

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 21 June 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Transportation Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 9.00 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Shravan Joshi (Chairman)	Anthony David Fitzpatrick
Deputy Graham Packham (Deputy Chairman)	Deputy John Fletcher
Deputy Randall Anderson	Alderman Ian David Luder
Brendan Barns	Deborah Oliver
Mary Durcan	Ian Seaton
John Edwards	

Officers:

Zoe Lewis	- Town Clerk's Department
Fleur Francis	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Gillian Howard	- Environment Department
Ian Hughes	- Environment Department
Bruce McVean	- Environment Department
Gwyn Richards	- Environment Department

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Ian Bishop-Laggett, Dawn Frampton, Deputy Marianne Fredericks, Antony Manchester, Deputy Alastair Moss, Deputy Brian Mooney, Alderwoman Sue Pearson, Judith Pleasance, Deputy Henry Pollard and Shailendra Umrada.

2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **BANK JUNCTION IMPROVEMENTS (ALL CHANGE AT BANK): TRAFFIC MIX AND TIMING REVIEW UPDATE**

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.

Members were informed of the history of the All Change at Bank Project. They were informed that work was started in 2013 with the Bank on Safety Scheme whereby bus and cycle only restrictions were introduced.

The Officer stated that the project description of All Change at Bank was to improve safety, air quality and pedestrian experience of the area around the Bank junction to reflect the historic and iconic surroundings with the appropriate sense of place. The scheme objectives were to continue to reduce casualties by simplifying the junction, reduce pedestrian crowding levels, improve air quality and improve the perceptions of place.

Bank junction, which is surrounded by Grade 1, 2* and 2 listed buildings, above the third busiest tube station in London had almost 50,000 people entering/exiting the station in the 3 hour morning peak period in 2016. It had a poor safety record and poor air quality with the rate of exposure high due to the high footfall.

Pedestrian counts in 2014-15 showed 18,000 people crossed the Junction in 2014/15 in the morning peak hour, 4,500 people travelled through the junction by bus and cyclists made up 50% of the vehicles that passed through the junction. Cyclists were disproportionately being involved in collisions. In the five years leading up to the end of 2015, there had been 111 casualties at the junction and the approaches to the junction and two of these had been fatalities. The last fatality in 2015 led to the creation of the Bank on Safety scheme which was driven out of a need to improve safety more quickly than the layout of the junction could be improved due to restrictions and constraints under the ground.

Bank on Safety was introduced to improve safety whilst work on the All Change at Bank project was designed. In 2016, it was agreed to progress an experiment to only permit buses and cycles through Bank Junction Monday to Friday 7am-7pm. There was a monitoring strategy agreed with Committee and also with Transport for London as part of the traffic management application. This monitored safety, access for deliveries, air quality and journey times and the experiment met all of the success criteria in these areas. The experiment was made permanent in September 2018.

In the first year of implementation, there was a 27% improvement in casualty statistics and there was also an improvement in casualties in the surrounding area. The general trend in casualty statistics had been downwards at a time when the numbers on the London Underground had been increasing.

Before the pandemic, 123,000 passengers used Bank/Monument station during the morning peak period. 51,000 passengers changed between lines within the station. 72,000 people entered or exited the Bank/Monument station complex.

Members were informed that the new station entrance on Cannon Street opened in February 2023 and the All Change at Bank work was expected to be finished in entirety in spring 2024.

The Officer stated that when the Area Strategy was adopted and the need for change was originally identified, the forecast for employment growth was that by 2026 employment numbers of 428,000 were anticipated. However, this had been exceeded by 2018. The most recent data published in October 2022

stated there were approximately 587,000 workers in the City. This required improved facilities for those travelling by public transport, walking and cycling.

As Bank on Safety drew to a close in 2018, the All Change at Bank project was restarted at the beginning of 2019 and it was agreed at Committee that there should be a move towards restricting traffic on two to three arms of the junction. It was also agreed that an option to extend this further e.g. by full pedestrianisation should not be precluded.

