



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	York Street Interchange Proposals
Date:	29 January 2013
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Department for Regional Development (DRD) Roads Service presented options for the proposed York Street interchange to Development Committee on the 27 June 2011 as part of a public consultation process.
1.2	The existing York Street Interchange is a key junction on the strategic road network which links three of the busiest roads in Northern Ireland, the Westlink and the M2 and M3 motorways. It is the main gateway to Belfast from the North, provides access to the port of Belfast as well as facilitates local traffic movement. It is considered that the existing traffic signal control at the York Street junction causes delays and congestion particularly at peak times, therefore DRD Roads Service have identified a number of options to remove the bottleneck.
1.3	Four options (A, B, C and D) aimed to improve traffic flow on the strategic road network were proposed. The options will provide direct links between the Westlink and the M2 and M3 motorways by creating new flyovers and/or underpasses below the existing Lagan Road and Dargan Rail bridges. Details of the proposed four options are outlined in Appendix 1.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Councils response to the consultation on the four options recommended Option B or C in terms of the enhanced connectivity for the strategic road network. The Council requested assurance from DRD that any new road infrastructure is designed to improve connections to the north of the city and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. This would include consideration of the potential to actively use spaces below the flyover in Option B or cover some of the proposed cut sections in Option C.

	<p>The Council also requested for consideration to be given to the potential for reallocation of surplus road space within the surrounding network and opportunities for the redesign of the Dunbar Link.</p>
2.2	<p>On the 6 December 2012, the Minister for the Department for Regional Development announced that Option C was the preferred option for strategic road improvements at York Street, Belfast.</p>
2.3	<p>Option C proposes movements between M2 and Westlink via underpasses below existing ground level underneath a new York Street bridge and existing Lagan Road and Dargan Rail Bridges and Westlink to M3 movement via an underpass below existing ground level and new York Street bridge. The cost is approximately £98m</p>
2.4	<p>Roads Service state that the decision is based on the government's overarching five objectives for transport, which are: environment, safety, economy, accessibility and integration. The decision also took account of the following scheme specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To remove a bottleneck on the strategic road network - To deliver an affordable solution to reduce congestion on the strategic road network - To improve reliability of strategic journey times for the travelling public - To improve reliability of strategic journey times for the travelling public - To improve access to the regional gateway from the eastern seaboard key transport corridor - To maintain access to existing properties, community facilities and commercial interests - To maintain access for pedestrians and cyclists - To improve separation between strategic and local traffic
2.5	<p>Following this announcement Roads Service intend to commence the Stage 3 Assessment to further refine the design of the Preferred Option in liaison with the public, the local community and the key stakeholders. Detailed environmental, engineering, economic and traffic appraisals on the preferred option will be completed as part of this assessment process.</p>
2.6	<p>At the conclusion of the Stage 3 assessment, Roads Service will prepare and publish the following documents to enable the scheme to proceed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The draft Direction Order - The drafting Vesting Order - The Environmental Statement - It is proposed that the council
2.7	<p>It is proposed that the Council will continue to work with Roads Service during the Stage 3 process to ensure issues raised during the Stage 2 consultation are addressed including:</p>
2.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further air quality assessment to reflect the impact of forthcoming local developments such as the University of Ulster Belfast Campus or Royal Exchange and the impact on proposed residential development in the vicinity;
2.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the design of the new road infrastructure to consider opportunities to improve connections to the north of the city and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists;

2.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a joint approach by DRD to work with other agencies on the assessment of the regeneration impact of land associated with the transport proposal. Opportunities to create employment uses and attractive and safe open space that contribute to the regeneration of this part of the city should be considered; and
2.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the potential for redesign of surplus road space within the surrounding network is considered such as opportunities for the redesign of the Dunbar Link.

3	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
3.1	No specific equality implications.

4	Recommendations
4.1	<p>It is recommended that Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - note the announcement of Option C as the preferred option for strategic road improvements at York Street, Belfast; and - support continued engagement with the Department for Regional Development on the Stage 3 Assessment to seek to influence the design of the Preferred Option to reflect the aspirations of the Council for both the transportation and broader regeneration outcomes.

5	Decision Tracking
There is no decision tracking attached to this report	

6	Key to Abbreviations
DRD – Department for Regional Development	

7	Documents attached
Appendix 1: York Street Interchange Proposed Options Summaries	

Appendix 1

Details on the four options for the York Street Interchange were previously presented to Committee and are summarised below:

Option A

- Movement between the M2 and Westlink will be via underpasses below ground level and Westlink to M3 movement also via an underpass
- The M3 to Westlink movement will remain signalled controlled
- All slip roads at Clifton Street remain open
- This option is the lowest cost of approximately £72m

Option B

- Movement between M2 and Westlink (southbound) via a new bridge over existing Lagan Road and Dargan Rail bridges, which will be approximately 18 metres above existing ground level.
- Movement between Westlink and M2 (northbound) and Westlink to M3 (eastbound) will be via an underpass below existing ground level and under new York Street bridge.
- Movement between the M3 to Westlink (westbound) will be via new bridge over York Street.
- All Slip roads at Clifton street remain open
- This option has the highest estimated cost at approximately £100m.

Option C

- Movement between M2 and Westlink will be via underpasses below existing ground level underneath a new York Street bridge and existing Lagan Road and Dargan Rail Bridges
- Westlink to M3 movement will be via an underpass below existing ground level and new York Street bridge.
- All slip roads at Clifton Street remain open
- The cost is approximately £98m

Option D

- Movement between M2 and Westlink will be via new bridges over existing Lagan Road and Dargan Rail bridges, approximately 18 metres above existing ground level
- Westlink to M3 movement via traffic signal controlled junctions at York Street
- Nelson Street and M3 to Westlink movement via new bridge over York Street
- M2/M3 bound on-slip from Clifton Street closed, all other slip roads at Clifton Street remain open
- The cost approximately £95m