

Committee(s): Streets and Walkways Sub Committee Planning and Transportation Committee Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee	Date(s): 03/12/2019 12/12/2019 20/01/2020
Subject: 2019 Car Free Day Update	Public
Report of: Director of the Department of the Built Environment	For Information
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Summary

The City of London Corporation supported the Mayor of London and TfL to deliver the 'Reimagine' Car Free Day event in central London on 22 September.

The event allowed people to explore and experience 27km of traffic free streets, most of which were in the Square Mile. Street closures were in place from 7am – 7.15pm, with the event open to the public from 10.30am – 5pm.

Overall the event was successful, with high levels of satisfaction for those who attended. The event attracted a high number of people into the City (it is estimated that 70,000 people attended over the course of the day), including many that have never previously visited or rarely visit.

Despite the extent of the street closures, which included both London Bridge (except for buses) and Tower Bridge, traffic impacts were relatively limited and lower than expected.

Attendance figures for City Corporation Open House venues suggest the Reimagine event may have had an impact on Open House attendance at some venues. Further analysis is required to understand the relationship between the event and Open House.

Following the success of this year's event we will liaise with the GLA and TfL on the potential to hold another Car Free Day event in the City in 2020.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation supported the Mayor of London and TfL to deliver the 'Reimagine' Car Free Day event in central London on 22 September.
2. This event formed part of a London-wide celebration of World Car Free Day to promote walking, cycling, improvements to air quality and a reduction in car use. In all, 27 boroughs hosted activities for Car Free Day, which included 385 Play Streets.
3. The central London event allowed people to explore and experience 27km of traffic free streets, most of which were in the Square Mile (event map is provided in Appendix 1).
4. Street closures were in place from 7am – 7.15pm, with the event open to the public from 10.30am – 5pm.
5. The Reimagine event was funded by the Mayor of London, managed by TfL and delivered by WRG, a leading events and communications company. The City Corporation's support included:
 - a. Contributing £125,000 to the cost of organising the event and activities on the day.
 - b. Waiving fees for parking bay suspensions, equating to an in-kind contribution of £45,000.
 - c. Providing parking enforcement and cleansing services on the day (funded through the event budget).
 - d. Supporting event planning through participation in the Event Liaison Team and Steering Group.
 - e. Supporting stakeholder engagement, event promotion and travel demand management communications.
6. The event was also supported by the City of London Police and the Cheapside Business Alliance.

Participation and feedback

7. It is estimated that 70,000 people (including approximately 25,000 children) attended over the course of the day. This is a lower number than expected and is likely to have been affected by poor weather on the day. This was also the first year the event was held, and numbers would be expected to increase over time.
8. Provisional results of a survey of attendees (550 people) show that:
 - a. Most of the attendees (61%) were Londoners. 13% of attendees were international visitors.
 - b. Just under 3% of attendees had accessibility needs that limit their daily activities. Acknowledging the low base size, a majority (80%) of attendees with accessibility needs said streets felt more accessible and welcoming to all during the event.

- c. The average satisfaction score for the event was 8.2 on a scale of 0 to 10, and 87% gave the event a 7 out of 10 or higher.
 - d. 91% of Londoners who attended agreed that the event made them feel proud of London and 95% thought it was good for London.
 - e. 76% of non-Londoner attendees agreed that the event made them more likely to return to London as a visitor, with 48% strongly agreeing.
 - f. Just over half of attendees interviewed said they visit the City of London on a Sunday less than once a year or never.
 - g. 95% of attendees said they would support the event being held in London each year.
9. A YouGov poll (1,416 people) conducted after Car Free Day found that:
- a. 45% of Londoners were aware of London Car Free Day.
 - b. 57% of Londoners think holding a Car Free Day event in London is a good idea.
 - c. 65% of Londoners said that Car Free Day events were excellent, very good or good at inspiring them to use a car less.
10. Event images and press and social media highlights are provided in Appendix 2.

