



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Taxis in Bus Lanes Report

June 2011

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Stockton Hackney Drivers Association (SHDA) has requested permission for taxis to use Bus Lanes in the Borough, highlighting that they are a valid form of public transport. They claim that as buses are given assistance to minimise delays in peak periods, they should be afforded the same advantages.
- 1.2 They also state that Bus Lanes can actively disadvantage taxis by forcing them to take circuitous routes to destinations. This occurs particularly around Stockton Town Centre with the High Street and Bishopton Lane (westbound) being prohibited for taxis throughout the day, thus forcing taxis to use other more onerous routes around the town centre. In addition it is also alleged that passengers complain of the additional time taken to get to specific destinations, and the increased fares that are incurred.
- 1.3 Complaints have also been received from disabled passengers that they cannot alight from taxis within the vicinity of their destination when it is within the prohibited central section of Stockton High Street between the two bus loops (0600 – 1800 hours northbound and all times southbound)..
- 1.4 This report will set out the current position of taxis and Bus Lanes in Stockton Borough and considers the practice undertaken in other local authorities as well as highlighting the views of various consultees. The report is intended to enable an informed decision to be made on whether or not to allow taxis to use Bus Lanes within Stockton.
- 1.5 The Housing and Community Safety Select Committee carried out a review of taxi licensing in 2010 and will consider the results of this consultation at their meeting on 7 April 2011 prior to any decisions being taken by Cabinet.

2. Bus Lanes

- 2.1 Transport Act 2000 states that an area of road is or forms part of a bus lane if the Traffic Regulation Order provides that it may be used:
 - (a) only by buses (or a particular description of a bus), or
 - (b) only by buses (or a particular description of bus) and some other class or classes of vehicular traffic.
- 2.2 High quality, road based public transport systems are vital in order to achieve maximum effectiveness from the road network. The majority of urban public transport in the Tees Valley is provided by buses, which can transport relatively large numbers of people, whilst occupying limited road-space.
- 2.3 There is generally a strong case for providing buses with priority over other road vehicles, with some of these reasons being:
 - Reduced delays to buses arising from traffic congestion.
 - Improved reliability of bus services, thus making bus travel a more attractive modal option.
 - Increased mobility for those members of the community who do not own or have use of a car, increasing social inclusion.

- Increased accessibility to major traffic generators like shopping centres, employment bases and leisure amenities.
 - Contributes to traffic restraint and the management of congestion.
 - Contributes towards reduced carbon emissions, and other 'Eco' targets should more people be encouraged to utilise public transport.
- 2.4 Bus priority measures can vary in scale from simple traffic management measures, such as exemptions for buses from a manoeuvre prohibited to other traffic through to "whole" route based systems where buses are provided with priority over all other types of motorised vehicles.
- 2.5 Bus Stop Clearways (adequately signed and marked) and short sections of bus lanes also make it easier for buses to access bus stops safely, and at the correct angle, thus ensuring low floor platforms are effective, as a means of preventing other vehicles parking within the bus stops.
- 2.6 With Stockton Borough there is a variety of bus priority schemes in place including exemptions, prohibition of turning movements, peak hour with-flow Bus Lanes and 24 hour contra-flow Bus Lanes.
- 2.7 A with-flow Bus Lane is an area of carriageway reserved for the use of buses and occasionally other permitted vehicles for all or part of the day, in which buses operate in the same direction as general traffic. Contra-flow Bus Lanes way allow buses to travel in a segregated lane to drive against the direction of general traffic.
- 2.8 Pedal cyclists are usually permitted to use with-flow bus-lanes for safety reasons, since otherwise they would be required to ride in the main stream of traffic outside the Bus Lane.
- 2.9 Whilst taxis are not allowed to use Bus Lanes in Stockton, and in some other authorities around the Country, some authorities do permit them to use Bus Lanes (usually with-flow bus lanes), provided that;
- Taxi volumes and set down/pick up behaviour does not interfere with bus operations.
 - Taxi use does not encourage infringement of Bus Lane regulations by other vehicles (taxis must be easily identifiable vehicles).
(Transport in the Urban Environment. Section 24.6)
- 2.10 Motorcycles are not normally permitted to use Bus Lanes as they travel at the same speed as general traffic and should not be encouraged to undertake weaving or overtaking manoeuvres on the inside of a queue by incursion into a Bus Lane.
- 2.11 There are various types of bus priority measures in operation within Stockton, including contra flow, with flow, bus gates and pre-signals, all of which have different impacts on accessibility. It should be noted that the Tees Valley was given £37 million pounds worth of funding from Government to implement agreed bus network improvements throughout the Region, with £13 million being identified for Stockton. This investment in the bus network has identified 8 Core Routes in Stockton with high frequency bus services that need congestion free routes in order to maintain reliable timetables, and maximise bus patronage.

Table 1 (overleaf) lists all existing and planned future bus lanes, together with their hours of operation, and other specific features.

The measures listed in Table 1 are all located on these Core Routes which are:-

Service 7	Stockton – Yarm
Service 15	Roseworth – Stockton – Thornaby
Service 17/17A/17B/17C	Middlesbrough – Thornaby – Ingleby Barwick - Eaglescliffe
Service 36/37/38	Middlesbrough – Stockton – Norton
Service 52	Stockton – Billingham
Service 58	Stockton – Hardwick
Service 59	Stockton – University Hospital of North Tees
Service 61	Stockton – Elton Park (Fairfield)

These routes should operate a minimum of 6 buses per hour in each direction, Monday to Saturday daytime.

Table 1 Existing Bus Lanes in Stockton-on-Tees

Location	Type	Hours of Operation	Length
Stockton High Street southbound	Contra-flow	At any time	260m
Bishopton Lane Norton Road to Allison Street	Contra-flow	At any time	180m
Yarm Lane Stockton High Street to Prince Regent Street	Contra-flow	At any time	130m
Westbury Street at Mandale Road	Contra-flow	At any time	70m
Mandale Road Westbury Street to Victoria Bridge	Contra-flow	At any time	370m
Mandale Road Bon Lea Roundabout to Westbury Street	With-flow Includes bus priority pre-signals	At any time	190m
Victoria Bridge Both directions	With-flow Includes bus priority pre-signals westbd	At any time	200m
Churchyard Link Road	With-flow Exemption from banned right turn	At any time	45m
Norton Road. Approach to Maritime Road Roundabout	With-flow	07:30 to 09:30 15:30 to 18:00	100m
Norton Road Mount Pleasant	With-flow	07:30 to 09:30 15:30 to 18:00	145m
Norton Road Norton Ave to Red Lion roundabout	With flow	07:30 to 09:30 15:30 to 18:00	300m
Yarm Road Sunningdale Drive to Yarm Bridge	With-flow	07:30 to 09:30 15:30 to 18:00	1500m
Stockton High Street northbound	Prohibition of general traffic	06:00 to 18:00	260m
Yarm Road West End Way	Bus Lane at traffic signals	At any time	50m
Durham Road North of Hardwick Road to Mile House	With-flow bus lane	At any time	980m
Future bus facilities			
Yarm Lane Prince Regent Street to Yarm Road, both directions	With-flow bus lane	At any time	374m
Junction Road North Albert Road to Stockton Ring Road	With Flow bus lane	At any time	230m
Mitchell Avenue Approach to Town Centre stops	Signal priority at Baysdale Road and short section of bus lane	At any time	50m
Yarm Road Cleveland Bay	Bus Priority at traffic signals	At any time	50m

