

11. 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 have been separately circulated to 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 and introduction 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 proposed fourth placed corridor is Hornby Mall to/from the Bus Exchange, via Riccarton Road. This corridor had been placed second on the list following a review of bus performance in terms of unreliability and delay, and also the potential benefit to others criteria (see section 1.4 of the plan), however with a significant network improvement at the Riccarton / Clarence / Straven intersection due for construction this financial year, it is the staff recommendation that for sound practical and engineering reasons, the development of bus priority measures be deferred.

The Board will be most interested in the Queenspark to/from the Bus Exchange, via New Brighton Road corridor and the Belfast to/from the Bus Exchange corridor as sections of both these corridors fall within the Board's boundaries. Specifically, these comprise sections of Shirley Road (Marshland Road to Hills Road), Hills Road / Whitmore Street (Shirley Road to North Avon Road) and Main North Road / Papanui Road (Factory Road to Blighs Road).

An explanation of the priority placing of these corridors is provided below.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRIORITY PLACING OF QUEENS PARK TO/FROM THE EXCHANGE CORRIDOR

In terms of the delay and unreliability criteria adopted by the Council in May 2004, as well as the potential to benefit others criteria, this corridor came fourth in priority order. However, following consideration of other factors (identified above and discussed in detail in section 3.4.3 of the plan), this corridor ranked third on the final proposed priority order of corridors for development. Each of the criteria are discussed below for this corridor.

Unreliability and Delay

Board members will see in the table on page 13 of the circulated plan that in terms of unreliability and excess bus to car travel time (delay), this corridor ranks just outside the top 3 corridors overall. Looking first at the unreliability calculations, it comes 5th and 4th of the eight corridors (columns one and three) but by then looking at the excess travel time rankings (4th and 2nd), one can see there is a tendency and weight of argument towards the higher fourth place. This placing can be confirmed by looking at the next higher and lower placed corridors. The next higher placing is the Hornby corridor, which tends towards 2nd or 3rd ranking by unreliability, with a tendency downwards towards 3rd place on excess travel time rankings. The next lower placed corridor is the New Brighton corridor, via Pages Road, which ranks 4th and 5th by unreliability, with a tendency to the 5th place based on excess travel time.

Potential Benefits to Others

The potential for this corridor to benefit others is high. The potential to improve pedestrian facilities is ranked high in each of the sections of this corridor, excepting the central city section between the exchange and the intersection of Gloucester Street and Fitzgerald Avenue. This is in common with all other central city corridor sections where the grid based road network layout provides regular crossing opportunities at regular intervals. The remaining sections have infrequent signalised intersections that mean pedestrians must seek gaps in the traffic flow and this is particularly the case along Whitmore Street and Hills Road and also along sections of New Brighton Road east of the Palms.

The section of corridor between Wainoni Road / New Brighton Road and Fitzgerald Avenue is rated highly for its potential to improve the level of service to cycling. This is because there is currently an absence of dedicated facilities along most of this section (some of which is in the capital works programme and categorised as medium priority) and presents a medium to high combination of perceived danger and exposure.

Though the good ranking of this corridor against the benefit to others criteria did not elevate this corridor's position in the overall priority list, it does reinforce the final recommendation that this corridor justifies inclusion in the top three.

Other Factors

Other factors that were considered for 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

This corridor offers some good potential to co-ordinate with other Council capital streets projects identified in the five year plan.

These include a \$1.9 million street renewal project for Bower Avenue and \$116,000 of cycle facilities (mentioned above) on New Brighton Road (Avondale Road to Wainoni 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 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.

Summary

Within the context of unreliability, delay and bus frequency, as well as potential for improvements to cycling and walking, this corridor was placed fourth on the priority list for bus priority treatments. In consideration of other factors though, it is recommended to defer development of the second placed corridor (Hornby to/from the Bus Exchange, via Riccarton Road) pending the completion and 'bedding in' of a key intersection improvement, which stands to improve traffic flow and reduce delay in the area.

This changes the priority order of corridors, bringing the Queenspark to/from the Bus Exchange into third place, behind the first placed Belfast/Exchange via Papanui Road and second placed Princess Margaret Hospital/Exchange via Colombo Street corridors.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRIORITY PLACING OF BELFAST TO/FROM THE EXCHANGE CORRIDOR

In terms of the criteria adopted by the Council in May 2003, this corridor came a clear first. The qualification of this corridor against the criteria are discussed below.

Unreliability and delay

Sub-committee members will see on page 13 of the 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 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.

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.

Five year capital works programme

In terms of programmed capital works, Papanui Road, Main North 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 and three significant contributions to the prioritised cycle network capital programme. 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 and Main North Road.

Effect on adjacent land uses

Member's are referred to the adjacent land use effects discussed above.

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 Main North Road and 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

This report provides an overview of the draft Citywide Public Transport Priority Plan and explains the reasons why the two corridors discussed are proposed as two of the first three corridors to be developed and implemented towards June 2006.

This report and the circulated draft plan outline that the development of these corridors have the potential to provide benefits to the city in terms of improved reliability and travel time of buses, as well as the potential to benefit other road 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 Shirley/Papanui Community Board provide its feedback to the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee on the draft citywide public transport priority plan.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: For discussion.