

Rob Davison
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer
Derby City Council

6 November 2008

Dear Mr Davidson

A6 Duffield Road Bus Lane

One of the main aims of Derbyshire and Peak District Campaign for Better Transport is to see improved public transport services for people travelling into Derby. We support the creation of on-road priorities for buses and wish to see the permanent bus lane on Duffield Road retained.

As you would expect, our members are mainly regular bus users, though most of us also use cars – we believe that different means of transport are more suitable for different people in differing circumstances.

We consider that buses are the most effective way of transporting people into Derby City Centre and wish to encourage their use. One of our members has written to me to say “*The benefits to bus users [both north & southbound] have been enormous. - It's quite a shock to travel by bus in the rush hour and arrive on time or very nearly on time.*” We think that bus passengers should be able to expect to arrive on time, and that modal shift to buses is impossible if this is not the case.

Policy Background

The Regional Transport Strategy has a number of objectives. The first one is:
“The development of transport infrastructure and services across the Region should be consistent with the following Objectives:

- 1 To support sustainable development in the Region's Principal Urban Areas,....”*
- 6 To reduce traffic growth across the Region and improve air quality by reducing the need to travel and promoting opportunities for modal shift away from the private car and road based freight transport.*

Sub-Area objectives for the three cities include

“T1 To reduce the use of the car in and around Nottingham, Derby and Leicester and promote a step change increase in the quality and quantity of local public transport provision”

The current Derby Joint Local Transport Plan (2006-11) includes

8.2 A summary of the strategy for tackling congestion

This strategy seeks to tackle congestion through a range of measures within each of the six elements of the long term transport strategy as outlined in chapter 6. Briefly, these include:

strategic public transport improvements – we will ensure bus travel is at the heart of our efforts to tackle congestion. We will encourage more people to use public transport by focussing on what buses do best, which is carrying large volumes of people on the key radial routes to and from the city centre, providing fast, reliable, affordable and frequent bus services on those key routes. We will work in partnership with bus operators to provide punctuality improvements, which include reducing delays to services. We will seek, should increased levels of funding become available, to provide new park and ride sites, with rapid transit style bus facilities, giving dedicated priority to buses. Key programme areas to address this include: bus punctuality improvements, public transport infrastructure and quality service improvements.

8.4 Programme development and performance management

Some of the specific schemes and broader initiatives that will be delivered during the LTP2 period that will contribute to tackling congestion include:

Kedleston Road and Duffield Road bus service quality enhancements –

improvements to the bus network and quality of bus services, including schemes to improve the punctuality of bus services, such as bus priorities and changes to traffic signals will enhance the bus as an attractive alternative to the car.

We are confident that the introduction of the bus lane on Duffield Road was in accordance with these regional and local policies.

General Comments

In today's society, where both partners in a couple work and jobs are no longer for life, it's inevitable that some people will need to work unusual hours or at a distance from home, and will need to travel by car. To avoid complete strangulation of the economy by congestion, it's imperative to encourage people who can travel other than by car to do so, so we support any changes which will encourage people to walk, cycle or travel by bus.

What has been created on Duffield Road is an inbound bus lane between Palm Court and Broadway islands to enable buses to get to the head of the traffic queue. As far as I understand it, it was planned as a simple means of improving conditions for those travelling to the City Centre by bus, thereby encouraging those who could change to bus to do so. It was done by creating an extra lane, so it did not reduce the space available for cars. Changes to the road layout anywhere else along the A6 corridor would be much more difficult to do and thus more expensive.

I wrote in a letter published by the *Derby Evening Telegraph* in July: "In the new era of climate change and expensive oil, where the cost of motoring is increasing rapidly, bus use is increasing. It's only sensible to encourage those making simple journeys to travel by bus, if only to reduce congestion for those whose journeys are more complicated." While fuel prices have dropped recently, we think that the long-term trend remains upwards and we understand that bus use is still increasing.

Trent use comfortable, modern, vehicles on the regular services along the A6 corridor, providing a decent alternative to the car. They have pledged to plough back journey time savings into service improvements.

Comments Specific to Duffield Road

It is often said that the road is too narrow to create three lanes. It is no narrower than other roads carrying heavy traffic in the city. I think that it is partly an optical illusion, as the road appears narrow at the southern end, where there is a wide verge, but not at the north end where there is not.

At the meeting organized by the Action Group in March 2007, most local residents supported the reduction of the speed limit to 30 mph and the extension of parking restrictions. Recent letters in the *Telegraph*, and comments from one of our members, suggest that the speed limit is regularly being broken – it may need to be better enforced. Obviously, there is now less room to manoeuvre without changing lanes than prior to the change, so vehicles need to travel slower and be more prepared to stop.

