

SUBMISSION ON MEADOWS TO GEORGE STREET 'STREETS FOR PEOPLE' SCHEME

Introduction:

Edinburgh Bus Users Group (EBUG) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Meadows to George Street 'Streets for People' scheme.

EBUG, which was formally launched in May 2019 is a voice for bus users and potential users, which is committed to protecting and improving Edinburgh's bus network. Participation is open to anyone with an interest on that basis. It is user/supporter led, independent of any operator, local or national authority, political party or trade union.

EBUG is concerned with bus services operating within the City of Edinburgh Council area and those which cross its boundary, and with city-wide rather than local issues. We are committed to sustainable transport.

Commentary on scheme proposals:

1. The bus priority provision along the core corridor is very welcome, and supports wider CEC aims to encourage modal switch from car to public transport as a key component of City Centre Transformation. Removal of general traffic from part of Candlemaker Row is also welcome in terms of bus priority.
2. While area-wide restraints on general traffic can lead to 'evaporation' of such traffic, we are concerned that measures limited only to the Forrest Road-Hanover Street corridor will lead to additional traffic on the Bridges – a crucial bus corridor – with consequent impacts on bus journey times and reliability. Have these impacts been modelled?
3. Four Floating Bus Stops (FBSs) are proposed. We have a number of major concerns on this:
 - (i) The plan drawings (as opposed to the text) do not identify the FBSs – a basic failure to consult properly on a design measure with significant impact on the travelling public (see below).
 - (ii) All the FBSs will involve potential conflict between cyclists and bus users / pedestrians, with particular dangers for the two which are on, or close to the foot of, gradients (Hanover St and Mound) where cyclists are likely to be approaching at speed – unless extremely robust engineering measures are to be used.
 - (iii) We understand that the results of a pilot monitoring exercise for CEC at one of the early FBSs (at Shrubhill on Leith Walk), which commenced two years ago, have still to be published. It seems to us that no further FBSs should be planned until the results of the monitoring exercise have been analysed, consulted upon and consequent FBS policy amended in light of the impact of

the FBS on bus users / pedestrians' safety and comfort, and in particular people with mobility impairments.

(iv) In any event, the introduction of FBSs should be judged by the extent to which they uphold Scottish Planning Policy (Para 273) which prioritises walking at the top of the transport mode hierarchy. This should mean that pedestrians have clear priority (in practice, not just in theory) at FBS crossings of the cycle way, potentially enforced by measures which ensure that cycling speeds (in practice, not just in theory) are reduced to walking pace.

4. The proposals provide no clarity on (i) whether the width of pavements in the vicinity of bus stops (both 'conventional' and 'floating') is to be increased, to stay the same, or to be reduced, and (ii) how the proposed widths compare with the minimum standards laid down in the Edinburgh Street Design Guidance.

A related point is the lack of clarity on waiting and circulation space (and shelter / seating space) on the FBS 'platforms' themselves, and how the planned space compares with (a) current provision and (b) Street Design Guidance standards. We are concerned that at the busy stops in particular the space will be inadequate, meaning worse conditions for waiting pedestrians – in terms of both comfort and safety – at these points of potential conflict with cyclists.

Have pedestrian flows and passenger usage at peak times been analysed / modelled to help inform the design concept?

5. There is no reference in the drawings (another failure of consultation) to the fact that it is proposed to remove two bus stops: one of the current two southbound stops on Hanover Street, and the southbound stop at the top of the Mound. In the former case this will lead to an over-concentration of passengers at the remaining (floating) stop (see (3) and (4) above); in the latter case, the removal is inconsistent, as the equivalent northbound stop (on North Bank Street) is to remain. The removal of this stop would lead to a gap between stops far in excess of 400m, with bus users (including those walking from Waverley Station) having to walk further, uphill, and crossing two busy main roads on the way.
6. In conclusion, while EBUG very much welcomes the aims of the scheme, there are evident design flaws and a significant lack of clarity on (a) design details and (b) the extent to which analysis of bus passenger flows (and bus passenger needs) have underpinned the design concept. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues.

EBUG / July 2019