

Meeting:	<b>JOINT COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TRANSPORT</b>
Date:	11 September 2020
From:	Joint Officer Steering Group

## **Transport Update**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the transport related issues across the Greater Nottingham conurbation. The report gives an update on the response to the COVID – 19 crisis as well as information regarding recent funding awards.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

#### **Covid-19 Transport monitoring**

- 2.1 In February this year the City Council began trialing a new system for collecting data related to the operation of the transport network. The system relies on sensors placed on lamp columns. Currently the sensors are located around the south west of the city covering an area from Beeston to the City Centre including Boots and the University of Nottingham. The sensors make use of artificial intelligence to provide classified counts of all vehicles together with counts of pedestrians and cyclists. The data from the trial has been used to understand the impact of the Covid 19 crisis on transport in Nottingham.
- 2.2 Appendix 1 to this report contains two charts showing graphical representations of the data collected since March 2020. The data has enabled us to draw a number of conclusions which are outlined as follows:
- Shortly after lockdown at the beginning of March, general traffic levels in the trail area dropped to around 25 - 30% of normal.
  - In April we saw Cycling levels increase in the trail area particularly at weekends where numbers were up to 200% higher than normal
  - As Lockdown eased during May and June traffic levels started to increase with HGV and LGV numbers increasing to above normal levels from the end of June onwards
  - General traffic levels (cars and motorcycles) are now at around 80-85% of normal levels
  - Bus and Tram returned to normal (summer service schedules) at the beginning of July however passenger numbers remain low at around a third of normal levels on buses and the tram is operating with around 23-25% of normal passenger numbers.

We expect passenger numbers to increase as school pupils return our response to this is outlined in Paragraph 2.12 onwards of this report.

#### **Emergency Active Travel Fund**

- 2.3 On the 27<sup>th</sup> May the Department for Transport (DfT) wrote to local authorities outlining indicative allocations for the first stage of the Emergency Active Travel Fund which was announced by the Secretary of State on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2020.
- 2.4 The fund was intended to be used to allow for the creation of “pop-up” or temporary walking and cycling routes. Walking and cycling have a role to play in helping to avoid overcrowding on public transport whilst providing an alternative to single occupancy car

trips. The fund is made up of a total of £250 million of which £225 million will be provided directly to local transport authorities, while £25 million will go to help cycle repair schemes. The £225 million allocated to local authorities will be released in two Tranches.

2.5 The City Council received £570,000 and the County Council received £263,250 through Tranche one of the EATF to spend on introducing the following measures:

- Develop new routes in the north and east of the city – through temporary pop-up cycle lanes on key routes, including Mansfield Road, Hucknall Road, St Ann's Well Road and Carlton Road
- Create a safer city centre, district centres and neighbourhoods – to help support social distancing and improve mobility as people return to work and need to access services. These measures include footpath widening and one-way streets in the Arboretum and Derby Rd areas and pop up cycle lanes in the Broadmarsh area.
- Create car-free school streets – to allow space and safety for walking and cycling to school. The scheme will be trialled at nine schools in the city
- Improve access to green spaces – to encourage their use for exercise and as locations for new cyclists to gain confidence, including Victoria Embankment and Colwick park
- Both the City and County Councils are working to provide improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians in and around Trent Bridge
- In addition, measures will be put in place to promote and maximise use of the new schemes through supporting measures – such as Nottingham Bike Aid, which provided 165 bikes to key workers, improved signage on routes, and pop up cycle parking in the city centre.

The County Council's EATF Tranche 1 funding allocation will be used to introduce the following measures in the Greater Nottingham conurbation:

- Temporary 'pop-up' segregated cycle facilities on the B684 Plains Road, Mapperley
- Temporary vehicle restrictions to enable enhanced walking and cycling in Bingham Market Place.

