

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 23rd June, 2021

SPECIAL REMOTE MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
The High Sherriff, Councillor Long;
Alderman Kingston; and
Councillors Beattie, Brooks, Donnelly, Ferguson,
Gormley, Harvey, Heading, Howard, Hussey,
Lyons, Maskey, McLaughlin, McMullan, O'Hara,
Spratt and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. D. Kelly, Programme Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for the inability to attend was reported on behalf of Alderman Dorrian.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentations

Translink - Update on Low and Zero Emission Buses

The Chairperson welcomed representatives of Translink to the meeting: Ms. S. Simpson, Business Change Manager, Mr. G. Smyth, Public Affairs and Project Communications Officer; Mr. D. Graham, Business Change Manager- Future Ticketing; and Mr. W. McGookin, Head of Ticketing Technology.

Ms. Simpson provided a presentation on Decarbonising Public Transport in Northern Ireland. She explained Translink's Climate Positive Strategy which detailed how it wished to achieve this responsibly by:

- Achieving at least 50% reduction in Translink's current emissions by 2030 in line with its Climate Action Pledge;
- Placing Translink at the forefront in the journey towards zero emission public transportation, and for all its buses, trains and buildings to be Net Zero by 2040;
- Metro services in Belfast will achieve this target by 2030; and

- Being Climate Positive by 2050, going beyond achieving net zero to create an environmental benefit by removing additional carbon dioxide from the environment while growing our business.

She described the 'Framework To Achieve Climate Positive' would be undertaken via the following priorities: Greener Vehicles (Bus Fleet Strategy, Rail Strategy, Supporting Systems); Greener Infrastructure (Energy Strategy and Sustainable Infrastructure); and Greener Business (Biodiversity, Circular Economy, Active Travel).

Ms. Simpson explained the Translink Fleet Strategy plans, with a migration to zero emissions fleet by to 2040. She described the Translink Zero Emissions Programme, which included how the battery electric vehicle (BEV) and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV) systems would work and illustrated a comparison of the two options.

She confirmed that the key operational considerations in the allocation of zero-emission fleet included:

- Capital expenditure and running costs;
- Infrastructure;
- Vehicle capability, that is the range;
- Climate change and air quality concerns;
- Current demand and service levels, passenger growth and future demand targets;
- Fleet age;
- Regulatory standards with regard to accessibility, emissions, and safety;
- Reducing traffic congestion; and
- Complementing other bus projects.

She highlighted that the first 20 FCEVs would operate on the Antrim Road Corridor (Metro 1 services) and suggested that the route would benefit from improved bus speeds and journey times.

She pointed out that 80 BEVs would be used across the entire Belfast Metro network where practicable, with the full conversion of the Holywood Road, Castlereagh Road and Cregagh Road, with inner city centre locations benefiting from reduced emissions.

She also explained how the Zero-Emission Fleet would deliver economic, environmental, customer experience benefits and strategic direction.

Mr. Graham provided a presentation on the future of Translink's Ticketing System. He described the £42.7 million investment project which would provide a bespoke solution via five phases of implementation. He explained the objectives of the system, as follows:

- **Connecting** people and opportunities through its future ticketing system transformation to increase the use of public transport;
- **Updating** - Replacing its obsolete ticketing equipment to collect fares revenue and record passenger journeys; and

- **Facilitating** – Making it easier for passengers to buy and use their tickets, easier for Translink to sell its tickets.

He explained the next steps of the project included the replacement of rail handheld ticket machines in Summer 2021 (paper tickets and smartcard validations, credit and debit card acceptance - contactless and Chip and PIN, barcode validation - buy online, and the replacement of Metro on-bus ticket machines in Autumn 2021 - paper tickets and smartcard validations, contactless EMV acceptance on-buses which includes tap on only, flat fares, contactless bank card payments/mobile payments, and daily fare capping.

He explained the future of account based ticketing to “Turn up, Tap and Travel”, the current range of smartcards in use, and provided an example story of how account based ticketing would work and save the consumer time and money over a day of travelling.

During Members questions, the representatives explained further the anticipated timeline for the new vehicles to be in operation and their impact on emissions and renewable energy. It was reported that Translink intended to replace payment equipment across all of its fleet to enable card payments across the network and advised that they had met with Transport for London representatives to research best practice.

