



Subject:	Sustainable Transport – Taxis in Bus Lanes Notice of Motion update
Date:	12 May 2021
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration and Development

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the status of the Notice of Motion regarding taxis in bus lanes since the previous reports to this committee in February 2020 and May 2020. In May 2020 it was agreed that a further report would be brought before this Committee in respect of the Notice of Motion to agree the Council position.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the background to the Notice of Motion in relation to Sustainable Transport: Taxis in Bus Lanes and previous Committee decisions; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the Council's position in respect of the Notice of Motion and the proposed letter to the Minister of Infrastructure as set out below.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>At the Council meeting on 3rd February 2020, the motion as below was proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor O'Hara. In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), this was referred to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for consideration:</p> <p><i>"This Council supports the promotion and expansion of sustainable transport in Belfast as a critical step in addressing the dangerous levels of air pollution and congestion across the City and in the context of our climate emergency.</i></p> <p><i>With the appointment of a new Minister for Infrastructure, the Council should ensure that the Minister is clear about our commitment to sustainable transport options and the need for urgent action on climate.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, the Council agrees to write to the Minister to state that the Experimental Traffic Control Scheme Permitted (Taxis in Bus Lanes), which was proposed by her Department, does not have the Council's support and to urge her to not progress this further, instead focusing efforts on further measures to enhance the provision of public transport, cycle infrastructure and pedestrian priority in the City."</i></p>
3.2	<p>At the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 4th March 2020 after discussion, it was moved by Councillor McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Donnelly:</p> <p><i>"That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the motion to enable a report to be submitted to its next monthly meeting providing details of any research/data available on the impact on air quality, traffic congestion etc. of permitting all taxis to operate in bus lanes."</i></p>
3.3	<p>At the May 2020 CG&R Committee meeting, a report was provided to Members outlining the findings of a report commissioned to provide research and data from other cities in their approach to permitting, or not permitting taxi's in bus lanes. Under the Chief Executive Delegated Authority procedure that was in place at that time for Committee reports, it was agreed, that in line with Members comments on the Committee paper, that a further report should be brought back into the CG&R Committee for discussion and to agree the Council position in respect of the Notice of Motion.</p>

3.4	<p>The May 2020 Committee Paper and associated appendices are included as Appendix 1 of this report, and summarised below.</p> <p><u>Context</u></p>
3.5	<p>The use of bus lanes in Belfast is determined by the Department for Infrastructure, and therefore any decision to allow taxis in bus lanes requires approval from the Department. Bus lanes are operational across certain hours of the day and permitted taxis can use them. Currently, Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) are not currently permitted to use bus lanes. Permitted taxis are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class B taxis displaying white/yellow roof signage - Class D taxis displaying internal signage.
3.6	<p>In 2017 a 12 week trial was undertaken by DfI, permitting Class A taxis access to bus lanes in Belfast. In 2018 DfI proposed an Experimental Traffic Control Scheme (Taxis in Bus Lanes). The Dept. advertised its Intention to Proceed on June 13, 2018 with a 21 day statutory period for representations. However, due mainly to the level of response to the advertisement of the proposal and also the absence of a Minister in 2018 the implementation of the planned 6 month (with a likely further 6 months) Experimental Traffic Control Scheme (not exceeding 18 months) did not proceed.</p>
3.7	<p>The Local Development Plan (LDP) Draft Plan Strategy includes the Strategic Policy (SP) 6 Environmental Resilience which emphasises the need for improved accessibility to sustainable transport modes and reduced reliance on car use. Furthermore, it highlights the need to improve sustainable transport links with commuter towns to protect the health of the city. It is noted that sustainable connectivity “<i>...is vital to social inclusiveness and improves the ability of local communities, in particular disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, to access employment and important services such as healthcare, education, shopping and leisure.</i>”</p>
3.8	<p>The LDP draft strategy sets out the Council’s strategy and policy direction of supporting integration of sustainable transport networks and land use to improve connectivity, reduce traffic volumes and promote sustainable patterns of mobility. It proposes that such an approach will enable the development of a compact, walkable city that is connected to high quality public transport and active travel networks.</p>

3.9	<p>'Future Proofed City' Belfast Resilience Strategy includes a number of key areas of focus, one of which is Connectivity. The Resilience Strategy sets out the aspiration of creating a Sustainable Transport Plan that will "... <i>develop cycle, pedestrian and public transport networks that will support ongoing initiatives to reduce traffic and less sustainable forms of travel, both into and within Belfast.</i>"</p>
3.10	<p>The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) has a stated policy to create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre. It alludes to a number of current and planned schemes that would have the cumulative effect of rebalancing the scale of tarmac to greenspace across the city, including the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT), Belfast Streets Ahead, Belfast Bikeshare Scheme, and transformation of the Inner Ring.</p>
3.11	<p>The May 2020 Committee report included a chronology and recap of previous reports to the CGR Committee between 2017 and 2018 in relation to taxis using bus lanes. It also detailed the key findings from a Jacobs UK Ltd benchmarking study which had been commissioned to understand whether similar authorities permit 'taxis' to use bus lanes, and to engage with the local authorities to establish the rationale for their decision. This benchmarking study looked at eight other similar authorities in the UK. All eight of the benchmarked authorities allowed Hackney Carriages into the bus lanes (public hire) but only four of the authorities permitted Private Hire Vehicles access. The main reason PHVs were not permitted was due to the significant number licensed in an authority, as this was deemed to hinder the effectiveness of bus lanes.</p>
3.12	<p>The study highlighted that some cities have set a numerical limit to the number of hackney carriage while other cities allow market forces to dictate the numbers. It was noted that the benchmarking report had provided little evidence to inform the impacts of taxis using bus lanes on the numbers of people who cycle in the city, or on air quality. None of the benchmarked authorities had measured the air quality impact from taxis using bus lanes. However, Nottingham City Council felt that this was a valid reason for not allowing PHVs to use bus lanes.</p>
3.13	<p>The report by Jacobs set out the following reasons for prohibiting and reasons for allowing PHVs in bus lanes:</p>

	Reasons for prohibiting PHVs in bus lanes	Reasons for allowing PHVs in bus lanes
	1. Congestion - PHVs in bus lanes may increase congestion, making it harder for buses to keep to their timetable and making them a less attractive modal choice.	Historical reasons – PHVs permitted in bus lanes since bus lanes were introduced.
	2. Enforcement difficulties - difficult to distinguish between a PHV and an ordinary car. May lead to private cars also using bus lanes.	Lower fares – e.g. people with a disability who require door to door service should not have to pay extra to travel the same journey if their journey requires a diversionary route due to a bus gate
	3. Financial implications – Installation of new signage & road markings. Enforcement and administration of PCNs.	Most efficient use of road space - Bus lanes often remain empty for significant amounts of time during the day and when buses are not operating.
	4. Air Quality – Perceived negative impact on air quality	
3.14	In line with the Notice of Motion as set out above Members are being asked to indicate how they wish to progress in terms of the proposal to write to the Minister.	
3.15	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report	
3.16	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.	
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached	
	Appendix 1 – Item 3(a) CGR Sustainable Transport Report in Response to NoM - 13 May 2020 Appendix 2 - Taxis in Bus Lanes - Jacobs Report - May 2020	