

Committee(s): Planning and Transportation Committee	Dated: 21/11/2023
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 Funding agreed August 2023 (Option C would save approx. £400k)
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	OSPR
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y
Report of: Interim Executive Director Environment	For Decision
Report author: Bruce McVean and Gillian Howard, Environment Department	

Summary

The All Change at Bank project is currently in construction and due to be completed in Spring 2024. Following a Court of Common Council Motion in April 2022, the planned review of traffic and timing restrictions at Bank has been brought forward.

Early data collection from this review shows daytime taxi volumes in 2022 were 35% lower in the Bank area and 27% lower for the City than in 2017. This is in line with the reduction in taxi volumes in the West End and the congestion charge area as a whole.

This report, therefore, gives Members the opportunity to accelerate any changes – including easing restrictions on taxis across Bank junction - still further.

Members are asked to select one of the following options for continuing the review:

- **Option A:** Continue with the approach agreed by the Court of Common Council in July 2023 to collect data and evidence the need for any change until May 2024. The likely date for implementation of any changes under this option is summer 2025.
- **Option B (Recommended):** To immediately restart the modelling of the traffic impacts, running this work in parallel with the data collection and analysis to identify and evidence the need for change. This has the potential to compress the timetable to implementation by up to four months (spring 2025).
- **Option C:** To stop the review at this point and leave the 7am-7pm, bus and cycle only restriction in place. This option would allow approximately £400,000 of unspent funds to be returned to the On Street Parking Reserve, making them available for other projects, street cleansing or highways maintenance.

Any changes to the traffic mix and timings of the restrictions at Bank is a decision for TfL and require a Traffic Management Application (TMAN) to TfL, supported by evidence, including traffic modelling. Members must also be satisfied that the evidence for making a change is robust.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Planning and Transportation Committee are asked to:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Select one of the following options for continuing the review:
 - Option A: Continue with the previously agreed approach of pausing traffic modelling to focus on identifying and evidencing the need for change and how this can be best addressed.
 - Option B: To immediately restart the modelling of the traffic impacts, running this work in parallel with the data collection and analysis. (Recommended)
 - Option C: To stop the review at this point and leave the 7am-7pm, bus and cycle only restriction unchanged.
3. Agree on the basis of recommendation 2 that this report is referred to the Court of Common Council for consideration.

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. Threadneedle Street and Queen Victoria Street on the approaches to the junction have been closed to motor vehicles, providing a safer and more pleasant environment for people walking and cycling and opportunities for seating and greening. The operation of Princes Street is also modified retaining two-way working for buses and cycles only and providing a route for vehicles requiring access to Cornhill. Construction is due to be completed in spring 2024.
3. The 7am – 7pm, buses and cycles only restriction remains in place for vehicles crossing the junction (except for access to Cornhill from Princes Street). When it was decided 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. The Streets & Walkways Sub Committee and the Projects Sub Committee agreed in September 2021 that the review would begin 12 months after the completion of construction, i.e. spring 2025.
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. Any changes to the traffic mix and timings of the restrictions at Bank, whether in the form of a standard traffic order or an experimental one, will require a Traffic Management Application (TMAN) to TfL. This is because Poultry and Cornhill form part of the Strategic Road Network and because changes are likely to have implications for other streets and junctions in the surrounding area, particularly regarding traffic signal timings, including streets that form part of the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) for which TfL is the Highway Authority.
6. The TMAN process requires traffic modelling to establish the likely journey time impacts across the area so that these can be assessed holistically. In order for TfL to agree to any proposed changes they would need to be satisfied that the

evidence submitted in the application, including evidence of the need for change, is robust and meets their traffic management duty under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

7. Members must also be satisfied that the evidence for making a change is robust. The statutory regime puts the consideration of any traffic implications (which would result from a change to any traffic orders) at the forefront of decision making when discharging the City Corporation's duty set out in Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
8. In February 2023 it was agreed that no further work on the option to reintroduce general traffic into Bank would be undertaken. This was based on the likely impacts to bus journey times. The review is now focussed on the assessing the need for changes to the restrictions to allow access for taxis and/or powered two wheelers.
9. Traffic reviews of this type are usually informed by an identification of an issue or issues that needs addressing, for example traffic collisions and casualties, volumes of people travelling, equality concerns and/or air quality, the development of mitigating measures to address the issue(s) and an assessment of the benefits and disbenefits of making a change.
10. To date, analysis of various data sets has found that the most likely potential reason for a change to the mix of traffic at Bank is equality impacts around accessibility for people who rely on taxis. The potential benefits of this change, if required, will need to be balanced against potential disbenefits for protected characteristic groups of any changes. Further work is needed before a conclusion can be drawn.
11. In July 2023 the Court of Common Council agreed to pause further work on the traffic modelling exercise and focus on identifying and evidencing the need for change and how this can be best addressed. Further work is also needed to understand how many taxis are likely to travel through the junction if allowed. This is needed to inform the next stage of traffic modelling work and this approach will need to be agreed with TfL. The report also set out the timetable for delivering change on that basis, which would likely be summer 2025.

