
REPORT 3
(1215/52/IM)

BUS PRIORITY PLAN – COURTENAY PLACE, KENT TCE, CAMBRIDGE TCE AND TARANAKI ST SCHEMES

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval from Committee to consult on proposed Bus Priority measures for Courtenay Place, Cambridge Tce, Kent Tce and Taranaki Street.

2. Executive Summary

The SPC committee approved a Bus Priority Plan for Wellington in April 2007. The Committee recognised as the city continues to grow, there is need for a strong and reliable transport system to meet the current and future demand for travel through the prudent allocation of road space to buses.

Buses are recognised as the most effective movers of large numbers of people and are more effective users of road space than private vehicles. By giving targeted priority to buses in areas of the network we can improve both journey times and the reliability of the service which in turn enhances the attractiveness of public transport.

Courtenay Place has for some time been identified as a constraint to reliable bus movement through the central city. It ranks high for action in achieving travel time savings for large numbers of public transport users. In order to achieve the necessary improvement to bus operation it is proposed to restrict private vehicle access to Courtenay Place in the morning and evening to give priority to buses.

Five options have been identified which range from giving full priority to buses to options which are less restrictive to private vehicles and maintain access to on street parking in the area.

Rationalisation of on street parking and a new taxi rank to bring order to the queuing of late night taxis is proposed as an integral part of implementing previously agreed outcomes of the Courtenay Place precinct plan. It is appropriate that these changes be considered as part of the bus priority scheme for Courtenay Place. It is also proposed to implement bus lanes in Taranaki Street, Kent and Cambridge Tce to allow buses priority along these streets.

A 30km/hr speed restriction is proposed on Courtenay Place to improve pedestrian safety in this area.

Approval is sought from Committee to consult on these proposals and for the results to be reported back to Committee with a recommended option for approval prior to implementation.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Agree to public consultation being carried out on a number of options for improving bus journey times and traffic management in Courtenay Place together with plans for bus lanes on Kent/Cambridge Tce and Taranaki Street.*
- 3. Agree that the results of the consultation be brought back to Committee in September 2008 to inform a decision on a preferred option for bus priority.*

4. Background

4.1 Introduction

Wellington is a dynamic and growing city, and transport has an important part to play in supporting and directing that growth. Transport affects the liveability of the city, its economic growth and influences where people choose to live. Ultimately, these factors affect our international competitiveness, and our long-term future as a city.

On many indicators Wellington's transport system is performing well: our traffic congestion levels are lower than many comparable cities and our public transport ridership is higher. We are a compact city with short travel distances and a good level of connectedness.

However, Wellington's transport needs are continuing to increase in line with economic expansion and population growth. These changes are placing added demands on the transport infrastructure needed to support the city therefore our use of bus and rail needs to increase even further in the future. Otherwise, our growing population and increasing urban development will lead to greater congestion.

Greater use of public transport will make the city more liveable and support our desires for intensification particularly along the growth spine. A successful transport system will benefit the economy by ensuring people and goods can be more efficiently and easily moved around the city. It is also a more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable option than the private car.

4.2 Strategic Direction Supporting Bus Priority Measures

The Council has successfully introduced bus priority lanes and bus priority signals to speed up bus trips on parts of the city road network. The benefits of improved bus travel times and travel time reliability have accrued to all transport users – analysis shows that bus priority lanes have also helped to reduce car travel times on the routes implemented to date.

The further introduction of bus priority measures in the city will support a number of strategic directions detailed in Council's Transport Strategy and draft Ngauranga-Airport Corridor Study:

- seamless passenger transport system along the growth spine. (Johnsonville to the Airport)
- bus priority measures on all main arterial routes to and through the central area
- a comprehensive travel demand management programme aimed at reducing the need for travel
- improving safety and personal security.

Specifically identified and supported in the Council's Long-Term Plan (2006-2016) as a priority in the next three years is to:

- *improve the performance of the city's passenger transport system through bus priority measures.*

4.3 Why prioritise buses on certain routes and during certain times?

In summary, there are five key reasons for giving priority to buses on selected key routes during peak hours:

1. **It's the lowest cost and lowest impact way of increasing the capacity of our transport network.** Each bus replaces the need for a significant increase in road space to accommodate an equivalent number of cars.
2. **Bus travel has strong growth potential.** 40% of cars users say they would take the bus if it was more reliable and convenient (2008 Resident Satisfaction Survey).
3. **Bus priority helps make buses travel times more reliable.** Bus travel time unreliability is the key barrier to more people taking the bus.
4. **Per traveller, buses pollute less.** Greater use of buses will help the Council achieve its climate change objectives.
5. **Greater bus use keeps the cost of living down.** On all routes taking the bus is a cheaper commuting option for households than taking the car.