2.6 Tranche 2 of the EATF is for both temporary, low-cost schemes, and permanent schemes which are deliverable (or can be committed) by the end of the 2020/21 financial year. While both authorities have been given an indicative Tranche 2 allocation, the actual sums allocated to authorities are subject to bids to government. The schemes included in the bids are:

- A6200 Derby Road – Upgrade crossing to connect routes created in Tranche 1 with Nottingham's wider cycle network, including access to the University of Nottingham and the QMC
- Carlton Road/Porchester Road – Build on measures introduced in Tranche 1 (segregated cycling facilities, temporary crossings and a quiet, signed route), to include more protected space for cyclists
- A60 Mansfield Road and London Road – Extend provision for cyclists along the length of Mansfield Road to the city boundary. This will link in with proposal for a low traffic neighbourhood in the Sherwood/Berridge area.
- St Ann's Well Road – Upgrade existing traffic calming features, helping to enforce the 20mph speed limit
- Arboretum Low Traffic Neighbourhood – Reduce 'rat running' by introducing 11 one-way closures to vehicles, creating a quieter environment for walking and cycling
- City centre 20mph zone – Introduce a 20mph speed limit in the city centre to create a safer environment

- E-scooters trial
- Pop-up community cycle centres – Deliver cycle training in local parks, included tuition, bike maintenance and guided rides
- Broadmarsh Cycle Hub – Develop a 120-space secure cycle parking facility in the city centre
- Nottingham Bike Aid – further support for this important initiative which will be extended from keyworkers to also include jobseekers and those individuals that are most in need in areas where we are improving cycling facilities

The County Council's EATF Tranche 2 funding bid includes the following proposals in the Greater Nottingham conurbation:

- Beeston cycling improvements – introduction of a point closure to stop through traffic on Dovecote Lane (which links NCN6 to the town centre) to reduce rat-running and provide a quieter route for cyclists and pedestrians; and additional secure cycling hub at the nearby rail station
- Regatta Way, Gamston – upgrade of the existing facilities to create a new fully segregated cycleway connecting the existing cycling network to the proposed new Transforming Cities Funded cycle/pedestrian bridge over the River Trent; as well as to the National Water Sports Centre and country park at Holme Pierrepont
- A behaviour change support package specifically targeted along the Tranche 1 and proposed Tranche 2 infrastructure improvements (and the locations/town centres to which these routes provide improved, safer access), including:
  - Bike aid programme, providing county residents with a similar offer to that currently provided to city residents
  - Travel planning delivered through local businesses, schools, health providers and community groups.

All of the above proposals (in both the city and county) will be subject to the necessary approvals, detailed scheme design, consultation, safety audits and equality impact assessments.

## **Midlands Connect MRN Preparation fund**

- 2.7 In 2017, the Department for Transport announced the development of a Major Road Network (MRN) of selected "A" classified roads operated by local authorities. Funding for proposed improvements on the MRN would be provided through the newly created National Roads Fund (2020-2025). A map of the MRN in Nottingham is attached. In its role as Sub-National Transport Body, Midlands Connect developed a first round of shortlisted schemes for the Midlands area throughout 2018. These were later submitted to the DfT in June 2019.
- 2.8 Midlands Connect has now announced that it has set up an MRN Preparation Fund amounting to a minimum of £300,000 per year to 2023. These scheme will be developed in preparation for the next round of MRN funding which is currently assumed to be 2023. The purpose of the fund is to enable the development of another round of schemes to a minimum of pre- Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) level but preferably to SOBC level. The schemes would primarily be aimed at reducing traffic congestion and enabling economic growth. The MRN preparation fund will provide 50% of the value required to develop a scheme to SOBC level with the remaining 50% being provided by the scheme promoter. Any submission to Midlands connect must demonstrate:

- The proposed scheme must be either directly on the MRN or designed primarily to benefit the MRN (e.g. a new off-line intervention to divert traffic away).
- The scheme development undertaken utilising the Preparation Fund is likely to generate a scheme that will have a £20m to £50m construction value; although there is some flexibility with the lower value.
- The submitting authority must be able to demonstrate that a 15% capital contribution will likely be supported by their authority if it were eventually submitted to DfT.

A scheme which receives funding through the Preparation Fund will firstly go forward to prioritisation process run by Midlands Connect. Scheme promoters or Local Highway Authorities may submit multiple schemes however Midlands Connect will only provide funding for one scheme per promoter. The prioritisation process will evaluate all submitted schemes consistently using a framework agreed by the region.

- 2.9 Initial conversations between officers at the City and County Councils regarding the potential to submit a bid to the MRN preparation fund to enable the preparation of a scheme around the A6002 / A610 junction close to Junction 26 of the M1. Details of the scheme are yet to be finalised however the scheme would be aimed at reducing congestion both through the junction and also on the approach arms to the junction. Further details of the scheme and next steps will be reported to the next Joint Committee.

