



## NORWICH HIGHWAYS AGENCY COMMITTEE

10.00 a.m. – 10.55 a.m.

22 July 2010

Present:

**County Councillors:**

Adams (Chair) (V)  
Gunson) (V)  
Bearman  
Scutter (middle of item 2)  
Shaw

**City Councillors:**

Morphew (Vice-Chair) (V)  
Read (V)  
Lubbock

\*(V) – Voting Member

Apologies:

City Councillor Wiltshire

### 1. CITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON THE COMMITTEE

The Chair referred to the High Court decision to quash the order to grant unitary status to the city and said that members of the City Council who were up for election in May 2010, no longer had their terms of office extended to May 2011 and had ceased to be councillors with effect from 6 July 2010, which included Councillors Morrey and Bremner, who had been members of this committee.

The Chair said that he had found Councillor Morrey, who would not be seeking re-election, to be a supportive Vice-Chair and considered him to be a hardworking member of the committee and the City Council.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Morphew, who had been elected as Vice-Chair at the meeting of the City Council on 20 July 2010, to the committee.

**RESOLVED** that the Chair writes to Councillor Morrey, expressing the committee's gratitude for his contribution to the work of the committee.

### 2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

#### Newmarket Road/Unthank Road Junction

(Councillor Scutter arrived during this item and declared a personal interest in this item as a resident of Newmarket Road.)

Councillor Judith Lubbock, Eaton Ward Councillor, asked the following question:-

'The completion of the reconfiguration of the Newmarket Road/Unthank Road junction which included the creation of a 24 hour bus lane and moving the crossing point has lead to complaints from local residents. Pedestrians and cyclists who use this crossing point to access facilities such as Post Office, shops and bank as well as public transport feel that the crossing point has become very much more dangerous especially now that 3 lanes of fast moving traffic has to be crossed.

Local Councillors are asking for a signalled crossing and ask if the site has been assessed in the light of the recent changes.'

The Transportation Manager, Norwich City Council, responded as follows:-

'Following the completion of the bus lane scheme, a stage three safety audit was carried out and the auditors commented that the on the Poplar Avenue side of Newmarket Road pedestrians now have to cross two live lanes of traffic rather than one which could prove difficult unless the pedestrian was able bodied or very confident. They recommended that the situation was monitored to ascertain whether a controlled crossing would be appropriate.

This concurred with the promise that was made in Norwich Highways Agency Committee when the scheme was developed that an assessment of need for a signalled crossing would be made once the scheme was complete. This assessment was carried out in May 2010, using our standard assessment method that looks at the number of pedestrians crossing and the time they have to wait for a suitable gap in the traffic. Under this method the site is ranked ninth out of 35 locations in the city where crossings have been requested. The main reasons for pedestrians crossing at this location would be to use the facilities in Eaton Village or the bus stops on Newmarket Road. Many people using Eaton village would choose the alternative route of Bluebell Road slip road and going under the A11 rather than trying to cross it, and this may be reducing demand for the surface crossing.

With a position of ninth in the priority order is unlikely that officers would be recommending a crossing at the location when it comes to the annual funding bid report in November, but of course members are not obliged to accept the recommendations and could afford it higher priority. However it should be borne in mind that there is at least one other site higher on the list that has also been raised as an issue at Norwich Highways Agency Committee."

Councillor Lubbock said that the 24 hour bus lane had necessitated the moving of the crossing and was pleased that it had been reassessed and was clearly on the list of priorities.

The Transportation Manager said that there had not been an assessment prior to the implementation of the new bus lane but it was expected that it would have received a similar score. Pedestrians had a wider area to cross and the location of the crossing had changed, whereas previously it had been a single carriageway.

During discussion, County Councillor Spratt, who was attending the meeting, pointed out that Newmarket Road was an important access road into the city for the whole of

South Norfolk and that he considered that there should be no more bus lanes or pedestrian crossings. Members of the committee referred to the extra lane and the amount of traffic using the bus lane.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bearman declared a personal interest in item 7, Norwich Area Transportation Strategy Implementation Plan, Dereham Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor below because, as County Councillor for Mancroft Division, he was involved in the Grapes Hill Community Garden.

### **4. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the meeting held on 24 June 2010.

### **5. SILVER ROAD AREA – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

The Transportation Manager reported the comments of the Divisional and Ward Councillors for Sewell Ward on the experimental one-way system introduced on Bull Close Road, Silver Street and Steward Street in August 2009. Councillor Brociek-Coulton considered that the one-way system had transformed the lives of Silver Road residents and should be made permanent. She had also pointed out that there should be more enforcement of other traffic regulations. County Councillor Toms welcomed the proposal to make the one-way system permanent but requested the continued monitoring of traffic in Wodehouse Street if it was possible.

During discussion the Transportation Manager answered members' questions. Concern was raised that one-way systems were bad news for cyclists. Members were advised that a policy on the use of contra-flows in one-way streets was being developed. There was a bus and cycle contra-flow in Bull Close Road but Silver Street was too narrow for a contra-flow for cyclists and had parked cars. It was also noted that the area was generally residential with shops at the corners of the streets.

**RESOLVED** to ask the Head of Transportation and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Norwich City Council, to carry out the necessary processes to make permanent the experimental one-way system in the Silver Street area which involves Silver Street operating one-way eastbound, Bull Close Road operating one-way westbound and Steward Street operating one-way southbound.

