



Belfast District Council (Shadow)

Report to:	Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Use of bus lanes by all vehicles at times of emergency or chronic congestion
Date:	Friday, 20th March 2015
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The Committee will recall that the Shadow Council, at its meeting on 8th December, passed the following motion, which had been moved by Councillor Boyle and seconded by seconded by Councillor Mullan:</p> <p><i>“Belfast District Council urges the Department for Regional Development to implement measures permitting the use of bus lanes by all vehicles at times of chronic congestion as a result of an emergency situation; thereby saving thousands of lost working hours to the economy of our City.”</i></p> <p>A letter had been forwarded to the Department outlining the Council's decision and a response from the Minister's secretary had been received on 8th January. The letter pointed out that, whilst the current legislation did not empower the Department to suspend bus lanes, a constable in uniform could exercise his or her discretion to permit all vehicles to use bus lanes in times of emergency. Such a decision, it was pointed out, should be taken only with a view to ensuring that the travelling public would be informed in a timely manner in order to avoid confusion.</p> <p>The Committee had noted the receipt of the response from the Minister and agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Police Service of Northern Ireland seeking its views on when they would exercise their discretion to permit all vehicles to use bus lanes in times of emergency.</p> <p>A response has now been received from the Road Policing Development Unit. The letter states that the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1995 governs adherence to traffic signs and provides for an exemption in circumstances where a “Constable in uniform” directs traffic to proceed in a manner which is at variance with the sign.</p> <p>It continues: “So where a police officer is on the ground and directs traffic to use the bus lane, then no motorist complying with the direction shall be guilty of an offence.</p>

	Alternatively, where a pre-notified event such as a public transport strike is to occur, the police have in the past agreed with DRD TransportNI, that enforcement of the bus lanes should be suspended to facilitate traffic flow. When this has occurred the public have been advised in advance via the BBC traffic bulletins and the NI Trafficwatch website.”
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2	Key Issues
	The Committee is asked to consider what action, if any, it would like to take.

3	Resource Implications
	None

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	None

5	Call In
	This decision is subject to call in.

6	Recommendations

7	Decision Tracking

8	Documents Attached
	Letter from the Road Policing Development Unit, PSNI.