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| Committee(s): Streets and Walkway's Sub Committee (For decision) Planning and Transportation Committee (For decision) | Dated: 14/02/2023 07/03/2023 |
| Subject: Bank Junction Improvements (All Change at Bank): Traffic mix and Timing review update | Public |
| Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly? | 1, 9, 11, 12 |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | N |
| If so, how much? | £ N/A |
| What is the source of Funding? | OSPR |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | Y |
| Report of: Executive Director Environment | For Decision |
| Report author: Gillian Howard, Policy and Projects, Environment Department | |

Summary

Following a Court of Common Council Motion in April 2022, the All Change at Bank project was asked to immediately bring forward the traffic and timing mix review of the restrictions at Bank. This report updates Members on the progress of the review.

The initial feasibility work has been completed following the data collection and updating of the Bank traffic model to reflect 2022 traffic conditions and flows. This report outlines why the option to allow general traffic (all traffic) thorough the junction at any time is not feasible. It is recommended that this option is excluded from further work and consideration.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of the report.
- Approve that no further work on the option of introducing general traffic into Bank at all times be undertaken, based on paragraphs 14-17
- Note the complexities of the work moving forward as explained in paragraphs 18 -19 and 22-26
- Note the updated indicative programme of work in Appendix 1

Main Report

Background

1. The All Change at Bank Project is currently in construction following approval in December 2021. Its objectives are to:
 - Continue to reduce casualties by simplifying the junction

- Reduce pedestrian crowding levels
 - Improve air quality
 - Improve the perceptions of place
2. The layout of the junction is being altered, narrowing the carriageway, and increasing the space available for people walking through and/or accessing the station or surrounding buildings. Parts of Threadneedle Street and Queen Victoria Street (on the approaches to the junction), will be closed to motor vehicles, providing a more pleasant environment for people walking and cycling and the opportunity to provide additional seating and greening in the area. The operation of Princes Street is also modified but retains two way working for buses and cycles only, and a route for vehicles requiring access to Cornhill to travel southbound. The design for the junction is in Appendix 2 for reference.
 3. At the time of making the decisions to proceed with the All Change at Bank design, it was acknowledged that there was still a need to review the traffic mix and timing of the altered junction. However, at the key decision points there were too many unknown factors. These related to the pandemic in terms of the temporary Covid recovery schemes in operation and the future of these schemes as recovery took place. It was agreed in September 2021 that the review would take place 12 months after the completion of the construction and once there was greater clarity of traffic composition and volume and potential changes to the network around Bank.
 4. A motion was subsequently approved at the Court of Common Council in April 2022 which included the following requirement in relation to Bank junction:

“That the Planning & Transportation Committee be requested immediately to begin a review of the nature and timing of current motor traffic timing restrictions at Bank Junction, to include all options. This review will include full engagement with Transport for London and other relevant stakeholders, data collection, analysis and traffic modelling. The Planning & Transportation Committee should then present its recommendation to this Honourable Court as soon as practicable.”
 5. A subsequent report was received by the Streets & Walkways Sub Committee and the Planning & Transportation Committee in May and June 2022. This set out how the review was intended to be undertaken. It recognised that this would be complex as there were a number of experimental traffic orders, including the bus gates on Bishopsgate and London Bridge managed by TfL, for which the decisions on their permanency would continue to be unknown for some time.
 6. Work on the review started, but due to difficulty securing a week on the road network to undertake the required traffic and pedestrian count data in ‘normal’ working conditions (to exclude school holidays, rail and tube strikes, and impactful road closures) the collection was delayed until early November 2022. During that time Bank had to be reopened to general traffic via Queen Victoria Street between 20 August to 15 October 2022 to facilitate the Bank Station works on Cannon Street. The data collection exercise is significant in terms of scale and cost and required 23 junctions to be monitored.

7. The delay in the data collection has meant that Officers have only recently received the large amount of data collected. This paper updates Members on the initial findings of the first round of feasibility on whether it is likely to be technically possible to change the mix of traffic through the junction during the hours of the current restriction of Monday to Friday, 7am to 7pm

Current Position

8. The aim of the initial feasibility was to establish which, if any, modes of traffic might be excluded from further detailed work. Four main scenarios have been looked at using a revised traffic model updated with 2022 traffic flows. This model assumes that Bishopsgate and London Bridge TfL experimental schemes and the City's own Pedestrian Priority experimental schemes at Cheapside, King Street, Old Jewry, Old Broad Street, Threadneedle Street and King William Street remain in place. This is because the traffic flows have been collected with all these schemes in operation
9. The scenarios assessed in the feasibility were to allow
 - a. Taxis with buses and cycles
 - b. Powered two wheelers with buses and cycles
 - c. Taxis and powered two wheelers with buses and cycles
 - d. General Traffic (All traffic)

For clarification Taxi means licensed black cab, not Private Hire vehicles, which are included within General Traffic.
10. The arms available for those vehicles would be the same as those available to buses and cycles in the scheme that is currently in construction, which are Cornhill, King William Street/Lombard Street, Poultry and Princes Street. Work had previously been undertaken to rule out reintroducing general traffic through Bank in 2020, but as traffic flows and composition have changed since the approved Bank traffic model, based on 2019 flows, this was agreed to be reviewed again.
11. In addition, other work has been commissioned including:
 - A revised equalities analysis to consider the positive and negative implications of reintroducing different modes back into Bank.
 - A review and update of the collision analysis
 - A review and update of the air quality monitoring in the area (which has been collected since 2015)
 - Pedestrian flow comparisons to help inform the future discussion about whether the timing of the restrictions should be changed.
12. There have been early conversations with TfL regarding the traffic modelling exercise that we have undertaken, but this initial stage of narrowing the options does not require their agreement or professional assessment. This will become a requirement as we take forward any options to public consultation and promote a preferred option (in traffic terms) to deliver.

