

Committees: Streets & Walkways Sub-Committee – For decision Bridge House Estates Board – For decision	Dated: 6 September 2022 13 September 2022
Subject: TfL's London Bridge Experimental Traffic Restriction	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	N/A
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
Report of: Executive Director, Environment	For Decision
Report author: Sam Lee, Policy & Projects	

Summary

On 28th March 2022, Transport for London (TfL) introduced a scheme to restrict traffic (except buses, taxis, motorcycles and pedal cycles) from using Borough High Street and London Bridge as a through route between 7am – 7pm Monday to Friday. The restriction was introduced using an Experimental Traffic Order (ETO) and effectively continued the temporary restrictions that were introduced in September 2020 as part of their Covid-19 transport measures. The ETO can remain in place for up to 18 months, by which time, TfL will have decided whether the provisions of the Order(s) should be continued to be in force indefinitely. Statutory public consultation is undertaken in the first 6 months and any objections must be made within this period.

The removal of through traffic is supported in principle as this provides significant benefits for people walking, cycling and using bus transport. It aligns with our Transport Strategy, Climate Action Strategy and supports growth and development in the area.

However, due to some outstanding issues and implications, the City Corporation has opposed the Bishopsgate ETO from continuing indefinitely. Since the London Bridge and Bishopsgate ETO schemes are inter-connected, limited monitoring data being provided and the need to accelerate the development of measures to further protect Tower Bridge, it is recommended that the City Corporation's response to this statutory consultation should also be one of 'in principle' support for removing through traffic but objecting to the experimental scheme from continuing indefinitely. Officers will continue working with TfL over the coming months to resolve both the Bishopsgate and London Bridge objections.

Recommendations

The Streets & Walkways Sub-Committee is asked to:

- i) Agree the City Corporation's response to the London Bridge ETO as set out in paragraphs 21 – 22 and agree that officers will continue working with TfL to resolve the objection.
- ii) Delegate the final wording of the response to TfL to the Director of City Operations in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of this sub-committee.

The Bridge House Estates Board is asked to:

- i) Note the contents of the report as relevant to its Terms of Reference.

Main Report

Background

1. In February 2022, Members were updated on TfL's proposal to introduce a Streetspace scheme to restrict traffic from using London Bridge, King William Street and Borough High Street using an Experimental Traffic Order (ETO). The traffic restriction prohibits vehicles (except buses, taxis, motorcycles and pedal cycles) using these streets between 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday. Members were advised that a further report would be brought back to this Committee to consider if the City Corporation should object to and/or make other representations in respect of the ETO being continued indefinitely.
2. In July 2022, a report on a similar TfL experiment along the Bishopsgate corridor was also considered by Members. This report included additional information on the London Bridge experiment. Members were advised that any decision relating to the Bishopsgate experiment would need to apply to the London Bridge experiment as both schemes were inter-connected, but that a further report (on the London Bridge ETO) would be brought back to this committee for further consideration and resolution.

Current Position

3. TfL's London Bridge ETO was made operational on 28th March 2022. This effectively continued the temporary restrictions that were implemented in September 2020 as part of TfL's Covid-19 transport measures.
4. The measures introduced various restrictions to prevent traffic (except buses, taxi, motorcycles and pedal cycles) from using London Bridge, King William Street and Borough High Street during the restricted times. It also includes the same restriction on the northbound access onto Fish Street Hill from Upper Thames Street. TfL's statement of reasons which includes a detailed list of the measures and an overview of the proposals implemented can be found in Appendix 1 and 2.
5. An ETO must be in operation for at least 6 months before it can be made to continue indefinitely and must not exceed 18 months. Statutory public consultation is undertaken in the first 6 months and any objections must be made within this period.
6. As with the Bishopsgate ETO scheme, it is recognised that in principle, limiting the use of this corridor by cross-London traffic aligns with our Transport Strategy and street hierarchy; and that this is likely to be necessary to improve conditions for people walking, cycling and travelling by bus and enhance the street environment. These improvements also align with our Climate Action Strategy by supporting sustainable transport.

