

Appendix 6

BANK JUNCTION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - TRAFFIC AND TIMING REVIEW

MINUTE FROM STREETS AND WALKWAYS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING ON 23 MAY 2023

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment which updated Members on the progress of the review and set out the findings of the review work to date.

In response to a question from the Chairman, an Officer stated that the findings indicated that there was no clear transport need for a change, over and above the scheme that was currently being constructed. There was, however, a justification to ascertain whether potential relaxations to the allowable traffic mix at the junction would impact positively upon different protected characteristic groups.

The Chairman asked Officers to comment on the three options. An Officer advised that Option B (an experimental traffic order) would present the same challenges as Option A (making a permanent change) as many of the same TfL processes would be required for approval. However, if TfL were content with the evidence provided, Option B would offer the opportunity to observe the option in action and take a decision on whether it worked from a traffic perspective. It would also show how the option worked in relation to other elements of the project objectives e.g., feelings of safety and security and users' experiences of the area. An Officer stated that Option A had the most risk and therefore had the highest risk of not gaining approval from TfL.

Members asked questions about costs, officer time and other resources used to date. An Officer stated that to February 2023, approximately £125,000 had been spent. Since then, there had been further staff time spent on the work. To continue with the work, more data collection would be required than expected. The work was costing more than anticipated when costed in 2021, and the project no longer had sufficient funding.

In response to a Member's questions, an Officer stated that prior to the Court motion, money had been set aside to undertake the review one year after completion of the current changes to the junction. The Court motion has forced an acceleration of the process. It was possible, without the Court motion, that a desktop review could have been undertaken rather than traffic modelling being undertaken upfront. This was taking place to try and shorten the programme.

A Member asked Officers if there was a cost reduction in modelling different vehicle types together rather than individually. An Officer stated that at this stage, desktop surveys were undertaken so the cost difference was not significant. However, at the detailed modelling stage, the costs were higher, although TfL would usually only accept one modelling option due to the time and their resources required to review the proposal.

Members commented that full costings should be provided to the Court of Common Council, as well as detail about the process and constraints, in order for Members to make an informed decision.

The Chairman asked Officers which option they recommended and which option would be their next preferred option. Officers stated that Option C was the preferred option and would give the ability to properly evidence why any potential change was being undertaken. Option B was the next preferred option as it would provide an opportunity to observe the changes in action before implementation. Option B would still require a change to the existing methodology and more work would be required in relation to equalities.

The Chairman asked Officers how a possible scenario, whereby the Sub-Committee supported Option C but the Grand Committee supported Option B, which was endorsed by the Court would be addressed. An Officer stated that more work would then be required to determine the extent of the changes and discussions would need to be undertaken with TfL.

In response to a question, Officers stated that there had already been discussions with TfL. The first round of mitigations identified would not significantly increase waiting times. The second round of mitigations while reducing impacts on bus journey times would increase waiting times for all other users which was a significant problem. Officers had not yet discussed the finer detail with TfL.

The Chairman asked if modelling had included taxis using all entrances and exits or a subset of these. He stated that minimising these would presumably improve safety as it would reduce turns, wait times and delays that drove pedestrians to undertake risky informal junction crossings. An officer responded that a range of scenarios had been modelled at the feasibility stage, including just an east-west route linking Poultry and Cornhill. Officers outlined the difficulty in understanding latent demand, i.e. the potential increase in taxi and motor cycle usage of the junction if restrictions were relaxed, and the impact this would have on wait times.

An Officer responding to a question, commented that if the time pedestrians had to wait at a signal was delayed, they would reach a point where they would give up waiting and cross the road without a signal. A Member said that this raised concerns that this would increase the likelihood of pedestrian/vehicle collisions. He also commented that it was not just those using taxis who might have disabilities as many pedestrians had disabilities too.

Members discussed whether motorcycles should be removed from further consideration as there was no obvious equalities driver for their inclusion as these transport modes were unlikely to be used by people with disabilities. An Officer suggested that motorcycles were not removed at this stage and that that more work on this could be undertaken as part of the work on the option taken forward. The Officer suggested that the motorcycle issue could be resolved at a later date once this work was complete.

A Member stated that a key driver of the original Bank Junction project was to improve safety. She raised concerns that adding more vehicles could increase complexity, increase collisions and suggested that removing traffic from the junction from 7am – 7pm at weekends would encourage visitors to the City and improve pedestrian safety.

A Members raised concern that the review meant other projects were not being advanced. She suggested that Officers request additional resources if the project was continued.

RESOLVED, That the Sub-Committee

1. Note the content of the Officer report including the need for a capital bid to secure funds to proceed (paragraphs 129- 133) and the risks (paragraphs 138- 147);
2. Agree Option C, in line with the Officer's recommendation, to recommend to the Planning & Transportation Committee for their consideration prior to that Committee making a recommendation to the July meeting of the Court of Common Council.

Option C

To pause further work on the traffic modelling exercise. Focus on identifying and evidencing the need for change and how this can be best addressed, and on doing further work to understand the potential latent demand. Subject to the outcome, this would then form the basis of resumed modelling in due

course, in advance of public consultation and the taking of a final decision whether to make a permanent or experimental change;

3. Agree that the report to the Court of Common Council should be fully costed and include detail on the process and constraints;
4. Agree that additional funding be sought for further work.