

Report for Resolution

Report to Norwich Highways Agency Committee
22 May 2008

Item

8

Report of Head of Transportation and Landscape

Subject Tourist Vehicles in The City Centre

Purpose

To inform members of representations made to the advertised Traffic Regulation Order for the proposed Road Train stop on St Peters Street in order to facilitate a decision.

Recommendations

That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) not to introduce a stop for the road train on the corner of St Peters Street and Bethel Street;
- (2) not to allow the Sightseeing Tour of Olde Norwich vehicle to be exempted from any further pedestrianisation restrictions.

Financial Consequences

None.

Strategic Objective/Service Priorities

The report helps to achieve the corporate objective to make Norwich safe and secure, building strong and proud local communities and the service plan priority maintain the City's highways for the safety of all road users.

Contact Officers

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Joanne Deverick, Transportation Manager

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Background Documents

None.

Report

Summary

1. At your meeting in September 2007 you asked officers to investigate the possibility of a road train stop outside the forum, and that if approval from the Department for Transport for a sign could be secured, then the appropriate Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) should be advertised.
2. Approval for a bespoke Road Train stop sign has been investigated with the DfT and a TRO advertised to allow the use by a tourist Road Train vehicle to pick up and set down passengers on Millennium Plain at the junction of St Peters Street and Bethel Street, Norwich. The exact location is shown on the plan attached as appendix 1.
3. Following the advertisement of that TRO, a request was received from Mr Agombar, the operator of the Old Sightseeing Tour of Norwich, asking for his vehicle to be afforded the same exemptions in the pedestrianised areas as the road train.

Consultation – Road Train Stop.

4. A summary of stakeholders representations to the TRO advertisement can be found in Appendix 2.
5. The main concerns of stakeholders relates to the following:
 - 1) Potential hazard posed to traffic using St Peters Street/Bethel Street.

Despite the off road parking location, the positioning of the Road Train stop on a bend means that the manoeuvre is unlikely to be successful on every occasion. There is a risk that traffic approaching from Guildhall may need to avoid the rear of the Road Train and face oncoming traffic, some of which may be emergency vehicles on “blue light” calls, given the proximity of both the Fire and Police Stations.

- 2) Potential obstruction to pedestrian and pedal cycle desire lines to and from Millennium Plain.

Recent works to improve St Peters Street have resulted in significant enhancements to pavement widths and informal crossings provided by “tables”. The location of the proposed Road Train stop would be exactly across these desire lines and would necessitate pedestrians and cyclists making detours around the vehicle. This is an unreasonable inconvenience and is the reason why at present there are extensive no loading and no waiting restrictions at this location to keep it free of parked vehicles to facilitate pedestrian and cycle priority.

- 3) Restricted access to Millennium Plain and St Peter Mancroft via St Peter Street/Multiple tourist operators wishing to use proposed stop location.

Both St Peter Mancroft and Millennium Plain require full unimpeded access

to facilitate their operation for a number of different purposes. This is a particular concern if waiting times were increased from the proposed 10 minutes, to 15 minutes, as requested. Whilst the any tourist vehicle could be asked to move if required, the likelihood of other tourist operators wishing to use this stop could result in unacceptable levels of usage and congestion at this location. It should also be noted that often articulated vehicles are used to service events on Millennium plane, and if these had to wait on the carriageway in St Peters Street for the road train to move this would cause considerable congestion on what is one of the main access routes to the fire station.

4) Intensified Use of the stop by other vehicles.

The operators of both the Sightseeing bus and the Olde Sightseeing Tour charabanc have asked that, if the stop is approved, they be allowed to use it too. Such intensification of use causes considerable concern, as the problems highlighted above would be exacerbated further. It is not considered that there is sufficient justification to restrict the use to the road train only, as it would be in a prime position for all operators.

6. It should be noted that the Road Train currently makes use of a coach bay for the purposes of lay over and picking and set down of passengers on Theatre Street and off the highway in the Cathedral Grounds This is in addition to other locations where the Road Train may informally pick up and set down passengers but not lay over, these are on King Street and Elm Hill.
7. Mr Williams has been made aware of the comments received and has submitted a rebuttal. This is attached as appendix 3.
8. It is the professional opinion of the officers that the use of this location as a stop for a road train, or any other vehicle, is detrimental to the safety and convenience of the general public.