Members were advised that temporary footway extensions were started in January 2020. This extended the available space for people walking by over 50%. The design for All Change at Bank, significantly improved the area for people walking with an increase of the footway of 2335sqm and it was anticipated this would improve safety as lines of sight were improved and there was less expanse of carriageway for pedestrians to scan and cross. There were also fewer turning movements which reduced the risk of collision within the junction.

The plan included providing street trees, greening and seating as part of the scheme. Traffic movements would change in mid-July, when traffic would be able to travel two ways through the junction and this would be the permanent routing for the bus services which had been diverted due to the closure of Queen Victoria Street. Threadneedle Street would be permanently closed and be only for cyclists and pedestrians.

Members were shown CGI images of how the junction would look on completion of the work. It would be a more inclusive and inviting space. The key city transport hub at Bank provided access for people to visit the City for work and leisure purposes.

Members were informed that a review of the traffic and timing mix was part of the approval of making the Bank on Safety scheme permanent. It had been intended to undertake this as part of the design process, but the pandemic gave uncertainty about the future and meant it was not possible to gather satisfactory evidence. It was agreed that the geometry of the junction would not need to change in order to accommodate a change in the mix of traffic. It was also agreed to proceed with the public consultation based on the geometry changes and traffic restrictions that were proposed. It was proposed to retain buses and cycles only as the main restriction through the junction. However, at the time of public consultation, TfL had lost a judicial review to representatives of the taxi trade against their Street Space Programme, specifically at Bishopsgate, and had applied for an appeal so the outcome was awaited as this could influence decision making.

3,500 people responded to the All Change at Bank consultation. Responses were heavily dominated by people who reported their main mode of travel was a taxi or private hire driver or passenger. The views on extending the timings of the restrictions or changing the mix of the traffic were inconclusive as there were polarised views depending on the main mode of travel.

The Officer stated that, in 2021, it was agreed to proceed with the design changes for Bank junction. This was based on the restrictions for Poultry, Cornhill and King William Street/Lombard Street being buses and cycles only Monday to Friday 7am to 7pm. A review was planned for 2025, 12 months after project completion.

A motion to Court of Common Council in April 2022 was passed in April 2022 which stated, "That the Planning & Transportation Committee be requested immediately to begin a review of the nature and timing of the 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."

Members were informed that the report being considered at the meeting was the third report written on the traffic and timing mix since the Court motion. It highlighted the findings to date, the difficulties and challenges that had been encountered whilst undertaking the review and set out three options. Members were informed that TfL approval would be required in order to change the traffic order at Bank as Poultry and Cornhill were part of the Strategic Road Network under the Traffic Management Act. This would require the submission of a Traffic Management Approval which was a business case for making a change. This would comply with the Corporation's function as traffic authority and in its duty under Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulations Act. TfL would then consider the proposal, the benefits and disbenefits and make a decision as to whether the proposed option could be progressed.

The Officer stated that there was no clear transport need for making a change over and above the scheme that was currently being constructed. There might be a case for change based on addressing an equality concern around accessibility for people who relied on taxis. However, conversely this might disbenefit other people with protected characteristics who used the area and travelled by other means. Further data collection and analysis was required. The Officer also stated that there was an issue with forecasting how appealing a route through Bank might be to other vehicles as traffic had not been through there in the last six years and there was therefore no recent data. This impacted on the traffic modelling journey time impacts being forecast. Without TfL approved traffic modelling and subsequent scheme impact report, the Traffic Management Notification (TMAN) would then be rejected/incomplete.

The Officer stated that some of the uncertainty surrounding traffic movements in the area had been quelled. The City's experimental schemes in the area were being made permanent. The final outcome of the TfL decisions on Bishopsgate and London Bridge experimental schemes was not yet known. More people were returning to work after the pandemic with Tube patronage at over 80% of pre-pandemic levels. Bank volumes were now above the pre-pandemic daily averages (with the Elizabeth line operational).

