



Subject:	Transport Issues
Date:	9 th September 2015
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Anne Doherty, Planning & Transport Officer

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Taxi Access to Royal Avenue, Belfast DRD Transport NI in conjunction with the PSNI, recently carried out a trial to permit taxi access to the pedestrianised / bus only portion of Royal Avenue, Belfast. The trial commenced on 1 st October 2014 and finished on 1 st April 2015. Taxis were permitted access to Royal Avenue from 6pm to 6am each day, in order to collect or set down fares in the street, but not to rank or ply for trade.
1.2	Taxi Ranks – Donegall Square DRD have received a request from organisations that represent public hire taxi drivers in Belfast to consider extending the rank provision around Donegall Square. There is an existing public hire taxi rank at Donegall Square North with additional space on Donegall Square East, however, the organisations feel that more capacity is required.
1.3	New Cycle Routes proposal DRD published the Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland on the 25 th August 2015. The strategy proposed the delivery of new bicycle routes and connections within Belfast City Centre. DRD are currently consulting on three proposed routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Grosvenor Road / Durham Street; College Square North / College Street & Queen Street;

<p>1.4</p> <p>1.5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Street to Middlepath Street; and • Alfred Street/ Upper Arthur Street. <p>Consultation layout drawings for the proposed routes are included in Appendix 2.</p> <p>DRD Transport NI (TNI) presentation</p> <p>A request has been received from TNI to present proposals on the Autumn Works Programme to this Committee.</p> <p>Proposed introduction of waiting restrictions on Falls Road and Divis Street, Belfast (between Beechmount Avenue and Millfield)</p> <p>DRD Transport NI have requested feedback on proposals to facilitate the operation of the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme on the Falls Road and Divis Street.</p>
<p>2.0</p>	<p>Recommendations</p>
<p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p>	<p>It is recommended that Committee consider the proposed responses outlined below and if appropriate agree their submission to DRD as the Council position. In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is suggested that DRD extend the pilot scheme to allow taxi access to Royal Avenue until further assessment can be carried out as part of the Streets Ahead Phase 3 scheme; • in relation to taxi rank provision in the Donegall Square area, it is suggested that the Donegall Square West area is retained for coach drop off and pick provision only until further assessment on coach parking needs is carried out; and • it is suggested that the Council support the proposals to upgrade the cycling infrastructure and network in the city centre subject to DRD engagement with the frontages along the proposed routes. • It is recommended that Members agree the request from TNI for a presentation to Committee on the autumn programme in November. All Members will be invited to this presentation which will be widened to include other transport issues and projects and should include DRD. <p>It is recommended that Committee supports the introduction of waiting restrictions on Falls Road and Divis Street (between Beechmount Avenue and Millfield) which should provide better access for customers to the local businesses in the area and facilitate the introduction of the BRT west way route.</p>

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Taxi Access to Royal Avenue, Belfast</p> <p>DRD have stated that no complaints were raised during the trial period. The Council previously responded that any amendment to the access in this area should be considered by DRD, DSD and the Council as part of the next phase of the Streets Ahead project. It was considered that development work for Streets Ahead Phase 3 would provide the opportunity for a broader approach to consideration of how the streets are utilised and accessed in the northern area of the city centre.</p>
3.2	<p>There are a number of developments proposed and underway in this part of the city, including the Ulster University on York Street, which could impact on the traffic situation in this area. It is suggested that the pilot is extended, the situation kept under review and considered alongside the Streets Ahead Phase 3 proposals.</p>
3.3	<p>Taxi Ranks – Donegall Square</p> <p>DRD are requesting feedback on the following proposals to provide additional capacity for ranking of public hire taxis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain Donegall Square North rank as existing; • Provide new feeder capacity in Donegal Square West, using part of the area currently allocated for coach pick up and drop off, which would be in direct line of sight of the Donegall Square North rank; and • Use the existing taxi rank in Donegall Square East as a feeder rank to the proposed additional capacity on Donegall Square West.
3.4	<p>It is suggested that the Council should not support a new feeder rank in Donegall Square West as this would reduce the space available for coach pick up and drop off by 20 metres. The Council would request further assessment and information to be provided on the impact of reducing the provision for visiting coaches in this area. There has been an increase in demand for coach parking in the city centre in recent years and coach operators consider the current provision to be inadequate to handle current demands.</p>
3.5	<p>New Cycle Routes proposals</p> <p>Grosvenor Road / Durham Street / College Square North / College Street & Queen</p>