- 2.12 Traffic flow and accident data has been collected for the existing Bus Lanes within the Borough, and appropriate accident rates have been calculated (Appendix 1). This shows the Bus Lanes to have accident rates generally expected for the particular classification of road.
- 2.13 However, there are three sections of Bus Lane that have significantly greater accident rates, than their classification. These are Stockton High Street, Norton Road (at Mount Pleasant) and Yarm Lane. However, Yarm Lane is a short length and the low traffic flow gives an inflated value to the single slight injury accident that occurred. The other locations with significant accident rates have occurred on sections of road where unusual traffic conditions are present.
- 2.14 Stockton High Street is part-pedestrianised with only buses and cycles permitted to travel southbound, and a limited number of service/permit holder vehicles permitted to travel northbound, during the daytime. The exceptionally high accident rate can also be related to the short length and low traffic flows associated with the Bus Lane, but the number of accidents (7 in the 5 years 2006 – 10) is a cause for concern. An analysis of the accidents shows that 5 of the 7 accidents involved passengers falling on buses due to harsh braking. This type of accident could increase if additional traffic is permitted to travel within Stockton High Street, particularly if sudden, unexpected manoeuvres were occur.
- 2.15 Whilst the accident rate for Stockton High Street may appear high, it should be compared to the figure's before the current restrictions were introduced. During a three year period (1988 to 1990), there were 85 accidents along Stockton High Street (including the two bus loops). The strict control of traffic on Stockton High Street has indisputably reduced the number of accidents that occurred.
- 2.16 Similarly, Norton Road (at Mount Pleasant) has various traffic movements associated with local shops situated on both sides of the road, resulting in significant pedestrian movements across the road. Records show there has been 7 accidents (2006 - 2010) at this Bus Lane but none have occurred during its hours of operation (07:30 - 09:30 - 15:30 - 18:00).
- 2.17 As part of the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement scheme, new Bus Lanes are being installed throughout the Borough. These include a with-flow Bus Lane on Yarm Lane between Yarm Road and Prince Regent Street, Durham Road between Junction Road and Darlington Lane, Junction Road for 230m towards A1027 Stockton Ring Road roundabout and Mitchell Avenue, Thornaby. These new Bus Lanes will assist bus reliability and punctuality to the benefit of bus passengers.

3. Taxis

- 3.1 Taxi is the generic term for vehicles that can be hired by the public for personal travel. They are licensed by the Local Authority and fall into two distinct categories, which are Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles. Taxis play an important part in local transport as they provide a flexible form of public transport that can play an increasingly important role in improving accessibility. The public must have reasonable access to Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles because of the role they play in local transport provision. At the time of writing this report Stockton Borough currently licences 303 Hackney Carriage vehicles and 294 Private Hire Vehicles, although taxis licensed in other areas may also use Stockton's roads.

- 3.2 A Hackney Carriage is a public transport vehicle that can “ply for hire”. This means that it may stand at taxi ranks or be hailed in the street by a member of the public. Hackney Carriages must be easily identifiable by members of the public and in Stockton-on-Tees the following conditions are imposed on them.
- Comply with the prescribed vehicle specification.
 - Be black in colour.
 - Be exceptionally well maintained to the standard prescribed by the Council.
 - Fitted with an approved roof sign bearing the word “TAXI”.
 - Fitted with a meter of a type approved by the Council, calibrated with the fares charged as determined by the Council.
 - Meters, after being checked, must be sealed by an agent approved by the Council.
 - Display transfers issued by the Council attached centrally to both front doors of the vehicle.
 - Display the Councils licence plates, which must be securely attached to the exterior front and rear of the vehicle as prescribed by a condition of the Council.
- 3.3 Only Hackney Carriages licensed by Stockton Borough Council can ply for hire within Stockton. However, those licensed outside the Borough may operate as a Private Hire vehicle in Stockton and may be black in colour.
- 3.4 Private Hire Vehicles are similar vehicles to Hackney Carriages. A Private Hire Vehicle is constructed or adapted to seat fewer than 9 passengers and is provided for hire with the services of a driver for the purpose of carrying passengers. All journeys made via a Private Hire Vehicle must be pre-booked through a licensed private hire operator. In Stockton Borough the following conditions are imposed on them.
- Comply with the prescribed vehicle specification.
 - Not be black in colour.
 - Be exceptionally well maintained to the standard prescribed by the Council.
 - Not be fitted with a roof sign of any description.
 - If the vehicle is fitted with a meter, it must be of a type approved by the Council.
 - Meters, after being checked for accuracy, must be sealed by an agent approved by the Council.
 - Display the Councils licence plates, which must be securely attached to the exterior front and rear of the vehicle as prescribed by a condition of the Council.
 - Display transfers issued by the Council attached centrally to both front doors of the vehicle.
- 3.5 The Council issues licences for Hackney Carriage drivers, Private Hire drivers and combined licences for Hackney Carriage/Private Hire. At the time of writing this report there are 780 licensed drivers within Stockton Borough, of which 82 are for Hackney Carriage driver’s only, a further 326 are Private Hire drivers, and 372 drivers are licensed to drive either a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire vehicle . Before issuing a licence, checks will be made on the applicant’s, including:

- Driving Experience.
 - Driver Knowledge/Locality Test.
 - Criminal Records Check.
 - Independent Safeguarding Authority.
 - Relevance of Convictions, Cautions and Conduct.
 - Medical Assessment.
 - Drug Testing.
 - Driving Standards Agency Taxi Test.
- 3.6 The relevance of a convictions check will include the applicant's Driving Licence and the number of points imposed by Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) that have been accumulated. If an applicant has 6 points, or an existing driver accumulates 7 - 9 points they will likely be referred on to a Driver Improvement Course, based on the Driving Standards Agency Taxi Test, for which Stockton Borough Council is the Lead Authority for the Tees Valley. Following this course any further points will cause the driver to be considered by the relevant authorities Licensing Committee with the possibility that the Hackney Carriage/Private Hire licence could be revoked.
- 3.7 In response to requests from disability groups, a 'permit system' was introduced in 2004 to allow disabled accessible Hackney Carriages to access the restricted part of Stockton High Street. Applications may be made in respect of Hackney Carriageways registered with Stockton Borough Council only. Permits will allow a Hackney Carriage to travel along the High Street in a northbound direction only. Use of the permit is strictly restricted to the needs of disabled passengers, and does not authorise use of the High Street as a short cut. Whilst stationary, Hackney Carriages shall be within one of the four High Street lay-bys, adjacent to the northbound side of the High Street, or Finkle Street. Hackney Carriages may not ply for hire in this section or use it as a routine drop-off location. Permit management is at the discretion of Stockton Borough Council, and these can be suspended or withdrawn should drivers be in breach of any Traffic Regulation Orders in place.
- 3.8 Prior to 2004 Department for Transport (DfT) had issued a policy that all taxi's had to be wheelchair accessible by 2011, although this is no longer the case. The permit system was intended to encourage early transition to disabled accessible taxis. Currently the DfT is working on a mandatory proposal which would substantially improve taxi provision for people with disabilities (which includes, but is not limited to, people who need to travel in a wheelchair), and until their work is complete they encourage councils to introduce taxi accessibility policies for their own areas. Stockton Borough Council has therefore agreed a revised specification for wheelchair accessible taxis, and has determined that all new applications for a Hackney Carriage vehicle licence shall be required to comply with this specification, until the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles reaches 25% of the total hackney carriage fleet (approximately 70 vehicles, currently there are 28 Hackney Carriage wheelchair accessible vehicles and 9 Private Hire wheelchair accessible vehicles licensed in Stockton) at which point the policy will then be reviewed. It should be noted that SHDA is in favour of a mixed fleet of wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriages and saloon style vehicles.

