

Special Meeting of the Labof Steering Group – Draft Minute	
Date: Thursday 17th November 2010	
Location: Marischal College	
<p>Attendees: Rab Dickson, Nestrans (RD), Kirsty Morrison, Nestrans (KM), Jenny Anderson, Nestrans (JA), Maggie Bochel, ACC (MB), Andy Smith, ACC (AS), Chris Cormack, ACC (CC), Richard Mckenzie, Aberdeenshire Council (RMck), David Stewart, First (DS), Duncan Cameron, First (DC), William Mainus, Stagecoach (WM).</p> <p>Apologies: Andrew Jarvis, Stagecoach, Gordon McIntosh, ACC, Derick Murray, Nestrans</p>	
Comments / issues discussed	Action
The Labof Executive requested this meeting however RD opened it up to both operators to set out the problems and then for ACC to go through the actions that have / are being put in place.	
DS – congestion on Market Street / Guild Street, particularly on the Saturday is the main problem although this extends across the network. The variation and inconsistency in punctuality across different Saturdays is very significant and makes it very difficult for operators to meet the Traffic Commissioner targets. This applies to other days as well but particularly Saturdays.	
WM – Getting bus in and out of the bus station is the key problem for Stagecoach who have evidence of it taking 7-14 minutes to get from the top of Market Street into the bus station. Stagecoach report almost running out of vehicles on a Saturday because they are having to put so many into the network to cope with the congestion. WM highlighted that if things don't improve Stagecoach will either have to take everything out of the bus station on a Saturday or cut frequencies in order to cope. Sundays are also an issue but Saturdays are the main problem.	
MB reiterated that ACC are taking the problem seriously and a lot of work is going in to trying to resolve it and it is something that they are concerned about. The attached list at Appendix A, which was circulated in advance of the meeting, shows the work already done and that being considered.	
AS – the network is at 100% capacity so any issues in one location can have a major impact and affect the entire network. His team are continually monitoring the situation with staff in over the last four weekends and manually intervening with the signal settings if necessary to try and clear the queues. The cause of the problem is the right turn into Union Square and the extent of this queue but this is magnified by poor driver behaviour and cars blocking the yellow box. The signals team have extended the green time for the right turn flow to try and get as much traffic through as possible however the Union Square car park is at capacity by 11:30am on a Saturday	

<p>yet people continue to queue on street, waiting for a space. If the Police could keep the junction clear, this would solve part of the problem.</p> <p>The signals team are looking at re-phasing the signals again to push as much traffic through the right turn as possible however up until Christmas, the situation will be exceptionally difficult.</p>	
<p>The Police have been approached in the past but have a lack of resource to put to this in the context of other priorities.</p>	
<p>One suggestion put forward is to ban the right turn altogether, perhaps even on a trial basis. This was discussed but AS highlighted that the successful delivery of this is extremely unlikely. The process for Traffic Regulation Orders and the length of time these take means that a short term trial is not feasible. Other factors are the reaction of Union Square (as this is their main entrance) and whether Councillors would back it because of the major impact on the city centre economy. It was agreed however that it should be modelled to explore the potential benefits / implications.</p>	
<p>AS is undertaking Transyt tests to look at the signal phasing and offsets on Market St at Guild St and the entrance to the Stagecoach depot to improve access to the bus station, but the problem of drivers blocking access by sitting in the yellow box can only be resolved by police enforcement. It is also only the police who can make drivers move on that are still queuing to turn right into Union Square once the car park is full and causing an obstruction.</p> <p>It was recognised that Grampian Police have indicated that they do not have the resources to commit to this. Labof willing to sponsor enforcement officer and agreed that a joint letter from the Chief Executives at ACC/AC, Nestrans and both bus operators be sent to the Chief Constable to urge a greater priority for police presence during the festive period and alert him to the offer. Two officers would be required – one at the right turn into Union Square to move traffic on when the car park reaches capacity and one to enforce the box markings at the entrance to the bus station.</p>	<p>KM to draft a joint letter to the Chief Constable.</p>
<p>WM noted problems with the loops detecting vehicles waiting to exit the bus station onto Guild Street even late at night when the roads are quiet and AS undertook to investigate this.</p>	<p>ACC to look at detection.</p>
<p>It was noted that a section of Palmerston Rd is now 2 way to improve egress from Union Square and divert vehicles from the Market St corridor.</p>	
<p>DS queried whether higher parking charges during peak periods at Union Square would help reduce the congestion, but this is set commercially by Union Square who are unlikely to wish to deter customers.</p>	
<p>AS asked whether Stagecoach would consider reversing the entry and exit points to the bus station. This could allow an option to be tested that designates the right turn lane from Market St to Guild St and the section of Guild St westbound between Market St and the access to the bus station as “bus only” . WM didn’t think it was feasible to change the operation of the</p>	<p>Modelling options to be agreed. Stagecoach to consider</p>

