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Date: *26th* July 2012

Dear Mr McNaney

QUESTIONS ASKED BY COUNCILLORS, FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF ROADS SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT

When I presented the Roads Service Report to Council on 28th May 2012, I agreed to give consideration to a number of matters. My response to these is as follows:

1. Councillor Kingston - raised the issue of the speed of buses within the City Centre and what can be done to reduce this.

Roads Service carried out a series of speed readings several years ago for all vehicles within the city centre. The recorded average speed of these vehicles was less than 15 mph. Since then, this exercise has been repeated by the PSNI who have recorded similar results.

Translink operate a self imposed speed limit of 15mph in the central core of Belfast. They are assisted in enforcing this by the PSNI City Centre Beat Officers who carry out spot speed surveys and report any vehicles driving in excess of 15 mph to Translink.

2. Councillor Kingston - there is a lack of observance of the zigzag lines at the pelican lights introduced at Snugville Street asking what further steps can be taken to highlight the crossing.

Parking on the zig-zag lines at a pelican crossing is enforceable by both the PSNI and our own Parking Enforcement Unit. I have written to both of these groups highlighting your concerns and asking them to undertake the appropriate action.

3. **Councillor Haire - with the proposed Belfast on the Move alterations to Donegall Sq South is there an opportunity for Donegall Sq West to be used as a filter lane for traffic exiting from the City Hall heading to the East of the City.**

Access to Donegall Square West is limited by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which only permits access by buses or vehicles making deliveries to premises located in Donegall Square West. It would not be appropriate to permit private vehicles to use this as a short cut as this may compromise its integrity as a bus priority street.

4. **Councillor Haire - drivers are experiencing difficulty in accessing the main road at Thorndyke St and Lord St, is there a solution to this situation?**

To maintain sightlines at road junctions it is an offence to park within 15 m of a junction. If the corner restrictions are marked with double yellow lines then these are enforceable by our Parking Enforcement Unit, if not marked, responsibility for enforcement lies with the PSNI.

Observations have shown that vehicles emerging from Lord St can join traffic on Albertbridge Road using gaps in traffic that are created by the busy pelican crossing located close to this junction. Vehicles emerging from Thorndyke Street onto Templemore Avenue are also aided by gaps created by the traffic signals at the junctions of Templemore Avenue with Albertbridge Road and Castlereagh Street respectively. We are aware that vehicles may find it difficult to merge with traffic on main roads at peak times but this would not be unusual for numerous urban junctions. There are no engineering measures or road markings that can be introduced to tackle this common problem at these specific locations.

5. **Councillor Haire - the frequency of the lights at Tillysburn, when heading from Holywood Road towards the A2 Bangor Road, only provide sufficient time for a maximum of 4 No cars to turn right. Same applies to the slip road heading from A2 into Tesco Knocknagoney – only lets a few cars turn left at any one time.**

Tillysburn is a very complex traffic signalised junction and has to manage many conflicting movements. The green time for traffic turning right from the Holywood Road towards the A2 has to be balanced, particularly at peak times, with the heavy demand of traffic using the A2 and the need to minimise queuing and delays. The right turn movement onto the A2 is coordinated with the traffic signal operation at Knocknagoney and Holywood Road. Traffic Control Operators in the Roads Service Traffic Information and Control Centre (TICC) monitor the area using real-time CCTV and can make adjustments to traffic signals as necessary.

With regards to the left turning traffic from the A2 towards Knocknagoney, this green time is deliberately short in the pm peak due to pressure on the overall junction cycle time to cope with all traffic movements at this complex junction. Again, TICC Traffic Operators can make adjustments to the traffic signals as and when necessary.

6. **Councillor McCarthy - the right turn manoeuvre from Ormeau Avenue on to Ormeau Road creates a long tail back interfering and delaying the traffic that turn left on to Cromac Street. The timing of the light needs checking.**

The traffic signals at this junction operate under an advanced adaptive form of control called SCOOT (**S**plit, **C**ycle, **O**ffset **O**ptimisation **T**echnique).

This allows the green times to be automatically determined and amended in real-time to suit the prevailing traffic conditions as well as the objective of minimising queues on each approach.

The problem you describe is caused by delays to downstream traffic heading out of Belfast on Ormeau Road especially during the pm peak. Under these conditions to give further green time to this movement would have the effect of traffic queuing across the junction and blocking the other movements.

Traffic Control Operators in the Roads Service Traffic Information and Control Centre (TICC) monitor the area using real-time CCTV and can override the SCOOT system in response to significantly abnormal traffic flows to ensure the effective management of the junction whilst not comprising road safety.

