

REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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DECISION OF:	COUNCIL
DATE:	9 September 2015
SUBJECT:	BURY TOWN CENTRE BUS LANE REVIEW
REPORT FROM:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
CONTACT OFFICER:	DAVID FOWLER ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LOCALITIES)
TYPE OF DECISION:	COUNCIL
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain
SUMMARY:	This report is in response to a motion regarding the review of town centre bus lanes passed by Council on 1 st April 2015.
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>Options relating to bus lanes:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Remove or experimentally suspend the bus lanes. 2) Make amendments to the existing design/ layout of the bus lanes. 3) Make amendments to the surrounding road network and other infrastructure. 4) Do nothing. <p>Recommendations:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended, that in light of the current Lidl proposal to realign Bolton Road and Victoria Street that the sections of bus lane on Bolton Road are left in situ. The bus lane at Victoria Street will be realigned and the new layout should make the bus lane easier to negotiate by drivers. It is recommended that the new layout is reviewed after 6 months.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to the bus lane at Manchester Road it is recommended that the termination point of the bus lane is moved approximately 20 metres south. In addition the bus stop at the end of the lane is also relocated further south. • It is also recommended that the bus lane on Rochdale Road is experimentally suspended for up to 18 months and reviewed after 6 months. In addition to this the effects of the experimental suspension are reviewed after 6 months. • Council notes the comments in para 2.4 about wider traffic management issues.
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IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	<p>Any resources required to implement the recommendations will be found from within existing highways management/maintenance budgets.</p> <p>More radical changes will require substantial capital resources and will involve bids into capital funds held by TfGM who control the key route network.</p>
Statement by Executive Director of Resources (including Health and Safety Implications)	There are no other resource implications at this stage. <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality/Diversity implications:	Yes No (see paragraph below)
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Wards Affected:	Bury East, Church and Redvales
Scrutiny Interest:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR: Stephen Kenyon

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners

Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet/Committee	Council	
		9 September 2015	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 On the 1st April 2015 Bury Council passed a motion to:

“Undertake both a detailed assessment study of the impacts of the suspension of, and possible removal of, bus lanes in and around the town centre, and a wider review of transport issues and opportunities along the key bus corridors into the town centre.

Review the financial implications of removing the bus lanes on both a temporary and a permanent basis.

Report back to full Council within 6 months with the findings of the study.”

1.2 At the same meeting, in response to a written question, it was confirmed that the Leader of the Council had already asked officers to look at this issue back in 2014. At the time that Council debated the motion several meetings had already been held with colleagues from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) who control the Key Route Network which includes the A58, discussions had taken place with Manchester City Council about traffic light phasing and work was already underway to examine the effectiveness of bus lanes.

1.3 Council will be aware that many of the traffic problems around the town centre are caused by Bury being a victim of its own success but it is essential that this success does not undermine us. The Council’s approach to town centre management in Bury has also been refreshed and this will help us to take a wider look at all issues, not just those caused by road layouts.

1.4 As part of the traffic review, TfGM has analysed relevant data relating to each of the town centre bus lanes. The data collected includes journey times, bus frequencies, traffic signals and traffic flow data.

1.5 Each of the sections of bus lanes is dependent for its efficiency of operation to some degree on downstream signal controlled junctions therefore the following has been considered

- Mode of operation (e.g. MOVA, SCOOT);
- Current (average) timings during periods of bus lane operation; and
- Date of last review of signal timings/operation.

This information has been collected for:

- Manchester Road/Radcliffe Road
- Rochdale Road/Heywood Street

- Rochdale Road/Wash Lane
- Bolton Road/Ainsworth Road
- Bolton Road/Crostones Road

1.6 To supplement the traffic signal data some additional data collection was required as below:-

A58 Bolton Road

- Bus Occupancy (video camera)
- Queuing (video camera adjacent to each of three sections)
- Classified Turning Counts:
 - Bolton Road/Stephen Street
 - Bolton Road/Ainsworth Road

A56 Manchester

- Bus Occupancy (video camera)
- Queuing (video camera, south of Redvales Road looking north)
- Classified Turning Counts
 - Manchester Road/Redvales Road
 - Manchester Road/Gigg Lane
 - Manchester Road/Radcliffe Road/Parkhills Road

A58 Rochdale Road

- Bus Occupancy (video camera)
- Queuing (video camera, east of Openshaw Park looking west)
- Classified Turning Counts
 - Rochdale Road/Wash Lane
 - Rochdale Road/Pimhole Road
 - Rochdale Road/Heywood Street/Bond Street

1.7 In addition to the above data collection separate site audits have been carried out by Council Officers and TfGM representatives. The findings of the site audits and data collection has resulted in the production of a fact sheet/proforma for each section of bus lane. A copy of the proformas can be found in the appendices of this report.

