



Subject:	Motion – Sustainable Transport
Date:	13 May 2020
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

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	To brief Members on details of research / data available on the impact on air quality, traffic congestion etc. of permitting all taxis to operate in bus lanes in the context of the Notice of Motion on Sustainable Transport, which was referred to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2020 by the Council at its meeting on 3 rd February 2020.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee should note the report from Jacobs at Appendix One outlining the findings of other city’s approaches to taxis in bus lanes and some of the consequences and impacts, as requested by the Committee earlier in the year.

	<p>The Committee should also note that a report will be brought back at a later date in respect of the Notice of Motion to agree the Council position on this issue and how that will be raised with the Minister.</p>
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</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>“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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.”</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>“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.”</p>
3.3	<p>Members will note that there has been a number of reports to the Committee over the past few years in relation to taxis using bus lanes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10th May 2017- Notice of Motion Use of Bus Lanes by Taxis. Proposed by Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor Reynolds, to the Committee for consideration: “This Council supports the decision by the Department for

Infrastructure to introduce the twelve week trial period permitting all taxis to use the Belfast Rapid Transit bus lanes and agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure a letter of support to extend the duration of the trial period for an additional six months and expand the trial to include all Belfast bus lanes.” It was moved and declared carried that the Committee supports the decision taken by the Department for Infrastructure to introduce the twelve week trial period permitting all taxis to use the Belfast Rapid Transit bus lanes and agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure a letter of support to extend the duration of the trial period for an additional six months and expand the trial to include all Belfast bus lanes.

- 10th January 2018 – Belfast Rapid Transit. Mr. S. Duffy from Belfast Taxi Group, was in attendance and had requested to speak to the Committee. Mr. Duffy explained that he represented taxi drivers from across the city. He pointed out that a recent trial which allowed private hire taxis to use bus lanes in Belfast had been an overwhelming success, with customers having benefitted from cheaper fares and reaching their destinations quicker. He reported that taxis were able to use bus lanes in a number of cities across Great Britain and Ireland, including Manchester, Glasgow, Cork, Dublin and Cardiff. He emphasised that taxis provided a vital community service in the city, by taking people who were unable to use public transport to hospital appointments and to school. He explained to the Committee that taxi drivers would be severely disadvantaged if they were forced out of bus lanes for twelve hours, six days a week.
- 7th March 2018 - Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure re: Taxis using bus lanes. The Chief Executive tabled a letter from the Department for Infrastructure, in relation to the Committee’s response to the Department’s consultation on the Bus Lanes Orders NI 2018. The Department stated that it was important that the definition of ‘permitted taxis’, in relation to bus lane legislation be the same across all bus lanes in Belfast, in order not to create confusion with different classes of taxis being able to use the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) bus lanes. The correspondence stated that a large number of people had made representation on the issue, calling for all taxis to be permitted to use all bus lanes in the city. While any permanent change required ministerial approval, the Department stated that it had since decided to carry out a further, more extensive trial whereby Class A taxis would be permitted to access all bus lanes which were available to permitted taxis for 12 months. The Committee noted that the trial would be introduced under Article 5 of the Road Traffic Regulation Order as an

	<p>Experimental Scheme and would come into operation prior to the commencement of BRT services in September 2018.</p>
3.4	<p>As agreed by Committee, a research report has been completed into the research/data available on the impact on air quality, traffic congestion etc. of permitting all taxis to operate in bus lanes. This work was carried out by Jacobs UK Ltd, and is included within Appendix One.</p>
3.5	<p>The report was commissioned to understand whether other similar authorities permit 'taxis' to use bus lanes, and to engage with the local authorities to establish the rationale for their decision, and to specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify whether authorities permit taxis to use bus lanes; - Understand the rationale behind the decision-making process of that authority; and - Identify whether there have been any impacts on cyclists in areas that permit taxis in bus lanes.
3.6	<p>The UK Core Cities were used as a benchmark for Belfast. All eight (Belfast, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol) of the benchmarked authorities allowed Hackney Carriages into the bus lanes (public hire) but only four permitted Private Hire Vehicles access.</p>
3.7	<p>Of the authorities that permitted Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) access to bus lanes the following key reasons were provided;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historically PHV's were permitted since the introduction of bus lanes to the authority area; - Potentially lower fares for PHV users through reduced journey times, in particular for vulnerable users; - Most effective use of road space, particularly in off-peak times when bus lanes are less utilised.
3.8	<p>Of the authorities that do not permit PHV's access to bus lanes the following key reasons were provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PHV traffic within bus lanes would increase congestion in bus lanes, affecting bus operating timetables and efficiency. It should be noted that the four authorities that currently do not permit PHV's into bus lanes have higher numbers of PHV within the authority area, with Belfast having the greatest number as identified within Table 2 of the report;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enforcement difficulties with and the potential for domestic vehicles to follow PHV's into bus lanes further exasperating issues with enforcement and congestion; - Financial implications of introducing and enforcing the policy change; - Allowing PHVs in bus lanes was also considered to have negative impacts on air quality, although engagement across all authority areas indicated that they carry limited or no data to support this.
3.9	The benchmarked authorities had not assessed, or have supporting data to assess, the impact of the decision to include PHV's from bus lanes on cyclists, but anecdotally felt that they had not been impacted negatively. That said some authorities did raise issues associated with cyclists in bus lanes in general and were promoting and introducing segregated cycling infrastructure to address this.
3.10	None of the benchmarked authorities had measured the air quality impact from taxis using bus lanes – but Nottingham City Council felt that this was a valid reason for not allowing PHVs to use bus lanes.
3.11	Members will note that the Council produced a Transport Policy in 2004 and revised in 2010 which can be found at Appendix Two and outlined the Council's vision for a sustainable transport system for Belfast. The transportation vision was supported by a number of underlying strategic objectives, including key external policy objectives for the “better support for people and communities” which committed to support and lobbying key delivery agencies for the effective integration of black taxis into the public transport network.
3.12	<u>Finance & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.13	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix One – Taxis in Bus Lanes Report Appendix Two – Transport Policy

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