Consultation

4. Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU)

4.1 TVU is the strategic body for the Tees Valley and include the functions of the Public Transport Lead Authority. Their responsibilities cover all forms of public transport to include rail, buses and taxis. During the consultation exercise a number of issues were highlighted by TVU regarding the use of Bus Lanes by taxis.

4.2 In summary TVU stated that whilst taxis are indeed a valid form of public transport, they would not support their inclusion for travelling within Bus Lanes for the following reasons:

- Taxis within Stockton Borough are not readily identifiable and their presence in Bus Lanes could lead to other motorists using them, thus the advantage to buses could be significantly reduced. (it should be noted that Middlesbrough Borough Council have a system in place where the taxis identity number is displayed on the roof, which should assist with any camera enforcement operation).
- Hackney carriages are able to pick up passengers who hail them from the kerbside. This may lead to sudden manoeuvres as the Hackney Carriage stops or u-turns in a Bus Lane, thus increasing the risk of a collision occurring.
- Camera enforcement of Bus Lanes is now taking place, and private hire vehicles would be difficult to differentiate from general traffic and may lead to enforcement difficulties. (It should be noted however, that this report is only considering bus lane usage by Hackney Carriage's only)
- Traffic signals on Bus Lanes are being installed with short "Hurry Calls" when buses are approaching. The signal installation at Mandale Road/Thornaby Road/Yale Crescent is a recent example. If taxis are allowed to use the Bus Lanes, they would be repeatedly triggering the "Hurry Call" and reducing available capacity on the other legs of the signalised junction, which could cause capacity problems for the junction, and potentially create unnecessary delays on the wider highway network.

4.3 TVU noted that Middlesbrough Borough Council do currently allow taxis to use the few Bus Lanes they have, although the major bus operators do have concerns about the impact of taxis on their services. If necessary, TVU would accept taxis using Bus Lanes after 23:30 when bus usage had stopped.

Local Authority Responses

4.4 Middlesbrough Borough Council is a neighbouring authority with licensing powers for taxis. They have a small number of with-flow and contra-flow Bus Lanes unlike Stockton, and have recently allowed Hackney Carriages to use their Bus Lanes.

4.5 There is a key Bus Lane along Wilson Street that links Middlesbrough Bus Station to routes to the east of the Town Centre. A Middlesbrough Council Officer made the following comments regarding use of their Bus Lanes:

- They recognise the importance of taxis as modes of public transport.
 - Bus Lanes have been established with legal Traffic Regulation Orders, but there is no distinction between Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles.
 - Findings have shown that there is some abuse of the Wilson Street Bus Lane by general traffic.
 - Currently Cleveland Police are relied upon for enforcement.
 - There is no evidence that the abuse of Wilson Street Bus Lane and lack of appropriate enforcement has caused problems for bus operators.
- 4.6 Newcastle and Sunderland City Councils have a number of “No Car” lanes on strategic routes. The definition of a car is strictly described, but specifically excludes Hackney Carriages. Private Hire Vehicles, although falling outside the definition, are also accepted in “No Car” lanes. These lanes tend to be long radial routes and can only be enforced by Police. The Tyne and Wear Integrated Passenger Authority have recently reported on the use of their priority lanes and resolved that bus lanes will operate 7am to 7pm and that a protocol be prepared on the type of vehicles allowed to use the bus lane (motorcycles, coaches and PHV to be considered).
- 4.7 Under recent legislation, Civil Enforcement Officers can enforce Bus Lanes with cameras, but the legislation does not cover “No Car” lanes. Some enforcement does take place, but they tend to be self-regulating due to the numbers of vehicles permitted to use them. Some short lengths of lane do get abused as drivers can see the full length and realise there is no actual enforcement present.
- 4.8 Initially there was resistance from Bus Operators, however, there have been few reported problems and the resistance has subsided. It should also be noted that SHDA also independently contacted Newcastle City Council who stated that since allowing both Hackney Carriage’s and Private Hire in to bus lanes there has been no particular issues regarding highway safety.
- 4.9 Birmingham City Council conducted an experiment in 2007 for a period of 18 months to allow Private Hire vehicles to use certain Bus Lanes. There were key concerns about allowing Private Hire vehicles in Bus Lanes, which included:
- Difficulty in telling Private Hire vehicles apart from cars.
 - Difficulty in enforcement.
 - Increased abuse of Bus Lanes
 - More vehicles in Bus Lanes
 - Negative effects on bus services
 - Negative effects on emergency response times.
 - More lane changing could be dangerous.
- 4.10 The potential worsening of emergency response times was of particular concern. Monitoring of traffic data before and during the trial was inconclusive which did not disprove the key concerns. It was therefore decided to end the Private Hire vehicle trial at that stage and reconfirm the City Council’s existing policy not to allow Private Hire vehicle to use Bus Lanes.
- 4.11 As part of the SHDA response to this consultation they independently contacted other local authorities throughout the Country to ascertain views on whether or not allowing taxis in bus lanes had had an adverse effect on bus operations, and collision statistics. The following responses were received:

- 4.12 Edinburgh Council currently limit use of their bus lanes to buses and taxis (hackney style 'black' only), bicycles, and emergency vehicles only. At present they do not hold any evidence regarding adverse effects to bus operations or increased collisions as a result of the Councils policy of allowing Hackney Carriages in to Bus Lanes.
- 4.13 Bradford City Council responded stating that they allow Hackney Carriages the use of their Bus Lanes, and presently there is no evidence which indicates adverse effect to bus operations, or increased collisions.
- 4.14 Sheffield City Council allow both Hackney Carriages and Private Hire to use its Bus Lanes (and bus gates), and have no particular concerns about taxis using Bus Lanes from a road safety perspective. In addition they also stated that South Yorkshire Passenger Executive confirm that the use of Bus Lanes by taxis has not been raised as an issue, in terms of accidents or delays.
- 4.15 North Tyneside allows Hackney Carriages to utilise Bus Lanes, but stated that they are not enforced.
- 4.16 In addition to the above, articles were also obtained from a local newspaper website, and a Council website which gave information in relation to allowing Hackney Carriages to utilise bus lanes within Stoke-on-Trent and Swindon respectively.

Bus Operators

- 4.17 Consultation with the two main private bus operators within Stockton Borough has been undertaken. It should be noted that these are also the principal bus operators within Middlesbrough Borough. During the meeting the following points were made:
- Bus operators are opposed to taxis using Bus Lanes within Stockton, pointing out that there were originally "Bus Green Routes" in Middlesbrough, but this concept has been eroded to the point where any taxi now use all Bus Lanes, despite a Middlesbrough Borough Council Officer stating that only Hackney Carriages are permitted.
 - Bus operators are primarily concerned about road safety problems and reduced punctuality/reliability.
 - Arriva produced statistics to show 42 accidents within the Tees Valley Region involving their buses and taxis in the last three years, with approximately 50% being the fault of the taxi. However, it is important to note that where the bus driver was deemed blameworthy it was normally as a result of 'clipping' a taxi parked in, or in the vicinity of a bus stop.
 - If allowed into Bus Lanes, taxis will continually make sudden manoeuvres including U-turns. These could be particularly dangerous on Stockton High Street where there is heavy pedestrian movement. In addition there is also evidence of elderly passengers on buses who have received injuries due to sudden braking of a bus.
 - Taxis would also be stopping in Bus Lanes to collect passengers that have 'hailed' them. This may take some time as luggage occasionally needs to be loaded and buses would be forced to wait behind the taxi, potentially leading to delays.
 - Bus operators were opposed to the Middlesbrough Borough Council policy of allowing Hackney Carriages in Bus Lanes. They pointed out that the Bus Lane is now regularly used by general traffic and buses can miss the

opportunity to turn right into Albert Road as taxis or prohibited vehicles are before them at the Albert Road stop line.