Travel and traffic impacts

11. Despite the extent of the street closures, which included both London Bridge (except for buses) and Tower Bridge, traffic impacts were relatively limited and lower than expected.
12. TfL's Network Management Control Centre reported minimal to moderate impacts for first 8 hours that closures were in place (7am – 3pm), with serious impacts for the remaining 4 hours and 15 minutes (3pm – 7.15pm). No severe impacts were reported.
13. Travel analysis by TfL found that:
- a. Total entries and exits at 12 London Underground stations around the event area was around 9% higher than Sunday 15 September and 16% higher than Sunday 8 September (between 7am and 7pm).
 - b. The number of passengers exiting stations within the event area was significantly higher on the day of the event compared to the previous Sundays, increasing by 293% in Cannon Street, 59% in Bank, 47% in St Paul's, 42% in Moorgate and 30% in London Bridge.
 - c. There was up to 10% less traffic on central London streets across the day.
 - d. A maximum of five minute delay to buses was recorded in central London across the day.
 - e. Santander Cycles docking stations around the event area – including stations on Tooley Street, Tower Gardens, Cheapside and Queen Street – experienced a significant increase in their total hire numbers, almost doubling from 800 to 1400.

Impact on Open House

14. Total visitor numbers to City Corporation Open House venues that were open on both Saturday and Sunday are summarised in Table 1. Visitor numbers for other venues in the Square Mile are not yet available.

Venue	2017	2018*	2019
Guildhall and Guildhall Art Gallery	6,981	4,493	4,490
The City Centre	879	1,306	1,286
Guildhall Library	1,666	537	36*
City Guides walking tours	1,800	1,200	1,320
Leadenhall Market	200	1,200 [#]	1,286
Mansion House	N/A	286	487
Old Bailey	N/A	N/A	175*
St Lawrence Jewry	1,500	1,500	2,000
Billingsgate Roman House and Baths	2,569	1,739	1,795

Table 1: Combined Saturday and Sunday visitor numbers at City Corporation Open House venues

* There was very bad weather on both Saturday and Sunday in 2018 with many venues across London showing significant declines

* Only offered tours this year

[#] A large event was held in Leadenhall Market in 2018 leading to a significant increase in visitor numbers compared with 2017

* New venue for 2019

15. The figures for City Corporation Open House venues suggest the Reimagine event may have had an impact on Open House attendance at some venues, particularly Guildhall which, given the good weather on the Saturday should have significantly topped its 2018 performance.
16. Further analysis is required to understand the relationship between the event and Open House, including the impact of parking restrictions on Open House attendance, and to inform the timing of/coordination between any future Car Free Day events in the City and Open House.
17. In future years, closer working between Town Clerk's – Cultural Services (who deliver Open House) and DBE, together with longer lead times and greater programme collaboration, may mitigate any negative impacts.

Lessons Learnt

18. The timescale for organising the Reimagine event was extremely tight for an event of this scale. While this did not affect the success of this year's event, more time to prepare will reduce the pressure on staff at the City Corporation, TfL and the event management company.
19. Close collaboration between the City Corporation, TfL and WRG was critical to the success of the event, particularly given the timescales. Teams within TfL also worked together very effectively.

20. Extensive engagement with stakeholders, including churches and hotels, and TfL's far-reaching travel demand management campaign allowed concerns about access to be addressed in advance of the event, avoided significant traffic impacts and resulted in a very small number of complaints.
21. There should have been earlier engagement with the City Corporation's Cultural Services team (Town Clerk's) to allow them to better inform the scope and nature of the event and to enable closer engagement with the City's visitor, hospitality, retail and attractions sectors.
22. Further analysis and discussions with Open City are needed to understand how the Reimagine event impacted on Open House. It may be necessary to avoid overlap between future Car Free Day events in central London and Open House or to improve coordination between the two events.
23. While significant steps were taken to ensure this was an accessible event, including conducting an Equalities Impact Assessment and appointing an Access Consultant, more could be done at future events. For example, while golf buggies were provided for transport within the event footprint these were not wheelchair accessible. It will also be important to communicate accessible travel options for future events to ensure everyone feels confident they can attend.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

24. The Reimagine Car Free Day event contributes to the delivery of Corporate Plan Outcomes 9 (We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive) and 10 (We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration).
25. It also contributes to the delivery of Transport Strategy, Cultural Strategy and Visitor Strategy.

Conclusion

26. The Reimagine event was successful, with high levels of satisfaction for those who attended and limited traffic impacts. The event attracted a high number of people into the City on a Sunday, including many that have never previously visited or rarely visit.
27. The central London event, alongside borough activities, helped support wider efforts to communicate the benefits of reducing motor traffic in London and promote walking, cycling and public transport use.
28. Following the success of this year's event we will liaise with the GLA and TfL on the potential to hold another Car Free Day event in the City in 2020.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Event map
- Appendix 2: Event images and press and social media highlights

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