

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLACE

REPORT TO CABINET HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

08 JULY 2010

MIDDLEWOOD ROAD AND LANGSETT ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH BUS/TRAM GATE
HOURS OF OPERATION CHANGES – 6 MONTH MONITORING REPORT AND
REVIEW

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The aim of the report is to inform members of continued findings and trends following the relaxation in the hours of operation of the bus/tram gate on Middlewood Road and Langsett Road, Hillsborough. Since 07 November 2009 this gate has been opened to general traffic between the hours of 1100 and 1500, Mondays to Saturdays as part of an 18 month Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). This relaxation also removed any restriction or enforcement on Sundays. The aim of this experiment is to stimulate the economic viability of Hillsborough District Centre, as previously local traders felt the restrictions were damaging their business, whilst car drivers felt Hillsborough was difficult to reach.
- 1.2 This review is the second of a series of monitoring reports which will assess the effect of these changes, with a view to making the current Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) permanent or revert to the previous arrangement within the 18 month period. This report covers the 3 month period between 07 February and 07 May 2010, the second quarter of monitoring. The 6 month period between 07 November 2009 to 07 May 2010 is also analysed. This represents the time the ETRO has been in place. Comparisons of the most recent 3 months and total 6 months of the experiment will be made against the 'before ETRO situation' where data permits.
- 1.3 Findings suggest there is broad public support for the current arrangements. Passengers do not perceive any increase in journey times or delays, whilst in reality there has been some increases in public transport journey times. Traffic flows along Langsett Road between 1100 and 1500 hours have increased since the relaxation, whilst the evening peak has also seen a more modest increase in flow. Demand for car parking in Hillsborough is relatively unchanged, whilst pedestrian footfall has increased.

2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE PEOPLE OF SHEFFIELD

- 2.1 The change meets a number of targets of the Sheffield 'City of Opportunity' Corporate Plan, under the 'Protecting and Enhancing the Environment' ambition, including priorities for reducing congestion, public transport that is easier for people to use and, safer roads. The change also helps promote improving the vitality of Hillsborough District Centre.

3.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 3.1 The experimental change has made it easier to travel to Hillsborough District Centre during the middle of the day, making the centre potentially more attractive to shoppers and visitors alike. Hillsborough is accessible by a range of transport

modes, and its transport interchange makes travel by sustainable modes attractive. Indications suggest that the opening up of the bus/tram gate has increased the amount of traffic along Langsett Road between 1100 to 1500 hours, whilst pedestrian flows are also up. The demand for car parking in Hillsborough remains relatively unchanged, whilst the change is favoured by the majority of the local population. However, in allowing general traffic through the bus/tram gate, public transport journeys have become longer, as there is more traffic competing for the same amount of road space, though these longer journeys have not been particularly noticed by most passengers.

4.0 BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

4.1 The criteria against which the ETRO is being judged have been agreed by the Sheffield Punctuality Improvement Partnership (PIP) Group. This group is made up of officers from the City Council and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYLTE), and representatives of the public transport operators. However, there has not been consensus between the parties concerned as to what thresholds of success or failure should apply. Of primary importance to the operators and SYLTE was to have no worsening in journey times and reliability, or reduction in patronage.

4.2 The evaluation criteria used include:

- Journey times and reliability
- Public Transport Patronage
- Traffic Flows
- Accidents
- Car Park Use
- Footfall
- Trader Data
- Bus/tram gate penalty charge levels

4.3 Following Member's request at the March Highways Cabinet Committee, the Central Community Assembly has also been directly involved in both the market research and had opportunity to comment on this monitoring report. The Community Assembly has also been used as another avenue to obtain meaningful data from local traders (though unsuccessful). PIP Group has also had the opportunity to review and comment on the outcome of the second quarter monitoring results.

5.0 OUTCOME OF THE MONITORING

5.1 A summary of the monitoring results is included in this section. More detail is included in Appendix A of this report where indicated.