## **Air Quality**

- 2.10 In 2017 Nottingham was named by the government as one of the cities with levels of Nitrogen Dioxide above the air quality directive limit of  $40\mu\text{g}\text{m}^{-3}$ . The City Council submitted its plan to improve air quality to Defra in September 2018. The plan had a number of measures aimed at improving air quality. The main measure was a program of bus exhaust retrofitting, aimed at reducing Nitrogen Dioxide emissions from the bus fleet in Nottingham. Other measures include a program of awareness raising grants and support aimed at helping hackney carriage drivers to convert to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs).
- 2.11 The bus retrofitting program for NCT vehicles was completed in March this year. All NCT vehicles now meet the highest emissions standards. It was reported to the January Joint Committee that Trent Barton would complete bus retrofitting by the end of April 2020. Due to the Covid – 19 all work on the project ceased as engineers were unable to work in close proximity to each other. The original schedule has therefore been severely affected. Trent Barton have now reported that their retrofitting program will be complete by Jan 2021. Trent Barton have also reported that they will be unable to complete their planned investment in euro VI buses to run on the “Threes” service – running from Victoria Bus Station due to a collapse in passenger revenue. Trent Barton have been granted an exemption from running Euro VI buses on this service until 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2022. CT4N are also continuing to retrofit their fleet of busses and are confident the project will be complete before the end of this year.
- 2.12 The City Council is also continuing to work with Hackney Carriage drivers in order to help with the transition away from older vehicles towards ULEVs by providing a ULEV try before you buy project together with grants for the licensing of new ULEV vehicles and home charge points. As of the end of July 130 Hackney carriages now meet the new age and emission specification policy, 100 are Euro 6 diesel and 30 are ULEVs. A further 4 ULEV hackney carriage vehicles will be operating in the city as the beginning of September.

## **Public Transport and preparing for the return to school in September**

- 2.13 Following the significant reductions in public transport services during lockdown, bus and tram services in Nottingham have now returned to near normal summer levels. (in terms of network coverage and frequencies) but patronage levels and fare revenues continue to be suppressed.
- 2.14 Social distancing requirements mean that on vehicle capacities are reduced to below 50% of seats available with no standing which typically means up to 32 people on a tram and between 20 and 40 people on a bus depending on the configuration of the vehicle. All operators are required to comply with Government guidance for operators and passengers. Face coverings are mandatory both on vehicle and within indoor terminals.
- 2.15 During lockdown passenger levels dropped to below 10% of normal levels. As lockdown measures have been released and services reinstated patronage levels have recovered to approximately 40% on bus and 25% tram of pre-covid levels. Tram recovery has in part been slower due to a partial closure of the system during July for City Centre track works but have been picking up since these works were completed.
- 2.16 A high proportion of pupils in Nottingham walk or cycle to school relative to many other areas but a significant proportion do use public transport. Those who do use public transport predominantly use the commercial bus and tram network. We are talking to the operators about the potential to increase capacity on key routes. NCT will increase capacity depending on demand on core routes as required. The tram system is less flexible. The mitigation for the tram will be to run additional dedicated bus/coach services to schools on key legs should overcrowding occur.
- 2.17 There are two dedicated contracted routes that serve three different schools in the north west of the City. The plan here is to increase the number of buses operating the services from four to six and separate journeys to each of the school groups.
- 2.18 The City and County councils are working together to address any issues affecting school pupils who travel from the City to County schools. In the opposite direction there are predominantly 16 – 19 students that travel to FE colleges from County areas into the City again largely on the commercial network. Marshalling may be required at some locations particularly to regulate access to services at key points particularly at the end of the school day where there is potential for school pupils to overcrowd particular services.
- 2.19 As reported in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of this report efforts to reopen public transport are being coordinated with the delivery of the Emergency Active Travel Fund include funding to work with schools to implement safer school streets schemes and travel to school behavior change initiatives to encourage more pupils to walk or cycle to school to help relieve the pressure on public transport. School travel messaging is also being prepared to be coordinated with central communications.

## **3 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the contents of this report be noted.

## **4 BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

4.1 None.

### **Contact Officers**

Chris Carter, Development and Growth, Nottingham City Council

Tel: 0115 8763940

Email: [chris.carter@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:chris.carter@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

Kevin Sharman, Place Department, Nottinghamshire County Council

Tel: 0115 9772970

Email: [kevin.sharman@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.sharman@nottscc.gov.uk)