Ms. Simpson drew Members attention to the Climate Positive Strategy Document which provided further detail on the electrification of their fleet and their green corporate vision. She pointed out that this was available to download on the Translink’s website.

During further discussion, Ms. Simpson advised that further feedback would be provided to the Committee in relation to its renewable energy model.

Mr. McGookin explained further the contactless payments. He confirmed that concessionary fares and discounted products currently available to consumers would remain. In relation to the recent issues regarding the mLink application on particular Android mobile phones, he advised that they were working with their supplier to resolve the problems.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, Translink would provide further information on the issues raised.

Department for Infrastructure - Spring Report

The Chairperson introduced Mr. K. Monaghan, Eastern Divisional Roads Manager, Mr. M. McKendry, Belfast North Section Engineer, Mr. D. Williams, Belfast South Section Engineer, together with Ms. L. Loughran, Director of Transport Policy and Mr. A. Grieve, Head of the Walking and Cycling Unit in the Department for Infrastructure, to the Committee and they were admitted to the meeting.

Ms. Loughran and Mr. Grieve provided a brief presentation on the Belfast Cycling Network and its programme 'Making Belfast an Active City' which had been published on 4th June. She advised that the document followed a public consultation in 2017 and set out a blueprint for the development and operation of the cycling infrastructure in the city for the next ten years.

Mr. Grieve highlighted the plans to ensure walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport was a priority in the city centre, together with the development of quiet routes throughout the city and low traffic and family friendly neighbourhoods.

He advised that the Department had established a dedicated team to lead in the delivery of this Belfast Cycling Network which would have responsibility for setting out a delivery plan for the entire network and it was expected that this outline delivery plan would be published by Autumn 2021.

He pointed out that, in relation to the funding of the programme, it was intended that the budget would grow, year on year, with the majority of the spend being expedited in the later years, after design plans had been confirmed.

Ms. Loughran outlined the infrastructure plans for 2021/22 and highlighted the key partnership work that had taken place with the Council under the Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund projects.

Mr. Monaghan presented the Spring Report. He advised the period from March 2020 had been unprecedented, caused by the impact of Covid-19, which had resulted in DfI contractors being unable to work from mid-March until around mid-May 2020, which had a knock on impact on its work programmes for the year. However, despite those challenges, the Roads Section had successfully delivered all of its planned programmes and services for 2020/21.

In relation to budgetary allocations, he advised that additional funds were being made available for walking and cycling, structural maintenance, safer routes to schools and traffic information and control.

He provided the Committee with updates on the main strategic transportation schemes for the city.

In relation to the York Street Interchange, he advised that delivery of the York Street Interchange scheme remained a high priority for the Department and highlighted the publication of the Public Inquiry Inspector's Report and the Departmental Statement which had completed the statutory processes for the York Street Interchange with the exception of the Vesting of the required lands.

He reminded the Committee that the procurement process to award a contract for the detailed design phase of this scheme was halted in early 2017 as result of a legal action. This legal action concluded in September 2019, with the award of contract being set aside.

He highlighted that the Minister recognised the strategic importance of the York Street Interchange. Its inclusion in the New Decade New Approach Agreement was a further indication of the significance of the project to economic and societal wellbeing and the Minister was determined to see it delivered. However, in order to ensure the scheme was future proofed and provided outcomes that best served the needs of those who used it and the local community who lived around it, the Minister had announced a short, sharp review of the York Street Interchange.

He confirmed that the Minister had accepted in full the six recommendations from that Review which were published on 26th March, 2021. As a result, further work was being carried out, particularly around place making and to maximise ambition in terms of what could be delivered for communities, connectivity and the wider living places agenda. He explained that it was proposed that this work would also take into account the further development of Bolder Belfast. The Strategic Advisory Group for the scheme would also be reconvened and the communications strategy updated to ensure local communities and other stakeholders were kept informed of future developments. The Minister had asked the consultants to report in the autumn of 2021 before deciding the next steps.

He provided Members with an update on the Tillysburn Park and Ride proposal, on vacant ground situated between the Holywood Road and Sydenham Bypass. He advised that the scheme was now progressing to the initial stages of planning application by beginning a Pre-Application Discussion (PAD).