4.4 Previous Committee Decisions

In April 2007 the Committee considered a paper on a draft Bus Priority Plan. There was agreement on the need for such a plan as a means to gain more efficiency out of the existing road network. Again in April 2008 the Committee agreed to first consider the implementation of bus priority measures for the central city supported by economic evaluation of city wide schemes. High on the list of schemes evaluated was Courtenay Place. The schemes developed in this paper were also heralded in the Courtenay Place precinct plan adopted by SPC in March 2008.

4.5 Courtenay Place: One of New Zealand's most intensely used urban spaces

The demand for space on the narrow road corridor in Courtenay Place is intense and is increasing. Not only is it New Zealand premier entertainment precinct and an important retail and business location, but Courtenay Place is also the second most important junction in the public transport network and a key part of the Golden Mile.

In terms of movement through the area, the key users of Courtenay Place (in order of significance in terms of number of people) are:

1. Buses
2. Pedestrians
3. Other vehicles and cyclists travelling through
4. Vehicles and cyclists accessing parking spaces
5. Taxis picking up and dropping off
6. Vehicles servicing local shops.

Currently Courtenay Place carries nearly 300 bus trips in each of the morning and evening peaks, carrying about 40,000 passenger movements a day.

While Courtenay Place is not major through route for other traffic (Wakefield and Cable Streets and SH1 have that function) during a week day around period 6,500 vehicle trips are made through Courtenay Place.

4.6 Movement overload leads to bus delays

During peak periods Courtenay Place is no longer adequately coping with the competing demands. This is especially the case for buses and bus users, who unlike cars, have no alternative routes through this part of the central area. Currently passengers and bus companies experience significant delays on Courtenay Place, which filter through the entire transport system and affect public transport users and drivers across the city.

The average journey time for buses along Courtenay Place in the morning is 1.5 minutes and in the evening is 4.25 minutes. This is against a free flow journey time of 40 seconds. Of more concern is the variability of the bus journey time ranging from 40 seconds to in excess of 10 minutes.

Delay to buses is caused by competition for road space with other vehicles travelling through the street; by buses themselves (loading and off loading); and by pedestrians ambling across the road at uncontrolled pedestrian crossings.

In short there is a need to rationalise and prioritise the competing demands on road space in Courtenay Place to improve bus travel times and journey time reliability through the area. Low cost measures are available to achieve this economically.

5. Discussion

5.1 Unblocking Courtenay Place

Better managing the competing travelling demands on Courtenay Place is one of the key priorities across the entire Wellington City transport system.

In particular, the delay experienced by buses in Courtenay Place is weakening the City's public transport system, which in turn places stress across the entire transport system. Slow and unreliable bus travel times not only affect bus users, but also reduce the attractiveness of bus travel, which in turn increases congestion as travellers (who may otherwise be willing to take a bus) choose car travel instead.

The proposal to 'unblock' Courtenay Place has six key components:

1. During peak hours, direct cars to use alternative routes such as Wakefield and Cable Streets
2. Introduce bus lanes on Cambridge Terrace and Taranaki Streets
3. Strongly encourage bus companies to improve bus loading and off-loading but with new technology
4. Reduce the speed limit to 30 km/h
5. Improve taxi loading and off-loading arrangements
6. Investigate signalling the pedestrian crossings.

Apart from some specific changes around taxis and night-time parking, no redesign of the road space is proposed. This means that, in contrast to other bus priority schemes, on-street car parks will not be turned into clear ways as Courtenay Place is too narrow for this option.

5.2 Effects of the proposal on travellers

The proposal to 'unblock' Courtenay Place will have a range of different effects on travellers:

- 1. Car drivers and passengers** will be asked to use alternative routes during peak hours, and there are a number of options for access to on-street parking (which are discussed further below)

2. **Pedestrians** will experience little change, apart from some possible delays at pedestrian crossings, where some form of control (to avoid continuous ambling) during peak hours may be required
3. **Bus users** will notice an improvement in bus travel times through the area
4. **Taxi users** will still be able to be dropped off and collected in the area, but in a more defined arrangement
5. **Cyclists** should experience little change, with some safety benefits from lower vehicle numbers
6. There will be no change for **delivery** and **emergency vehicles**, which will be able to access the street as they do at present.

5.3 Effects on retailers and businesses, and access to on-street parking

Courtenay Place is an important part of the Golden Mile, and is the location of a large number of shops and businesses. The limited amount of on-street parking on Courtenay provides convenient access to the businesses for a portion of their customers and suppliers.

If all cars are prohibited from travelling through Courtenay Place during peak hours, then these on-street parking spaces will not be available to these users and businesses for those times (although cars already parked will be able to remain on the street as no clear ways are being proposed).

