

Committee(s)	Dated:
Streets & Walkways Sub Committee	18 February 2021
Subject Major Highway Activities 2021	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2 & 3
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Director of the Built Environment	For Information
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Summary

The City's statutory Network Management Duty requires the City Corporation to minimise disruption to its road network and the networks of its neighbouring authorities. As a result, the City takes a proactive role in planning, prioritising and programming a whole range of on-street activities, from building developments and utility operations to major transport infrastructure projects and the City's own highway maintenance works.

An assessment of the last 12 months would suggest the volume of planned works has declined due to COVID-19, with construction activities slowing, utilities focusing on maintaining existing services & responding to emergencies, and event & filming activities almost completely ceasing.

Although the pandemic has impacted on the volume of works, proactive negotiation & discussions have continued, with 369 days of disruption saved in 2020 through collaborative working. Activities such as Cadent's closure of Cheapside, Poultry & Newgate St have also tested the resilience of the City's road network in parallel to the deployment of COVID-19 measures out on street.

This report also provides an early indication of the works likely to affect the City's streets in 2021, with Cadent's continuing investment in their aging gas main network leading the way. In the context of the evolving Transport Strategy, the continuing focus for 2021 remains minimising the impact of construction sites & utility works as the City recovers from COVID-19.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to receive this report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Traffic Management Act 2004 placed a Network Management Duty on the City Corporation to ensure the 'expeditious movement of traffic' on both its road network and the road networks of its neighbouring authorities.
2. To help deliver that statutory function, the Highways team within the Transportation and Public Realm Division of the Department of the Built Environment (DBE) permits and co-ordinates all major activities on the City's highway, including:
 - a. Road closures and diversions;
 - b. Major building site operations, including Construction Logistics Plans, vehicle loading bays and mobile crane works;
 - c. Street works by utilities;
 - d. Highway works by the City's term contractor, JB Riney, and highway structural repair works by DBE's Structures Team;
 - e. Works by major transport infrastructure providers, such as Transport for London, Crossrail and Thames Tideway;
 - f. Special events;
 - g. Parking permissions & suspensions for major deliveries, removals and filming operations.
3. Whilst enabling applicants to safely deliver works that are the lifeblood of the Square Mile, it is equally important to minimise the individual and cumulative impact on City businesses, residents and the public at large. (See Appendix 1 for further background, including the limitations to the consent process & political oversight on DBE's delegated authority.)

Current Position

4. The table below shows the breakdown of road closure applications by source over the last six years.

Road Closure Application Volumes

Type / Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Developments	155	231	175	214	190	77
Utilities	67	89	95	91	125	106
Emergencies	57	68	38	35	76	75
CoL	85	89	78	93	98	87
Other	18	17	51	59	76	57

Filming	N/A	N/A	N/A	29	43	10
Total	382	494	437	521	608	412

5. From these figures, the key trends are:
 - a. There has been a noticeable slowdown in closures pre-pandemic.
 - b. Utility closures for 2019/20 show a return to something closer to the average after an exceptionally high 2018/19.
 - c. Building and development has seen a significant decline in comparison to previous years, this may have been a result of the uncertainty of Brexit for many developments
 - d. Filming ceased during the first lockdown, however since November, guidelines from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport have permitted limited filming to return even through the current lockdown.

6. Since April 2020, this downward trend has been exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. Although construction and utility activity have been classified as 'Key Worker' functions, only 159 road closure requests were received in the first six months of 2020/21.

7. This would suggest either significant volumes of work are being deferred until after the pandemic or the decline in activity seen before the pandemic began has worsened. The pace of a post-COVID recovery later this year will inform to what degree these two factors are in play, but for now, although this means less impact on the City's road network, licence fee income for these activities is considerably down.

8. The significantly reduced demand for road space by utilities before & during the COVID-19 pandemic is also reflected in the number of permit applications to excavate the City's highway.

Utility Street Works Permit Applications

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Permit Applications	3099	3074	3448	4400	4896	5431	3305*

* Projection based on permit application volumes from Jan-Oct 2020.

9. Despite this, officers continue to proactively identify opportunities to combine works from different contractors, with 369 days of disruption saved on the network between January and October this year - an exceptionally high number for any highway authority. This reflects the level of co-operation from utilities in using round table discussions to draw out medium and long-term plans.

10. Due to the pandemic we have seen a significant reduction in traffic flows which has enabled officers to consider and press utilities to bring forward works which

would under normal circumstances result in having a major impact on the Network, such as:

- a. The closure of Bevis Marks, which was coordinated to work in line with the social distancing measures imposed by TfL on Bishopsgate. These works involved the lowering of services and reconstruction of the carriageway
- b. Major gas mains replacement along Tudor Street and Bouverie Street.