- Both Arriva and Stagecoach were undergoing reorganisations at the time the bus lanes experiment was introduced in Middlesbrough, and admit that this meant that they might have failed to formally register their opposition to the proposals.
- It is not possible to allow only Hackney Carriages into Bus Lanes as Private Hire vehicles cannot be easily distinguished in Stockton.
- Enforcement of Bus Lanes by Bus Operators using on-board cameras was discounted because of difficulties with equipment and staff resources.

4.18 It was suggested that taxis could be permitted to use Bus Lanes outside normal bus operating times. The Bus Operators argued that restrictions in Middlesbrough had been continually eroded and this could be seen as the first step in Stockton. They did not believe that taxi drivers would respect specific time restrictions. However, if a concession had to be made, a period of midnight to 05:00 may be acceptable.

Sustrans

4.19 Sustrans are a leading UK charity encouraging people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys made every day. They work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in. They are the charity behind the National Cycle Network, of which 75% of people in the UK now live within a couple of miles of it, and hundreds of thousands of children and families have benefited from Safe Routes to School and Bike It. Finally, Sustrans work with Central and Local Government which brings us closer to the transport issues that affect our daily lives, from the health and safety of travel choices to the practical function of the network of cycle routes.

4.20 Sustrans are opposed to the use of Bus Lanes within Stockton Borough by taxis (both Hackneys Carriages and Private Hire). They state that the principles of public transport should be that it is safe, convenient, quick, cheap, accessible to all and environmentally sound.

4.21 The concept of a 'clear' Bus Lane to achieve a reliable journey time can be more difficult to achieve if other vehicles are allowed to use the lanes. Congestion is generally caused by too many cars, rather than too many buses. Key points made by Sustrans include:

- Taxis tend to have similar carrying capabilities to private vehicles, which means that a single journey is not using less road space or producing less carbon.
- They are not cheap as users not only pay per mile for a journey, but are also paying running costs, drivers wages, and profits for the company.
- Drivers tend not to be trained to an advanced standard.
- Taxis do not benefit the Councils need to cut CO² levels, and to reduce particulate matter in the atmosphere.
- Rapidly increasing sustainable travel will require diverting current transport investment towards extending travel choices that reduce car and taxi use.
- The way that transport initiatives are appraised should be linked with their ability to reduce carbon, increase sustainability, and improving the health and quality of life for people.

- 4.22 The act of encouraging public transport use also encourages active travel, for example people generally walk to a bus stop rather than a taxi picking them up from the front door. Public transport can be a very efficient element of a multi modal journey.
- 4.23 The Bus Lane can be quite an attractive place for a cyclist to travel. Bus drivers tend to be courteous and highly trained, they are also less frequent allowing a safe, open, rapid environment for a cyclist, without having to avoid pedestrians on a shared footway/cycleway, or come into conflict with cars on a congested road. We should be encouraging cycle use within our communities which in turn benefits health, reduces the impact on the National Health Service, reduces congestion and is environmentally sound.

Stockton Hackney Drivers Association

- 4.24 Stockton Hackney Drivers Association (SHDA) represents 120 members (at the time of this report), the majority of who are self-employed Hackney Carriage drivers (Appendix 2 details their consultation response in full). SHDA make reference that for a number of years now they have raised the issue of Hackney Carriages being allowed to use Bus Lanes, and cite the following reasons in support of their case:
- Taxis form an important part of the public transport network being available 24 hours a day throughout the year.
 - The trade receive complaints from disabled passengers that they cannot alight taxis nearer to their destination not only in the restricted section of Stockton High Street but also in other areas of the Borough.
 - Taxis drivers regularly face verbal abuse and intimidation from passengers alleging that drivers are deliberately taking circuitous routes resulting in longer journeys and increased fares payable to the passenger. This is further exacerbated when regular taxi-users find that taxis in neighbouring authorities use bus lanes resulting in shorter journeys and fares.
- 4.25 As part of their consultation response SHDA contacted a number of local authorities throughout the Country (these were detailed in local authority response consultation) and noted that all of those contacted allowed Hackney Carriages to utilise Bus Lanes, and that they are not aware of any adverse effects to road safety and/or bus operations.
- 4.26 Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) is the strategic body for the Tees Valley and includes the functions of public transport lead authority. Their responsibility covers public transport including rail, buses and taxis. SHDA note that there is no record of TVU having ever consulted them prior to commenting in the consultation document, or indeed any other matter, and are concerned to note that TVU oppose their request.
- 4.27 SHDA also refute the claim that Hackney Carriages are not readily identifiable as they are not aware of any previous issues or reported problems with the current markings/decals, therefore they state that their vehicles utilising Bus Lanes may lead to private motor vehicles using them is 'illogical'.
- 4.28 Hackney Carriages are able to be hailed in the street, and this has been raised as an issue by other consultees in that it may lead to delays to buses, and contribute towards increased accidents. However, SHDA claim that picking up or setting down of passengers takes less than one minute, therefore any delays to buses would be negligible.

- 4.29 In relation to adverse effects on bus journey times, SHDA state that there will be relatively few taxis in bus lanes at any given time, and therefore there is subsequently no risk whatsoever that Bus Lanes would be congested. In addition the Association state the same argument should apply to congestion associated with the 'hurry call' system as there will be few taxis within the Bus Lane at any one time therefore congestion on other legs should be minimal.
- 4.30 SHDA welcomes proposals to re-generate Stockton town centre (further details on this are included later in the report), and in particular The Globe Theatre. They also welcome consideration being given to proposed taxi ranks in that area. However, it should be noted that there are concerns at proposals to remove the taxi rank at the southern end of Stockton High Street, as this is the main rank and serves the public at all times. SHDA hope that Stockton Borough Council will discuss this proposal, and provide assurances that a suitable alternative rank will be installed at or near the current location.
- 4.31 SHDA claim that evidence they have obtained from other authorities clearly demonstrates that concerns in relation to bus journey times and potential road safety implications of allowing Hackney Carriages to utilise Bus Lanes are unfounded, and that the current concerns of Stockton Borough Council, bus operators and TVU are somewhat speculative and unfounded. SHDA therefore request that the Committee support their request by allowing taxis to use Bus Lanes at all times.

Members of Parliament (MP)

- 4.32 A letter was received during the consultation period (10 January 2011) from Stockton North MP Alex Cunningham. Within the correspondence he stated that there was no reason why local taxi drivers should not be granted the same concession as their peers in other local authority areas, and a concession that would allow them to offer a better, faster and cheaper service to local residents. He also indicated that his preferred option would be to allow full use of the Bus Lanes, but in view of the anticipated objections, suggests an experimental period of no less than 6 months to allow the Council to examine for itself the positives and the negatives of the scheme before making a final decision.
- 4.33 He indicated that some of the expressed concerns are making assumptions about the behaviour of the taxi operators, and an experimental period could prove or disprove these concerns. Also he felt a set of 'rules' could be developed to address some of the issues raised by other consultees. Finally, he would like the Council to encourage more of the hackney drivers to apply for the 'waiver' to access the High Street (from the south), which would lead to an improvement in accessibility for those people with disabilities.
- 4.34 The Member of Parliament for Stockton South, James Wharton MP, has also corresponded with the Council outlining concerns of constituents who were also SHDA Members and urged the Council to engage into further dialogue with them to ensure their concerns were fully understood.

