

Update on Oxford Transport Plans – meeting held on 11th May 2022 (on Teams)

Chaired by Craig Rossington (CR) – Oxfordshire County Council, responsible for Transport Strategy
Also present: Ted Maxwell (TM) – Regeneration Manager at Oxford City Council (working with County Council on this project)...

...and approx. 20 members of the public, most representing their local residents' association – from SENDRA: Sally Cooper, Margaret Maden, John Stobbs

3 core schemes were discussed: Zero Emission Zone, Traffic Filters (aka Bus Gates) and Workplace Parking Levy (ZEZ, TF, WPL).

CR commented that this was not the first occasion, nor the last, for local residents to have their say: there will be a consultation over multiple weeks in the summer, possibly going into September.

OCC's Vision:

- Affordable, comprehensive bus network running 24/7
- Comprehensive and safe cycle network
- Beautifully designed streets and public spaces
- Congestion free roads for residents, visitors, businesses to make essential journeys in zero emission vehicles
- A carbon neutral city

Currently peak bus speeds are as low as 8mph; patronage is down by a quarter; further cutting of routes may be necessary when government (Covid?) funding ends; 39% visitor satisfaction compared to national average of 48%.

Traffic Filters will operate from 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week. For suggested positioning of TFs please see:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/core-transport-schemes>

ZEZ – for exemptions/discounts etc. please see:

[https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/oxford-zero-emission-zone-zez/discounts-and-exemptions#:~:text=Zero%20emission%20vehicles%20\(such%20as,your%20vehicle%20is%20zero%20emission.](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/oxford-zero-emission-zone-zez/discounts-and-exemptions#:~:text=Zero%20emission%20vehicles%20(such%20as,your%20vehicle%20is%20zero%20emission.)

WPL – already introduced in Nottingham. Any business within the ring road with 11 or more parking spaces will be charged £600 per parking space p.a., with money raised to be reinvested in city transport.

Investment in 139 electric buses: the bus companies need journey time savings in order for this to go ahead – time limited if they are to obtain government subsidy.

Complementary schemes to run alongside ZEZ, TFs and WPL:

Controlled Parking Zones, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, E-scooters and public parking charges.

Next steps:

- Autumn/winter 2022 Cabinet decision (following summer consultation)
- Summer 2023 – (if agreed) introduction of ZEZ and TFs
- WPL has to go through Secretary of State – possibly Spring 2024

Summary of questions raised (very few were answered directly but a note was made of the issues)

- Should ZEZ and TFs be introduced simultaneously? Better to introduce one, then evaluate before introducing the other.
It is clear that there is pressure on OCC from the bus companies to go for the whole package in order for them to be confident that bus journey times will be substantially improved (for them to be prepared to invest in electric buses and qualify for the government subsidy).
- TFs – could they operate only at rush hours when there is dense traffic (rather than from 07.00 to 19.00)? Many participants raised this.
- TFs will mean that if one wants to go from our corner of Oxford to Summertown, one would have to go down the Abingdon Rd, round the by-pass and down Woodstock/Banbury Rd. The by-pass is already very busy; further congestion will bring traffic to a halt, thereby increasing pollution. In addition, buses are not a convenient solution for some, especially the elderly or those with mobility problems: the nearest bus stops for bus services to Summertown are 0.7 miles away.
- OCC had stated that money raised by the ZEZ would be reinvested in improving traffic and *“Providing financial assistance for residents & businesses to switch to zero emission vehicles”* - p.11 of January 2020 update under “Benefits”:
file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Previous_ZEZ_Update_January_2020_.pdf
Referring to the above, CR mentioned that there might be funding for installation of charging points.
- Is this the right time to be introducing a scheme which will cost residents £250 per year (up until 2024/£500 afterwards) when there are such pressures on household budgets?
- Positioning a TF on Thames St will mean that traffic wanting to use the Westgate car park (or Oxpens) will come from one direction only – either from Frideswide Sq. or up the Abingdon Rd. Admittedly, because of the ZEZ charge there is likely to be a reduction in traffic but the pressures on “one direction only” are still likely to cause considerable jams on the single access road.
- Are there any case studies of local residents/students/employees being commissioned? CR mentioned that OCC has carried out sophisticated traffic modelling.

Other questions were more specific to particular areas of Oxford, thus I have not included them in these notes. It is true to say that the majority of participants were not in favour of the package of measures as it stands, though many agreed with the aim of reducing congestion and improving air quality. It will be very important for SENDRA to make a full submission when the ZEZ/TFs consultation opens in the summer.

J.S

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