Under this bus priority proposal, Officers have identified five feasible options for car access to Courtenay Place. The times that private vehicle access could be restricted (and to what extent) is summarised in the following table:

	Car access to Courtenay Place is restricted at these times	Car access is restricted to these sections of Courtenay Place:	Cars are allowed to enter Courtenay Place if they have <u>local</u> business e.g. they want to park
Option 1	6am to 6pm	Cambridge Terrace to Taranaki Street	Yes
Option 2	7 – 9am 4 – 6pm	Cambridge Terrace to Taranaki Street	No
Option 3	7 – 9am 4 – 6pm	<i>Cambridge Terrace to Tory Street only</i>	No
Option 4	4 – 6pm	Cambridge Terrace to Taranaki Street	No
Option 5	7 – 9am 4 – 6pm	Cambridge Terrace to Taranaki Street	Yes

No 24 hours restriction on car access to Courtenay Place is proposed for two reasons. Firstly, limited bus activity late in the evening does not justify a full time restriction on private cars. And secondly, the late night passive surveillance by private motorists is also important for the safety of the area.

5.4 Benefits and Disbenefits for each option

The benefits/disbenefits of each option can be summarised as follows:

Benefits/Disbenefits	Options				
	1	2	3	4	5
Gives priority to buses	√√√	√√√	√√	√√	√
Easily understood by motorists	√	√√	√√	√√	X
Provides access to on street parking	√√	X	√√	√√	√√√
Easy to enforce	√√	√√	√√	√√	X
Assists Cyclists	√√√	√√	√√	√√	√
Friendly to pedestrians	√√√	√√	√√	√√	√√
Safe to operate	√√√	√√√	√√	√√	√√

Option 1 (see diagram 1 below) affords the best priority for buses through out the business day and would allow limited access for motorists seeking parking on street. All options allow access for delivery vehicles to service local businesses, taxis, cyclists and emergency vehicles.

Option 1 Courtenay Place Restricted Access 6am to 6pm



Diagram 1

Option 2 provides similar benefits but confines these to both the morning and evening peak. Benefits for buses reduce as we move through to option five where a higher priority is placed on accessibility to the area for private motorists including access to on street parking.

Of the five options suggested for consideration, option 2 is the most severe in terms of its impact on other traffic, as it would apply in both directions over the full length of Courtenay Place during both peak periods, and only allows the very minimum number of other vehicles to access Courtenay Place.

Options 3 and **4** allow access to well used car parks particularly at the western end of Courtenay Place albeit option 4 restricts parking in the evening. Option 3 would only apply to the short length of Courtenay Place between Cambridge Terrace and Tory St during the morning and evening peak, whereas **option 4** would address the most pressing need for buses i.e. the heavy delays caused due to congestion along the westbound lanes of Courtenay Place during the evening peak period.

Option 4 would not, however, provide any assistance to buses which experience delays during the morning peak but it would allow greater use of Courtenay Place by other traffic which would dilute the effectiveness of the bus priority measures. This option could be seen as the very minimum needed to provide any worthwhile advantage to public transport, and which could be a first stage with the possibility of moving some or all of the way to option 2 and then possibly option 1 over time.

It is important that whichever option is finally chosen by the Committee, it is easy to understand by the public and that a good level of compliance will be achieved. Of the five options, option 2 is likely to be the easiest for the public to understand and simple to enforce, where **option 5** will be less so due to the fact that more vehicles will either by design or error assume they have the right to access the restricted length of Courtenay Place. In this regard the existing restriction on vehicles accessing the length of Victoria and Manners Streets to private vehicles with businesses in the area has a recorded non-compliance rate of about 12% which could be seen as reasonable for a rather complicated restriction which receives little enforcement.

It is believed that offering a wide range of options for public and stakeholder consultation should allow for all relevant access issues to be raised through the consultation process, and for officers to report back with a recommendation which will provide the best balance of advantages while still progressing the Council's bus priority objectives.

5.5 Associated Improvements for Taxi Waiting, Parking and Footpath Activities.

Identified in the Courtenay Place Precinct plan was a need to bring order to the chaotic parking of taxis in the evening on Courtenay Place. Combined with this was a need to find smarter ways to use the kerb side space both for day time and evening activities in the area. This called for a review of the parking needs and an investigation into how additional space for footpaths can be achieved in the area. The resulting parking, servicing and taxi restrictions are shown on plan 1 in the appendix.

5.5.1 Taxis

It is proposed that taxis be queued at the Embassy end of Courtenay Place in the slip lane on the south side. The advantage of this location is its proximity to the busiest night time activities in the area and the ease with which either end of Courtenay Place can be accessed. The location also allows the new space on Courtenay place to feed from taxis queued against the central median in Cambridge Tce beyond the existing taxi stand, thus reducing the need for taxis to congest Courtenay Place.

5.5.2 Parking

It is proposed to rearrange on-street parking in Courtenay Place to better reflect the multiplicity of uses throughout the day and evening. Predominantly parking during the day will be 2hour business/shopper car parking consistent with wider city restrictions. This will be complemented by a number of goods service vehicle parks.