The Committee was provided with an overview of the DfI Roads Programme of Works for 2020/21 for those projects and schemes that had been completed and were in progress, which included updates on minor works, maintenance of structures and inspections, network maintenance resurfacing and adoptions. He also summarised the updates to network traffic and street lighting, collision remedial schemes, traffic schemes and pedestrian measures and resident's parking schemes.

Mr. Monaghan highlighted the work which had been completed in relation to the Safer Routes to School Scheme, which implemented 20mph part time speed limits, and advised that 12 had been programmed for the Eastern Area this year, and the scheme was anticipated to continue in following years.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to:

- The pedestrianisation of the City Centre and consultation;
- Expansion of 20mph zones of Safer Routes to School Scheme;
- The need for grass cutting;
- The need for weed spraying, particularly in the City Centre, and contractor issues;
- Future Glider Routes for North and South Belfast and the draft proposals;
- Cycle Network deficit in North and West Belfast;
- Longer term funding for cycle network and its funding streams;
- Cycle lane infrastructure considerations (width of roadway/curbs/bollards);

- Implementation of SUDS policy and its integration into schemes;
- Data and review of pop-up cycle lanes;
- York Street Interchange timescales and its funding;
- Accessibility for those with disabilities and the measurement of infrastructure;
- 20mph zones in the city centre and the pilot scheme; and
- Unapproved tree removal at Adelaide Park and the potential for replanting.

In relation to the pedestrianisation of the City Centre, Mr. Monaghan encouraged Members to speak with the Bolder Vision Team to express their views.

He highlighted that there had been issues with its contractor for removing weeds, however an in-house team had been established to tackle high priority areas and if Members had any urgent suggestions to contact Mr. Williams or Mr. McKendry.

Regarding the Cycle Lane Network, Mr. Grieve advised that the programme of work would prioritise the city centre initially and address the deficit across the city in the longer term and they had been working with the West Belfast Partnership Board and its cycling group to take forward routes for development. He highlighted that they were also developing routes in the Collin Area. He advised that some areas of the city would be easier to develop in the earlier part of the scheme which would underpin further development across the city. He welcomed further discussion on the issues with Members of the Committee. In response to a question from a Member in relation to feedback on Pop-up Cycle Lanes in Sandy Row, he also advised that there would be a review of the lanes in Dublin Road and Grosvenor Road to ensure the impact was evaluated and considered for future lanes.

Ms. Loughran advised that, in relation to funding for the scheme, the anticipated multi-year budgets, subject to agreement by the Executive, would assist in the funding commitment to the expansion of the Cycle Network.

In terms of the measurement of accessibility infrastructure data, Mr. Monaghan suggested that the information of how the highways were used was collated which might assist with the Members request.

The Members drew the attention of the officers from DfI Roads to a number of other matters, a number of requests and suggestions which are set out hereunder:

- Request for the Montgomery Road Link preliminary layout plans;
- Suggestion for Harmony Lane and Bridge pedestrianisation/cycling link and resolution of its adoption issues;
- Lower Shankill Community Association request to change the junction at Malvern Lane, close to Denmark Street Community Centre, to a mini roundabout;
- Junctions at Bilston Road/Crumlin Road – following DfI initial response from November, 2020 – suggestion to move traffic island further down the road;

- A request for an update on the status of the dropped curbs at Hemsworth Court, Malvern Street;
- Paisley Park entrance on Circular Road – the potential to remove car parking space to improve site lines;
- Fortwilliam/M2 Slip Road onto Shore Road – request for bushes to be cut back; and
- An update on the residents Car Parking Scheme Pilot in Iveagh Drive/Falls Road.

Mr. Monaghan provided an update on the issues raised and advised that, where relevant, action would be taken on these issues if it was deemed necessary after inspection, and a response would be provided.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, DfI Roads would provide further information on the issues raised.

Correspondence - Department for Infrastructure

It was reported that the following correspondence had been received in response to the queries raised at the last Special Committee with the Department for Infrastructure (Roads) in November, together with a recent letter which had been sent on behalf of the Committee:

- DfI Roads Eastern Division Reply to Special Committee of 24th November; and
- DfI Response - York Street Interchange Review and Belfast Cycle Network.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the correspondence which had been received.

Chairperson