
REPORT 2
(1215/52/IM)

BUS PRIORITY PLAN: COURTENAY PLACE, KENT AND CAMBRIDGE TERRACE AND ADELAIDE ROAD

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval from the Committee for a package of works designed to implement the Bus Priority Plan in Courtenay Place, Kent Terrace, Cambridge Terrace and Adelaide Road.

2. Executive Summary

The Bus Priority Plan was presented to SPC in April 2007, when Councillors reaffirmed their support for improving the performance of the city's passenger transport system through bus priority measures. Councillors agreed that viable public transport is critical to the functioning of Wellington's transport system and acknowledged the important contribution of bus lanes to achieving that end.

The Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Corridor Plan (N2A Plan) identifies that Wellington City has responsibility for passenger transport improvements along the Golden Mile route, and bus priority measures on arterial routes, to the airport, hospital and key suburban centres.

Bus priority measures are aimed at making travel by bus more attractive and reliable, encouraging a shift from private cars to buses, facilitating a more efficient and environmentally friendly means of transport, future-proofing bus movements from the effects of growing traffic congestion, helping buses bypass congestion and reducing journey times.

A significant number of bus priority measures are now in place both along the Golden Mile and on main arterial routes carrying high bus flows into and out of the central city. These are routinely monitored with the results presented to Committee, and the schemes have been shown to perform well.

The latest scheme has been the restoration of the Golden Mile project. This has achieved a number of core planning objectives including restoring the original two-way public transport route through the Golden Mile, providing a more legible bus route closer to passenger demand and bypassing potential traffic delays by creating a largely dedicated route along Manners Street.

While it is too early to fully evaluate the project, early bus travel survey results are encouraging with the key northbound direction, which has been subject to persistent delays and unreliability for a number of years, showing journey time savings of around 14% and reduced variability in service times by about 11 minutes during the evening peak.

Bus operators have reported significant reduction in congestion, no holdups northbound, more consistent trip times with better timekeeping and fewer customer complaints.

The survey results can be viewed in the context of the new lower 30km/h speed limit, long running road works on Willis Street, and the project continuing to settle in.

Public feed back has also been positive, and Colliers International has reported that pedestrian counts in the former Manners Mall have returned to 2009 levels.

It is proposed that the next stage of the Bus Priority Plan include Courtenay Place, Kent and Cambridge Terrace and Adelaide Road all of which carry large bus flows. A detailed assessment of the scope for introducing bus lanes along these routes shows that it will be possible to implement these with minimal effect on parking or general traffic movement while achieving good benefits for public transport users.

In the case of Courtenay Place, we are also addressing two other long standing traffic related matters. These are the traffic circulation on Blair and Allen Streets where there is the potential to improve pedestrian safety and expand the amount of space available for café/dining while retaining as much parking space as possible. Also the issue of poor taxi driver compliance during weekend evenings in particular. Both these issues are discussed in the report, however, both will be subject to further work before seeking Committee approval.

On the matter of pedestrian safety and convenience, detailed work is also progressing on whether or not the two remaining zebra crossings on Courtenay Place should be converted to signalised crossings in the same manner as the crossing near the Reading cinema. Depending on the outcome one or more of these may be signalised under previous authorisation by SPC.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree to:*
 - (a) *Bus lanes in both directions for the full length of Courtenay Place*

- (b) An evening peak southbound bus lane on Kent Terrace from 4pm – 6pm weekdays between Majoribanks Street and Elizabeth Street*
- (c) A morning peak northbound bus lane on Cambridge Terrace from 7am – 9am weekdays between Buckle Street and Courtenay Place*
- (d) A southbound evening bus lane on Adelaide Road from 4pm to 6pm weekdays between Rugby Street and John Street.*

All as per the plan included in the appendix

- 3. Agree that the traffic resolutions required to implement the above bus lanes be advertised and brought back to the Committee for confirmation.*
- 4. Note that the report discusses a possible taxi management system on Courtenay Place to be consulted on with the taxi industry and local businesses and with any proposal that eventuates being subject to the traffic resolution process.*
- 5. Note the report discusses the potential for some changes to Blair and Allen Streets, including a possible one-way arrangement, to be further progressed in consultation with Council's urban designers and local businesses and with any proposal that eventuates being subject to the traffic resolution process.*

4. Background

4.1 Introduction

Wellington is a dynamic and growing city, and transport has an important part to play in supporting and directing that growth. Transport affects the liveability of the city, the economic growth and it influences where people choose to live. Ultimately, these factors affect our international competitiveness, and our long-term future as a city.