Current Position

12. One of the key pieces of analysis to inform the decision on whether to make any changes to the traffic restrictions at Bank will be the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). This will consider the benefits and disbenefits for different protected characteristic groups of the potential changes to allow taxis and/or powered two wheelers through the junction during restricted hours.
13. Data collection and analysis of taxi availability and journey lengths and costs for people who rely on taxis for door-to-door transport is ongoing. This is expected to be completed in early December. This analysis will help inform the assessment of the equalities benefits and disbenefits.
14. The following studies, surveys and analyses have been commissioned:

- a. On-street taxi availability (light on vs light off) surveys on the approaches to and in the vicinity of Bank and at control locations elsewhere in the City, including comparison with surveys undertaken in 2006 and 2016.
 - b. Taxi availability via ride hailing apps (e.g. Gett, Free Now and Addison Lee) on the approaches to and in the vicinity of Bank and at control locations elsewhere in the City.
 - c. Comparison of pre- (2017) and post- (2022) pandemic taxi volumes in the City of London against data for Oxford Street and Regent Street, central London trends and the numbers of licensed taxis and taxi drivers.
 - d. City-wide taxi rank occupancy and availability survey.
 - e. Journey time surveys.
15. The interim report summarising the methodology and headline results from the data collected and analysed so far is provided in Appendix 1. Data for on-street availability, journey times and taxi rank occupancy is still being analysed and is not included at this time. Findings to date include:
- a. The average wait times for a taxi hailed via a ride hailing app are between three and five minutes with little variation between approaches to Bank junction and elsewhere in the City. Average wait times for private hire vehicles (e.g. Uber) are longer, between four and 14 minutes, with more variation through the day.
 - b. In 2022, peak hour (8-10, 12-14, 17-19) average taxi volumes on Oxford Street and Regent Street were 26% and 46% below 2017 volumes. By comparison, for the same times average volumes were 35% lower in the Bank area and 27% lower for the rest of the City.
 - c. The volume of taxis entering the congestion charge zone during charging hours was 43% lower in the first quarter of 2022 compared with quarter one of 2017.
 - d. Between 2017/18 – 2021/22 time period, the number of taxi drivers holding an All London licence has fallen by 16% and licensed taxi vehicles by 30%. On 22 October 2023 the number of taxi drivers holding an All London licence was 23% below 2017/18 numbers.
16. We have also requested Taxi Card and Oyster Card data from TfL and London Councils to help inform the EqIA. This includes looking at the type of Oyster card used on bus services that pass through Bank and at local London underground stations to help inform the use of public transport by particular groups, e.g. Freedom Pass Holders, Disabled Oyster users or Young Persons Oyster users.
17. Other ongoing workstreams to inform the review include:
- a. Meetings with TfL and the traffic modelling consultant to agree an approach to the future modelling requirements of any proposed change to the restrictions. This includes discussion to agree a methodology for the likely increase in taxi numbers that would travel through the junction if permitted.
 - b. Engagement with the taxi trade. Officers have met with the London Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA) and are arranging meetings with the

Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers and TfL Taxi and Private Hire.

- c. Offering a briefing for the City branch of the London Chamber of Commerce (City branch) to discuss Bank and any business concerns related to this. At the time of writing, we are awaiting dates from the Chamber of Commerce.

Options

18. As previously agreed, and noted above, the review is currently focused on identifying and evidencing the need for change and how this can be best addressed.
19. This activity, alongside work to inform the modelling by identifying the likely number of taxis that would use the junction if permitted, will be completed in time to report to the Planning & Transportation Committee in May 2024 and the Court of Common Council in June 2024. Members will then be able to decide whether to pursue a change to the restrictions at Bank.
20. If the decision is to pursue a change to the restrictions, then the traffic modelling to assess the traffic impacts will resume. The outcome of the modelling will inform a final decision on whether to proceed with making a permanent or experimental change, followed by public consultation (for a permanent order) and the submission of a TMAN application to TfL.
21. The additional data collection and analysis, including the EqIA, to inform a decision on whether to pursue a change to the restrictions at Bank is still ongoing.
22. An alternative option (Option B, recommended) is to immediately restart the modelling of the traffic impacts, running this work in parallel with the data collection and analysis.
23. Restarting the modelling now has the potential to reduce the overall programme for the review by up to four months. Although this would be dependent on TfL being able to resource the modelling audit at this stage and on agreeing taxi numbers that would travel through the junction if permitted.
24. There is a risk of abortive work and costs (approximately £110,000 to £170,000 depending on additional data required to progress the traffic modelling work) if the decision at the next report is to not make any changes to the current restrictions.
25. A final option (Option C) is to stop the review at this point and leave the 7am – 7pm, bus and cycle only restriction in place. This option would allow unspent funds to be returned to the On Street Parking Reserve, making them available for other projects or highways maintenance. The current data collection exercise would be completed under this option with the results being used to inform other transport planning, initiatives and projects.
26. This option would recognise that the restrictions have now been in place for over six years with positive impacts for people walking, wheeling, cycling, and travelling by bus through Bank junction and on surrounding streets and with no significant general traffic impacts.