<p>station and Stagecoach would not have a budget to redesign and implement this. Agreed that a separate meeting should be arranged with AS, Stagecoach, First and Joanna Murray to look at plans and discuss traffic management options for modelling.</p>	<p>reversal of entry/exit.</p>
<p>The layover time for buses, particularly when changing drivers on Guild Street was raised as adding to the congestion problem and although First didn't think this was a relevant issue and any impact would be negligible in comparison with the scale of other problems they were urged to look into this.</p>	<p>Operators to look into bus dwell times on Guild St.</p>
<p>To try and address the problem of cars queuing once the car park is full ACC plan to position portable VMS signs on key approach routes such as King Street and Beach Boulevard to warn of the delays and ask drivers to avoid the area. RD noted the use of signs in other Cities on the periphery that suggest using P&R once central car parks are full. AS would be happy to introduce this if funding was available. JA noted the consideration by Nestrans in 2010 for a third phase in extending the signs that had previously been installed from Aberdeen City Centre outwards, but as the costs were spread over 2 financial years it had not been progressed.</p>	<p>ACC to agree best location for temporary VMS signs and put them into operation.</p>
<p>WM questioned whether there were peripheral car parks that could be marketed, eg at Shell, where people could park for free at the weekend and use existing bus services. It was noted that there used to be weekend P&R from Calder Park and Woodhill House, but they operated under a different charging regime, where the cost was per car parking rather than per passenger. Councils to look at possible sites.</p>	<p>ACC/AC to identify any available Council land.</p>
<p>RD asked if Hammerson know how well other access points to their development are used by drivers and whether the Palmerston Road access and spaces within College St Car Park could be better promoted?</p>	
<p>WM warned that Stagecoach's operators licence is at risk, so they may have to re-register services out of the station in the New Year if the situation doesn't improve and just pick up/drop off on City Centre streets instead. AS noted this would just cause delays elsewhere.</p>	
<p>Vehicles from St Magnus house car park seem to sometimes go through a red light onto Guild St and it was questioned whether they are seeing the green light from the next set of signals at the railway station?</p>	<p>AS to check if filters needed on signal head</p>
<p>KM queried whether the next rearranged meeting of the Labof Steering Group was required on 5 December and it was agreed that this should still take place to discuss other agenda items. It was agreed that a long term solution should be investigated for the festive period next year and KM to arrange a meeting of the operators and ACC to discuss options for modelling.</p>	<p>KM to arrange meeting for early January</p>

Market Street / Guild Street Corridors – Improvements Schedule

The following is a list for discussion on improvements either already undertaken, currently under investigation or for discussion for future possible action/investigation following Union Square Opening in October 2009 to assist with the efficient movement of all traffic, particularly buses and access/egress to the bus station:

Already Completed / Investigated

Traffic Signal Junctions

- Improved signal timings at bus station egress
- Improved signal timings at bus station access
- Improved signal timings at Union Square Car Park Access on Market Street
- Introduction of Scoot at Guild Street / Wapping Street (anticipated completion late November)
- Monitoring of congestion (Via Video, ongoing CCTV surveillance and BPIP reliability surveys)

Enforcement

- Increased presence of City Wardens in City Centre
- Increased enforcement of existing Loading Restrictions by the City Wardens, especially on Market Street.
- Existing Yellow Box Junctions have been relined to assist Grampian Police to enforce.

Bus Stopping

Traffic Signage

- Variable Message Signing being used to inform traffic of congestion

Bus Priority

- New bus lane on Kings Street/Castle Street
- Bus lane reduction on Union Street westbound approach to Market Street junction

Traffic Management

- Two way flow implemented on Palmerston Road
- Revised Road Layout adjacent to Station Hotel has eased Traffic Flow.
- Buses only on Guild Street – rejected due to City wide impact
- Additional right turning lane into Union Square car park – rejected as insufficient carriageway space to accommodate with traffic signals requirements

Marketing of Alternatives to Car

- Winter campaigns to promote Park & Ride (includes shelter, billboard, radio adverts and adverts on pay and display tickets)
- Events with bus companies (eg Summer in the City)
- 1 year of NE bus and rail P&R advertising on Original FM (started Oct 11)
- 1 year of bus back advertising (realtimebus.com, getabout and NE P&R)
- Launched NE P&R Guide
- Car Share (STV adverts and on-line virals)
- Local Rail Accessibility and Timetable Guides
- Travel Planning events in St Magnus House and major industrial estates within the NE
- Cycle Roadshows

Currently Under Investigation

Traffic Signal Junctions

- Further signal improvements at car park access on Market Street for Saturdays/Thursday evenings
- Adjust signal timings on Market Street to hold north bound traffic longer and permit longer time for southbound and right turning car park access
- Re-phasing of signals on Market Street to improve southbound movements and assist bus operations. The modelling runs are currently being analysed to see what benefits, if any, can be achieved.

Enforcement

- Grampian Police approached for additional (funded) resource – initial approach not positive

Bus Stopping

- Bus operators to investigate removing layovers on Guild Street

Traffic Signage

Bus Priority

Traffic Management

- A Controlled Parking Zone has been proposed for the Palmerston Area, additional investigations are required to see how this will affect traffic movements in the area.

Possible Future Investigation / Action

Traffic Signal Junctions

- Ban right turns (southbound) into Union Square car park

Enforcement

- Continue to negotiate with police on funded dedicated enforcement resource

Bus Stopping

Traffic Signage

Bus Priority

Traffic Management

- Reverse access/egress of bus station
- Investigate 2 way access/egress to bus station from Guild Street
- Alter lane disciplines on southbound approach to Union Square Car park access to permit two right turns when needed and two ahead turns when not – would probably require significant investment in gantry style overhead signage – prohibitive costs – several hundred thousands
- Better lane markings/signage into Union Square access to improve access capacity
- Further consolidated marketing of alternatives to the car.
- Cheaper/more incentives to encourage more bus patronage
- Investigate Guild Street westbound traffic buses only from Market Street to St Magnus House access – would require modelling to establish wider road network impact
- Raise awareness of alternative access points to Union Square, including availability of car parking spaces within College Street car park. (Consideration could be given to leaflets, signing etc.)