The Officer stated that currently it was difficult to pursue a change to the Traffic Management Order. The evidence to support the case was not currently very strong. The statutory regime put consideration of any traffic implications at the forefront of decision-making.

Members were informed that, to look at equalities in more detail and ascertain the benefits and disbenefits and then proceed with the traffic modelling requirements, approximately £500,000 would need to be spent to get to a point where TfL could make a decision on the TMAN application. A large portion of this spend would be on the required traffic modelling process and audits. This meant that the timescale for possible implementation was now indicatively forecast for 2025 as the traffic modelling approvals would take at least 12 months.

The Officer stated that the three options were set out in paragraph 112 on page 23. She stated that Option A was to continue with a view to consulting on making a permanent change to the type of vehicle included in the restrictions, on a yet to be determined routing as set out in the original methodology for the review. This assumed the traffic modelling issues set out in the report could be overcome. There was a high risk of the money being spent and then not receiving approval. If approval was given there was a risk that traffic modelling or forecasts were incorrect, and more vehicles would come to the area causing congestion. If this was the case, as it was a permanent change to the traffic order, it could not be removed.

Option B was a change in methodology to work towards using an experimental traffic order to introduce a future recommended change and monitor how that worked before a final decision was taken to make it permanent. If this option was approved and did not work, it could be removed and it would give the option of monitoring and consulting with it in place but this would be more expensive.

Option C was to pause further work on the traffic modelling exercise and to focus on identifying and evidencing the need for change and how this could be 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. This option would enable a strong and robust case to be put forward to TfL. This would limit expenditure in assessing whether or not there was a need for change.

Members were informed that the Officer recommendation to the Streets and Walkways Sub-Committee was Option C and the Sub-Committee had agreed to support this recommendation.

Alderman Hailes made representation to the Committee. He raised concern about hackney carriages not be permitted through Bank Junction as they were used by people with restricted mobility. He also raised concerns expressed by business constituents and retail companies. He stated that a report had been to

the Operational Property and Projects Sub-Committee, which stated that taxi volumes as measured at peak times across the City of London, had declined by 25% from pre-pandemic levels. He was concerned that on Cheapside, taxi volumes between Queen Street and Milk Street were almost zero and on King Street, Queen Street, Gresham Street and Poultry i.e., the displaced areas, they were down by 60%. Alderman Hailes stated that hackney carriages were part of the public transport mix available through the City of London and he stated that they should be treated consistently with other forms of public transport such as buses. He stated that most of the fleet was environmentally friendly, they fulfilled a social purpose as part of the transport mix, business constituents were expressing serious concerns about the consequences of consistently closing down access to the City to hackney carriages and they had an exemplary safety record. Alderman Hailes stated that the Operational Property and Projects Sub-Committee had agreed that an assessment should be undertaken to allow taxis to be exempt from the restriction along Cheapside and subject to the assessment to proceed with an experimental traffic order to test the impacts of allowing taxi access through Cheapside. He advocated for the same approach to be taken at Bank.

A Member stated that taxi access was particularly important for business uses, those who had limited mobility and visitors. He stated its importance in relation to Destination City, one of the prime corporate strategies. He suggested that by allowing taxis within Cheapside, this would give access from the West and passengers could be dropped off close to Bank junction without this undermining the All Change at Bank proposals. He stated that even during restricted hours, southbound traffic from Princes Street was allowed into Cornhill through the junction so passengers approaching from the North could be dropped off in Cornhill which had close links through to Threadneedle Street. The Member further suggested that if the restriction at the far eastern end of Cornhill was removed, taxis would be able to access Cornhill from the East and they could be permitted to turn left and leave via the South. The Member stated that taxis were part of the public transport network and were not private vehicles. He also commented on their good safety record.