Officers Traffic Group

- 4.35 During the consultation period a 'special' Officers Traffic Group was arranged in order to fully discuss the subject of potentially allowing Hackney Carriages to travel in Bus Lanes. The meeting was held in Gloucester House, Stockton on 20 January 2011, with representatives from Stockton Borough Council, SHDA, Stockton Police and Bus Operators present. Formal records of the meeting can be seen at Appendix 3.

Stockton Police

- 4.36 Consultation with the Superintendent responsible for Stockton District was undertaken and the views received on allowing taxis in bus lanes were that there would be the potential for an increase in collisions (particularly involving buses), road safety concerns (potential for an increase in injury collisions involving pedestrians), and recognition that Cleveland Police could not (and therefore will not) provide constant enforcement or even prioritise the routes, which would call into question the likelihood of the restrictions being adhered to, where camera technology was not being utilised.

Survey

- 4.37 During this consultation period it was deemed appropriate to undertake a survey using the surveillance camera on Stockton High Street, opposite the Silver Street junction to ascertain vehicle movements in both directions (including Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles), in the vicinity of northbound taxi rank near to Stockton Town Hall. The survey was undertaken on two consecutive nights with those dates being Friday 11 February and Saturday 12 February 2011 between 23:00 - 00:00 hours respectively.
- 4.38 The main findings of the survey were that numerous taxis were observed utilising the northbound taxi rank, collecting fares and then undertaking a u-turn manoeuvre to travel along the southbound Bus Lane. In addition throughout the survey period significant numbers of taxis were observed travelling in the southbound Bus Lane, effectively using it as a 'rat-run'. It should be noted that both of the manoeuvres described are strictly prohibited, as they are in contravention of the legal Traffic Regulation Order that is in place, and all drivers observed carrying out either of these manoeuvres during this period could have received a fixed penalty charge. Finally it should be noted that during the survey period buses were still in operation along the High Street.

Stockton High Street Regeneration

- 4.39 Public consultation has recently started on ambitious plans to regenerate Stockton High Street. The plans are designed to provide an attractive town centre environment which, in turn will assist in attracting retailers and other investors to Stockton. They include creation of high quality public space and opening up of an area to be known as 'Infinity View' which will connect the High Street to the River Tees.
- 4.40 Of more interest to the taxi fraternity (both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire) will be ambitious plans to redevelop the Globe Theatre, and improvements to both North High Street and South High Street (formally known as northern and southern bus loops).
- 4.41 The Globe Theatre will create a 'key' leisure attraction and undoubtedly increase footfall through the town centre, thus potentially increasing the usage of taxis to and from the destination. It is likely that new taxi ranks will need to be introduced in the locality of the Globe Theatre, and officers will be considering, consulting and working on proposals over the coming months. In addition it may be necessary to consider the status of the current contra-flow Bus Lane on Bishopton Lane, and potential for usage by taxis, as it is likely demand for this route will increase once the Globe Theatre is operational. If progressed this would remove the need for taxis to travel along Norton Road to Durham Road By-Pass roundabout before travelling south along Allison Street, which is accepted as a more onerous route. It would also remove the occasional abuse of the 'no-left turn' restriction at the Norton Road / Allison Street junction that potentially endangers pedestrians.

- 4.42 North High Street and South High Street will be also seeing some changes with the biggest being the re-introduction of approximately 50 'short-stay' public car parking spaces. Inevitably this will result in changes to the current hackney taxi rank at the southern end of the High Street, and subsequently there will also be a review of other taxi ranks in and around this locality. However, officers will work closely with other agencies including SHDA to identify the most appropriate location/s.

Disability Advisory Group

- 4.43 A meeting of the Disability Advisory Group (DAG) was held on 26 April 2011, and the Traffic and Road Safety Manager was present to discuss the remit of this report and request views of the group in relation to allowing taxi's to frequent bus lanes.
- 4.44 The main concern the group had centred around Stockton High Street and the problem that disabled passengers in taxis face being unable to set down in close proximity to their preferred destination. In order to alleviate this issue the group suggested that consideration should be given to easing the existing northbound restriction on to the High Street to allow taxis to pick up and set down those customers who had a disability (and subsequently a blue badge) at there desired location.
- 4.45 They also suggested that 'waivers' should be issued free to all taxis rather than charge the current fee of £10, as this would ensure sufficient taxi availability for those wishing to 'hail' a taxi in area of the High Street restricted only for those customers who had a disability. However, it should be noted that the group would wish to see 'waivers' revoked should taxi drivers begin to abuse them.
- 4.46 In addition they also supported the revocation of the current Bishopton Lane bus lane, and opening it up for usage by all traffic.

5. Discussion

- 5.1 A request has been made by Stockton Hackney Drivers Association to allow Hackney Carriages to use Bus Lanes within Stockton Borough claiming that they are a valid form of public transport and the use of Bus Lanes would enable them to give a better service to their passengers.
- 5.2 It would be expected that there would be improvements in journey times as taxis using Bus Lanes would avoid queues, and also in distance as taxis would be able to take more direct routes to certain destinations. The Bus Lanes on Stockton High Street, Yarm Lane, Bishopton Lane, Mandale Road and Westbury Street would all offer convenient shorter routes to some destinations. At present, however, all taxis are prohibited from using the Bus Lanes in Stockton.
- 5.3 Bus Lanes have been provided around Stockton Town Centre to limit the amount of traffic in the sensitive central areas without adversely affecting bus movements. There are also Bus Lanes on the "core" bus corridors of Norton Road, Durham Road, Bridge Road and Yarm Road to help buses avoid the peak period queues that regularly occur, and take a more direct route into Stockton.

- 5.4 A contra-flow Bus Lane has been introduced on Mandale Road as part of the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement Scheme. This Bus Lane will improve reliability and punctuality of the bus services by allowing them to use a more direct route, avoiding traffic queues.
- 5.5 Extensive consultation has taken place with other local bodies, including (see consultation section for their detailed views):
- Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU)
 - Middlesbrough Borough Council
 - Newcastle City Council
 - Sunderland City Council
 - Birmingham City Council
 - Edinburgh Council
 - Bradford City Council
 - Sheffield City Council
 - North Tyneside Council
 - Arriva
 - Stagecoach
 - Sustrans
 - Stockton Hackney Drivers Association (SHDA)
 - Member of Parliament (MP)
 - Officers Traffic Group
 - Stockton Police
- 5.6 There has been a recent High Court case on the use of licenced taxis in other local authority areas. As a result of the ruling it is now possible for Hackney Carriages licensed by one authority, to act as Private Hire vehicles in another authority. It is now expected that Hackney Carriages licensed in Berwick-on-Tweed for example will continue to operate in Stockton as Private Hire vehicles, leading to further confusion if Hackney Carriages were permitted in Bus Lanes.
- 5.7 These Hackney Carriages will not comply with the conditions imposed on Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles licensed in Stockton, thus making enforcement even more difficult and potentially increasing abuse of any Hackney Carriage restrictions
- 5.8 Three alternative scenarios for taxis in Bus Lanes have been considered, with these being:
- **Option 1** - All taxis (Hackney Carriages and Private Hire) to use Bus Lanes at all times.
 - **Option 2** - Only Hackney Carriages to use Bus Lanes at all times.
 - **Option 3** - All taxis to use Bus Lanes when bus services are infrequent.
- (It should be noted that it is assumed that all of these would only be considered on an experimental basis if at all).
- 5.9 **Option 1 - All taxis (Hackney Carriages and Private Hire) permitted to use Bus Lanes at all times.**
- 5.9.1 It is stated (Transport in the Urban Environment. Section 24.6) that taxis are sometimes permitted to use with-flow Bus Lanes, on the grounds that they perform a public transport service, provided that:

- Taxi volumes and set down/pick up behaviour does not interfere with bus operations.
 - Taxi use does not encourage infringement of Bus Lane regulations by other vehicles.
- 5.9.2 At the time of writing this report there are approximately 597 taxis licensed in Stockton Borough operated by 780 drivers and it is clear that should taxis be permitted to use Bus Lanes it will inevitably have a detrimental impact on the operation of Bus Lanes simply because of the geographical nature of the Borough and the short amount/total distance of Bus Lanes currently in situ. Allowing more vehicles in to Bus Lanes could also increase the risk of collisions occurring, with either buses or pedal cycles respectively.
- 5.9.3 Setting down and picking up of passengers will take place, particularly in the busier pedestrian areas of the town, thus affecting the free-flow of buses, and potentially reducing the attractiveness of this mode of travel, leading to increased use of the private car, increased congestion and adverse environmental impacts that would occur.
- 5.9.4 Stockton High Street would be an obvious point at which road safety, and adverse bus journey time problems may occur due to the increased taxi trips and pick up/drop off occurrences along this route, together with the large number of pedestrians (many whom are vulnerable) who cross the road along its full length at all times of the day.
- 5.9.5 There is also strong evidence from the consultees so far that the use of Bus Lanes by taxis may inadvertently (in some cases) encourage general traffic to use the Bus Lanes, unless there was an obvious difference (such as a London style taxi design being introduced) between them. In addition it would be difficult for Bus Lane Cameras to distinguish between a private motor vehicle and a taxi (hackney or private) in their current guise, therefore resulting in potential enforcement difficulties. There is already evidence to suggest that there is some abuse of the Bus Lanes by general traffic, but the important Bus Lanes on Yarm Road and the contra-flow lanes around the Town Centre including Stockton High Street itself could be compromised, should taxis be permitted to use them.
- 5.9.6 The relatively new contra-flow Bus Lane along a section of Mandale Road includes a sensitive traffic signal controlled junction at Thornaby Road/Yale Crescent. Additional activation of the "Hurry Call" (which when activated gives a 'green wave' to approaching buses) would occur if taxis were permitted to travel in Bus Lanes and could cause capacity/congestion problems at the junction, and potentially the wider secondary road network.
- 5.9.7 Accident rates at Bus Lanes (details of which can be seen at Appendix 1) are shown to be in line with national trends except where there is additional activity at shops or from pedestrian movements. The addition of taxis in Bus Lanes will cause increased, unexpected manoeuvres (such as u-turns) to take place or as they stop to pick up or set down passengers. It will be most noticeable in Stockton High Street where pedestrians currently have a largely traffic free environment, yet still experience a relatively high accident rate. The bus operators have already provided evidence that there are accident problems associated with taxis and buses sharing the same road space (although as detailed the blameworthiness is divided). In addition Sustrans expressed major concerns regarding potential increase in risk of accidents between cyclists and taxis should taxis be permitted to use Bus Lanes throughout Stockton Borough, in addition to the adverse environmental impacts this could also bring about.

- 5.9.8 There are other Bus Lane schemes proposed throughout Stockton over the coming years and some of these may also be vulnerable to road safety issues if there was to be additional use by taxis.
- 5.9.9 Finally it should be noted that despite this option considering use of Bus Lanes by all taxis at the time of writing this report no request has been received from the Private Hire trade regarding this issue, but it is possible that they may seek comparable treatment as in Sunderland.
- 5.10 **Option 2 - Only Hackney Carriages to use Bus Lanes at all times.**
- 5.10.1 If Hackney Carriages alone were able to use Bus Lanes, many of the problems discussed above, whilst reducing would still exist, therefore there would be an adverse effect on both road safety, and free-flowing conditions for scheduled bus services.
- 5.10.2 It is clear from the consultation that it is not easy to distinguish between Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles. None of the local north eastern authorities have thus far allowed private hire vehicles in Bus Lanes and special authorisation is needed from the Department for Transport. Birmingham City Council did undertake an experiment which allowed Private Hire vehicles to use Bus Lanes, but ended the experiment for a variety of reasons (detailed in the consultation section of the report) and reverted back to the existing Birmingham City Council policy not to allow Private Hire vehicles to use Bus Lanes.
- 5.10.3 In Stockton, the distinguishing features are that Hackney Carriages are black and carry a "TAXI" sign on the roof, whilst Private Hire Vehicles cannot be black (but may be other 'dark' colours), and must not carry a roof sign. However, these are the only differences between the two types of taxi, with both carrying plates and transfers issued by the Council. The lack of subtle differences between the two modes of taxi would make it extremely difficult to enforce, and virtually impossible at night, other than the roof sign, where there is no natural light to easily identify vehicular colours.
- 5.10.4 The above problem will likely become even more difficult following the recent High Court ruling. Hackney Carriages licensed by other authorities with different markings and signage will be allowed to operate within Stockton Borough as Private Hire vehicles. This may lead to further enforcement discrepancies should they use Bus Lanes and could result in more 'general' traffic using them.
- 5.11 **Option 3 - All taxis to use Bus Lanes when bus services are infrequent.**
- 5.11.1 The final option being considered is to investigate allowing taxi use at times when bus services are viewed as more infrequent; although a consistent time would need to be agreed on all Bus Lanes to ensure consistency throughout the Borough, and ensure discrepancies were kept to a minimum.
- 5.11.2 This option has been criticised by some consultees (mainly bus operators) during the consultation period as they believe it would gradually lead to an erosion of the Bus Lane principle, and result in taxis using the Bus Lanes throughout all times of the day.

- 5.11.3 Taxis can, like all general traffic already use the with-flow peak period Bus Lanes after their hours of operation have finished (07:30 - 09:30 & 15:30 - 18:00). In addition Stockton High Street is already available from 6pm for northbound traffic (including taxis), although taxi drivers would also like similar access to the southbound Bus Lane but as it is a contra-flow Bus Lane it would need to be an 'all-or-nothing' approach. Taxis with permits can also use the High Street northbound lane at all times to pick up/set down disabled passengers.
- 5.11.4 The use of Bus Lanes during periods when bus services have stopped has been accepted by Tees Valley Unlimited and the Bus Operators, and a period of 00:00 to 05:00 has been suggested. However, this is a time when there is little traffic on the roads and the advantage of using Bus Lanes during this period would not assist in by-passing congestion, although it would alleviate the concerns raised by SHDA of having to take customers on more onerous routes to get to their destination, which leads to increased fares, and abusive situations.
- 5.11.5 Where certain bus priority measures such as bus gates, pre-signal and bus contra-flow lanes operate this option is not practicable as they have to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week or major road safety and enforcement difficulties would likely occur. For this reason this option is deemed 'unworkable' as it must be an all or nothing approach. Anything less would lead to major confusion for the general motoring public, and as stated have major implications in terms of road safety and enforcement.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Bus Lanes in Stockton-on-Tees perform a hugely important role in helping the reliability and punctuality of bus services, thus maximising their usage, and reducing reliance on the private car, congestion and improving the environment through reduced emissions.
- 6.2 Stockton Council is different to many of the other local authorities in the Country in that we are one of approximately only twelve camera enforcement authorities. We are currently in the middle of the Tees Valley Bus Major Scheme project aimed at improving bus travel throughout the Borough. We also have many different types of Traffic Management situations in place to control, and facilitate the safe, smooth efficient passage of buses.
- 6.3 Three options have been considered within this report, which are:
- Option 1 – All taxis (Hackney Carriages and Private Hire) use Bus Lanes at all times.**
- Option 2 – Only Hackney Carriages to use Bus Lanes at all times.**
- Option 3 – All taxis to use Bus Lanes when bus services are infrequent.**
- 6.4 **Options one and two** generate similar issues which have been raised in both the consultation and discussion sections of this report. To summarise these options should not be supported by Stockton Borough Council for the following reasons:
- Taxis being allowed access to Bus Lanes at all times would adversely impact on the effectiveness/free-flowing nature of the Bus Lanes, as another road user group would be utilising this space, and potentially setting down and picking up customers, at undesignated and random points.