I understand that congestion in the area was partly caused by buses bringing pupils to St Benedict's school. The logical answer to this would have been to create a parking area, either inside the grounds or at the side of the road on the north side of the school gates. Instead, houses have been built on this land close to the boundary, making any changes to the road at this point impossible. This shows a lack of "joined up thinking" within the Council, and leaves all of us stuck with a difficult situation.

Possible Alterations

I will comment first on the four suggestions made in your letter, and then on points raised by our members.

A *"abolish the bus lane between Mileash Lane and Broadway but retain the remainder"*.

This proposal comes from those who find it difficult to exit Mileash Lane. I believe that this arrangement was considered originally, but was rejected to discourage motorists from using the Church Lane, Abbey Lane and Mileash Lane loop to by-pass traffic queues on Duffield Road. I understand that the difficult exit has been successful in reducing traffic on the loop. Residents may now find it easier to get onto the loop roads, but more difficult to get on to Duffield Road. On balance, we would not support this change.

It may be worth a slight extension of the stretch of road where the two lanes become "straight on" and "right turn", but would require lengthy observation to determine what, if anything, should be done.

B *"keep the bus lane but for part time operation"*

This would confuse road users, for little advantage. The purpose of the bus lane is for buses to overtake southbound queuing traffic. If there isn't a need for the bus lane off-peak, then it's because there isn't a queue, which means that the traffic can easily fit into the remaining southbound lane.

As I understand it, most problems occur in the single, northbound lane. Having two traffic lanes southbound would not help this.

Presumably the suggestion is that the road be treated as a normal three lane road off-peak, i.e. with vehicles driving in the left hand lane in both directions and using the centre lane to overtake or turn right. I cannot envisage any fool-proof way to sign the road southbound to say "use the middle lane in the peak but the left hand lane off-peak". The reports given of "near accidents" show a lot of poor driving practice. A more complicated situation is hardly likely to improve this, and would be likely to confuse occasional users of the road. Hence, I think this suggestion would be either ineffective or increase accidents.

C *"keep three lanes, have a reversible bus lane in the middle"*

This is completely impractical for a bus lane with intermediate stops. It would need special arrangements for safety. Problems with passengers boarding and alighting in the middle of the road were one reason for the abandonment of traditional trams in the 1950's, when traffic was a fraction of what it is now. For safety, it would probably require a law that all vehicles

stopped when a bus did, which would be unique in the UK and so probably could not be enforced.

D *“keep three lanes, but abolish the bus lane and use the middle lane for all traffic on a tidal flow basis, town-bound in the morning and out bound in the evening”*

This would be practicable, but would be to the disadvantage of bus passengers. The object of the bus lane is to encourage bus use. This change would not provide any incentive for a motorist to change to a bus. It would enable any one vehicle to travel more quickly between Palm Court and Broadway islands, but, without any increase in road capacity elsewhere, would only bring a more rapid arrival at the next traffic queue.

Side Roads

Given that the lane widths are now narrower, would it be practical or worthwhile to widen some junctions, to enable easier turns.

Cycling

Northbound cycling may have become more dangerous since the northbound lane was narrowed. We would like to see an alternative to cycling in this lane found, rather than any change to the road layout to accommodate cyclists.

Ferrers Way Junction

There is currently a significant traffic flow from Palm Court Island to Ferrers Way, which involves turning right across the northbound lane. The previous right turning lane was abolished when the bus lane was introduced. There is no space to widen the road.

This should be no more dangerous than any other right turn on a two lane road, but the layout does encourage cars to “nip in” to the bus lane to “overtake” cars waiting to turn right. Alternatively, it causes delay to traffic heading for the city centre.

Ferrers Way was not designed for heavy traffic and one answer would be to abolish the right turn off Duffield Road. However, we are not sufficiently aware of the local situation to know whether greater use of alternative routes would cause equal or worse problems elsewhere.

If the right turn is allowed to remain, the road layout must be clearly marked and the markings enforced to reduce the risk of accidents.

Church Lane Junction

The bus lane starts after the junction with Church Lane. In theory, one is supposed to drive on the left after church Lane and the move across to the “middle” lane. In practice, most motorists keep to the right past Church Lane junction. We would like to see the road markings changed to reflect normal behaviour, i.e. to have the inside lane prior to Church Lane as “buses and left turn only” and the outside lane “any vehicle, straight on only”.

Yours sincerely

Jim Froggatt

Chair, Derbyshire and Peak District Campaign for Better Transport