27. All Change at Bank is significantly changing the layout of the junction. There have also recently been significant changes to streets in the wider Bank area, particularly the 7am – 7pm restrictions on through motor traffic using Bishopsgate. These may, in combination with the Bank restrictions, lead to further increases in journey times that exacerbate the negative impacts of the Bank restrictions on people who rely on a taxi, car or private hire vehicles for their transport. This balance of benefits and disbenefits is due to be assessed through the EqlA which forms part of the ongoing review.

Improving access to taxis

28. At July's Court of Common Council, a Member asked Officers to identify short-term measures to improve access to taxis.

29. Engagement with the taxi trade is ongoing but the following short-term measures to improve access have been identified:

- a. Working with BIDs, venues and businesses to raise awareness of taxi hailing apps as an alternative to hailing a taxi on-street. As noted above and in Appendix 1 average wait times for taxis hailed via an app are between three and five minutes.
- b. Providing event venues in the City with details of social media accounts, etc that inform drivers of events that are likely to have a high demand for taxis. This will allow them to alert drivers when there will be higher demand for taxis as events finish.
- c. Sharing details of recent traffic management changes with drivers.
- d. Continuing to share details of temporary traffic management, with drivers for example for restrictions associated with street works or construction.
- e. Continuing to review taxi rank provision and explore the potential for new ranks in areas that may have a higher demand for taxis, particularly at night.
- f. Exploring the potential for rank marshalling to improve late night availability and safety at taxi ranks. The City of London Crime Prevention Association are currently piloting taxi marshalling at the Liverpool Street rank with Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) funding. Through the Safer City Partnership, Officers will monitor the results and assess the resources required for ongoing provision of a marshalling service.

30. In addition to the above, upcoming changes in the Bank area are expected to increase access to taxis. The Cheapside bus gate will open to taxis (on an experimental basis) on 6 November and a new taxi rank to serve the Ned hotel is expected to be installed in the week beginning 20 November (subject to no objections being received).

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

31. The extent to which any potential changes contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Plan, Transport Strategy and Destination City are being considered as the review progresses.

Financial implications

32. The total cost of the review and taking forward a proposal to approval to implement a change is estimated to be in the region of £643,000 excluding costed risk (this includes the £143,000 estimated to have been spent on the review to reach the July 2023 Court of Common Council decision).
33. Table 1 details the estimated profile of expenditure under Option A to reach the next set of decision reports based on the current agreed programme. This would see any proposal for permanent change through the approvals process within the City and within TfL. Depending on the need for further data collection, there could be funding left towards the implementation of any recommended changes.
34. If it is decided to use an experimental traffic order, there will be other costs required after approvals to implement the changes including monitoring, reporting and consultation on the experimental scheme.
35. The traffic modelling exercise needed for either a permanent or experimental order is expensive and lengthy because the modelling area for changes at Bank is large and covers a high number of signalised junctions.
36. Other aspects of the estimate include some Officer time, TfL costs for reviewing the traffic models, further data collection, consultancy support, stakeholder engagement, a public consultation exercise and further reviews of the equalities assessment as proposals are developed. The estimated costs are based on previous experiences of progressing the Bank model through the TfL audit and approval process.

Table 1

Option A - estimate to Gateway 5			
	Budget £	July 2023 to June 2024 decision report £	To gateway 5 £
Staff	55,000	12,000	43,000
Fees	445,000	125,000	320,000
Total	500,000	137,000	363,000

37. If Option B is approved and the traffic modelling work is restarted earlier than currently programmed, the total amount of money required is not likely to change, but the profile of spend would. The estimate for this is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Option B - estimate to Gateway 5			
	Budget £	July 2023 to June 2024 decision report £	To gateway 5 £
Staff	55,000	18,000	37,000
Fees	445,000	290,000	155,000
Total	500,000	308,000	192,000

38. Under Option C the only remaining costs would be the completion of the current data collection and analysis which are already committed (approximately £104,000 including officer time of the £137,000 in Table 1).

39. An additional £650,000 of On-Street Parking Reserve has been secured to fund the review up to the point that a final decision on whether to change the restrictions is made. This includes £150,000 of costed risk given the potential for legal challenge of the decision.

