

4 January, 2011

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Integrated Transport Scrutiny Working Group – Update report

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Ansell - Transportation

Executive Summary:

This report will look at two work streams which were identified by councillors and how far they have progressed since the working group reported to the Scrutiny Panel.

The two projects are:

1. Bradford Place interchange
2. Town Centre Signage

Bradford Place:

There are safety concerns for bus users and pedestrians due to the large number of buses using Bradford place and the lack of control. Plans were presented to the Integrated Transport Working Group showing draft designs for improving this situation. There are medium to longer term plans for a more permanent fix to the problem which require funding to be sourced and plans to be drawn up, however in the short term a Traffic Regulation Condition is proposed to regulate and manage the operators and area.

Next Steps:

1. The Council and Centro have met and decided to put forward Traffic Regulation Conditions to manage the operators and area around the bus stands.
2. These are currently being finalised and will then be published.

Town Centre Signage:

During the Integrated Transport Working Group Members highlighted a lack of signage for and between Transport interchanges in Walsall town centre. Officers were tasked to investigate options and presented designs to the group which were endorsed and officers tasked with working up plans for implementation. However, due to budget constraints the project was put on hold once proposed signage had been designed and initial contact made with relevant landowners regarding erection of signage.

Next Steps:

1. Note that by 2011 the government will have announced transport budgets and how they can be allocated; the signage scheme will then be assessed along with other schemes.
2. Council will work in conjunction with Centro to find funding sources to implement the recommendations.

Reason for scrutiny:

During meetings of the Integrated Transport Working Group councillors requested updates on work which was progressing towards an improved Bradford Place interchange and also identified that signage between transport modes in Walsall Town Centre needed to be improved. Therefore draft plans were presented to the Group and endorsed. It was requested that an update be presented to the full scrutiny panel in the next 6-12 months.

Recommendations:

That the Panel:

1. Note that the Council and Centro have met and decided to put forward Traffic Regulation Conditions to manage the operators and area around the bus stands.
2. Note that the Traffic Regulation Conditions will be published once finalised.
3. Note that the signage scheme will be assessed, along with other schemes, when the government have announced the transport budgets and how they can be allocated in 2011-
4. Endorse that the Council will work in conjunction with Centro to find funding sources to implement the recommendations.

Background papers:

n/a

Resource and legal considerations:

The projects are currently using officer time. Once progressed they will require some funding which has yet to be identified due to uncertainty over budget levels at the Council and Centro.

Citizen impact:

An improved Bradford Place interchange will improve the safety of bus users and pedestrians and also the traffic flow in the area around it.

Improved signage will allow Walsall to function more efficiently as a transport

interchange with improved pedestrian links to all modes.

Environmental impact:

More use of Public Transport will take cars off the roads and improve the environment in the Borough through reductions in car based pollution.

Performance management:

If implemented the schemes will allow more efficient and safer delivery of transport facilities.

Equality Implications:

No Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as this is an update on schemes which are yet to be progressed.

Consultation:

Transportation, Strategic Regeneration, Centro

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1. Report

1.1 This report will look at two work streams which were identified by councillors and how far they have progressed since the working group reported to the Scrutiny Panel.

1.2 The two projects are:

- Bradford Place interchange
- Town Centre Signage

Bradford Place

2. Aims

2.1 During meetings of the Integrated Transport Working group councillors requested updates on work which was progressing towards an improved Bradford Place interchange. This will update on how far the work has now progressed.

3. History

3.1 The Bus stands at Bradford Place have been highlighted as a safety hazard as they become overcrowded with buses at peak times. Various solutions have been tried including moving some services out of Bradford Place. However due to bus services being commercial entities the Bus operators are free to move the services back into Bradford place if they see fit.

3.2 In the medium to long term a more permanent solution is being sought. However due to current safety concerns and current lack of funding a solution to control buses entering Bradford Place has been proposed using Traffic Regulation Conditions to regulate and manage the operators and area.

4. Next Steps

4.1 The Council and Centro have met and proposed to manage the operators and area around the bus stands using a Traffic Regulation Condition. These are currently being finalised and will then be published.

Walsall Town Centre Signage Improvements

5. Aims

5.1 Following Councillors requests to look at signage for Walsall rail station from the bus terminals and within the town centre in general, Walsall Council officers undertook a scoping exercise to see where signage would be most effective. Officers ascertained that there was no visible signage unless you were directly outside the Station street entrance or in the Park Mall section of the Saddlers Centre outside the station entrance. Councillors instructed officers to look at a solution to this problem.

6. History

6.1 Working with a local signage firm, officers have drawn up recommendations for where signage is needed to make the station visible within the town centre. These

were presented to the Scrutiny Working Group and officers were endorsed to implement signage improvements in the town centre.

6.2 The council then contacted land owners who would be affected by the signage with mixed responses. Some were happy for signs to be attached to their buildings, where as others were more sceptical. All responses and contact details were recorded for future use.

6.3 Centro were then consulted and the signage scheme was compared with a scheme that they had previously commissioned to be designed. It has been suggested that a combined scheme will be a more efficient use of public funds as there is some overlap in the separate scheme designs.

6.4 Unfortunately the scheme was put on hold in July 2010 due to budget uncertainty and constraints. Due to the recession and Comprehensive Spending Review council transport budgets have been uncertain for the last 6 months and were cut in year by 25%. Therefore although officers have investigated all options it has been impossible to commit budgets to new work streams such as the town centre signage scheme.

7. Next Steps

7.1 By 2011 the government will have announced transport budgets and how they can be allocated; the signage scheme will then be assessed along with other schemes.

7.2 The Council will then work in conjunction with Centro to find funding sources to implement the recommendations.