

5. CITYWIDE PUBLIC TRANSPORT PRIORITY PLAN

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The purpose of this report is to seek the Board's feedback on the draft Citywide Public Transport Priority Plan. This has been developed using criteria commented on by Community Boards, which were approved by the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee and the Council at its May 2004 meeting.

BACKGROUND

The draft Citywide Public Transport Priority Plan (copies **separately circulated** to Board members) has been prepared as a first step towards the development of public transport priority measures across the city, the aim of which being to provide a more convenient metro public transport system with the efficiency and reliability necessary to encourage more people to make more bus trips in deference to car trips. As the Board will know from previous reports, this is a key objective of the Christchurch Public Passenger Transport Strategy Update 2003, which was adopted by the Council and Environment Canterbury in July 2003, following consultation with each Community Board.

The purpose of the citywide plan is to develop a list of corridors with identified unreliability and delay problems, and then place them in a priority order using the criteria already adopted by the Council.

It is not the purpose of the plan to identify options (or specific proposals) on each of the corridors. This will follow adoption of the plan, at which stage options will be developed in association with people likely to be affected or to have an interest in the particular areas.

KEY POINTS IN THE PLAN

Board members will see from the circulated plan that the three corridors proposed for development first are:

- Belfast to/from the Bus Exchange, via Papanui Road
- Princess Margaret Hospital to/from the Bus Exchange, via Colombo Street
- Queenspark to/from the Bus Exchange, via New Brighton Road

The Board will be most interested in the Belfast to/from Bus Exchange corridor and in particular the section of Papanui Road between Blighs Road and Bealey Avenue, which falls within the Board's boundaries.

BACKGROUND TO THE SELECTION OF BELFAST TO/FROM EXCHANGE CORRIDOR

In terms of the criteria adopted by the Council in May 2004, this corridor came a clear first. The qualification of this corridor against the criteria is discussed below.

Unreliability and Delay

Board members will see on page 13 of the circulated plan that it ranks 1st in three of the four unreliability and delay indicators developed to prioritise the corridors. It is typical of this corridor that due to high and variable traffic flow, between 25% and 49% of all bus trips in the morning and evening peak hours are more than 3 or more minutes early or late. Bus trips can also take up to 5 minutes longer than 125% of a car's journey time. More specifically, on Papanui Road between Papanui Shops and Bealey Avenue, inbound morning trips are unreliable 38% of the time and take on average 4.7 minutes longer than 125% of a car. Outbound evening trips are unreliable 49% of the time, but only 0.6 minutes slower than 125% of a car.

Potential Benefits to Others

The potential for this corridor to benefit others (particularly on Papanui Road) was ranked highly and this was primarily because currently there is an absence of cycle facilities on this busy arterial road, which is a high/medium priority for completion of the prioritised cycle network capital programme according to the Cycle & Pedestrian Planners.

The potential is also good to improve the level of service to pedestrians as there are long sections along Papanui Road in particular that are intimidating for pedestrians to cross. The painted median in many locations could be upgraded to a pedestrian island or pedestrian signals (within the context of bus priority and wider traffic management implications) which would afford a new level of protection to pedestrians, greatly improving on the current situation.

Other Factors

Other factors that were considered in selecting this corridor included the level of integration possible with the existing five year capital works programme and the effect on adjacent land uses, commented on below.

Five year capital works programme

In terms of programmed capital works, Papanui Road and environs stand to receive the highest amount of capital spending of any of the corridors considered for bus priority treatments. The works programmed include many street renewal projects linking with Papanui Road, including the most substantial sums for works on Blighs Road, Perry Street and Mays Road. Three cycle facility schemes amounting to \$246,000 are also programmed for completion on Papanui Road, in the 2007/08 financial year. These schemes present a good opportunity for co-ordination with bus priority corridor works that would give the Council scope to develop integrated designs achieving multiple outcomes for local residents and businesses, as well as public transport and other road users passing along and across Papanui Road.

Effect on adjacent land uses

As outlined in the citywide plan, primarily the concerns in this respect will be on the potential loss of on-street parking. Until options are developed to resolve the unreliability and delay issues identified on the eight corridors, it is difficult to comment on the local and specific effects of bus priority schemes on adjacent land uses to any level of detail. The actual effects will depend on the type of measure required and the availability of, or potential for, nearby alternatives.

Each of the corridors have similar ranges of adjacent land uses including residential and commercial purposes, in the central city and in the suburbs. It would be fair to say that whichever corridors are first developed, there will be concerns over potential effects such as loss of on-street parking. The important issue in such cases is to establish the actual level and type of use of on-street parking supply and to reconcile this with local land owners and users needs within design options that also achieve public transport objectives.

Board members will be aware of recent proposals to provide additional parking at the Merivale Mall. Whilst this is currently only an initial proposal, it does have some potential relevance to the development of this corridor for future bus priority treatment. The addition of this new parking could relieve on street parking pressures in the Mall area and provide some additional flexibility towards the development of options that could conceptually require the removal of parking on Papanui Road.

Summary

Within the overall context of unreliability, delay and bus frequency, as well as potential for improvements to cycling and walking, and other factors such as integration with the five year capital works programme, this corridor is the highest priority for treatment. The corridor is certainly strategic in terms of its overall importance to the metro system. At its north end are many metro services focussed on serving Northlands Mall (including the Orbiter) whilst along its length are three long through-routes which are particularly sensitive to unreliability and depend on certainty of arrival times to maintain their schedules. Any improvements to reliability and journey time would benefit not only passengers boarding and alighting along Papanui Road, but have other far reaching benefits including improved operating efficiency of the Bus Exchange (i.e. buses would arrive when they are supposed to) and benefits to passengers on the through routes as far a field as Hoon Hay, Cashmere and Westmorland, and also on the Rangiora route.

OTHER KEY CITYWIDE PLAN ISSUES

The draft citywide plan also covers the important issue of enforcement. This is important to maintain the benefits of any bus priority scheme, as well as to ensure the safety of other road users.

Enforcement is primarily a key requirement for bus lanes and should these be developed through the consultation and option development process at the next stage, then it is important that they be enforced appropriately.

The draft plan recommends a direction that allows staff to undertake planning for Council enforcement officers to be employed in the enforcement of bus priority measures. This will involve working with Central Government and the Police to obtain the necessary warrants and delegations of authority for the Council to enforce bus lane moving vehicle violations (currently the Council can only enforce stationary vehicle offences such as parking in a bus lane).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the draft Citywide Public Transport Priority Plan and to explain the reasons why Belfast to/from the Bus Exchange, via Papanui Road has been proposed as one the three corridors to first be developed for bus priority treatments.

The report has outlined that overall this corridor stands to provide the most benefit to the city in terms of improved reliability and bus travel time relative to the car, as well as potential benefit to other users and other factors like integration with existing capital works projects. This conclusion has been reached using recently Council adopted criteria.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Board provide its feedback to the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee on the draft citywide public transport priority plan.

Chairman's

Recommendation: For discussion.