7. **Councillor McCarthy - there is approx 50 m of unfinished footway in Balfour Avenue at the recreational centre, towards the youth centre – is this adopted?**

This portion of footway is not adopted for maintenance purposes by Roads Service. A Land Registry check has been carried out and it is unregistered.

8. **Councillor McCarthy - the city streets (Lower Ormeau Area) have ongoing problems with cars being parked on the footways, what can be done to prevent this practice?**

It is an offence to park a vehicle in such a way as to cause obstruction. Only the PSNI have the powers to deal with obstruction. Should parking in the Lower Ormeau Area continue to obstruct the passage of vehicles or pedestrians, then the police should be contacted for their appropriate action. If, however, these vehicles are parked on a footway adjacent to an Urban Clearway (eg Ormeau Road) or adjacent to single or double yellow lines then this can be enforced by our Traffic Attendants. In this case, please report to our Parking Enforcement Unit on 90540400.

9. **Councillor Convery - in Queen Street there is a problem with Translink buses double parking at stops which in turn create accessing and exiting problems for passengers especially those with a disability.**

Buses double parking is unsafe for all passengers and creates particular problems for the elderly and mobility impaired. We shall bring this matter to Translink's attention to ensure their drivers are made aware of the problems this creates and are asked to park at the kerb.

- 10. Councillor Convery - On Royal Avenue at the Santander building the bus numbers are on a pole at a distance from the actual bus shelter. This is creating problems for passengers waiting at the shelter.**

The bus stop pole in Royal Avenue, outside Santander, is located to allow for 2 buses to stop within the lay-by. Planning permission has just been granted to allow the existing bus shelter to be relocated to the pole position. This work will be carried out as soon as the electricity supply is disconnected from the existing shelter

- 11. Councillor McCabe - seeking clarification on the current position of the proposed improvements to the crossing on the Crumlin Road at Brompton Park.**

Roads Service carried out an assessment of the current zebra crossing facilities at this location in January 2012. This assessment looked at volumes of vehicles and pedestrians, speed of vehicles, proximity of public amenities and pedestrian collision history etc. An analysis of the results showed that the existing zebra crossing was the most suitable crossing facility for the current level of pedestrian demand and that the injury collision history did not suggest that the crossing was unsafe.

Given these results there are no plans at present to alter the existing crossing or change it to a pelican or puffin crossing.

- 12. Councillor Spence - has Roads Service carried out an evaluation of the introduction of the bus lane on the Shore Road and could a copy be sent to him?**

Full evaluation of any new bus lane is normally carried out after a full year of operation, enabling bus speeds to be fully analysed. As the Shore Road bus lanes only came into operation on 21 November 2011 a full evaluation has not yet been carried out. Roads Service do however continually monitor bus lane operation through observations, along with feedback from Translink, PSNI and the public. We can report that the Shore Road has had some infringement problems from drivers parking in the bus lanes, particularly in the afternoons and this has been passed to the appropriate bodies to carry out some enforcement. Other than this, Translink have reported the bus lanes are assisting in improving bus journey reliability.

- 13. Councillor Spence – traffic is experiencing difficulties in turning right at the traffic lights Shore Road/Donagall Park Avenue. Can a filter light be provided?**

There is a current planning application for the redevelopment of Lough Shore Park in Belfast being considered by Planning Service. Part of the measures proposed by the developer to deal with the additional traffic generated includes the provision of a filter light at this junction.

14. Councillor Spence - the Street lighting in Marcus Ward Street is of poor quality and needs investigated.

An assessment of the street lighting in Marcus Ward Street found that the existing lighting exceeded the requirements of the current BS standards. Roads Service has no plans to enhance the lighting at this time.

15. Councillor Lavery - there are severe traffic tailbacks from the Westlink lights on to both the Crumlin and Antrim Roads with Carlisle Circus also being backed up. Can the traffic flows be improved to ease these problems?

One of the initiatives identified in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan is the improvement of walking facilities for pedestrians on arterial and other routes in Belfast, referred to as Quality Walking Corridors (QWC). Clifton St has been designated a Quality Walking Corridor,

Improved pedestrian facilities on Clifton St has included is the provision of pedestrian crossing facilities at signalised junctions where previously there were none. The junction of Clifton Street and the Westlink is one such junction where, previous to the QWC works, pedestrians moving into and out of the city were crossing the slip roads of the Westlink without the benefit of signal controlled crossings.

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As with many of the main arterial routes in to Belfast, traffic movements at junctions along these routes are closely monitored on CCTV by staff at our Traffic Information and Control Centre (TICC). This allows Roads Service to identify any traffic progression difficulties and to optimise traffic signal timings at strategic junctions.

I hope this satisfactorily answers the various questions, raised by Aldermen and Councillors.

Yours sincerely



JOHN IRVINE
Divisional Roads Manager