Resource implications

40. Depending upon the chosen option there is the possibility of requiring more internal resource than is currently available. Consideration as to how this is managed, for example by reprioritising other work or through additional consultancy support, will be required following the decision on how to proceed.

41. It should also be noted that progressing the traffic modelling work with TfL requires them to have sufficient staff resource to undertake their assessment and audits. This may be a particular issue if we are to immediately restart the modelling process. The capacity of the traffic modelling consultant would also be required.

Legal implications

42. In exercising the City Corporation's functions as traffic authority and taking a decision on the review, the City are required to comply with the duty in 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.

43. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 the public sector equality duty requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity and
- Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic (i.e., race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership and gender reassignment) and those who do not.

44. As part of the duty to have “due regard” where there is disproportionate impact on a group who share a protected characteristic, the City Corporation should consider what steps might be taken to mitigate the impact, on the basis that it is a proportionate means which has been adopted towards achieving a legitimate aim.

Risk implications

45. There are several key risks associated with this review including reputational risk and the potential for a legal challenge under all three options. £150,000 of costed risk has been allocated to cover potential costs associated with a legal challenge.

Programme risks

46. The review is currently on programme to meet the time frame set out in the July 2023 report to the Court of Common Council. The next decision point, on whether to pursue a change to the restrictions, will be the May and June 2024 meetings of the Planning & Transportation Committee and Court of Common Council.

47. If it is decided to change the restrictions at this point then, under the current approach (Option A), then changes to the restrictions are likely to be implemented in Summer 2025 – if successful in gaining TMAN approval and depending on whether it is promoted as an experiment or a permanent change. This timetable is largely driven by the time required for the traffic model audit process which is likely to take at least 12 months, assuming TfL have the capacity to undertake the work.

48. This timetable could potentially be compressed by three to four months under alternative option of immediately beginning the traffic modelling and running this in parallel with the remaining data and collection and analysis (Option B). This time frame would be subject to TfL resourcing and there is a risk of abortive work and costs if it is decided to not pursue any change to the restrictions at Bank.

49. The timeframes above are similar to the original timeframe for the review that was agreed in 2021 before the Court of Common Council motion to begin an immediate review. They are 8 – 12 months longer than originally anticipated when the review was initiated, when implementation was expected in summer 2024. It is recognised that these extended timeframes carry a degree of both political and reputational risk.

Equalities implications

50. Further equalities analysis will be undertaken as the review progresses.

Climate implications

51. The extent to which any potential changes contribute to the delivery of the Climate Action Strategy will be considered as the review progresses.

Security implications – N/A

Conclusion

52. Data collection and analysis for the review of the traffic mix and timing of restrictions at Bank junction is ongoing. This is focussed on taxi availability and journey lengths and costs for people who rely on taxis for door-to-door transport is ongoing. This analysis will help inform the assessment of the equalities benefits and disbenefits.
53. Work is also underway on determining the likely increase in taxi numbers that would travel through the junction if permitted. This will inform the traffic modelling that is currently due to be restarted after a decision on whether to pursue a change to the restrictions is taken at the May and July 2024 meetings of the Planning & Transportation Committee and the Court of Common Council.
54. While the next major decision point is not due until Spring 2024, Members are asked to select one of the following options for continuing the review:
- a. Option A: Continue with the previously agreed approach of pausing traffic modelling to focus on identifying and evidencing the need for change and how this can be best addressed. This avoids the risk of abortive work and costs on modelling if the decision at the next report is to not make any changes to the current restrictions. The likely date for implementation of any changes under this option is summer 2025.
 - b. Option B (Recommended): To immediately restart the modelling of the traffic impacts, running this work in parallel with the data collection and analysis to identify and evidence the need for change and how this can be best addressed. This has the potential to compress the timetable to implementation by up to four months (spring 2025). Note that a decision on whether to pursue a change would still be required in May/June 2024.
 - c. Option C: To stop the review at this point and leave the 7am-7pm, bus and cycle only restriction in place. This option would allow approximately £400,000 of unspent funds to be returned to the On Street Parking Reserve, making them available for other projects or highways maintenance.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Bank Junction taxi availability analysis - Interim Report

Background Papers

- All Change at Bank: traffic and timings review plan, Planning & Transportation Committee, 7 June 2022
<https://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=128066>
- Bank Junction Improvements (All Change at Bank): Traffic Mix and Timing Review Update, Planning & Transportation Committee, 7 March 2023
<https://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=137966>

- Bank Junction Improvements (All Change at Bank): Traffic Mix and Timing Review Update, Planning & Transportation Committee, 21 June 2023
<https://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=141439>
- Bank Junction Improvements (All Change at Bank): Traffic mix and timing review update, Court of Common Council, 20 July 2023
<https://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=142436>

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