows the location of the incidents during this period. In total, 39 incidents have been identified, with one fatality, two serious casualties and 36 slight casualties. 18 of the 39 incidents involved vulnerable road users.
- 5.5. Based on the outcome of the RSAs, the latest casualty data analysis, and input provided by the council's road safety team there are 11 bus lanes which can be brought forward for further consideration for use by PCC-licenced PHVs, as outlined in Table 2 below. The remaining eight bus lanes are located within a higher-than-average casualty area and should not be considered further at this stage, as was highlighted in the January 2024 report to the Cabinet Member for Transport.

Table 2: Bus lanes considered for PCC-licenced PHV access

Suitable for further consideration	Should not be considered further
Baffins Road	London Road, A3
Eastern Road	London Road, Hilsea
Eastney Road	London Road, North End
Highland Road	London Road Access Road, Hilsea
Northern Parade	Fratton Road
Northern Road	Winston Churchill Avenue
Portsmouth Road	Portsmouth Road North
St Helens Parade	
Tangier Road	
Portsbridge Roundabout	
Commercial Road	

- 5.6 Prior to any of the bus lanes be taken forward to detailed design, there would be a requirement for additional data gathering and analysis, relating to the bus routes impacted, bus delays, and cyclist usage.

6. Estimated Cost

- 6.1. If detailed design were to be carried out on the 11 bus lanes that can be considered for PHV access and a work programme developed to implement them, the estimated cost is £300,675 based on works being completed in 2025. This estimate includes detailed design, traffic orders, communications and engagement, implementation of highway works, associated staff time, camera installation for enforcement, and risk and contingency.

7. Stakeholder feedback

- 7.1. In accordance with the established governance for this project, a meeting was held with the External Review Panel (ERP) to discuss the draft recommendations, and member of the ERP were also invited to provide further feedback in writing after the meeting. The ERP includes representatives from bus operators, the PHV and hackney carriage trades, and the Portsmouth Cycle Forum.
- 7.2. Feedback received can be summarised as follows;
- The PHV representatives generally felt that as the five trial bus lanes had not caused any problems, PHV drivers should be authorised to use more bus lanes, and they questioned why there was so much funding for bus services in the city but not for taxi services.
 - Portsmouth Cycle Forum expressed serious concerns regarding any prospect of expanding the trial to more bus lanes, noting that the likelihood of more "close passes" in bus lanes would make cyclists feel unsafe using them, and they said that authorising this would undermine the council's own "Give Space Be Safe" road safety measures.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 As outlined in the January 2024 Transport Committee report, the trial of allowing PHVs in five bus lanes did not have a significant impact on the metrics being monitored.
- 8.2 There is no clear evidence demonstrating the benefits of expanding the PHV trial to further bus lanes, either from the Portsmouth trial or from other local authorities that have allowed PHVs in some bus lanes, such as in Southampton and Brighton.
- 8.3 There is significant cost with no approved budget identified.
- 8.4 There are projects which are more closely aligned with the strategic objectives and policies of the Portsmouth Transport Strategy.
- 8.5 The Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 1/20 states that allowing taxis and motorcycles to use bus lanes can "significantly increase traffic flows, thereby acting as a deterrent to cycling while also increasing risk of conflict."
- 8.6 If up to 11 new bus lanes were to be approved for Portsmouth PHV access, this could bring the total number of lanes where access is authorised to 16, while access would not be permitted in 15. This has the potential to cause confusion among all road users, and while the signage changes and an effective communications strategy would help mitigate this, it nonetheless represents a further important factor to consider.



- 8.7 The period of trial to date is short. Typically, data is collected for a period of 3-5 years before firm conclusions can be reached when evaluating a significant road initiative with safety implications. Therefore, although it is not recommended to extend from the existing five bus lanes that do permit PHVs to more bus lanes at this point in time, those in place should be retained to provide a better base for future decision making. The accident data and any other relevant data relating to the five bus lanes that featured in the trial will be monitored by the council's Future Transport Project Board throughout 2025 so that any significant issues or evidence of positive impacts can be reviewed and responded to accordingly.

9. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 9.1 An integrated impact assessment has been completed for this scheme and is included as Appendix C to this report.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1 It is the duty of a local authority to manage its road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives:
- (a) securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and
 - (b) facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.
- 10.2 Local authorities have a duty to take account of the needs of all road users, take action to minimise, prevent or deal with congestion problems, and consider the implications of decisions for both their network and those of others.

11. Director of Finance's comments

- 11.1 To date, work on the Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) in bus lane trial has been funded from the Parking Reserve. There is no alternative funding route identified for this trial.