The Sightseeing Tour of Olde Norwich

9. Mr Agombar has submitted a request to be allowed to use his vehicle in the same pedestrianised areas as the road train. This request is attached as appendix 4.
10. The vehicle Mr Agombar operates is classed as a public service vehicle (PSV) and is subject to different licensing restrictions to the road train, which has a special licence that the Highway Authority has to approve. A PSV can travel on any highway but must obey any traffic restriction that is in place such as one way streets, banned turns etc.
11. This means that the Sightseeing Tour can use the ring road, and visit say Mousehold Heath. These options are not open to the road train as this committee agreed that it should not be allowed to travel on the main road network due to congestion concerns. Additionally the maximum speed of the sightseeing tour vehicle is greater than that of the road train, causing more of a potential hazard in pedestrianised areas. For these reasons it is recommended that Mr Agombar's request is denied.

Appendix 2

Verbatim responses received

Respondent	Comments received
Rev Peter Noakes St Peter Mancroft	<p>Summary: Opposed Reason: Access to Church required, risk to pedestrians and drivers</p> <p>Thank you for your recent communication with regard to proposals concerning a 'Tourist Road Train'. Whilst I am happy with the concept in general, I am totally opposed to the proposed siting for the parking/pick-up location, as shown on your plan. On a regular basis, vehicles have access to St Peter Mancroft Church on necessary business. In addition, funeral cars and vehicles associated with weddings require access. The 'Road Train' would be required to move regularly in order to allow access to what is, after all, public highway - albeit with restricted access conditions. Quite apart from the inconvenience involved, it would, I believe, be dangerous to pedestrians and drivers to have the train regularly shunting backwards and forwards on the pavement in order to allow access to authorised vehicles through St Peter Street.</p> <p>The Church Council will not meet again until 31st March. I suspect that I speak for the churchwardens and Council; but I will raise the matter at that meeting and report to you if there is support for the proposed scheme from any of our members.</p>

Respondent	Comments received
<p>Colin Pordham Church Warden</p>	<p>Summary: Opposed Reason: Access required to Church for functions deliveries</p> <p>I have seen your e-mail to the Reverend Peter Nokes regarding the proposal for a tourist train stop near Millennium Plain.</p> <p>First I must express surprise that a tourist train is being proposed when there is already a sightseeing bus and a tourist charabanc operating from the city centre and I do wonder whether there is really any need for yet another form of tourist transportation in the centre of Norwich. Your consultation letter of 27 February gives no indication of the operating hours but presumably if the venture goes ahead it will be restricted to the summer months only.</p> <p>The proposed parking stop will effectively block the access route for vehicles (including funeral and wedding cars) which are permitted to drive along St.Peters Street and down Hay Hill. In 2006 I was in correspondence with your Council pointing out that successive traffic regulation orders relating to St. Peter's Street and Hay Hill had erroneously omitted to retain the right of access for vehicles other than funeral and wedding cars which, from time to time, need to gain access into the churchyard of St. Peter Mancroft Church during pedestrianisation hours. These vehicles include flower arrangers cars which park within the churchyard to unload large boxes or sheets of foliage and flowers. Following my representations, the point was recognised by the Transportation Planning Co-ordinator in her letter to Mr. Nokes of 24 November 2006 (ref. JLD/CC Ped).</p> <p>If permission were to be given for the tourist train stop, not only will those in funeral corteges and wedding cars have to request the train to be moved but so will drivers of flower arrangers' cars and those lawfully making deliveries to the Church. These regular requests are bound to become an irritant for the tourist train operator and an unnecessary inconvenience for those legitimately able to use the roadway round to the south door of the church. The inevitable shunting backwards and forwards of the tourist train could well endanger the many pedestrians using the area.</p> <p>I would hope that Area Highways Committee will accordingly decline the application for a train stop in the particular location which has been requested.</p>