Traffic- Langsett Road/Hillsborough Corner

5.2 Since the introduction of camera enforcement (July 2007), the amount of through traffic in Hillsborough Centre has reduced. A three-day survey of Langsett Road, undertaken on the 9th, 10th and 11th February 2010, each between 0700 and 1900 hours, revealed a significant increase (over 400% or 776 vehicles over the 3 days) in the number of cars (from 191 to 967) travelling outbound through the bus/tram gate between 1100 and 1500 hours when compared with the same survey in February 2009. This clearly demonstrates drivers are aware of the relaxation and travelling through the bus/tram gate when permitted.

5.3 However, this traffic is not new traffic attracted either to the corridor or to Hillsborough itself. The traffic is merely re-routing when the restrictions are relaxed. Langsett Road itself and the surrounding local area is a mix of land uses, residential, shops, businesses, etc. Hence, any traffic travelling through this area will also reflect this mix, the trip purposes will be varied and no doubt a proportion of the traffic using Langsett Road will be through traffic. However, it is not clear whether the relaxation of the hours of operation of the Langsett Road bus/tram gate has resulted in more traffic either being attracted to visit Hillsborough District Centre or use the road as a through route. It would appear to be the same traffic as before rerouting. Trends and analysis of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) data, car park surveys and traffic in the wider area (discussed in later sections of this report), seem to support this. (See *Appendix A for more detail*).

Traffic - Wider Area

5.4 12 hour traffic surveys have been undertaken at a series of side roads in the Hillsborough area to monitor the impact originally of the enforcement of the bus/tram gate and, now the change in hours of operation. These surveys have been taken every February, June and September since 2007 (no data is available for February 2007). The most recent June 2010 data is also included here. Generally traffic flows are now lower. (See *Appendix A for more detail*)

Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)

5.5 A comparison of the 6 month period since the change shows an 11% increase in PCNs along Langsett Road, but against a more modest overall increase of PCNs in Hillsborough of 5%. Comparisons between the various periods consistently shows Langsett Road to account for 10% of all PCNs issued before the change. Following the change in the hours of operation, the proportion of PCNs issued along Langsett Road now consistently accounts for around 21%. (See *Appendix A for more detail*).

Public Transport Reliability

5.6 SYPTTE has supplied reliability data sourced from fare surveys conducted along the City to Hillsborough corridor. Tram reliability (measured as the proportion of services operated) has decreased by 1.3%, from 100% (Nov 08 to May 09) to 98.7% (Nov 09 to May 10). Bus reliability has marginally decreased over the same 6 month period, from 98.6% (Nov 08 to May 09) to 98.2% (Nov 09 to May 10).

Public Transport Punctuality

5.7 SYPTTE has supplied real-time information for Hillsborough to provide public transport punctuality. The introduction of camera enforcement has generally helped improve public transport punctuality between Middlewood Road and Langsett Road and vice versa. The percentage of bus services arriving on time in the inter-peak period fell by 4.8%, from 74.8%% to 70%% for inbound services, and fell by 11.7%, from 79.6% to 67.9%, between 7 November 2008 to 7 May 2009, compared to the same period in 2009/2010. Tram punctuality has generally improved by 4% (from 75.8% on time to 79.8%) during the inter peak period (between 1100 and 1500 hours) since the hours of operation of the bus/tram gate were relaxed.

Public Transport Patronage

5.8 Comparing calendar years, 2010 and 2009, tram patronage has increased by 12%, equivalent to an additional 452 passengers per day. Over the same period the number of trams operated per day has remained consistent, at around 140

trams per days. Bus patronage over the same period has declined by 9%, or the equivalent of 355 fewer bus passengers per day. This has been matched by a 3% reduction (17 vehicles) in the average daily number of buses operated. The trends and changes in public transport patronage are the result of a range of external forces; the changing economy, rising unemployment, rising cost of living, and a long standing problem with the image of, particularly, bus based public transport. Tram travel has demonstrated the ability to attract passengers and achieve some modal shift.