- Road safety would be compromised as there would be increased conflicts between buses and taxis which would likely lead to increased collisions. As described above there would be the potential for unexpected movements/manoeuvres by taxis, which may result in harsh braking by bus drivers and subsequent injuries to bus passengers.
- Allowing all taxis in Bus Lanes would create enforcement difficulties as Private Hire vehicles are difficult to distinguish from private motor vehicles, even more so during the hours of darkness.
- Allowing only Hackney Carriages in to Bus Lanes would reduce the above concerns, but it would still be difficult to enforce effectively as Hackney Carriages from out of the Stockton area can operate legitimately as a Private Hire vehicle within the Borough, and therefore could try and utilise Bus Lanes.
- Allowing taxis in Bus Lanes would damage the principle of keeping Bus Lanes free for buses, thus ensuring swift/efficient and effective services. This could then lead to reduced passenger numbers, and potentially more trips undertaken by private vehicles, thus leading to increased emissions and congestion.
- Also as indicated by Sustrans, and supported by the Stockton Councils Cycling Officer there are potential safety implications for cyclists.

6.5 **Option three** of allowing all taxis to use Bus Lanes when bus services are infrequent would still create many of the issues that are detailed above. In addition due to the diverse nature of the Bus Lanes in Stockton which include a number of contra-flow Bus Lanes it would simply be unworkable to allow taxis in these when scheduled bus services are less frequent. The major issues would occur at the Bus Lanes discussed below, which, it should be noted would probably offer the most benefits to taxis should they be allowed to use them.

6.6 In terms of Mandale Road contra-flow Bus Lane allowing taxis to use this on an evening would increase the risk of collisions occurring, as other motorists may not expect there to be other traffic using the Bus Lane after a specific time. In addition there is currently a Traffic Regulation Order in place which bans right-turn movements from Thornaby Station. However, to allow taxis to utilise the Bus Lanes on an evening would increase u-turning movements as taxis would exit Thornaby Station left and then immediately u-turn and travel in the Bus Lane if heading towards the Stockton area. A banned u-turn Traffic Regulation Order could be implemented on Mandale Road but without regular/consistent enforcement the u-turning would inevitably still occur.

6.7 Westbury Street contra-flow Bus Lane allows only buses and cycles to enter from its junction with Mandale Road. This was implemented in the main due to concerns from residents about the number and speed of vehicles which were travelling along Westbury Street, which given the terraced nature of the properties and their proximity to the carriageway was intensified. Therefore to permit its use by taxis during the evening would increase the risk of a collision occurring, in addition to objections which would likely be received from residents.

6.8 If taxis were permitted to travel through this point on an evening it would be inevitable that some general traffic would follow as taxis (particularly private) do not differ significantly from a private motor vehicle placing onerous enforcement demands on the Police. The only legal option for contra-flow bus lanes is an all or nothing approach therefore to allow evening use would entail allowing all day use also.

- 6.9 The most high profile Bus Lane within the Borough is located on Stockton High Street, and in particular the southbound contra-flow Bus Lane. This Bus Lane is currently the only one that is subject to fixed camera enforcement activity at various times of the day. To allow taxis the use of this Bus Lane during the evening would have major road safety implications both in terms of increased risks of bus/taxi collisions occurring. However, more concerning would be potential increase of taxi/pedestrian collisions occurring, especially given the number of pedestrians and taxis that would be present in this area. The enforcement difficulties described for Westbury Street would also be applicable here, and constant enforcement activity would be necessary.
- 6.10 Finally in relation to this option, there would be substantial cost implications in terms of the signing and lining amendments that would be necessary, in addition to the signs being larger (due to more wording and times that would be necessary), and more visual, thus adding to 'street clutter'.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Taking in to account the views of all the consultees who submitted 'formal' comments the views of Stockton Borough Council Officers would be that:
- The request to allow taxis of any form, whether Hackney Carriage or Private Hire to use Bus Lanes within the Borough (at any time) is rejected for the reasons stated within this report.
 - The revocation of the contra-flow Bus Lane on Bishopton Lane is considered in conjunction with the other regeneration proposals associated with the North High Street.
 - Council Officers work closely with SHDA to ensure that an appropriate taxi rank/s near to or on South High Street is/are identified, in addition to the provision of a facility near the Globe Theatre.
 - The request of the DAG to allow taxis to pick up/set down passengers with disabilities in the northbound lane of the High Street should be rejected due to operational difficulties it would create enforcing this. Ability to adequately enforce this would potentially result in abuse of this and see able-bodied customers being picked up and set down in restricted areas of the High Street.
- 7.2 If members are minded to reject Officer recommendations then any proposal should only considered on an experimental eighteen month basis, with objections reported during the first six months of operation.

Table 1 Existing Bus Lanes

Road	Length (Metres)	Traffic Flow (veh/day)	Accidents	Accident Rate	Comments
Stockton High Street	260m	2,700	7 (0 serious)	546 (52)	High pedestrian activity around Bus Lane
Yarm Lane Stockton High Street to Prince Regent Street	130m	1570	1 (0 serious)	268 (52)	Low traffic flow/length inflates accident rate
Bishopton Lane Stockton High Street to Allison Street	180m	410	0	0	
Norton Road. Approach to Maritime Roundabout	400m	13,800	3 (1 serious)	30 (58)	Standard Bus Lane
Norton Road Mount Pleasant	145m	13,800	7 (0 serious)	191 (58)	Shops and pedestrian crossing at Bus Lane
Norton Road Norton Lane to Red Lion	300m	14650	4 (2 serious)	50 (58)	Standard Bus Lane
Yarm Road Sunningdale Road to Yarm Bridge	1500m	14110	12 (2 serious)	31 (58)	Standard Bus Lane
Churchyard Link Road Riverside Roundabout to Bridge Street	45m	18750	1	65 (58)	Standard Bus Lane
Westbury Street at Mandale Road	70m	Not available	0	0	

Accident Rate is annual number of accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres
Figure in brackets is reported accident rates for road type Table 26 Reported Road Casualties 2008.