The key issues

Traffic impacts and links with the Bishopsgate ETO scheme

7. The London Bridge ETO removes large volumes of traffic from using this network. In doing so it helps to make the experience of walking and cycling much more pleasant and the route is expected to be much safer. Monitoring data (Appendix 3 and 4) supplied by TfL has shown that bus journey times have reduced by over 2 minutes per kilometre and pedal cycle flows have increased by 1500 compared to last year. Since taxi and motorcycle access have been maintained, journeys made by these modes are anticipated to have improved.
8. The ETO impacts users of non-exempt vehicles accessing or leaving the City with longer journey times and distances as they need to use alternative routes. However, other traffic impacts such as traffic reassignment is constrained. This is because there are limited routes for traffic entering the City from the south (limited to the three nearby bridges) and from the north, it is largely restricted by the Bishopsgate ETO scheme. Monitoring data on key routes likely to be affected by the scheme has shown journey times to be broadly consistent with baseline data i.e., similar to pre-pandemic levels. As expected, due to the restrictions on the London Bridge corridor itself, general traffic journey times have improved.
9. London Bridge and Bishopsgate form a key north-south traffic corridor, linking Southwark to the south and Hackney to the north. The London Bridge and Bishopsgate ETO schemes, bordered at the Monument junction, are therefore inter-connected with each other as without one or the other, large traffic volumes are anticipated to divert onto the City's street network, particularly on Cannon Street and Eastcheap, but also across the wider City area.
10. This traffic reassignment is likely to lead to more frequent and severe congestion, longer journey times and distances, increase road safety risks and pollution, poorer conditions for people walking and cycling, and potentially reduce the opportunities for future improvements. If, however, neither scheme proceed, the network would return to pre-pandemic arrangements and any benefits delivered from the ETO would be lost.
11. In July 2022, Members resolved that the City Corporation would oppose the Bishopsgate ETO from continuing indefinitely while support the principle of restricting through traffic. It was agreed that officers would continue working with TfL to address the City's outstanding issues, with the hope that the objection could be withdrawn. These outstanding issues include the need to take account of the ongoing monitoring, responses to the statutory and non-statutory consultations, whether the existing measures are the most appropriate and whether changes can be incorporated to mitigate the impacts on our network. The formal statutory consultation period for the Bishopsgate ETO scheme has now passed.

Tower Bridge weight restriction

12. Members will be aware that Tower Bridge has an 18-tonne weight limit restriction. There is concern that the London Bridge and Bishopsgate ETO schemes have led to more over-weight vehicles diverting to Tower Bridge. Increases in general traffic

volumes also have a cumulative impact on the bridge structure. As reported previously, TfL has not been able to obtain any base data (before these restrictions, either through the temporary or experimental orders were first implemented) to determine if there has been any traffic displacement. Data previously provided by TfL (also in Appendix 3) showed approximately three to five over-weight vehicles cross the bridge each day.

13. It is worth reiterating that it is possible that some drivers, while trying to avoid London Bridge or Bishopsgate end up going over Tower Bridge, either because they were unaware of the weight limit, or that they felt this was their best option especially given the reduced crossings to the east. In any case, displacement from London Bridge or Bishopsgate will only form part of the three to five over-weight vehicles per day crossing Tower Bridge. Tower Bridge is on the Inner Ring Road, it is therefore logical to assume that most of the over-weight vehicles crossing the bridge is from existing routes rather than from London Bridge or Bishopsgate and due to the very low numbers, TfL is of the opinion that the HGV's previously used London Bridge have displaced elsewhere.
14. TfL recognise that protecting the bridge is critically important and has undertaken to investigate and implement additional measures to reduce these vehicles. These include investigating additional measures such as signage, stiffer penalties, engaging with freight operators and continued monitoring. Unfortunately, we have seen no evidence or had any discussions on these measures.
15. The existing weight restriction at Tower Bridge is an environmental restriction which exempts busses and is enforced by the Highway Authority. Unfortunately, TfL have not undertaken this for a number of years contrary to the agreement the City had to facilitate the introduction of Congestion Charging. We have convinced LB Southwark to undertake this enforcement on behalf of TfL to afford some protection for the Bridge. If these proposals continue and TfL do not introduce additional measures to afford Tower Bridge some protection from HGV's then the next step will be for the BHE Board to require the weight restriction to be changed to a regulatory restriction used for weak Bridges. This will not allow the exemption for busses and prohibit many of the existing tourist busses crossing the bridge but is also enforceable by the Police as a traffic offence. This increased enforcement, especially where points are applied to drivers' licences should help reduce the effects.
16. If there continue to be offences and damage or increased wear occurs to Tower Bridge then the BHE Board can introduce a lesser weight limit that will prevent all large vehicles and install physical barriers on the approaches, similar to TfL's current restrictions and installations at Rotherhithe Tunnel.