Major Works & Schemes for 2021

11. This section of the report looks ahead to the major works expected to take place in the next 12 months, with an outline calendar and map of locations contained in Appendices 2 & 3. Activities are categorised under four main sources, namely:

- a. Development activities
- b. Major infrastructure projects
- c. Utility works
- d. City of London projects

Major Infrastructure Projects

12. Three major infrastructure projects remain on-going in the City, namely:

- a. Crossrail's construction & fit out at Farringdon East is complete, however due to delays being caused as a result of the pandemic, Moorfields and Liverpool St is expected to conclude mid-2021. As a result of this delay the City's public realm works immediately adjacent to the station entrances are now expected to finish in the latter part of 2021, with wider area improvements integrated with the various oversight developments still in discussion.
- b. Thames Tideway's works on Victoria Embankment are expected to remain relatively static during 2021, with the riverside walkway and down slip from Blackfriars Bridge closed for the duration of the project. Although COVID has led to a delay in the project's overall completion to 2025, the Blackfriars site has successfully positioned the new culvert whilst the tunnel boring machine has passed through the Square Mile.
- c. TfL's Bank Station Capacity Upgrade project remains highly active and on course to deliver a new Northern Line tunnel and station entrance in Cannon St by 2022. The next major milestone will be a closure of the Bank branch of the Northern Line for several weeks in summer 2021 to allow the team to connect the new running tunnel with the existing one. This will receive considerable publicity nearer the time given the impact on passengers.

Utility Works

British Telecom

13. BT have not needed to undertake major works in the City for some time, but they have identified structural damage to a sizeable chamber outside St Paul's

Cathedral. This requires BT to demolish and rebuild the chamber, with works undertaken using temporary traffic lights. This significant structural repair is now underway and is expected to last until mid-April, with close liaison between BT, the City and the Cathedral throughout.

Cadent

14. The last five years has seen Cadent progressively replace their medium & low pressure gas mains across the City with one of the largest capital investment programmes the City has seen for many years. The last 12 months saw them complete works in Cheapside, Poultry, Newgate St & Tudor St, but they acknowledge their remaining network is highly vulnerable to emergency leaks, health & safety risks to premises and ad hoc disruption to the road network.
15. In terms of Cadent's programme for 2021, their main priorities are:
 - a. Fenchurch St – Works to upgrade the gas mains in Fenchurch St had originally started in 2018 but were put on hold due to other higher priorities elsewhere. However, Cadent have now started these works & intend to complete them by the end of March.
 - b. Replace 280m of iron pipes of up to 8 inches diameter with new Polyethylene (PE) pipes. This accounts for around 80% of all 'at risk' iron pipes.
16. Cadent's works are particularly challenging given the depth below the surface, and they have the potential to be disruptive & slow as other utility chambers have to be demolished and cables diverted in order to reach them. However, extended working hours, 'sleeving' (where plastic pipes are fed inside the old ones) and spray lining repairs from the inside the pipe will all be encouraged where possible.
17. Local liaison remains crucial to minimising the disruption these works might cause, and further information will be provided to all Members and other stakeholders as / when they become available. In the meantime, officers will continue to provide e-mail updates when emergency works are triggered.

Power Supplies to the City Cluster

18. The extent & impact of the pandemic and the social distancing measures introduced have led to some works being deferred but further power connections from either UK Power Networks or Reach Active are likely in Gresham St, Leadenhall St and Threadneedle St at some point in 2021.

City of London Projects

19. The vast majority of the City's own planned public realm, road safety and highway maintenance programme is expected to have little impact on the road network, with activities sensitively programmed to avoid clashes with other works and minimising local impacts.
20. The only exceptions to this will be:
- a. The installation of raised tables on London Wall to complete the s278 works associated with the London Wall Development. These works are currently proposed to take place May/June 2021 with a closure that may last up to a week.
 - b. Waterproofing over the structures in Charterhouse St & West Smithfield in relation to the Museum of London Development, which is currently proposed for March / April 2021
 - c. The permanent All Change at Bank scheme at Bank Junction, where further changes to the kerb alignment are expected to be made following the public consultation later this year. These works are currently planned to take place in phases starting towards the end of this year into 2022.

Strategic Implications

21. The activity outlined above helps create a safe, effective and fit-for-purpose environment for the City community to flourish in the long term; but it brings with it a need for road and footway space for construction, essential utility connections and additional heavy vehicle traffic.
22. The City has a series of statutory duties to maintain safe highways for the public to enjoy, to regulate activity that takes place on its streets and to co-ordinate that activity to ensure its impact is minimised. As a result, the focus must continue to be meeting these statutory requirements and to deliver safer streets, but at the same time to ensure the City retains its competitive edge & remains an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Financial implications

23. With the decline in activities on the highway, this has further resulted in a reduction in income received in financial year 2019/2020 of approximately 15% (£284k) from 2018/2019.