On many indicators Wellington's transport system is performing well: our traffic congestion levels are lower than many comparable cities and our public transport rider-ship is higher. We are a compact city with short travel distances and a good level of connectedness.

However, Wellington's transport needs are continuing to increase in line with the economic expansion and population growth. These changes are placing added demands on the transport infrastructure needed to support the city. Our good use of bus and rail needs to increase even further in the future. Otherwise, the growing population and increasing urban development will lead to greater congestion. Greater use of public transport will make the city more liveable and will benefit the economy by ensuring people and goods can be more efficiently and easily moved around the city. It is also a more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable option than private cars.

The 2007 Bus Priority Plan showed how bus priority can contribute to improving the performance of the city's passenger transport system and confirmed that viable public transport is critical to the functioning of Wellington's transport system.

4.2. Strategic Direction Supporting Bus Priority

The Regional Land Transport Strategy seeks to achieve increased peak period passenger transport mode share, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and reduced severe road congestion. Public transport and improvements to the public transport system through bus priority have been identified as one of the actions to achieve the desired outcomes of the strategy. The strategy acknowledges that territorial authorities are responsible for bus priority measures.

Similarly Wellington City Council's Transport Strategy identifies bus priority as one of the key tools that will achieve transport and wider city objectives. The strategy identifies five key tasks to meet the objectives, one of which is the development of passenger transport systems as the main means for the movement of people along the urban development strategy growth spine.

The Bus Priority Plan directly supports three relevant outcomes of the Transport Strategy:

- More liveable – Wellington will be easy to get around, pedestrian friendly and offer quality transport choices
- More sustainable – Wellington will minimise the environmental effects of transport and support the environmental strategy
- Better connected – Wellington will have a highly interconnected public transport, road and street system that supports its urban development and social strategies

More specifically the initiative to achieve these outcomes for public transport is:

A seamless passenger transport system along the growth spine including bus priority measures on all main arterial routes to and through the central area.

Bus priority is a key element in regional and local strategies and is an integral part of the direction that the city is taking in terms of transport planning.

4.3. Relationship to other Plans and Projects

The Ngauranga to Airport Corridor Plan (N2A Plan) adopted in October 2008 and supported by the Council, is a joint initiative between New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), Great Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) and Wellington City Council (WCC). It presents a long term plan for improvements to the transport network within this key corridor and includes a strong emphasis on passenger transport.

The Plan identifies bus priority as a key measure to improve journey times, reliability, passenger waiting facilities and boarding provisions. It specifically identifies the Golden Mile, Kent/Cambridge Terraces and Adelaide Rd for bus priority treatment.

The proposals in this report are integral to the recently released NZTA plans for traffic improvements around the Basin Reserve which form part of the Cobham Drive to Buckle Street improvements currently out for public consultation.

4.4. Progress on the Bus Priority Plan

A significant number of bus priority measures are now in place both along the Golden Mile and on main routes carrying high bus flows into and out of the central city.

Bus lanes are now in place on

- The Golden Mile between the Railway Station and Taranaki Street
- Adelaide Rd
- Kent Terrace
- Kaiwharawhara Rd
- Glenmore St
- Chaytor St

These are routinely monitored with the results presented annually to Committee, and the schemes have been shown to perform well.

The latest scheme has been the restoration of the Golden Mile project. This has achieved a number of core planning objectives including restoring the original two-way public transport route through the Golden Mile, providing a more legible bus route closer to passenger demand and bypassing potential traffic delays by creating a largely dedicated route along Manners Street.

While it is too early to fully evaluate the project, early bus travel survey results are encouraging with the key northbound direction, which has been subject to persistent delays and unreliability for a number of years, showing journey time savings of around 14% and reduced variability in service times by about 11 minutes during the evening peak.

Bus operators have reported significant reduction in congestion, no holdups northbound, more consistent trip times with better timekeeping and fewer customer complaints.

The survey results can be viewed in the context of the new lower 30km/h speed limit, long running road works on Willis Street, and the project continuing to settle in.

Public feedback has also been positive, and Colliers International has reported that pedestrian counts in the former Manners Mall have returned to 2009 levels.

It is important to emphasise that buses are highly efficient users of road space especially at peak times when passenger loadings are at their greatest. For example a modern bus with a capacity of say 70 commuters is equivalent to roughly 50 cars. Additionally if we consider the movement of people along our main bus corridors e.g. Courtenay Place, there are around 27,000 people that travel through Courtenay Place by bus on a typical weekday compared with around 8,500 people travelling in private vehicles.

