

Consultation on Bus Priority Proposals in Birmingham City Centre

March 2021

Purpose

With the West Midlands declaring a climate emergency and setting ambitious targets to be carbon neutral by 2041, Transport for West Midlands aims to constantly improve public transport to make it easy for people to get around using greener and cleaner travel solutions and reduce future reliance on private cars, which cause unnecessary congestion and pollution. Buses have a huge part to play in helping achieve these visions and Transport for West Midlands and Birmingham City Council are working together to improve the bus network in Birmingham, helping to make bus travel more attractive by reducing journey times and improving reliability.

TfWM aims to realise a Cross City bus network for the region that has Birmingham city centre at its heart. Transport for West Midlands and Birmingham City Council are working together on 4 proposed road schemes in Birmingham city centre which aim to improve travelling by bus.

As part of the design process a public engagement exercise on the new road layouts was conducted allowing members of the public to have their say. This feedback will help refine the proposals before the planning applications are submitted and we would like to thank everyone for taking the time to respond to this survey.

Respondents

In total there were 289 responses to the engagement.

The consultation ran from the 21st February to the 21st March 2021. Members of the public were able to have their say via:

- Online Survey form on the TfWM and Birmingham Beheard website.
- Feedback via social media/letters and email.

- Over virtual meetings (scheduled Webinar and Stakeholder Meetings)

The demographics of the respondents are:

	Frequency	%
Age		
16-24	31	11
25-34	41	14
35-44	33	11
45-54	56	19
55-64	64	22
65+	50	17
Prefer not to say/no reply	13	5
Gender		
Male	153	53
Female	106	37
Other	3	1
Prefer not to say/no reply	26	9
Disability		
Yes	71	25
No	170	59
Prefer not to say/no reply	47	16
Total	288	100

The travel habits of respondents were:

- 35% of respondents were travelling at least 5 days a week into Birmingham city centre before lockdown. With an additional 25% travelling at least once a week.
- 73% would travel by bus into or through the city centre, with 35% using the train. 13% travelled via tram.
- 28% would travel via car/van with 12% using a private taxi or hackney carriage.
- 27% walked and 10% cycled.

Consultation Responses

This report aims to provide an executive summary of the key findings from the consultation based on the 4 areas that we sought feedback on; Margaret Street, Bristol Street, Newhall Street and Snow Hill Queensway.

Margaret Street

Opinion of the proposed bus priority in Margaret Street was positive, with 34% choosing the top two ratings compared to 21% choosing the bottom two ratings. 23% had no opinion.

Bristol Street

Opinion of the proposed road layout for Bristol Street was positive, with 34% choosing the top two ratings compared to 23% choosing the two bottom ratings. 21% did not know or had no opinion.

Newhall Street

Opinion of the proposed road layout for Newhall Street were positive, with 37% choosing the top two ratings compared to 18% choosing the two bottom marks. 27% did not know or had no opinion.

Snow Hill Queensway

Opinion of the proposed road layout for Snow Hill Queensway was positive, with 38% choosing the top two ratings compared to 21% choosing the two bottom marks. 22% did not know or had no opinion.

Specific Comments

Whilst the majority of comments were positive, there were some specific comments that were made throughout the consultation process; the most prominent comments have been grouped into subject areas.

‘Against closing more convenient car parking/bad to get rid of parking in the city centre.....no car zones will not work’

RESPONSE: A key transport objective for TfWM and Birmingham City Council is to enable a significant modal shift away from the car and several travel studies have been undertaken to understand this objective further. A study was undertaken by TfWM in 2019 focusing on shopper and leisure users in Birmingham city centre. It looked at users current travel habits and their use

of Birmingham city centre. We found that most shoppers and leisure travelers, travelled to Birmingham by bus (63%), this was followed by train (15%), by car, as a driver (8%) with tram or on foot (equally 5%) being less prevalent. In fact what we found was that if buses are not available (not running or discontinued route/stop) then bus users would choose to not go into Birmingham city centre rather than find an alternative transport option, therefore the evidence right now suggests that most people do not require car parking spaces or car usage within the city centre what they need is better public transport options.

‘It will cause congestion’

RESPONSE: Traffic studies have been undertaken to assess how traffic will flow with the introduction of bus lanes and designs are produced in accordance to permitted highway standards. The bus lanes that we consulted on are not just for buses; hackney cabs, motorcyclists and cyclists can use many of them too. Buses are the most efficient way to move people on the roads and by prioritising bus we are making them a more attractive and cleaner alternative to the car. The Government also published a National Bus Strategy in March 2021, this is the first of its kind and again puts an emphasis on local authorities to provide bus priority. Buses are the most popular form of public transport and the ambition is to make bus journeys quicker and more reliable getting people out of their car and reducing pollution.

‘What about night buses to help bounce out nightlife economy?’

RESPONSE: The consultation was focused on presenting changes to road layout across the city centre to reduce delays to buses and to provide the best possible travel experience for bus passengers travelling around and through the city centre by bus. Whilst not the specific focus of this consultation, the largest local bus operator, National Express West Midlands already operates a number of all-night bus services across the city and wider region.

Next Steps

TfWM will be seeking to present the bus priority designs as presented within the consultation through the next stage of Birmingham City Council’s project approval process. This will be presented in May 2021.