However it is proposed in the evening to restrict parking to allow for more entertainment activities by using day time car parking space to widen the footpath for tables and chairs and to generally allow more space for pedestrians to walk, mingle and queue outside busy premises. This would only happen as the demand for this use becomes evident. In the meantime these areas would remain as general parking.

5.6 Speed Limits

It is proposed to lower the speed limit on Courtney Place to 30km/hr. This is to protect the highly pedestrianised environment that is an important factor for the ongoing success of Courtenay Place. To limit vehicle speeds to 30km/hr will be consistent with other areas of the inner city where a 30km/hr restriction operates such as in Lambton Quay and parts of Willis Street. It is proposed to consult on this initiative as part of the Courtenay Place changes.

5.7 Kent and Cambridge Terrace Bus Priority Lane

To complement improvements to bus journey times expected to be achieved by the Courtenay place scheme, it is also proposed that bus lanes be implemented on the feeder routes either end of Courtenay Place. This would involve using the clearway lanes in Kent and Cambridge Tce between the Basin Reserve and Courtenay Place in both the morning and evening peak. This will build on the bus lane which already operates on Kent Tce in the evening peak carrying in excess of 50 buses per hour between Elizabeth St and the Basin Reserve. This will have minimal effect on parking as current parking is already subject to a clearway restriction. The difference would be the use of the kerb side lane for buses, both morning and evening whereas the current restrictions on parking apply in the morning on Cambridge Tce and in the evening on Kent Tce. There is however sufficient parking on the opposite side of both these streets to meet demand during these times.

The proposal is shown on plan 2 in the appendix.

5.8 Taranaki Street Bus Priority Lane

Similarly on Taranaki St, between Buckle Street and Courtenay Place, it is proposed that a bus lane operate in both directions in the morning and evening peak utilising a dedicated lane alongside the parking lane. This will have no effect on parking. It will however reduce the general traffic to one lane in each direction but this is manageable now that the inner city bypass has been completed. The proposal also allows for the possibility of median planting in the future.

Further consideration of implementing this as a Transit lane in the future is possible as current bus volumes are in the vicinity of 15 buses an hour. This is below the threshold of 20 buses an hour considered necessary for a dedicated bus lane and which will be tested as part of the trial of taxis in bus lanes.

The proposal is shown on plan 3 in the appendix.

5.9 Public Consultation

With the agreement of the Committee it is proposed to consult on the five options identified for Courtenay Place together with the proposals for Cambridge/Kent Tce and Taranaki Street. It is also proposed to consult on future management of taxi, general parking and speed limits in Courtenay Place. Consultation will be structured to ensure comments are received from local businesses, retailers and residents on the effect these changes may have on their activities in the area. This is in addition to seeking wider public views on improvements to bus journey times and reliability. Major stakeholders such as NZ Bus, Greater Wellington Regional Council, and the taxi industry will also be approached for their views.

The results of the public consultation will be reported back to Committee with a recommendation for consideration in September 2008.

6. Conclusion

The demand for people to travel in and around Wellington City continues to grow. This is putting increasing pressure on the roading network which is near or at capacity at peak times. Road building and traffic management will not fully address the shortfall in demand and therefore further targeted capacity needs to be extracted from the existing system. The most effective way to gain further efficiency is to move larger volumes of people more efficiently. An accepted cost effective method of achieving this is to move more people by bus.

Five possible options have been identified for Courtenay Place which it is proposed to put to the public for comments and submissions. The results of the consultation will be reported to the Committee with a recommendation for consideration in September.

Contact Officer: *Stephen Harte, Programme Manager,
Transport Network Development,
Urban Development and Transport*

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The Council's transport strategy is based on supporting wider city objectives, It has as one of its key five tasks:

- The development of passenger transport systems as the main means for the movement of people along the urban development strategy growth spine.

This is to be achieved within the overall goal for Wellington's transport network to support the economic, social, cultural and environmental well being of its citizens. The bus priority plans directly support three relevant outcomes:

- More liveable – *Wellington will be easy to get around, pedestrian friendly and offer quality transport choices;*
- More sustainable – *Wellington will minimise the environmental effects of transport and support the environmental strategy;*
- Better connected – *Wellington will have a highly interconnected public transport, road and street system that supports its urban development and social strategies.*

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

The project is contained in project # CX492. Capital expenditure is expected to be in line with that budgeted in the LTCCP.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

No issues identified

4) Decision-Making

The report seeks endorsement to consult on options for bus priority measures in Courtenay Place, Cambridge/Kent Tce and Taranaki Street.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Approval to consult on scheme options is sought

b) Consultation with Maori

No consultation carried out to date

6) Legal Implications

None identified at this point.

7) Consistency with existing policy

The report is consistent with existing WCC policy.