Respondent	Comments received
<p>Steve Falvey Forum Trust</p>	<p>Summary: Opposed Reason: Risks to pedestrians, adverse effect on pedestrianised areas (encouraging parking)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forum Trust is supportive of the concept of a tourist Road Train, our concerns relate to the proposed site for a stopping point on the corner of St Peters Street and Bethel Street. • Being adjacent to the area in question we have witnessed a number of occasions where there have been near misses between vehicles since the improvement works to St Peters significantly reduced the width of the carriage way. • These incidents appear to occur when there are vehicles parked on the loading bay on St Peters Street meaning that other vehicles have to cross on to the opposite side of the road to get around them and then fail to adequately reposition themselves in time to get around the corner. If the road train were also to be parked in this area it would inevitably add to this problem. • If the Road Train were allowed to park on the pavement we believe that it would send a very negative message to other motorists by condoning vehicle movement across pedestrian areas, this is something we have had to work very hard to stop on and around our site since opening in an attempt to ensure pedestrians can use the areas in safety. • We also have concerns that as the raised table in the road at this point is heavily used by pedestrians to cross there is a significant conflict between increasing vehicle movement especially parked vehicles. • As you know there is already significant movement of vehicles across pavements in this area with motorbikes and mopeds crossing to the bike park additionally we have a cycle route crossing our site which adds to the hazards already present for pedestrians trying to enter or exit our site. • We are supportive of the alternative stopping site on Theatre Street.

Respondent	Comments received
<p>Matthew Williams Norwich Cycling Campaign</p>	<p>Summary: Opposed Reason: Risks to cyclists, obstruction to cycle route</p> <p>Thank you for your letter dated 27 February 2008 seeking response to a proposal for a tourist road train to make stops at the junction of St Peter's Street and Bethel Street adjacent to Millennium Plain.</p> <p>I am writing on behalf of Norwich Cycling Campaign which was founded in 1990 and is a subscription organisation of about 150 members wishing to see a greatly increased modal share of cycling as a means of transport for the good of all in the city.</p> <p>While we have no fundamental difficulties with the principle of having a road train operating in the city centre, we would certainly OBJECT to allowing the road train to stop at the position shown on your drawing RT1 right across the line of St Peter's Street.</p> <p>Our comments are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The line of St Peter's Street as a public highway continues across the west end of St Peter Mancroft Church and has been an established route for centuries prior to its recent incorporation into Millennium Plain following construction of The Forum, and the kerbing of the right angle corner encouraging motor vehicles to connect to Bethel Street. 2. That project formally incorporated the strategic two-way cycle route linking Theatre Street and St Peter's Street, which remains an important signed route across Millennium Plain and reflects a centuries-old public thoroughfare between the yards of inns that fronted the two streets. 3. The line between Millennium Plain and upper part of The Market Place is also a well-used desire line for pedestrians, being on the main tourist trail and also a major walking route for shoppers. Flows are often heavy, and the north end of Millennium Plain can already become quite congested with pedestrians at times. 4. The cycle parking stands off the north-west corner of St Peter Mancroft Church railings are amongst the most popular in the city, used by travellers from the south-west when accessing the city centre and complimenting the similar parking on the other side of The Market Place at Guildhall. 5. Both the cycle route (2 above) and pedestrian route (3 above) meet St Peter's Street at the very point where the proposed stopping point would place a physical obstruction up to 20 metres long diametrically at right angles across the heavily used flow line for minutes at a time. This would by definition occur during the busiest parts of the day. 6. The vehicle presumably cannot be crossed halfway along, therefore pedestrians and cyclists would be forced to funnel through a narrow constricted space at either end. This convergence would have a very serious impact on the safety and amenity of cyclists and pedestrians. It would also cause potential difficulties to users of the road train and would cause considerable inconvenience to the movement of all in the vicinity whilst the road train was stopped. It would furthermore seriously obstruct the well-used cycle parking (4 above). 7. In regard to the proposal to have a restricted waiting period, this is unenforceable and we have absolutely no confidence that this and/or the other suggested token measures would in any way mitigate the inevitable problems that would be caused by having a stop at this point. 8. We would suggest that the only workable options would be to stop the road train on the east side of St Peter's Street opposite City Hall, or to reconstruct the south side of Bethel Street to allow a practical stopping point further west alongside The Forum.