The Officer responded by informing Members that a Cheapside bus gate restriction report had recently been to the Streets and Walkways Sub-Committee and the Operational Property and Projects Sub-Committee. The Cheapside bus gate was being retained as it was currently with work being undertaken in relation to an experiment to allow taxi access through the bus gate which would lead to an Experimental Traffic Order, which would be monitored and if successful, would be kept. Although this was not part of the All Change at Bank project it would impact upon it. This was part of the Pedestrian Priority Programme. Having Southbound traffic into Cornhill was part of the design so this allowed access into Cornhill for taxis and other vehicles with a reason to be in Cornhill e.g. picking up or dropping off passengers or deliveries. Allowing taxis to enter Cornhill eastbound could be looked into when moving forward with the review as part of the project. The Officer stated that if King William Street was opened up, this would require vehicles to go through the junction. Also, due to the design, Princes Street was narrow and there were

changes to the way the traffic signals worked as traffic could only go one way at a time at the southern end of Princes Street.

A Member raised concerns about increasing wait times at traffic lights potentially causing more pedestrians to informally cross the junction and the safety impacts of this. The Officer stated that further work would be undertaken on this.

A Member asked for the Officer's view on the possible outcomes of the equalities work. The Officer stated that this would depend on the volumes of additional traffic and the impact that would have on journey times. If bus journey times were increased, that would have an impact on anyone with a protected characteristic using a bus through Bank junction. Equally, if pedestrian wait times at crossing increased, this would mean pedestrians would wait longer to cross and there would also be longer waits for cyclists meaning that pedestrians and cyclists with a protected characteristic would be impacted. More data collection and assessment of the balance was required. The Officer stated that increasing the wait times to 104 seconds would give four fewer opportunities to cross the road each hour. Some of the other options did not require an increase in wait times to mitigate journey time increases so under these options, the current signal timings of 94 seconds could be retained for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. The maximum time allowed was generally 120 seconds but at this point people could think the signals were broken and proceed without them. Therefore, having a shorter cycle was preferably for safety reasons. The geometry design tried to reduce the risk of collisions but increasing the number of vehicles would increase the risk.

In response to a Member's question about how it was envisaged cyclists and pedestrians would safely share the same space, an Officer stated that the areas for pedestrians and the areas for cyclists were clearly differentiated. The main place pedestrians and cyclists would both use was on Threadneedle Street where the cycle space had kerbs and a raised crossing point.

A number of Members raised concern about the behaviour of some cyclists. An Officer advised that whilst the majority cycled responsibly, work would continue with the City of London Police to improve the behaviour of road users.

A Member stated that as a wheelchair user, he valued the service provided by taxis and did not consider that permitting them access would have a detrimental effect on others with protected characteristics. He asked that he be consulted about the location of dropped kerbs and rush hour choke points which were exacerbated by street furniture and the pavement constricting.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the options Members were being asked to consider were the process options rather than whether to allow taxis at Bank junction. The Chairman stated that Streets and Walkways Sub-Committee had previously been presented with options of different categories of vehicle types to go to consultation. However, the categories were now no longer being considered as the situation had changed. Members were just being asked to consider the process at this stage. The Chairman asked

Members to focus on the three options in the report and stated that there would be opportunities for further debate on the vehicle types and other matters when this was presented to Committee at a future date.

An Officer outlined the vehicle options and stated that these were still for consideration, however complications in moving forward including costs implications and risks of how successful a scheme might be without the robust evidence required for the traffic management approval. Therefore, Members were being asked to recommend one of the process options to the Court of Common Council.

A Member raised concern about Options A and B as so many variables had changed since the traffic was measured and more modelling would be time consuming and expensive. He stated that it was important to try to understand the softer issues e.g. how many disabled people travelled in taxis, how many disabled people walked or cycled and how long people would wait at a traffic signal without crossing without one. He stated that Option C would enable these types of issues to be assessed.

A Member stated that he had attended two recent meetings with City businesses and a key priority for them was taxi access. He suggested that Option B would enable the methodology to be considered and work take place to look at taxi access.

A Member stated that Option C had the lowest risk of legal challenge, not obtaining approval and would result in lower costs than the other options.

A Member stated that Officers had given their advice on how best to approach gaining TfL approval. This would take time but then it could be possible to look into granting taxis access. He added that there were also problems with getting taxis into the City in the evening when Bank junction was open so restrictions were not the only issue.