	<p>Street</p> <p>DRD proposes to upgrade the existing cycle infrastructure along the Grosvenor Road and Queen Street and extend it to provide a new connecting two way segregated cycle lane along Durham Street and College Square North. Improvements are also proposed to enhance the environment for both pedestrians and cyclists in College Street.</p>
3.6	<p>The proposed new bicycle route will provide a dedicated connection between the Grosvenor Road Junction with the Westlink to the city centre. The proposal should provide designated cycle infrastructure on the western approach towards the city centre and enhanced access for residents to the retail core and employment areas.</p>
3.7	<p>High Street to Middlepath Street</p> <p>The proposal is to upgrade and add to the existing cycle infrastructure along High Street to Middlepath Street. The proposed route will provide a dedicated connection between the High Street Junction with Bridge Street to Middlepath Street. It will provide an opportunity for people to avail of designated cycle infrastructure between the city centre and the eastern city approaches, as well as a connection to Titanic Quarter.</p>
3.8	<p>New Cycle Route along Alfred Street /Upper Arthur</p> <p>The first part of this proposal is to upgrade the existing cycle infrastructure along Upper Arthur Street and extend it to provide a new connecting two way segregated cycle lane along Alfred Street. This proposed new bicycle route along Alfred Street and Upper Arthur Street will provide a continuous segregated cycle facility between Ormeau Avenue and Chichester Street. It will provide an opportunity for people to avail of designated cycle connection between the Lagan Towpath (Gasworks / Lower Ormeau) to the city centre.</p>
3.9	<p>To facilitate this proposal, a range of traffic management measures are proposed such as: removal/relocation of parking bays, provision of loading bays, kerb and junction realignment, traffic signal works, banned south bound turning movements into Alfred Street from adjoining side streets, extension of the one way system on Alfred Street from the junction of Franklin Street to Ormeau Avenue north bound, extension of existing raised junctions and additional 50/50 humps at junctions.</p>
3.10	<p>The DRD proposals support a key objective outlined in the Council’s Transport policy “to seek to influence the development of transportation policies and proposals which improve connectivity and encourage modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable</p>

	forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport”.
3.11	<p>It is suggested that the Council supports the proposals to upgrade the cycling infrastructure in the city centre and the connections to the western and eastern approaches to the city centre. This is subject to DRD engagement with the frontages along the routes. The proposals should provide safer routes for cyclists in the city centre and enhanced connections along the western and eastern approaches. The proposals will also support the Council’s Belfast Bikes scheme.</p>
3.12	<p>DRD Transport NI (TNI) presentation</p> <p>The presentation will include information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Road Improvement such as the York Street Interchange; • Network Development such as minor works and bus measures; • Network Traffic and Street Lighting; • Network Transport Telematics; • Network Maintenance; and • Network Planning.
3.13	<p>Proposed introduction of waiting restrictions on Falls Road and Divis Street, Belfast (between Beechmount Avenue and Millfield)</p> <p>In order to facilitate the operation of BRT on the Falls Road and Divis Street, DRD are proposing the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce a Parking and Waiting Restrictions Order limited to 2 hours, no return within 1 hour, Monday to Saturday, 8.00am to 6.pm, on a number of parking lay-bys on Falls Road, Belfast, between Grosvenor Road and Millfield. The aim of this proposed restriction is to deter all day parking and create a turnover of available spaces that will benefit local businesses and offices along the route; and • To introduce a 25 metre section of no waiting ‘At Any Time’ waiting restriction (double yellow lines), on the north side of the Falls Road between Beechmount Avenue and Islandbawn Drive. Loading and unloading will be permitted within the proposed waiting restrictions. This proposed restriction aims to regulate all day parking and aid traffic progression to facilitate the operation of the BRT bus lane at this location. <p>The layout drawings are attached in Appendix 3.</p>
3.14	The Council has previously supported the work to progress the development of Belfast

<p>3.15</p> <p>3.16</p>	<p>Rapid Transit scheme. It is suggested that the Council would support the introduction of waiting restrictions on Falls Road and Divis Street (between Beechmount Avenue and Millfield) which should provide better access for customers to the local businesses in the area and facilitate the introduction of the BRT west way route.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Appendix 1 - Response to Transport NI on the taxi access to Royal Avenue, the taxi ranks at Donegall Square, new cycle routes proposals and waiting restrictions on Falls Road and Divis Street, Belfast.</p> <p>Appendix 2 - DRD Cycle Consultation Layout drawings and Transport NI correspondence</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Waiting restrictions on Falls Road and Divis Street, Belfast - Layout drawings</p>