### **6. LOCAL BUS SERVICE ANNUAL RELIABILITY AND PERFORMANCE APRIL 2009 – MARCH 2010**

During discussion, Councillor Read referred to the Joint Investment Plan (JIP) and the Punctuality Improvement Partnership (PIP) being voluntary agreements and suggested that unless these were replaced with a quality bus contract, issues such as over priced fares and poorly co-ordinated routes would continue. Councillor Lubbock considered that a partnership would have more influence on the bus companies. Members then discussed the competition for routes between bus companies and that passengers could influence this by not using a particular service,

but there was nothing that the local authorities could do. Councillor Morpew said that Norwich did not have the same scale of resources as London, which had the only quality bus contract in the country. Local authorities should exert influence through the provision of the County Council's subsidy of £5.3m in 2010/2011.

Members also discussed the 2.5% decline in bus use and the speculation that this was attributed to the downturn in the economy. Councillor Scutter asked for further information regarding the implications on the change in start time for the use of concessionary bus passes.

The Travel Network Manager, Norfolk County Council, confirmed that the standard for all buses to be low floor easy access compliant would be achieved in the next 7 years. There was a commercial incentive to bus operators to improve bus quality as it encouraged more passengers.

Councillor Bearman referred to the fact that around half of the buses did not comply with the low emission zone (LEZ) standard and asked what actions were being taken to improve this. The Head of Transportation, Norwich City Council, said that compliance with the standard and investment by operators in cleaner buses was always expected to be phased in over a 2-3 year period.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) note the report;
- (2) ask officers to provide additional information to committee members on:-
  - (a) the implications of the change in start time for the use of concessionary bus passes in relation to the decline in passenger numbers; and,
  - (b) the action plan to encourage bus operators to ensure that their buses meet the low emission zone standard

**7. NORWICH AREA TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN – DEREHAM ROAD BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) CORRIDOR**

(Councillor Bearman had declared a personal interest in this item.)

Councillor Read said that the encouragement of passengers to purchase tickets before boarding the bus was crucial to the success of the bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor, and suggested that a discount fare was offered. The Transport Development Officer, Norfolk County Council, said that the introduction of off-bus ticketing was likely to be phased in and bus ticket machines in the city centre had already been introduced through the CIVITAS project. Officers were also looking at alternative approaches to off-bus ticketing across the country. It was expected that the first phase of the BRT would have less impact on local businesses than the later stages. Councillor Read said that the BRT would not necessarily have a harmful impact on local businesses, as there could be more passing trade from bus users, pedestrians and cyclists.

The Growth Point Team Leader, Norfolk County Council, and the Transport Development Officer then responded to members' questions on the report relating to the phasing of the project and how the first phase would set the vision for future phases and funding streams. Members were advised that there would be an additional lane created for the bus lane on Grapes Hill, with land being taken from the central reservation and verges to accommodate this.

Councillor Bearman referred to paragraph 5.5 and said that he would be interested to look at the details of the junction changes from a cyclist's point of view. The Growth Point Team Leader confirmed that the junctions would look at issues for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists, and not just the requirement for bus priority.

The committee was in support of the scheme. During discussion on the scheme members noted funding was not available to do the outer ring road and that there could be some road widening and land acquisition involved.

Councillor Lubbock suggested that the funding to the Grapes Hill Community Garden was a lot of public money for one project. Councillor Bearman said that the group had successfully bid for lottery funding and would only draw down what was required.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- (1) note the committee's comments on the emerging proposals for Dereham Road BRT so that their views may be taken into account as part of the further development of the scheme;
- (2) approve in principle the Phase 1 Works as detailed in paragraph 7.2.2. Note that a further report seeking approval to consult on the detailed elements of the Phase 1 works and approval to progress the necessary statutory procedures associated with advertising Traffic Regulation Orders will be brought to the meeting on 23 September 2010.

**8. HIGHWAY PERFORMANCE MONITORING OF THE HIGHWAYS AGENCY AGREEMENT**

The Head of Transportation circulated a supplementary report at the meeting which set out the options that formed part of an overall package of recommendations to deliver a 25% saving in the County Council's overall Local Transport Partnership improvement programme which was considered by the County Council's Cabinet at its meeting on 12 July 2010 and would be recommended to the County Council's Council meeting on 26 July 2010.

During discussion Councillor Read said that it was regrettable that funding would not be available for the following schemes:-

- Norwich - cycling in pedestrianised areas - standardisation of times;
- Norwich - city centre contra flow cycle lanes on one-way streets;
- Norwich - B1108 Earlham Fiveways roundabout Improvements.

The Head of Transportation said that the funding for cycling in pedestrianised areas had been cut from this element but it was hoped that it could be funded through the Norwich Area Transport Strategy (NATS). The Transportation Manager said that a policy on the contra-flow cycle lanes in one-way streets would be developed but that only one of the two pilot schemes would be carried out. It was explained the funds for the roundabout improvements were to make changes to the lane markings and erect a monitoring camera which were not considered to be value for money in the present climate.

In response to a question from Councillor Shaw relating to the pedestrian crossings in Harvey Lane, the Transportation Manager said that the crossing had been brought forward from the 2011/2012 programme and that it would not be value for money to put in one refuge or crossing at a time.

During discussion members considered the effectiveness of local safety schemes in the past and the reduction in the accident rates.

Councillor Gunson referred to the reduction in the capital funding and considered that the cuts to the programme for Norwich were the right ones. It was not possible to do half a scheme which had already been committed. There would be further cuts in capital funding next year and it would be necessary to reprioritise schemes in the next financial year.

**RESOLVED** to receive and note the reports.

## **9. MAJOR ROADWORKS – REGULAR MONITORING**

**RESOLVED**, having considered the report of the Head of Transportation, to note the report.

CHAIR