Consultation responses

17. As part of the experimental scheme, TfL carried out some initial engagement including briefing ward members. They also launched a "discussion" page on their engagement website to seek feedback. However, on 27th July, TfL launched a full public consultation exercise for the changes implemented under this ETO scheme.

This consultation exercise closes on 27th January 2023 and is separate to the statutory public consultation provision provided under the ETO legislation. The information and access to the consultation can be found here <https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/london-bridge-borough>

18. To date, the City has not been provided any feedback on the initial engagement nor the statutory consultation responses, but officers have had discussions with TfL, alongside discussion on the Bishopsgate ETO.

Options

19. Since the London Bridge and Bishopsgate ETO schemes are interlinked and the City has opposed the Bishopsgate ETO from continuing indefinitely, there is only one viable option. This is to also to oppose the London Bridge ETO scheme from continuing indefinitely, while supporting the principle of removing through traffic from the London Bridge and Bishopsgate corridor.
20. This would link decisions relating to the two separate schemes to be considered together and allow more time to review any additional data.

Proposals

21. It is recommended that the City Corporations response to the statutory consultation should be one of 'in principle' support for removing through traffic but objecting to the experimental scheme from continuing indefinitely because of the interconnected and outstanding issues relating to the Bishopsgate ETO as well as insufficient monitoring data. TfL is also required to accelerate the development of measures to afford protection to Tower Bridge and consult with both the City and BHE to facilitate these as soon as possible.
22. If Members agree, officers will prepare a response to the statutory consultation.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

23. Strategic implications – Reducing general motor traffic using London Bridge enables more effective and efficient use of street space. It improves conditions for people walking, cycling and bus transport. It also reduces transport related carbon emissions, improves air quality and reduces road danger. Traffic reduction supports the delivery of Corporate Plan Outcome 9: We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive; the Transport Strategy; Climate Action Strategy and the Air Quality Strategy.
24. Financial implications – None envisaged at this stage unless there are changes to the Tower Bridge Weight enforcement.
25. Resource implications – None.
26. Legal implications – TfL has made an experimental traffic order under section 9 and 10(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. In due course TfL will be considering whether or not, the provisions of the Orders should be continued in

force indefinitely. Within the period of six months from the coming into force of the Orders, or if the Orders are subsequently varied by another Orders or modified, from the coming into force of that variation or modification (whichever is the latest), any person may object to the making of an Order to continue indefinitely those provisions.

27. Risk implications – Reducing motor traffic in the Square Mile helps mitigate Corporate Risks CR21 – Air Quality and CR30 – Climate Action and Departmental Risk ENV-CR-TR 001 – Road Safety.
28. Equalities implications – An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed by TfL. This is provided in Appendix 5.
29. Climate implications – Reducing motor traffic supports the delivery of the Climate Action Strategy by reducing carbon emissions and reallocating space for people walking and cycling.
30. Security implications – None

Conclusion

31. Limiting the use of the London Bridge corridor by cross-London traffic provides significant benefits for people walking, cycling and using buses. It aligns with our Transport Strategy, Climate Action Strategy, supports growth and development in the area and therefore is supported in principle.
32. However, the London Bridge scheme is interconnected with the Bishopsgate ETO scheme as without one or the other, significant traffic is anticipated to use the City's street network.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: TfL's Statement of reasons and detailed list of measures implemented.
- Appendix 2: Overview plan of measures implemented on London Bridge and Fish Street Hill
- Appendix 3: Monitoring data (1)
- Appendix 4: Monitoring data (2)
- Appendix 5: TfL's EQIA

Background Papers

- Report of the Executive Director, Environment on TfL's London Bridge Experimental Scheme to the S&W Sub-Committee, February 2022
- Report of the Executive Director, Environment on TfL's Bishopsgate Experimental Closure to the S&W Sub-Committee, July 2022.

Sam Lee

Policy & Projects, Environment

E: sam.lee@cityoflondon.gov.uk