Bus Journey times

- 5.9 Bus journey times through Hillsborough have generally increased, this varies dependent on the direction and route, but journey times are up by between 3 seconds and 47 seconds between 1100 to 1500 hours. (See Appendix A for more detail)

Tram Journey Times

- 5.10 SYPTE has supplied tram data. However, Supertram has looked at this and queries some of the figures. Supertram will look at this further and provide the data and analysis for the next monitoring report. However, using the SYPTE supplied data, during the inter-peak period (1100 to 1500 hours) the change in average tram journey times varied, from a reduction of 15 seconds (November 2008 to November 2009) between Langsett Road/Primrose View to Malin Bridge Terminus, to an increase of 1 minute 23 seconds (March 2009 to March 2010) between Shalesmoor/Infirmary Road to Middlewood Terminus. Generally, tram journey times have increased since the operational hours of the bus/tram gate were relaxed. (See Appendix A for more detail)

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Data

- 5.11 On weekdays the impact of relaxing the hours of operation of the bus/tram gate on Middlewood Road/Langsett Road has thus far had no significant negative impact on overall journey times on the main road network monitored as part of the review. The reason for this is that the amount of additional traffic passing through the bus/tram gate in these hours is currently at a level that can be accommodated within the existing signal timings at the Hillsborough Corner junction. The exception to this is during match days or special events, when traffic levels do exceed capacity for a short period of time. Bus journey times may have increased, but because the number of vehicles is relatively low when compared to other local traffic, their delays do not have an impact on overall journey times through this section. (See Appendix A for more detail)

Car Parking

- 5.12 Generally, the change in the operational hours of the bus/tram gate has had little overall effect on the car parks in Hillsborough during weekdays. However, on Saturdays, whilst overall peak occupancy has not increased by more than 5%, there has been a change in the demand profile, with now more cars parking between 1100 to 1500 hours when the relaxation applies. There are still a sufficient number of available car parking spaces in Hillsborough to meet demand. (See Appendix A for more detail)

Vacant Retail Space

- 5.13 The latest available data (2008) on vacant units and vacant sales areas in Sheffield shows that Hillsborough operated with 10% (18 units) vacant. This was consistent with the city-wide average of all district centres (also 10%). The best performing centre was Woodseats, with only 3% of its units vacant, whilst the

worst performing was London Road and Crystal Peaks, each with 16% of their units vacant.

- 5.14 In terms of vacant sales area, Hillsborough performed well above the city-wide average (7%), with only 2% (637 square metres) of its sales area vacant. The best performing district centre was Chapeltown, with only 1% vacant floorspace, whilst the worst performing was Stocksbridge, with 27% vacant floorspace. Clearly, this data is not recent enough to take into account the changes in the economic climate or any effect from the changes in the hours of operation of the bus/tram gate.

Local Traders

- 5.15 Despite numerous requests from local traders over the past 6 months, there has not been any hard data or figures provided that could be used to assess what (if any) effect the change in operational hours of the bus/tram gate has had on local trade. The views of a small sample of local traders have been obtained through the piece of market research undertaken in May 2010 (see paragraph 5.18). This reported nearly three quarters of the local traders who responded said that the change in hours has not affected their business.

Annual Footfall – Langsett Road

- 5.16 An annual footfall count undertaken for 12 hours on Langsett Road, near to Rudyard Road each May shows that between 2008 and 2009, footfall decreased by 3%, from 8,870 to 8,563. However, between 2009 and 2010 figure this trend has been reversed, with footfall increasing by 12%, from 8,563 to 9,553. This suggests the route through Hillsborough is now more attractive for pedestrians since the relaxation of operational hours of the bus/tram gate.

Accident Data

- 5.17 Generally, there have been 3 fewer incidents over this 6 month period. Vehicle-to-pedestrian collisions still appear to be the prevalent type of incident. Interestingly, no vehicle-to-vehicle collisions have been reported since the hours of operation of the bus/tram gate have been relaxed. However, statistically the surveyed increase in traffic flows along Langsett Road should result in an increase in accidents. Normally a 3 year period is examined to establish particular trends or road safety issues. (See Appendix A for more detail)

Market Research

- 5.18 The key findings/recommendations from this market research are:
- There is general public support to keep the hours of operation of the bus/tram gate as 0700 to 1100 hours and between 1500 to 1900 hours
 - The change has not affected how often people visit the district centre or travel through the area
 - The change has not affected the mode of transport people use to visit or travel through the District Centre
 - Public transport users do not perceive the changes to have made their journeys either to, or through the District Centre any longer
 - Passengers have not seen any tangible impact on the punctuality of public transport services (229 users)
 - Car drivers have not noticed their journey time through the area to be any longer
 - There is broad agreement that Hillsborough District Centre is now easier to get to since the operational hours were relaxed.