Options

13. There is a lot of work taking place now which will feed into a more detailed future report that is due in May. This will be more comprehensive than this first technical assessment of feasibility. This work will also look at the factors that are additional to whether there is sufficient junction capacity to cater for the extra demand from reintroducing traffic without causing significant journey time impacts.
14. At this stage, the initial feasibility modelling clearly indicates that it would be significantly detrimental to reintroduce general traffic through Bank at all times. There are significant implications to both bus journey times, but also for general traffic travelling on London Wall, particularly the westbound direction in the peak times.
15. In terms of bus journey times there are 21 bus services within the modelled area. Of these this initial feasibility indicates delays of over 15 minutes to eight of the services in the AM peak. The evening peak indicates similar length of delays with five services forecast over 15 minutes and a further three services between 10-15 minutes delayed.
16. These are significant delays. Whilst this is initial feasibility and no mitigation work has been undertaken, it is highly unlikely that this level of delays can be mitigated into a reasonable time band to obtain traffic management approvals.
17. It is therefore recommended that as per this Committees' previous decision in October 2020 and ratified by the Court of Common Council in December 2020, that no further work is undertaken on the option of reintroducing general traffic through Bank during the restricted hours.

Proposals

18. This leaves the three scenarios a, b, and c in paragraph 9 which will undergo further work to determine their viability. It should be noted that the feasibility model does indicate that there could be some substantive difficulties with reintroducing taxis on the four arms tested to date and that further work is needed to tease out whether this might be possible to mitigate the indicated delays to several bus routes, or whether reducing the number of available arms, turning movements etc available to taxis would offer a more viable option at this feasibility stage.
19. This work is being undertaken and will form part of the subsequent report in May. It should also be noted that bus journey delays are an important factor in the traffic management approval process with TfL. Schemes often have difficulty securing agreement with relatively minor delays to a bus service of between 1 to 2 minutes. As Poultry and Cornhill form part of the Strategic Road Network TfL's support on these streets is essential (see Risk implications).

Financial implications

20. Funding of the review is currently contained within the overall Project Budget. To date approximately £125,000 has been spent/committed including fees and staff time.

Resource implications - N/A

Legal implications

21. Any proposal that comes out of the review will need to demonstrate how it complies with Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act which requires the traffic authority, in exercising its traffic authority functions, to secure the expeditious, convenient, and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians), so far as practicable having regard to
- (a) the desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises.
 - (b) the effect of amenities of any locality.
 - (bb) national air quality strategy.
 - (c) public service vehicles.
 - (d) any other relevant matters.

Risk implications

22. Members should note the risk of undertaking the review whilst the experimental schemes by Transport for London on Bishopsgate and London Bridge, and the City's experimental schemes, are still in their monitoring phases. Undertaking the traffic counts to update the traffic model with these in place creates a risk of abortive work should it be later decided that these experimental schemes are not progressed into permanent schemes or change significantly from their current arrangements; particularly the Bishopsgate/London Bridge schemes.
23. The traffic modelling results will outline likely journey time impacts but rely on reasonable representative flow of traffic at each junction within the model. If those traffic flows on corridors change substantially during the process of us assessing the options for changing the traffic mix, then the impacts and/or benefits regarding journey times will not be representative.
24. This may impact our ability to be able to get a subsequent Traffic Management Approval (TMAN) for changing the traffic mix and or timing of the restrictions. It is possible that to progress a change of traffic mix and or timing that we could be asked to restart the traffic modelling process again if this were to happen.
25. In addition, there is a risk that at the stage of submission for the required Traffic Management approvals from TfL that they could refuse to approve the submission. Cornhill and Poultry are part of the Strategic Road Network as defined in the Traffic Management act 2004. This means that TfL are more than a consultee on these streets and able to veto proposals.
26. Early engagement should minimise this risk but there is a risk that a change in the traffic mix or timings of the restrictions at Bank may impact on their existing

experimental schemes, which may be made permanent, which could influence discussions

Equalities implications

27. Revised equalities analysis with updated data has been commissioned to support the review

Climate implications N/A at this stage

Security implications N/A at this stage

Conclusion

28. There is still a significant amount of work required to comply with the Court of Common Council motion. The next stage is intended to be presented to Members in May.

29. This report updates members on progress to date and requests that one of the initial options for changing the traffic mix through Bank junction is not investigated further based on the initial feasibility modelling results. It also recognises that there are challenges with the remaining options, but that this requires further investigation.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Programme overview
- Appendix 2 – General Arrangement for the All Change at Bank scheme

Background Papers

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