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Signed by (Director)

Appendices:

Appendix A - Map of Original Trial Bus Lanes

Appendix B - Location of incidents

Appendix C - Integrated Impact Assessment

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:

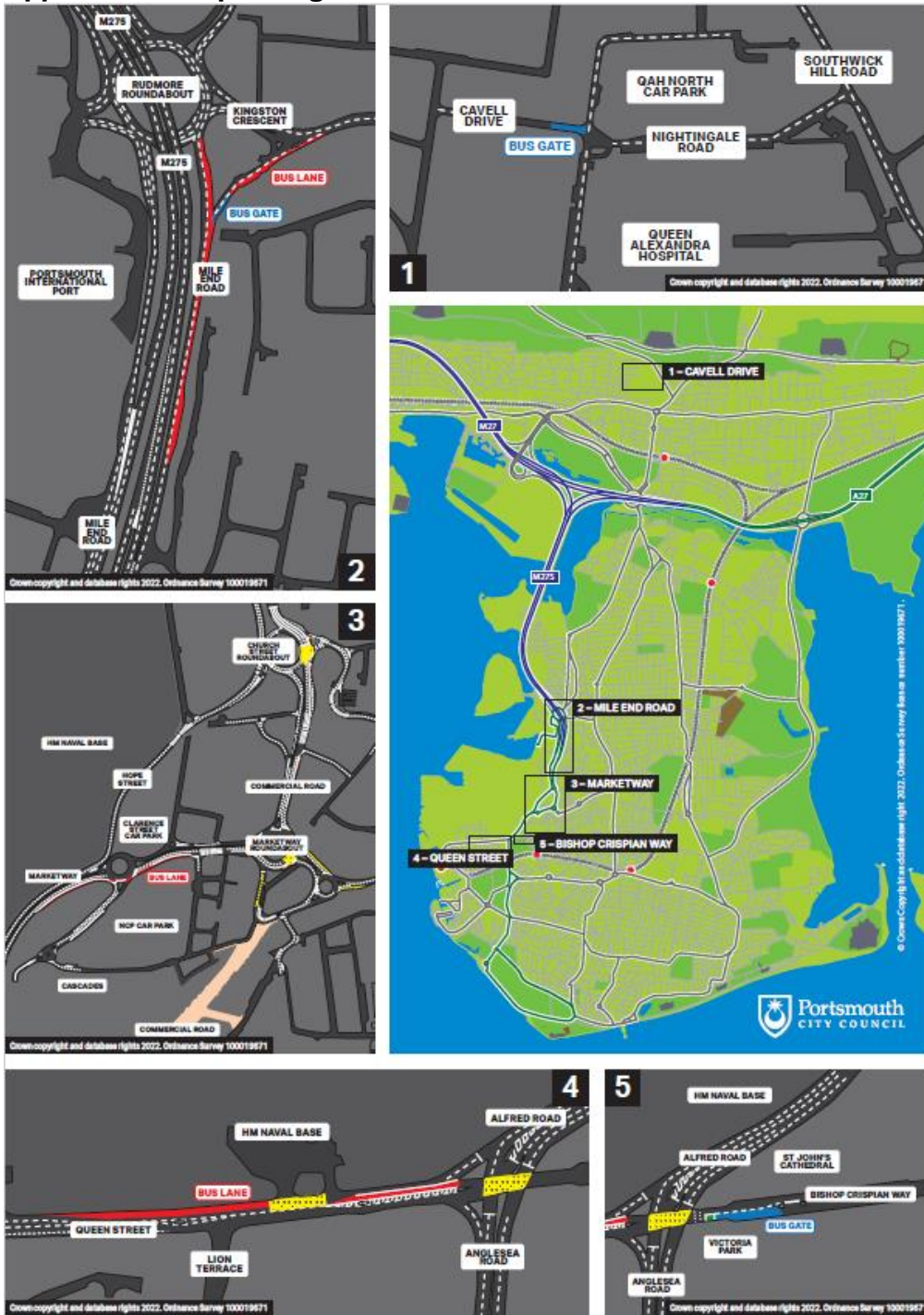
Title of document	Location
Private Hire Vehicle in Bus Lane Trial Report to Cabinet Member of Traffic and Transportation 5 July 2022	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation on Tuesday, 5th July, 2022, 4.00 pm Portsmouth City Council
The Portsmouth City Council (Various Roads) (Bus Gates and Bus Lanes), (No.184) Experimental Order 2022	Portsmouth City Council (Various Roads) (Bus Gates and Bus Lanes) (No. 184) Experimental Order 2022
Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) in bus lanes trial - Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) 184/2022	Cabinet Member for Transport on 30 January 2024

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

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Signed by Councillor Candlish, Cabinet Member for Transport

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Appendix A - Map of original trial bus lanes



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Appendix B - Location of incidents