- The majority of traders sampled view the change as having no effect on their business

(See Appendix A for more detail).

Air Quality

5.19 Local air quality is no longer monitored. This is a result of criticism of the monitoring data included in the last quarterly review. The data was criticised as it does not distinguish the contributing factors to changes in air quality, such as changes to the bus tram/gate operation, as there are many other contributing factors. Due to the nature of the monitoring it is also difficult to confine analysis to a specific area.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Journey times for public transport have generally increased, however these are not noticed by the majority of passengers. Although public transport vehicles are taking longer to travel through Hillsborough, these delays have not impacted on overall journey times through the area as they only account for a small proportion of the total traffic flows.

6.2 There has been no indication of increased trade following the relaxation in operational hours of the bus/tram gate, this fact is supported by no real change in car parking demand (with the exception of some increase on Saturdays) and views obtained from traders as part of the market research. Footfall has increased, whilst there appears to be broad public support for the relaxation from the local population.

6.3 The increases in traffic flow and pedestrian footfall do raise some concern that in opening the bus/tram gate up during the middle of the day has created a short cut for traffic. Therefore, it is proposed to undertake a series of Origin-Destination surveys of vehicles driving through Hillsborough District Centre after the school summer holidays (timed to provide a neutral survey period). These surveys aim to establish where vehicles are travelling from and to, and for what purpose. These surveys will be incorporated into the next monitoring report November 2010.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no particular environmental implications arising from this report.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The market research was commissioned as a result of a competitive tender and cost £9,000. The ongoing costs of monitoring the changes of the bus/tram gate are largely staff time, funded from existing revenue budgets, to organise and analyse various data sets and surveys. The surveys already occur at regular intervals throughout, and have done so for a number of years. The costs for origin-destination surveys would be additional (estimated £5,000 to £10,000) and subject to competitive tender. Survey costs are funded as part of the ongoing Hillsborough Area Traffic Management Review from the Local Transport Plan.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted. It has concluded that the scheme is 'equality neutral' with no significant effects relating to age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality, etc. However, we will continue to monitor this throughout the life of the project
- 10.2 The future viability of district centres is vital in terms of inclusive access to services. Measures which enhance the long-term viability of such centres will reduce future growth in journey distances for a range of trip purposes. A vibrant Hillsborough would reduce journeys to other parts of the city. Reduction in the hours of operation of the bus/tram gate is designed to make Hillsborough more attractive and easier to reach for all people, improve trade and local community cohesion.
- 10.3 Travel by public transport needs to be attractive and reliable, to promote and enhance social inclusion and access to local amenities and to offer a realistic alternative to motorists. Hillsborough is highly accessible by public transport, served by a number of bus services, as well as the Sheffield Supertram. However, by improving Hillsborough's accessibility to car travel, car-owning customers may well revert to travelling by car, contributing to congestion problems, if the cost or the quality of public transport reduces. Those without cars may well suffer increased social exclusion.
- 10.4 The changes have been brought in under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) and provide the option to either make the changes permanent or revoke the changes should there be a detrimental impact to either traffic or public transport travel in Hillsborough.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 Note the findings of this second monitoring report
- 11.2 Report back again in November 2010 with a 12 month review
- 11.3 Continue to attempt to obtain quantifiable information from local traders to determine the effect of the experiment on the economic viability of Hillsborough District Centre
- 11.4 Undertake of a series of Origin-Destination surveys to establish the proportion of increased traffic between 1100 to 1500 hours which is through traffic and that which is local.
- 11.5 Continue to liaise with public transport operators, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, and the Central Community Assembly with regard to data collection/analysis and reporting.

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