

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Streets and Walkway Sub Committee	15 October 2012
<b>Subject:</b> Blackfriars Junction: Issues Raised by Members and Responses	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of the Built Environment	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Ward (if appropriate):</b> Castle Baynard, Farringdon Without, Farringdon Within	
<b><u>Summary</u></b>	
<p>City Officers have reviewed the operation of Blackfriars Junction (the Junction) and it is operating as intended. There is no evidence that the Junction is inherently unsafe.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>I recommend the Streets and Walkway Sub Committee:</p> <p>Note that City Officers are working closely with Transport for London (the Highway Authority for Blackfriars Junction) to resolve issues raised as soon as practicable and that currently the Junction is operating safely.</p>	

## **Main Report**

### **Introduction**

1. This report is in response to concerns raised at the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee on 17 September 2012 with regards to the safety of, and the enforceability of signage, at Blackfriars Junction. The issues City Officers have considered include the:
  - (a) Use of incorrect signage;
  - (b) Loss of the U-turn facility to general traffic at Blackfriars Junction;
  - (c) Narrowness of the right-turn pocket in New Bridge Street;
  - (d) Enforceability of the "bus and taxi only" lane; and
  - (e) Review of road safety audits to date.

## Background

2. The Thameslink Programme (originally known as Thameslink 2000) is a £6 billion project to upgrade and expand the Thameslink rail network to provide new and longer trains and associated supporting infrastructure linking a range of stations to the north and to the south of London. Planning permission was granted in 2006 under the Network Rail (Thameslink 2000) Order 2006 in consultation with relevant local authorities.
3. Blackfriars Station (the Station) has been undergoing major redevelopment since 2009 resulting in a new Thameslink station which spans the river with entrances on north and south banks, and a newly built underground station. A planning condition for the Station required the provision of two new at-grade pedestrian crossings at Blackfriars Junction to facilitate the increased pedestrian movements. Transport for London (TfL) is the Highway Authority for New Bridge Street and Victoria Embankment which forms part of Blackfriars Junction. The City of London (the City) is the Highway Authority for Queen Victoria Street, one of the approaches to Blackfriars Junction.
4. The City, working in partnership with TfL and Network Rail, was actively involved in the redesign of Blackfriars Junction to accommodate the two new at-grade pedestrian crossings. Nine options were developed in a process which culminated in a single option considered operationally acceptable to both Highway Authorities. This option was approved by the Planning and Transportation Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010 as an "In Principle" Permanent Highway Design.
5. There was significant stakeholder interest and response to the proposed scheme. As a result, amendments were made in early 2011, principally the addition of a southbound cycle lane outside the station and a cycle right turn facility from the Embankment to Blackfriars Bridge. However this did not constitute a significant change to the approved design. The highway around the Station, including the intersection at New Bridge Street and Queen Victoria Street, are now substantially completed in accordance with the approved design. This leaves the highway outside the Station at Blackfriars Passage to be completed.

## **Issues Raised at Blackfriars Junction**

Several areas of potential concern have been examined by City Officers:

### Incorrect Signage

6. Three incorrect traffic sign plates were installed at Blackfriars Junction. These should have had blank faces without red rims. (The signs with blank faces are to highlight the presence of the solid central islands to road users.)
7. In response to the City's concerns, TfL acknowledged their error and replaced the signs with correct signage on 17 September 2012.

### Loss of the U-turn facility to general traffic at Blackfriars Junction

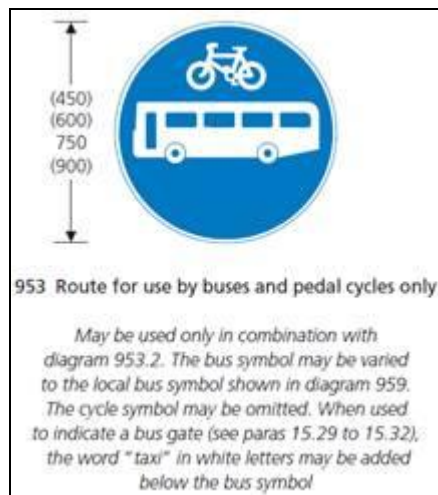
8. There was concern that the removal of the U-turn facility at Blackfriars Junction to general traffic would result in the Temple area being less accessible to southbound traffic from New Bridge Street.
9. This concern has been addressed by the introduction of a right-turn pocket at the junction of New Bridge Street and Tudor Street to enable southbound vehicles along New Bridge Street to access the Temple area without the need to negotiate Blackfriars Junction.

