
Meeting of the Cabinet – 13th December 2006

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

A458 between Halesowen & Stourbridge : Traffic Management Measures

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval to undertake route appraisal and evaluate detail solutions associated with a Red Route along the A458, and for it to be included in the West Midlands (WM) Phase 2 Red Routes Programme Submission to the Department for Transport (DfT).

Background

2. Congestion on our roads and in our towns is getting worse year by year, costing £2.5 billion for the whole of the WM conurbation. Through congestion we incur costly delays and face higher transport costs, pay more for the goods we buy and suffer the effects of poorer air quality.
3. One of the key components of the West Midlands Area Multi Modal study was the development of a comprehensive network of Red Routes designed to keep traffic moving more efficiently on key strategic routes by better management of parking and improved traffic management measures including junction improvements. Against this background 20 routes have been identified within the WMs for consideration in future phases of the Red Route Programme
4. The A458 suffers considerably from delay, congestion and poor air quality. The road has little changed in character since being established as a Turnpike Road, and is part of a strategic WM route that runs from Stourbridge through local areas such as Lye, Cradley, Colley Gate, and the Stag and Three Horseshoes Shopping Centre, and on to Birmingham City Centre, Solihull and Coventry.
5. It is considered that the problems of delay, congestion and air quality could be greatly relieved through the introduction of Red Route traffic management proposals linking in with proposals in the adjacent authority areas. This would involve looking at opportunities to improve junctions, facilities for cyclists and pedestrians as well as local off street parking facilities.
6. Traffic management is a way of making busy roads work better for everyone – the people who travel on them, the businesses based beside them or served by them and the residents who live nearby. With the backing of effective enforcement they put a stop to motorists who park without consideration of other users blocking the flow of traffic and causing congestion and delay.

7. The proper introduction and enforcement of traffic management measures will:-
- Reduce traffic congestion
 - Improve safety for all road users through better management of conflict areas, achieving a reduction in accidents
 - Improve general traffic times and reliability – resulting in easier and less frustrating journeys for everyone, and a better quality of life for local communities along the route
 - Improve bus service speed and reliability and optimise the layout and location of bus stops
 - Provide better, safer conditions for pedestrians and cyclists
 - Improve parking enforcement and compliance
 - Improve air quality – less queuing traffic reduced traffic noise and exhaust emissions
8. Many issues that are regularly raised at Area Committee could be addressed through these traffic management proposals and establishment of a Red Route along the A458 through the Red Route Programme will provide the necessary funding for highway, traffic management and car park schemes (funding that cannot be resourced elsewhere).
9. Currently the WM Red Route programme includes 20 potential routes and there is a need to appraise all routes to determine a shortlist to be included in the Phase 2 submission to DfT in November 2007 – future phases will consider the routes not included at this stage. A key factor in consideration for inclusion will be the ability to deliver the scheme and the participating authority's commitment to taking the proposal forward. Dudley is now the only WM Authority not participating in the Red Route Programme and the A458 provides an opportunity to commit to this important WM agenda.
10. It is proposed, therefore, that a traffic management scheme including the introduction of a red route BE CONSIDERED for inclusion in the Phase 2 Red Route Submission being designed to reconcile the needs and interests of the communities.

Feedback from Stourbridge and Halesowen Area Committees

11. This subject was reported to Stourbridge Area Committee on 6th September 2006 (minute 36) and also to Halesowen Area Committee on 12th September 2006 (minute 36).
12. Stourbridge Area Committee expressed support for the concept of possible future traffic management measures along the A458.
13. However, there were reservations from Members of Halesowen Area Committee, who were opposed to the concept of a Red Route but were interested in investment in improvements to highways and parking facilities.

Sustainable Transport

14. Measures to assist movements by all forms of transport, and also to reduce instances of obstructive parking, support sustainable practices.
15. The ethos of a red route is to maximise highway capacity for all modes of transport, including the more sustainable forms.
16. The absence of obstructive parking, together with better car parks and road junctions with greater capacities, and sensitive enforcement, would assist local economies, support sustainable travel modes and increase opportunities for local employment.

Timetable for West Midlands Phase 2 Red Routes

17. On 26th January 2007, The Planning & Transportation Sub Committee will decide which of the currently identified 20 West Midlands provisional red routes should be included in the shortlist to be included in the Phase 2 submission to DfT.
18. A business case would be submitted to the DfT in November 2007 seeking Programme Entry in the spring 2008 scheme approval notification.
19. Subject to meeting DfT and Regional Funding investment criteria the Phase 2 Red Routes Programme is anticipated to be introduced during 2010-2011 with future phases following.
20. A further report will be submitted when future funding arrangements have been secured setting out detailed proposals for delivering the scheme in particular the consultation strategy to be adopted that is critical to ensuring successful delivery.
21. The proposal to introduce a Red Route will align with Decriminalised Parking Enforcement as agreed at your last meeting.

Finance

26. Currently all funds for future red route developments would DERIVE FROM CENTRALLY HELD WEST MIDLANDS LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS.

Law

27. The Road Traffic Act 1991 permits the Council, as Highway Authority, to apply to the Secretary of State for Transport to become Special Parking Areas and Permitted Parking Areas.
28. The Council may participate in the National Parking Adjudication Service Joint Committee under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.
29. Traffic Regulation Orders are made under powers contained in Section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
30. Off-Street parking places may be provided by the Council under Sections 32 and 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

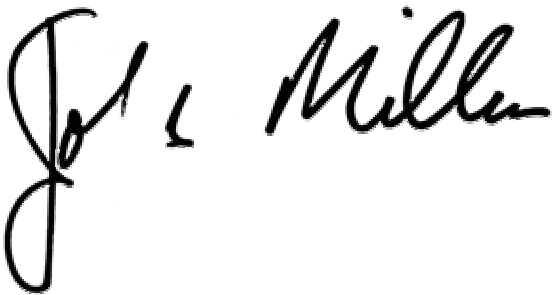
31. Traffic Regulation Orders are made under powers contained in Section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
32. Each red route proposal, or set of red route proposals, must be individually authorised by the Department for Transport.

Equality Impact

33. The proposal contained within this report complies with the Council's equal opportunities policy.
34. The proposal would assist pedestrian movements.
37. Opportunities for social inclusion (including for disabled users of taxis), disabled access and off-street parking would be possible as part of traffic management measure proposals.

Recommendation

39. That the Cabinet approves the A458 route for inclusion, and SUBSEQUENT CONSIDERATION, in the West Midlands Phase 2 Red Route package to be submitted to DfT.
40. That if selected as a route to be included in phase 2 the Council is committed to its introduction as part of its overall policy to improve conditions for the travelling public.
41. That a further report be submitted on progress with the Phase 2 Red Routes submission and the Consultation Strategy to be adopted.



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List of Background Papers

1. Red Routes Guidelines for Implementation (Produced for CEPOG and the West Midlands Authorities)