Respondent	Comments received
<p>Mr Agombar Sightseeing Tour of Olde Norwich</p>	<p>Summary: Support for use of site for use by all types of tourist vehicle but opposed to exclusive use by Road Train Reason: unfair competitive advantage to rival tourist vehicle operator</p> <p>In November I had a meeting with Andy watt about waiting outside the forum. The road train is a duplication of my own business and your description of it would apply without any amendment to my own operation. Andy Watt agreed that I would be able to wait outside the forum in the same manner as the road train. For the past three years I have been trying by letters, meetings and campaigning to get permission to pick up and drop off passengers outside the forum. In the afternoons this year I am doing a different tour although following the same route, visiting the 30 odd medieval churches and 2 cathedrals and one of the churches which my passengers will be going inside is St, Peter Mancroft. Which means that I will have to wait outside while they are shown round by one of your own councillors.</p> <p>Can you please arrange for my own vehicle to be included in the order to wait outside the forum with the same criteria and conditions which apply to the road train.</p> <p>I also would like the same privileges as the road train , being able to go though the pedestrianised part of King Street & St. Georges. My route always used St.Georges and the closure has curtailed the route and impose a long diversion which is unfair and of prohibitive cost. I will have to re-register my route which will cost £60. The church of St.Andrew, St. Andrews Hall & Sucklings House, & Tudor fascia are too important to omit from the tour. I have been operating my route for the past three years and the closure is a major imposition to my business. It is not unreasonable to be allowed the same privilege as the dotto road train.</p> <p>My main concern of the dotto road train is road safety. Other than the initial examination there are no laws in place to monitor the operation.</p> <p>I operate a PCV, I have to hold an operators licence with many criteria including a CPC transport managers licence, a PCV licence, Pcv annual test at VOSA, maintenance and repairs approved by VOSA and inspection sheets kept for inspection. The route has to be registered as a bus service, I could be fined for being more than 10 minutes late or 3 minutes early or not running or missing a service. None of these conditions apply to the dotto road train. The only laws which come under Section 44 of the road traffic act are 10 mph and only to be used on the agreed route. Can you give me an assurance that someone in the council will be monitoring maintenance and repairs and inspections of the dotto road train?</p> <p>See also subsequent letter dated 25th April 2008</p>

Respondent	Comments received
Michelle Hurren Norwich Tourist Information	<p>Summary: Support Reason: Proposed stop is ideal location for tourist business and should be open to all tourist operators</p> <p>David Macmaster has copied me into his response regarding the new proposals for a stopping point for the Road Train only.</p> <p>Is this proposal out for consultation? I would like to comment that it seems unfair to have a stopping point for just one of the tour companies which take tourists around Norwich? Could it be possible for all 3 (at present) companies to use such a favourable pick up point? From our point of view, it is more visible for tourists and would, I think, be beneficial for all of them to stop at the same place.</p> <p>I look forward to your response.</p>

Respondent	Comments received
<p>Ian Williams Discover Norwich</p>	<p>Summary: Supportive Reason: Applicant Note: 10 min restriction is inadequate</p> <p>The only real concerns I have is the 10 minutes waiting. I would point out that unloading and loading passengers and collecting their fares plus embarking wheel chair users will need extra a longer time than 10 minutes.</p> <p>While most of the time 10 minutes should be ample I hope that it is not set in concrete.</p> <p>The train is 18m long and has three carriages.</p> <p>There will always be someone with the train, either guard or driver.</p> <p>A couple of issues spring to mind about the St Peters Street/ Bethel Street stop.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I will need to wait at the stop for a period of 15 - 30 minutes to accommodate a lunch break. 2. I will also need to wait here from 16.30 - 19.00 so that when the evening tours start from Gentleman's Walk I can just move from here to the start point. <p>Another issue that no one has pointed out or made any reference to is that when I sort the relevant permissions from the councils and Police for the VS order I stated that I will be waiting at the Coach bay on Theatre Street from 16.30 - 18.30 hours before either returning to garaging and/or before moving to the Gentleman's Walk start point for the evening tours (June - September 13th).</p> <p>See also response from Mr Williams to TRO representations in Appendix 3</p>

