



Title: Review of Existing Bus Lanes in Torbay

Wards Affected: Tormohun, Blatchcombe Roundham with Hyde and Churston with Galmpton

To: Transport Working Party **On:** 12th December 2013

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1. Key points and Summary

- 1.1 Following a recent trial in the City of Liverpool to suspend its Bus Lanes to potentially ease traffic congestion, the Mayor of Torbay has raised whether there is merit in considering a similar trial in Torbay and requested officers to advise the Working Party accordingly.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Bus Lanes have been widely introduced in urban areas in the UK to regulate bus journey times and promote the use of public transport. Mainly these are introduced on strategic routes where there was previously more than one traffic lane and can take a number of forms such as 'Bus Only' , 'Bus and Taxi', 'Bus and Cycle' and Time related 'mixed use' lanes.
- 2.2 A recent trial has commenced in the City of Liverpool to suspend all of their 24 bus lanes to see if the additional road capacity improves congestion along these routes and to ascertain the effect to bus journey times. This trial is for a nine month period and the results are expected in the summer of 2014. The Mayor has requested that the Working Party is presented with details of whether such a trial would be appropriate within Torbay.
- 2.3. Whilst the introduction of bus lanes within Torbay have been considered and promoted by bus operators in recent years, the restrictive width of many of our strategic urban routes has meant that their introduction has not generally been recommended for implementation. There are however 3 locations where types of bus lanes have been introduced as follows:
- a) Tor Hill Road/Union Street, Torquay
 - b) Trelissick Road/Queen Elizabeth Drive, Paignton
 - c) Dartmouth Road ('Quarry Bend'), Paignton.

- 2.4 The Lanes in 'a' and 'b' above are in effect 'bus gateways' rather than 'bus lanes' as they allow the access of busses only through restricted accesses and prevent the use by other vehicles. For Union Street three bus services and the land train use the lane under signal control to avoid the route around the Town Hall. The lane would not be sufficient to allow other vehicles to make this manoeuvre due to the lack of a right turn lane on Tor Hill Road, resulting in a significant increase in traffic queuing and a likely increase in collisions. The lane in Trelassick Road allows access to busses serving the Great Parks estate, but restricts other vehicles, preventing potential 'rat running' through the estate, which would also place additional pressure on the Kings Ash Road/Luscombe Road junction.
- 2.5 The Lanes in 'c' above run on the left hand lanes of the dual carriageway section of Dartmouth Road, Paignton between Saltern Road and Cherry Brook Drive and are 'bus and cycle lanes'. The lanes were introduced in 2006 as part of a road safety scheme to firstly improve the access for busses, but mainly to reduce vehicle speeds by removing the vehicle overtaking lanes, thus improving safety to pedestrians using the pedestrian crossing, which was installed at the same time. As this section of dual carriageway is relatively short, the loss of a traffic lane in either direction has had a negligible affect to road capacity or peak time congestion. The pedestrian crossing also has had an excellent collision record since implementation.
- 2.6 In conclusion there is no evidence to suggest that bus lanes currently in operation in Torbay have any impact on traffic congestion. Removal of bus lanes on Dartmouth Road, Paignton may also be detrimental to road safety in the area as vehicle speeds are likely to increase due to the opportunities to overtake on the dual carriageway section. The two bus gateways also serve a useful purpose in positively managing bus routes, whilst ensuring that other traffic use a more appropriate route. Officers would therefore advise members that a trial removal of any of the bus lanes would not be of benefit to traffic movement or congestion in their respective locations. However, officers will monitor the effect of the trial in the city of Liverpool.

Sue Cheriton
Executive Head – Residents and Visitor Services

Appendices

None

Documents available in members' rooms

None

Background Papers:

None