There is thus compelling logic in providing priority lanes for buses which can carry many more people per hour than a normal traffic lane.

5. Discussion

5.1. Further development of the bus priority plan

The next stage of the Bus Priority Plan is to complete bus priority on the Golden Mile by implementing bus lanes in both directions along Courtenay Place, and also extending the priority along Kent and Cambridge Terrace and Adelaide Road, through to Newtown. The recommendations will achieve an improved level of service and reliability of the bus services in the city and protect the space for further growth of the transport system.

The above proposals are important components of the approved Ngauranga to Airport Corridor Plan where the City Council's contribution is focussed on rolling out the bus priority programme as part of the plan's multi-modal approach to future transport network improvements.

In terms of timing, completing the Golden Mile bus lanes then consolidating bus priority along Kent/Cambridge and Adelaide Road will fulfil a significant part of the Council's commitment to the proposed Basin reserve improvement. They will if implemented, complete an essentially continuous bus priority corridor between the Wellington railway station and the regional hospital at Newtown, as required by the Council's Urban Development and Transport strategies.

Where bus lanes are located on main arterial roads carrying high traffic volumes to and from the CBD, they are able to be used by certain other vehicles including cycles, motorcycles and in-service taxis as well as providing for emergency vehicles. They therefore serve a wider purpose than simply providing for buses, so that increasing the number of bus lanes is seen as a way of also providing a useful facility for cyclists in particular, where it is impractical to provide dedicated space.

Where justified by demand, or safety considerations, or where road space is not required for other traffic then bus lanes are operational 24/7. This is the case along most of the Golden Mile route. In other cases where there is a clear peak bus demand and there are other competing demands for road space, e.g. kerbside parking, then the bus lane will operate only at peak times – usually either 7am to 9am or 4pm to 6pm.

Therefore as far as possible the objective is to make the most efficient use of the scarce road space, with buses being highly efficient users of space in particular at peak times. There is also a strong emphasis on minimising adverse impacts on other road users, so that for example where there is established kerbside parking then every effort is made to retain this as far as practical by the use of peak hour clearways which allow parking at times other than the duration of the peak period.

In the case of Courtenay Place, we are also addressing two other long standing traffic related matters. These are the traffic circulation on Blair and Allen Streets where there is the potential to improve pedestrian safety and expand the amount of space available for café/dining while retaining as much parking space as possible. Also the issue of poor taxi driver compliance during weekend evenings in particular. Both these issues are discussed in the report and both will be subject to further work before seeking Committee approval.

On the matter of pedestrian safety and convenience, detailed work is also progressing on whether or not the two remaining zebra crossings on Courtenay Place should be converted to signalised crossings in the same manner as the crossing near the Reading cinema. Depending on the outcome one or more of these may be signalised under previous authorisation by SPC.

5.2. Courtenay Place

5.2.1. Bus Priority Lanes

Bus priority improvements are proposed along Courtenay Place. The priority will be in the form of dedicated and time restricted bus lanes which can be established without the removal of any parking in the westbound direction, and with a peak period clearway in the eastbound direction from Taranaki Street to the pedestrian crossing in front of Reading cinemas. Cyclists, motorcyclists and taxis will be allowed to use the bus lanes.

Opus consultants were commissioned to carry out an analysis of options for bus lanes on Courtenay Place and Kent/Cambridge Terrace. Three options with different levels of investment and impact on other traffic were identified and assessed at a high level using the WCC traffic model. All the options showed good benefit/cost ratios for bus operations with the recommended option being the one with least impact on kerbside parking and general traffic.

The bus lanes can be established with limited effect on parking. In total 8 car parks from Taranaki Street up to the first bus stop on the northern side of Courtenay Place will be a clearway during the 7am-9am and 4pm-6pm peaks. The clearway has previously been approved by SPC as part of the parking and traffic changes to allow for the Courtenay Park project, with implementation held back subject to further work on the bus priority project.

There will be minor changes to the kerb line along Courtenay Place in the narrow sections however these will not effect the operation of the footpaths.

Courtenay Place has three pedestrian crossings. The pedestrian crossing outside Reading cinema has been converted to a signalised crossing which has improved the functioning of the St James bus stop while providing a more orderly flow of vehicles and pedestrians. Further discussion on pedestrian crossings is covered in 5.2.4.

Given the bus lanes will have only a minor effect in terms of car parking and little if any impact on general traffic flow; it is proposed that the changes are dealt with through a traffic resolution process rather than a separate consultative process. This will simplify implementation while still providing for public input.