Respondent	Comments received
<p>David McMaster Awayadays</p>	<p>Summary: Opposed to exclusive use of stop by Road Train, supportive of use of St Peters Street for stop for tourist vehicles Reason: Unfair competitive advantage for rival tourist operator</p> <p>I appreciate you contacting me and giving me the opportunity to comment on the council's proposal.</p> <p>I am very surprised that you are considering this because when I started my Open Top Bus Tour in 2003 my start point was on St Peters Street opposite City Hall and was an ideal visual site. When the changes and the pedestrianization of this area were made I had to move to Theatre Street which is certainly not as visible. Many of my customers come to the centre and have difficulty finding me. I have tried to mitigate this by giving a margin of sale of Tickets to the Tourist Information Centre to enroll their support to guide customers to me.</p> <p>It has taken several years to establish my business and I now have the confidence to obtain a replacement bus which will comply with the new emission controls in Castle Meadow, this is going to increase my costs considerably.</p> <p>As you can understand the Tourist Train will be in direct competition to me and if he is allowed to stop where you suggest this will give him an unfair advantage, unless you are willing to reconsider that I return to the loading bay on St Peters Street.</p> <p>I also wish to inform you that I have had a Tourist Train proposal which I discussed with Andy Watt. I have not pursued this as the council originally disallowed these Trains down pedestrian streets. These rules seem to have changed. My vehicle was to be electric powered and half the length of the proposed train you seem to be encouraging.</p> <p>I have also been advised that such a vehicle has a larger turning circle than normal buses. On the route proposed there will be some practical problems and would advise you that the route is trialed with the approval of Colin Page the Police traffic manager. Just as I did, before I originally registered my route.</p> <p>I would be pleased to be kept informed of any developments.</p>

Respondent	Comments received
Helen Selleck Events Manager Norwich City Council	<p>Summary: Neutral Reason: Events may affect St Peters Street</p> <p>Thank you for the information. My comment is that we often close roads for events and the train would not be able to get through. As long as it is written into any agreement that if the road is closed for events he will not be able to use this as a pick up drop off point then I can not see a lot of problems.</p>
Colin Page Norfolk Constabulary	<p>Summary: Neutral Reason: "Try it and see what happens" with road markings</p> <p>Not being able to come up with anything better, I feel that we have to give this location a go. Obviously this will mean traffic being forced on to the wrong side and it is essential that the road train pulls in as tight as possible. In an ideal world the stop would be marked on the road surface and a central white line marked on the bend – I realise this is a traffic man's point of view and accept that environmentally this will be objected to.</p>

Appendix 3

Mr Williams follow up document

Response to representations

I would like to respond to the submitted responses to the consultation over the TRO on St Peters Street near to The Forum. I hope this of help to set out a balanced consideration of the request.

The road train would only be waiting at the following times.

09.45 - 10.00;

11.00 - 11.15;

12.15 - 12.30;

13.30 - 13.45;

14.45 - 15.00;

A total of 75 minutes during the day.

Between June 5th - September 13th on Thursday, Friday & Saturday evenings waiting may be required between 16.30 - 18.30 before moving to Gentleman's Walk evening tour start point maybe other nights if booked.

I am not entirely sure that the exact place requested has been correctly identified by all respondents except Colin Page and what the legal definition of the difference between a road train and bus.

Disability – Please note another reason for requesting this site is that to access the road train at Theatre Street, wheelchair users have to find a lowered kerb, travel in the roadway to gain access to the train's two spaces for wheelchair users. St Peters Street stop site is all on one level.

Re Peter Noakes

As with Norwich Cathedral when they have funerals and special services I would work with St Peter Mancroft and use alternative. As to adverse risk to pedestrians - these trains are designed for pedestrian areas. I would ask why are Norwich pedestrians be any different to other pedestrians in cities in UK and Europe, theme parks and zoos? Also why are St Peter's Street pedestrians different to Timberhill pedestrians?

At least there can be two way communications between St Peter Mancroft and myself over special services whereas with delivery drivers and others there is not.

It seems City Care trucks can park outside St Peter Mancroft and by the motorcycle park quite readily.

