
Secretariat memorandum

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Bus priority in London briefing for members

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To brief Board members for their discussion with the Transport Commissioner regarding bus priority and the 3G programme.

2 Background

- 2.1 Since the first bus lanes in London were implemented in the 1970's London has seen a steady increase in bus lane mileage and hours of operation. More recently (early 1990's) this has been co-ordinated by the London Bus Priority Network (LBPN) set up by the London Boroughs (led by Bromley) and the Traffic Director (the forerunner of TfL with respect to the Red Routes), supported by DfT funding. The then Transport Minister, Stephen Norris was particularly supportive. In 1999 the London Bus Initiative was established to promote whole route initiatives and 27 important routes were designated for substantial interventions. The principal of whole route priority was progressed further under the banner 3G (third generation). The pilot for this programme has been bus route 38 which is now being implemented on the ground most notably at Holborn and Piccadilly where long one-way diversions have been taken out of bus routes.
- 2.2 Bus priority leads to shorter journey times and less journey time variability. This will mean less buses are needed to operate a route and therefore cost savings as identified in the recent KPMG report commissioned by TfL (Independent strategic review of the provision of bus services in London, KPMG, July 2009).
- 2.3 The benefits of bus priority is supported by research (Independent strategic review of the provision of bus services in London, KPMG, July 2009), much of it conducted in London. TfL's 3G project has a benefit to cost ratio of 7.1 to 1 (Historic Surface Transport investment programme, 2008).
- 2.4 Without increased levels of bus priority TfL tell us that in the planning period 2006 to 2016 bus schedules are forecast to extend by 13% ("Keeping London moving", Third Generation Bus Priority. TfL presentation to London TravelWatch, May 2007) as general congestion worsens.

- 2.5 Bus priority is supported by an overwhelming number of Londoners. TfL's research¹ shows that 8 out of 10 Londoners support bus lanes and giving priority to buses at traffic lights. Nearly half strongly support such schemes. The level of support is similar across all transport users. Car drivers show least support, but even among this group, eight in ten are in support.
- 2.6 It is undoubted that the various London Government bus priority programmes have contributed to the huge improvement in bus service performance in London.
- 2.7 Members should note that bus priority includes both large scale schemes such as at Holborn, but also very simple schemes such as the implementation of yellow line controls in densely parked areas to allow buses to make quicker progress.

3 Bus priority today

- 3.1 The new Mayor has taken a different approach to bus priority in London. Both the budget for bus priority and the decisions to promote schemes appears to have been devolved to the boroughs. The Mayor's policies promote improvements to whole corridors to benefit of all modes. This has been reflected in a sharp decline in the implementation of specific bus priority schemes. It is unclear what the outcome of this change in policy will be.
- 3.2 London TravelWatch is being consulted on far fewer schemes and our enquiries to local authorities regarding their transport expenditure leads us to believe few bus priority schemes are being considered as part of their proposals. The chart below demonstrates the fall of in bus priority proposals being consulted on. Recently there have been consultations to remove bus lanes.

| | Borough roads | TfL roads | Totals |
|-------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 2005 | 3 | 16 | 19 |
| 2006 | 4 | 15 | 19 |
| 2007 | 9 | 14 | 23 |
| 2008 | 10 | 12 | 22 |
| 2009 | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| 2010 | 4 | 2 | 6 to date |
| | 38 | 60 | 98 |

- 3.3 Much of the bus priority budget has either been devolved to the London Boroughs to spend as they see fit or transferred to support cycling schemes. TfL would, however, say that many corridor schemes will benefit all modes and therefore be of benefit to buses too. This seems unlikely given the traditional modelling of traffic equates one bus to two private cars.

¹ Attitudes to bus priority, TfL research. May 2009

3.4 The 3G bus priority programme gets a mention in this year's TfL budget :

6.2 Bus Priority

Bus priority measures consist of bus lanes, some with a contra flow, facilities for buses only (e.g. prohibited turns for other traffic), signal schemes and other traffic management and engineering measures along busy bus routes.

Key activities include:

Implementation of the third Generation Bus Priority (3GBP) Programme. 3GBP aims to improve or maintain service reliability, minimise delays and protect buses from traffic congestion, as well as incorporating safety benefits and improvements for other road users including pedestrians and cyclists.

Selective Vehicle Detection provides bus delay savings, which when aggregated result in significant efficiency savings across the network, journey time reductions and passenger reliability benefits. SVD works by detecting enabled buses as they approach traffic lights and alters the sequence of lights to significantly reduce the time the bus is held up by a red signal.

Group Business Planning and Performance Budget 2010/11 39

| Deliverables Description | Date |
|--|-------------|
| 3G Route 220 Section D North - network assurance scheme approval (phases 2 & 3) | Sep-10 |
| 3G Route 220 Section D North - substantially complete on site works (phases 2 & 3) | Mar-11 |

3.5 The original 3G programme is described below. It is unclear how this programme is progressing.

Key milestones

November 2007 : Tranche 1 feasibility complete

March 2008 : Tranche 1 early-win schemes complete

June 2009 : Tranche 1 preliminary design/consultation complete

November 2009 : Tranche 2 feasibility complete

June 2010 : Tranche 1 detailed design complete

June 2011 : Tranche 2 preliminary design/ consultation complete

November 2011 : Tranche 3 feasibility complete

December 2011 : Tranche 1 implementation complete

June 2012 : Tranche 2 detailed design complete

December 2012 : Tranche 1 monitoring complete

June 2013 : Tranche 3 preliminary design/consultation complete

December 2013 : Tranche 2 implementation complete

June 2014 : Tranche 3 detailed design complete

December 2014 : Tranche 2 monitoring complete

December 2015 : Tranche 3 implementation complete

December 2016 : Tranche 3 monitoring complete

December 2016 : 3GBP programme complete

4 Questions for the Commissioner

- 4.1 How is the 3G programme progressing?
- 4.2 We have previously been told by TfL that bus services schedules will extend by 13% over the planning period up to 2016. What will be the impact on bus service performance up to 2016 if the 3G programme is not progressed as originally planned?
- 4.3 What will be the extra costs of poorer bus performance due to increased congestion.
- 4.4 Will Smoothing the Traffic Flow initiatives address forecast increases in bus journey times. What evidence is there?
- 4.5 Bus services cross borough boundaries. How is TfL promoting a strategic approach to bus priority? What is TfL's approach to borough's removing bus priority on the roads they control?