A Member stated that he could not see an equalities reason for the inclusion of motorcycles. An Officer stated that the work to determine whether they should be excluded was taking place. Making a decision ahead of this piece of work being concluded would increase the risk of judicial review. Once the work was completed, a recommendation could be made on whether motorcycles should stay in for the next round of assessment.

The Chairman asked about the experimental traffic order in place on Cheapside and Chancery Lane and why there was more risk attached to Bank than on these other schemes. An Officer stated that Bank was a junction and even with simplification, it was still more complex. The Officer also stated that TfL approval was still required for Cheapside.

The Chairman asked how the £500,000 required to complete the work would be funded. An Officer stated that a bid had been submitted to complete the review. This would be considered by the Priorities Board and if agreed, would be submitted to the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee meeting for decision in

September 2023. The funded would be from the On Street Parking Reserve (OSPR).

The Chairman asked for more details on timeframes. An Officer stated that these were set out on pages 81-82 of the Officer report. Option B would be a faster process by a few months as the consultation would take place during the experiment. Option C would be longer as background work was required before proceeding with the modelling.

A Member asked if any discussions had taken place with TfL and an Officer confirmed that they had. TfL had confirmed the process that would need to take place. They would not comment on a proposal until the evidence had been presented to them.

In response to a Member's suggestion that an Experimental Traffic Order be put in place to permit eastbound entry for taxis into Cornhill, an Officer stated that this could be looked at as an option as part of the traffic and timing review. The Officer informed Members that TfL approval would be required as this was part of the Strategic Road Network.

In response to the Chairman's question about the difference in the quality of data between Options B and C, an Officer stated that the quality of data for any of the Options would be relatively similar. The difference was the risk if after collecting data, it was found the case for equalities did not support an application. The risk was greatest where the traffic modelling was undertaken at the same time as the data collection. The Officer stated that Option C would give clarity on the evidence base which could make the process of technical approvals easier.

A Member commented that although Option B would provide real life data, with the difference in timings being relatively insignificant, Option C would be less risky.

A Member commented that unlike Option B, Option C would provide a baseline of Bank on Safety working and then it was possible there could be an Experimental Traffic Order permitting taxis at a later date. He stated that Option C had substantially lower risk.

In response to a Member's question about the processes involved in Options B and C, an Officer stated that a need and a reason for change had to be established and the impacts of the potential change had to be modelled. Option B would establish the need at the same time as the modelling was undertaken. Option C would establish the need and then undertake the modelling. If the work to establish the need showed there was no need, the modelling would not need to be done and the associated spend could be avoided, unlike in Option B when the modelling would have already taken place.

In response to a Chairman's question about the difference in timescales, an Officer stated that there would be an approximate difference of six months between Options B and C being submitted to TfL.

In response to a Member's question, an Officer stated that a consequence of pausing the modelling would be that the majority of work at Bank junction would be complete and traffic would be moving as it would permanently, and therefore observational work could be undertaken.

RESOLVED - That the Committee

1. Note the content of report including the need for a capital bid to secure funds to proceed (paragraphs 129-133 of the Officer report) and the risks (paragraphs 138-147 of the Officer report).
2. Note that the Streets & Walkways Sub Committee preferred Option C (all options are outlined in paragraphs 112-127 of the Officer report) and agree Option C as the Committee's preferred option to recommend to the July meeting of the Court of Common Council.
3. Agree on the basis of recommendation 2 that this report is referred to the Court of Common Council for consideration.

4. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

A Member raised concern about new entrances to Bank Station being closed during rush hour and advised that TfL had stated this was due to staffing issues. He asked that this be raised with the TfL Commissioner. The Chairman asked Members for their endorsement for him writing to the TfL Commissioner on behalf of the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Chairman write to the TfL Commissioner on behalf of the Committee.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were no additional, urgent items of business for consideration.

The meeting closed at 10.28 am

Chairman

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