2.0 ISSUES

- 2.1 There are currently 3 town centre bus lanes in Bury:-
- Rochdale Road
 - Bolton Road
 - Manchester Road
- 2.2 These bus lanes have been implemented as part of a wider Greater Manchester (GM) initiative, with an aim of playing an integral part of reducing journey times for buses across the strategic road network. Whilst this was the primary aim not all GM districts followed through with the proposed schemes originally designed. This has led to a sporadic approach and as such the overall effectiveness of the measures introduced (from a GM perspective) may have been compromised.
- 2.3 Since their introduction road layouts and local arrangements at each of the sites have changed. In addition to this, developments within the Town Centre have contributed to a change in traffic patterns.
- 2.4 In respect of wider traffic management issues, the road network through Bury town centre currently experiences queuing problems as do some of the arterial routes around the periphery. Officers are in continued discussion with Transport for Greater Manchester Urban Traffic Control in relation to traffic control strategies around the town centre e.g. traffic light phasing. However, such adjustments as are possible can only give short-term relief. In the longer term it is likely that a significant investment in new highway and public transport infrastructure will be required.
- 2.5 There is a perception that bus lanes contribute to congestion. However, it is worth noting that at weekends when the bus lane is not in force vehicles queue the full length of Rochdale Road. This would imply that the problem is as a result of wider network issues rather than the bus lane in isolation.
- 2.6 Similarly turning right from Rochdale Road into the petrol station and side roads can cause queues.
- 2.7 The road layout along Bolton Road is currently being modified as part of the Lidl development at Victoria Street and this involves changes to the highway.
- 2.8 The bus lane on Bolton Road is split into three sections. The section which currently results in the most complaints is that closest to Bury Bridge. It is a common misconception that this section is actually two bus lanes due to the large gap in the lining at the Victoria Street turning. Whilst the markings are technically correct it can cause confusion for certain drivers. The highway improvement works associated with the Lidl development will change the lane allocations and better draw drivers' attention to the bus lane, particularly the short section near to Victoria Street. A proposed plan can be found in the A58 Bolton Road Proforma.

2.9 All bus lanes within the borough conform to one of the three Greater Manchester standard operational time periods. All bus lanes (except Manchester Road) operate Mon-Fri between the hours of 7am -10am & 4pm – 7pm. Manchester Road bus lanes operates Mon-Sat between 7am -7pm. Even though Manchester Road conforms to GM standards it could be seen as confusing for motorists as it does differ from others in the borough.

LOCATION	PROS	CONS
Bolton Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bus lane currently provides a traffic free route for buses to reach the traffic signals at Bury Bridge. If the lane was removed buses would experience delayed journey times by queuing on the approach to the signals. • In order to introduce a bus lane on Bolton Road localised widening of the road took place. This resulted in the bus lane being created from what was a grass verge and former footway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some motorists are confused with the existing road layout. • Some motorists cut into the bus lane when travelling towards Ramsbottom, instead of waiting for the bus lane to end before getting in the correct lane.
Rochdale Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The road network from the Motorway junction up to the town centre currently experiences queuing during peak periods and at weekends. During the week the bus lane assists buses travelling along the Quality Bus Corridor towards Bury town centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The start of the bus lane has a very short taper. This means motorists have to merge into the alternative traffic lane quickly. • Rochdale Road experiences congestion and queuing during peak periods. The bus lane is seen by motorists as an additional traffic lane that could improve capacity and reduce queues for other vehicles.
Manchester Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lane protects buses from queues into the town centre during busy peak periods. • The bus lane currently operates on a Saturday. This provides a benefit for buses when Bury Football 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The layout of the lane means that vehicles travelling to Radcliffe have a fairly short lane merge at the end of the bus lane. • The operational times of this bus lane is inconsistent with the other bus lanes

	Club are playing at Gigg Lane.	across the borough. Notwithstanding this it still conforms to one of the three Greater Manchester standardised timings.
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		conforms to one of the three Greater Manchester standardised timings.
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3.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Bus lanes are a method of improving transport around the town by encouraging the use of public transport and enforcement is critical to their effectiveness. Income that the Council receives as a result of bus lane contravention is ring fenced in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004 and is used for further traffic and parking schemes, public transport services, highway or road improvement projects or for environmental improvement in the local authority's area.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 It is acknowledged that there have been changes in the road network and physical infrastructure since the introduction of the bus lanes in Bury Town Centre. The review that has been carried out has looked at each of the town centre bus lanes and considered whether there remains justification for a bus lane at each location.

4.2 The review has highlighted that the key routes into the town centre are suffering from congestion and delay. It's perceived that bus lanes are the main cause of congestion; however the review has indicated that the network also suffers from wider issues that are contributing to queues.

4.3 The review has highlighted a number of recommendations including:-

- Reviewing the physical changes to the road layout on Bolton Road after 6 months.
- The reduction of the bus lane on Manchester Road by approximately 20 metres and the relocation of the bus lane which is currently situated at the end of the bus lane.
- Amending the start taper of the bus lane on Rochdale Road which in turn would increase capacity at the start of the bus lane.
- Investigation into possible amendments to the pedestrian crossings and the traffic signals at Heywood Street, to be determined by modelling

4.4 Notwithstanding the review conclusions, in view of the specific issues which are arising within the town centre and on the M66 slip road Members may wish to experimentally suspend the bus lane on Rochdale Road to assess the effect. They may also wish to amend the hours of operation of the bus lane on Manchester Road to bring them in line with the other town centre bus lanes.

List of Background Papers:-

TfGM scoping study brief

Contact Details:-