### Right-turn pocket from New Bridge Street (southbound) into Tudor Street

10. Concern was also raised about the narrowness of the right-turn pocket from New Bridge Street (southbound) into Tudor Street.
11. In response to the City's concern, TfL will instruct their safety auditors to consider the narrowness of the right-turn pocket at this location as part of the final Stage 3 safety audit, expected in November 2012.
12. In the mean time, TfL confirms the current arrangement is compliant with the Department for Transport (DfT) guidance on the use of 'ghost islands' as stated in the "Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 5" (page 44), a copy of which is enclosed in Appendix 1. This is a view City Officers agree with.

### "Bus and taxi only" lane at Blackfriars Junction

13. There was concern on the enforceability of the "bus and taxi only" lane as this restriction was only supported by road markings and signage is essential.
14. TfL accept the restriction is currently unenforceable and was a mistake. Additional signage for the "bus and taxi only" U-turn facility is being investigated. The non-standard arrangement of this junction requires careful consideration, however TfL are currently looking at installing TSRGD diagram 953 (slight amendment to the sign shown below) indicating that the route is for buses and taxis only. The proposal is to have a bus symbol with the word "taxi" in white letters below the bus symbol. This proposal is a permitted variant, and will not require DfT approval.



15. Corresponding white road markings reading “buses and taxis only” will be added to the carriageway (currently this reads “buses only”). The new signage and road markings are expected to be completed before the Stage 3 road safety audit.
16. TfL also explored the possibility of installing “box” signals displaying a smaller version of the sign above next to the traffic signals. However, DfT have now advised that this is not permitted and therefore this will not be pursued.
17. TfL has committed to monitoring compliance of the bus and taxi only turning facility to review the need for an enforcement camera at this location. Site observations over the next six months will inform this decision along with feedback from City Officers and the City of London Police.

### **Review of Road Safety Audits To Date**

18. The overall highway design for Blackfriars Junction was safety-audited by TfL (in their capacity as Highway Authority) as follows:
  - Stage 1 (concept design) in August 2010
  - Stage 2 (detailed design) in May 2011
  - Interim Stage 3 (post implementation) in June 2012
19. The final Stage 3 road safety audit and corresponding designer’s response is expected to be undertaken once all snagging works are completed. It is noted that safety issues raised in Stages 1 and 2 have been addressed through the designer’s response, and accepted recommendations have been reflected in subsequent design revisions. A copy of the interim Stage 3 report is attached in Appendix 2 for reference.
20. The City’s Road Safety Officers have reviewed the above audits and the designer’s response. City Officers have also undertaken an inspection of Blackfriars Junction and report as follows:
  - There is broad agreement on problems identified in the safety audits to date. All significant safety issues appear to have been raised and the reports are considered thorough.

- If similar audits were undertaken by the City, these would not materially differ from that already produced by TfL.
  - A further road safety audit by the City would therefore not add any further value, especially in light of TfL's agreement to remedy and/or review issues raised by the City.
  - The designer's response to issues raised appears meaningful and robust. Accepted recommendations are suitably reflected in subsequent design changes.
21. TfL has committed to completing the final Stage 3 road safety audit and designer's response by the end of November 2012.

## **Conclusion**

22. TfL still have to make minor changes to the signage and conduct the final Stage 3 safety audit. The review of documentation and inspection of the Junction by City Officers indicates that the safety of the Junction is adequate. The City of London Policy is not aware of any accidents at the Junction since it was remodelled.
23. City Officers will continue to work with TfL to address issues raised at Blackfriars Junction including those highlighted in this report and any that may arise in the forthcoming final Stage 3 road safety audit.

### **Contact:**

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