5.2.2. Blair and Allen Street

Blair and Allen streets have a number of competing interests. There is increasing pressure for these streets to cater more for dining and entertainment while still accommodating residents and commercial tenants. The existing design of the streets provides a substantial amount of parking, however the pedestrian environment is quite constrained and there have been some safety issues.

A comprehensive urban design and transport study is planned to determine what the options are for these streets. The study area would also include the eastern end of Courtenay Place.

One possibility is a one-way northbound traffic flow on Blair Street and southbound traffic flow on Allen Street. This will allow motorists to circulate the blocks in a safer clockwise movement if they are looking to park or service property on the streets.

It would allow the entry and exit points of the streets to be narrowed at the Courtenay Place and Wakefield Street ends which will create a safer pedestrian environment and help keep vehicle speeds down.

A one-way system would potentially free up more space for other users of the streets. However any decision to proceed needs to be considered in the wider context of how these streets should best be utilised in the future. Officer discussions are ongoing and when a proposal is ready it is expected this will be referred to Committee with any traffic and parking changes dealt with through the traffic resolution process.

5.2.3. Taxi Management

Courtenay Place is the entertainment zone of Wellington in the evenings and weekends. Many patrons of the restaurants and bars choose to use taxis to get home. The high demand during a short period of time creates issues with taxis double parking, parking in illegal spaces and causing a general efficiency and safety issue on Courtenay Place. Part of the problem is that there is not enough parking for taxis close to the passenger demand at these busy times, and a general free for all. This requires a higher than desirable level of enforcement.

The plan is to create a small taxi pick-up zone at the south eastern end of Courtenay Place where the public toilets are located. The footpath side parking will be converted to a taxi zone from 6pm every night. The parking will continue to be pay and display for the remainder of the day, having little effect on the businesses in the area.

The area designated for taxi parking provides for 18 taxis, and also has a convenient one-way system which will help the pick-up process. The benefit of a parking precinct is that both the patrons and the taxis know where to go to meet each other rather than the current disorder.

The area will be fed from the taxi stand on Cambridge Terrace. Taxis will communicate by radio and be able to call through additional taxis as they leave the area.

The Taxi Forum have been consulted and have concerns with the proposal, however, officers are of the opinion that this proposal gives the best overall outcome for the area. Officers have requested other alternatives from the Taxi Forum but no feedback has been received.

Council will need to commit to enforcing and monitoring the taxi area. History has shown that the taxi drivers and companies are not able to behave in an appropriate manner without enforcement. It should be noted that the recent introduction of a mobile warden with the camera mounted car has resulted in significant improvements in compliance. Officers are also progressing the implementation of static cameras which are expected to further improve taxi behaviour in the area and would reinforce the proposed taxi zone.

No approval is being sought from Councillors at this point and discussions will continue with the taxi industry and also with local business interests. As and when the scheme is ready to take forward it is proposed that it be progressed through the traffic resolution process.

5.2.4. Pedestrian Crossings

Courtenay Place has three pedestrian crossings at important locations where significant demand is centred. The pedestrian crossing outside the Reading Cinema has been converted to a signalised crossing as part of the previous stage of bus priority. The change was made to give buses better flow along Courtenay Place, while providing a safe and convenient facility for pedestrians.

At a zebra pedestrian crossing each individual pedestrian can stop the traffic, but signals bunch the pedestrians meaning there is overall less disruption to traffic which is particularly relevant on this main bus route.

Signals also allow pedestrians to cross with the protection of a dedicated phase which is safer for pedestrians as motorists are sometimes tempted to not give-way to pedestrians on conventional zebra crossings.

A dedicated 'B' bus phase at the signals lets buses go before general traffic, allowing them to effectively jump the queue, which gives further benefits to bus travel times.

Although too early to make an accurate safety assessment, early indications suggest there have been safety improvements for pedestrians since the signalised crossing has been established at the Reading Cinema.

The two eastern pedestrian crossings were not signalised at the same time because of uncertainty that they would achieve the desired gains in traffic efficiency. Therefore we chose to signalise the Reading Cinema crossing and to allow this to settle in before considering further conversions.

As part of the current bus lane proposal, detailed modelling is being carried out to determine whether it is best to maintain the crossings at their current locations and whether or not they should be signalised. The crossings can then be modified as appropriate when the study results have been analysed.

5.3. Cambridge Terrace Bus Priority

Cambridge Terrace currently has three lanes for general traffic and two parking lanes. The parking lanes are on either side of the road, one against the footpath and one against the central island. The parking against the footpath is generally time restricted with either P5, P30, P60, P&D 2hr or loading. The parking against the island is P10hr parking and a large taxi stand at the northern end.