Legal Implications

24. See Appendix 1 re the City's Network Management Duty.

Resource, Risk, Equalities, Climate & Security Implications

25. None

Conclusion

26. The City's approach to network management continues to focus on identifying the needs of these major projects early, to combine them where possible, and to

keep them apart when necessary. With the support & guidance from appropriate political oversight, this requires officers to:

- a. establish the dependency between separate projects;
- b. understand their potential conflicts and impacts, and;
- c. engage with project managers early and often to ensure that disruption can be minimised through a combination of regulation, negotiation and influence.

27. With the past 12 months seeing a notable decline in activity, the City must continue to ensure the co-operation of major project sponsors, utility companies and developers in co-ordinating their works programmes and reducing their durations in order to limit both the direct and cumulative impact on the public at large.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Network Management Duty; Limitations & Oversight
- Appendix 2 – Major Works Timeline
- Appendix 3 – Major Works Map

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Appendix 1

Network Management Duty

The City's statutory Network Management Duty includes a responsibility to minimise disruption to its road network, needing officers to work closely with major project sponsors, utility companies, developers, our own contractors and key Members to co-ordinate activities and minimise the impact of works on our streets.

In discharging that responsibility, the City continues to focus on:

- balancing the need to keep projects on track with the need to minimise congestion and road danger risk to traffic and pedestrians (especially vulnerable road users);
- ensuring the needs of City businesses, residents and visitors are also considered;
- maximising the opportunity to combine works together to minimise their overall impact;
- identifying & promoting safe and effective ways to reduce work durations;
- working with Transport for London and our neighbouring authorities to ensure the needs of the wider transport network are considered.

Key to that effort remains:

- the close level of contact between officers, utilities, developments and projects;
- the ability to find, influence and negotiate innovative solutions to construction problems and programmes with contractors;
- understanding, programming and managing the City's own long-term programme of projects;
- continuing the development of the City's various communication channels through which upcoming activities are publicised.

Limitations to the Consent Process

The City exercises its authority to control activity on-street through the issue of scaffold & hoarding licences, permits to dig up the street, traffic orders to allow roads to be closed, approval of Construction Logistics Plans for developments and the granting of parking dispensations & bay suspensions for lorries to deliver.

However, the City has to act reasonably in exercising these powers, and its ability to control the pace and detail behind major works has a number of limitations. That means the City must rely on its knowledge & influence to co-ordinate and manage that activity, rather than relying on its limited regulatory authority. For example:

- a. Utilities retain wide-ranging statutory powers to excavate the highway, particularly in emergencies.

- b. Developers can decide when to trigger their planning application and start work.
- c. We are obliged by the Highways Act 1980 to issue scaffold licences on request (albeit we can impose conditions), and there is no effective legislative mechanism to fine or penalise building sites that overrun.
- d. As Strategic Transport Authority, TfL have the authority to implement wider Mayoral transport policy initiatives such as Cycle Super Highway that affect our network, and their management of traffic signals across London also means they can significantly influence the ability of that network to absorb temporary traffic disruption.
- e. Crossrail, the Bank Station Capacity upgrade and Thames Tideway projects come with bespoke powers enabled by Acts of Parliament that assume primacy of their works over other projects. They have disapplied many of the City's normal controls and have deliberately limited the ability of local authorities to change, prevent or delay those works.

Political Oversight

Given the volume & technical complexity involved in managing these activities, Members have previously agreed a series of delegations to enable DBE to effectively deliver this function on a day-to-day basis.

However, in response to Member concerns regarding effective political oversight, a more structured political engagement process was implemented to ensure appropriate and proportionate oversight of DBE's delegated authority for the most significant activities.

The vast majority of applications continue to be managed by 'Business as Usual' protocols under DBE's existing delegations, but regular briefings now take place for the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of the Streets & Walkways and Planning & Transportation Committees in advance of major activities being agreed.

This ensures a greater degree of political oversight for those activities judged to have the greatest likelihood of impacting City stakeholders, with officers held to account for ensuring that all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise the disruption, reduce the duration and publicise such works.

Appendix 2 – Major Works Timeline 2021

(High, Medium & Low Impact schemes)

Q1 Jan-Mar	High Fenchurch St – Cadent	Medium St Paul’s Churchyard – BT Blackfriars slip closure (Tideway)	Low Seething Lane – Cadent Arthur St – Bank Station Northern Line upgrade
Q2 Apr-June	High London Wall – CoL / JB Riney (raised table)	Medium Gresham St – Reach Active (power connections) West Smithfield / Charterhouse St – CoL (waterproofing structures) Blackfriars slip closure (Tideway)	Low Arthur St – Bank Station Northern Line upgrade
Q3 July-Sept	High	Medium Blackfriars slip closure (Tideway)	Low Arthur St – Bank Station Northern Line upgrade
Q4 Oct-Dec	High All Change at Bank CoL / JB Riney	Medium Blackfriars slip closure (Tideway)	Low Arthur St – Bank Station Northern Line upgrade

Appendix 3 – Major Works Map