Re Colin Pordham

As above

Re Steve Falvey

I would be using the paved area not the road. So pedestrians can still cross safely from pavement to pavement and would not have to negotiate a parked road train - but other road users parking illegally make it a hazard. Is issue seems to mainly with vehicles parking/loading in loading bay on St Peter's Street - not at my proposed stopping place, two different areas. I have also witnessed people using the loading bay as a parking bay.

Re Matthew Williams

Road train already travels down "century old roads". The Road train would not block the cycle route completely and would be no more of an obstruction than the Ice Rink that is placed in the area at Christmas time. Cycle counts I carried out in my research in the summer of 2007 saw low figures of cyclists using the route in any 15 minutes period. The TRO would be enforced as others are around Norwich. **NO**, the road train will not be there for long periods. The road train is a tour attraction not a stationary attraction.

Re David McMaster & Frederick Agombar

Buses cannot park or stop on pavements as I am sure it is illegal. Buses and trucks are different categories of vehicles; hence a road train has to have a Vehicle Special Order licensed by the DfT. Would a bus or truck be allowed to use Gentleman's Walk or Timberhill as part of its route?

If a level playing field is sought then the road train should have the restriction of the hours it is able to operate lifted so as to be in line with the tour bus and truck and be allowed to travel down to the rail station for example and be able to pick up from Tombland and Castle Meadow, as the bus and truck are.

David McMaster also uses a commercial argument, but the Bus has advantages over the road train as set out in previous paragraph.

Ref Michelle Hurren

Please note "It would be beneficial" and see previous comment.

Re Ian Williams

See revised times above. No thirty minutes required for lunch break.

Re Helen Selleck

Noted

Re Colin Page

Noted and agreed.

<Document Ends>

Appendix 4

Mr Agombar letter dated 25th April 2008-04-30

Sightseeing Tour of Olde Norwich

Joanne Deverick
Transportation Team Leader,
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NR2 1NH



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Norwich.
NR7 0ES.
Mobile 07917 664472

E Mail : tour@oldenorwich.co.uk
web site: www.oldenorwich.co.uk

Your ref: route.

25th April 2008

Dear Ms. Deverick,

Could you please put forward my requests to the next meeting of the highways agency committee in May?

I operate a very similar operation to the dotto road train, I operate a set route at low speed and was approved by the authorities. It is identical in nature to the dotto road train except I have to abide by the law by having a Pcv operators licence, pcv driving licence, financial qualifications, a qualified transport manager (CPC holder) the route has to be registered and the vehicle is subject to annual vosa testing and monitoring of maintenance and repairs by a vosa approved contractor. (None of which apply to the dotto road train). When I started three years ago I asked for permission to go through the pedestrianised part of King Street and later Timberhill and later still to wait for passengers outside the Forum or anywhere in that area in an agreed safe place. I have been obstructed in every way by council officers who find hundreds of reasons to say no.

However along comes a former city councillor named Williams assisted by a current councillor who declares an interest at highways committee meetings -Judith Lubbock and everything I have been refused has been granted to an unlicensed vehicle which is 60 ft long and only has three restrictions, route, speed and attendant. In the interest of fairness alone my replica 1920s charabanc should have exactly the same privileges as the dotto road train. There is no body or organisation to monitor safety or maintenance or repairs and nobody to monitor speed or sticking to the one approved route.(conditions of special types order)

I am only asking for the same privileges as afforded to the dotto road train, access to the pedestrianised streets of King Street & timberhill. Access to St.georges which I have used as my route for the previous years of 2006 & 2007. Also to wait and pick up and drop off passenegers at the same spot at the forum where the road train is to be allowed to stop. My vehicle is 14 ft long and 7 ft wide & drives very slowly (20 mph max) so that passengers can study and photograph historic buildings. It also stops frequently. It takes approx 1 hour to cover the five mile route taking in much more than any other tour.

I am grateful that the sightseeing tour of olde norwich has been allowed to go through St.Benedicts on Saturdays as an exemption to the closure. However if I am suitable for an exemption for St.Benedicts then I should be suitable for the other streets and places? I do not accept that including my one off sightseeing tour vehicle (the only one like it in the world) will open the flood gates to all and sundry to access st.Georges, Timberhill & King Street.

Please look into this scenario and consider my request for parity with the dotto road train.
Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. A. Agombar'.

F . A . Agombar.