The proposal is to convert the footpath side parking lane into a morning peak bus lane from 7am – 9am. There is currently a clearway from Fifeshire Avenue to Courtenay Place which covers most of the length of the proposed bus lane, so there would be minimal impact on kerbside parking. The bus lanes allow cyclists, motorcyclists and taxis to also use the lane.

A parking survey was carried out in June 2011 to determine the occupancy of the car parks during this period. The survey showed the average occupancy was only 14% between 7am – 9:30am showing there is potentially little effect from establishing the bus lane.

Importantly the bus lane consolidates the public transport corridor which can be further developed in the future for alternative modes of public transport as and when they become viable.

5.4. Kent Terrace Bus Priority

Kent Terrace is similar to Cambridge Terrace with three general traffic lanes and two parking lanes, with an evening peak bus clearway from 4pm – 6pm from Elizabeth Street up to the Basin Reserve. The current clearway is against the footpath. The proposal is to convert the clearway into a bus lane for the full length of Kent Terrace from Majoribanks St to Buckle St. Cyclists, motorcyclists and taxis are also allowed to use the lane.

A parking survey of Kent Terrace from 4pm – 6:30pm showed that the parking has an average occupancy of 25%. It should be noted that half of the length of the street is already a bus clearway in the P.M peak. The survey showed that there was good compliance with the clearway restriction.

The effect of the bus lane would be limited to the length of kerbside parking between Majoribanks St and Elizabeth Street which has space for around 12 cars plus a loading zone and motorcycle stand. Over this length parking would not be available 4pm to 6pm weekdays but available at all other times.

5.5. RoNS – Basin Reserve improvements

The recommendations in this report can be implemented in a relatively short time frame compared to the likely completion time of the Basin Reserve improvements recently announced by NZTA. Upon completion of the Basin Reserve project the bus lanes on Kent and Cambridge Terrace can be easily realigned, while achieving benefits for public transport in the meantime.

5.6. Adelaide Road Bus Priority

Adelaide Road is also a critical part of the bus network. Further gains can be achieved by converting the current clearway on the east side to an evening peak bus lane from the Basin Reserve heading south to John Street. As for the other proposed bus lanes, cyclists, motorcyclists and taxis are permitted users.

The proposal can be achieved with minimal effect on parking or the amenity of the local area and is consistent with the Adelaide Road Framework.

Further improvements for buses will be achieved when the approved Adelaide Road upgrade is implemented. This is currently programmed for 2013/14.

5.7. Consultation and Engagement

Consultation is proposed to be carried out through traffic resolutions, as all the recommendations are consistent with policy and plans that have been through earlier public consultation exercises. Officers consider the effects of these specific proposals to be minor and localised, and therefore appropriate to be dealt with through the standard consultation for a traffic resolution.

Subject to Councillor approval, it is proposed to advertise the traffic resolutions covering the recommended bus priority measures on 23 August and to report back to SPC with feedback and recommendations on 22 September, prior to a final Council decision.

5.8. Climate Change Impacts and Considerations

Bus Priority is part of Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2010 for addressing climate change by improving the current service levels making bus travel more attractive to a larger number of people.

6. Conclusion

The Bus Priority Plan is an integral part of both city and regional strategies and plans. Bus priority is a practical and proven method for improving the public transport system.

Significant progress has already been made in achieving the plan and the proposed bus lanes will provide a virtually continuous bus priority corridor between the railway station and the Wellington hospital in Newtown.

These proposals are important components of the approved Ngauranga to Airport Corridor Plan and in particular the proposed Basin Reserve scheme where the City Council's contribution is focussed on rolling out the bus priority programme as part of the planned multi-modal approach to future transport network improvements.

The proposals are expected to deliver good benefits to public transport, with minimal if any impact on other road users or local businesses.

Contact Officer: *Stephen Harte, Programme Manager: Transport Network Development. Stephen Carruthers, Transport Planner.*

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The recommendations of the paper are consistent with the expectations and desired outcomes of the Transport Strategy.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

The recommendations are able to be achieved within existing Bus Priority budgets. (CX 492)

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

N/A

4) Decision-Making

This is not a significant decision.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

The paper recommends consulting through the traffic resolution process.

b) Consultation with Maori

N/A

6) Legal Implications

N/A

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report recommends measures which are consistent with the existing Bus Priority Plan and other Council strategies and policies.

Appendix: Bus Priority Plans – Courtenay Place, Kent and Cambridge Terrace and Adelaide Road