**Consultation On Draft Report
Taxis In Bus Lanes**

**Response by Stockton Hackney Drivers
Association**

Introduction

1. Stockton Borough Council ('the Council') is currently undertaking a consultation to determine whether taxis licensed by the Council should be allowed to use Bus Lanes in the Borough.
2. The consultation is in response to a review of taxi licensing carried out by the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee which recommended, *inter alia*, that a consultation be carried out prior to any final decision being taken.
3. The Stockton Hackney Drivers Association ('the Association') represents 120 members, the majority of whom are self-employed Hackney Carriage Drivers. Membership is restricted to drivers and proprietors of vehicles licensed with the Council.
4. This report has been prepared by the Association in response to the consultation. The report aims to answer the concerns raised by the Council, Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU), and the two main bus operators, Arriva and Stagecoach.
5. The Association aims to make representations and further the interests of its members and therefore this response does not include any representation on behalf of the Private Hire trade. Any reference to 'taxi' or 'taxis' is therefore restricted to Hackney Carriage vehicles licensed by the Council.

Bus Lanes

6. The taxi trade in Stockton has for a number of years raised the issue of taxis being allowed to use bus lanes. Taxis form an important part of the public transport network being available 24 hours throughout the year.
7. In contrast many bus services come to end around 2300hrs daily with limited services available during holiday periods and adverse weather conditions.
8. Taxi drivers and the Council have received complaints from disabled passengers that they cannot alight taxis nearer to their destination not only in the restricted section of Stockton High Street but also in other areas of the Borough.
9. **The majority of taxi drivers work alone and are in a vulnerable position with no immediate assistance in the event of a confrontation with such passengers.**
10. **Taxi drivers regularly face verbal abuse and intimidation from passengers alleging that drivers are deliberately taking circuitous routes resulting in longer journeys and increased fares payable by the passenger.**
11. **This perception is further exacerbated when regular taxi-users find that taxis in neighbouring authorities use bus lanes resulting in shorter journeys and lower fares.**
12. The concerns to our request outlined by the Council, TVU and Bus Operators can be summarised as follows:
 - Possible delays to bus punctuality
 - Possible increased risk of accidents where taxis may perform 'sudden manoeuvres'.
 - Taxis not readily identifiable
 - Private Hire Vehicles too difficult to differentiate from general traffic leading to enforcement difficulties

- 'Hurry call' systems may be adversely affected, particularly on the new Mandale Road/Thornaby Road/Yale Crescent junction.
 - A recent High Court case on the use of taxis licensed in other local Authority areas carrying out private hire work in Stockton.
13. In support of these concerns, the Council, TVU and/or bus operators cited Middlesbrough Council, Newcastle City Council, Sunderland Council and Birmingham City Council and various accident statistics.

Comments

14. The majority of local Authorities throughout the United Kingdom recognise that taxis are an important part of the public transport system, that they provide a relatively cheap and easy form of travel and that they must be readily accessible to most members of the public. They also recognise that taxis should be able to travel with minimum delay along the shortest routes throughout their respective towns and cities and in that respect allow taxis to use bus lanes.
15. For the purposes of this report and to achieve a better understanding of the nationwide picture, the Association contacted a number of local Authorities, selected at random, to ascertain whether the respective Authorities allowed taxis to use bus lanes and if so, whether there was any evidence of adverse affect to bus operations, punctuality and road safety.
16. **All the Authorities that we contacted have confirmed that taxis are allowed to use bus lanes and that they are not aware of any adverse affects to road safety and/or bus operations.**
17. Copies of the responses provided by these Councils can be found at the back of this report. Please note that in the case of Stoke-on-Trent and Gloucester, information was obtained from websites belonging to the Council and/or local media publications. The Authorities contacted included:
- **Edinburgh**
 - **Newcastle**
 - **North Tyneside**
 - **Bradford**
 - **Sheffield**
 - **Stoke-on-Trent**
 - **Swindon**
 - **Gloucester**
 - **London**
 - **Oxford**
18. **Middlesbrough Council** has approximately 300 licensed taxis which are allowed to use bus lanes at all times. Private Hire vehicles (approximately 300) licensed by Middlesbrough Council regularly use bus lanes.
19. A Middlesbrough Council Officer has confirmed directly to the Council (at para.4.3 of the Draft Consultation) that there is no evidence of adverse affect to bus operations. *Unlike Stockton, Middlesbrough has a busy main Bus Station located in the town centre near to three taxi ranks and a key bus lane located on Wilson Street.*

20. **Birmingham City Council** allows taxis to use bus lanes. Birmingham City Council trialled the use of bus lanes by Private Hire vehicles. After 18 months however the prohibition on Private Hire vehicles was reinstated due to enforcement difficulties. Nevertheless, Birmingham City Council continues to allow Hackney Carriage taxis to use bus lanes.
21. **Newcastle** and **Sunderland** provided information directly to the Council (para.4.5, Draft Consultation) confirming that initial resistance from bus operators in those towns has subsided due to few reported problems.
22. With regards to accident statistics provided by the Council and bus operators; there is **no evidence** to suggest that any of the accidents were the solely the fault of taxi drivers or indeed bus drivers, general traffic or pedestrians.
23. Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) is the 'strategic body for the Tees Valley and includes the functions of the Public Transport Lead Authority. Their responsibility covers public transport including rail, buses and taxis'. (para.4.1, Draft Consultation)
24. **The Association has no record of TVU having ever consulted the Association or taxi trade prior to commenting in the consultation on this or indeed any matter. We are therefore concerned to note that TVU opposed our request.**
25. The bus network has received £60m worth of investment (para 2.7, Draft Consultation). In contrast, the taxi trade in Stockton has received negligible public investment in the last ten years.
26. All costs incurred by the Council in issuing taxi driver or vehicle licenses are recovered on a 100% basis through license fees. Despite various representations by the Association, the Council remains amongst those that charge the highest fees to licence holders in the United Kingdom.
27. In contrast to buses, the taxi trade does not receive any public subsidy for the service it provides.
28. Taxis licensed with the Council regularly use bus lanes on other Authority areas with no reported problems.

Taxis

29. Hackney Carriage taxis licensed with the Council are either saloon vehicles or wheel-chair accessible. They are black in colour and fitted with illuminating taxi signs on the roof, illuminating 'for-hire' signs in the front windscreen, yellow door decals on the front offside and nearside doors and yellow plates on the front and rear of the vehicle issued by the Council.
30. This system has been in place for a number of years without any reported problems (that the Association is aware of) and the assertion that these taxis are not 'readily identifiable' and could perhaps lead to members of the public in private motor cars following taxis into bus lanes is illogical.
31. Any such concerns can be addressed by altering road signs to remind the public that only taxis and buses are allowed to use bus lanes. Camera enforcement of bus lanes (which is already taking place) would further assist the Council in prosecuting persistent offenders.
32. Although the number is reducing, many local Authorities continue to license taxis in any colour. It would appear that the colour or type of taxi (saloon or wheel-chair accessible) has not played a part in other local Authority decisions to allow taxis in bus lanes and that taxis not being 'readily identifiable' has not been a concern for other local Authorities.

33. Taxis wait at designated taxi ranks throughout the Borough. They can also be hailed in the street. Whilst it may be the case that taxis occasionally stop at the roadside to pick up passengers, any delay to buses is negligible given that the whole process of picking up or dropping off passengers takes less than one minute. *It must be noted in most instances taxi-users walk to designated taxi ranks thereby further reducing any risk of delays to buses.*
34. 'Private hire' vehicles licensed by the Council can be any colour other than black and do not carry a roof sign or for-hire sign. These vehicles cannot be hailed in the street. Private Hire vehicles are fitted with white door decals and front and rear plates and whilst there may be some acceptable concern that Private Hire vehicles can be difficult to differentiate from general traffic leading to enforcement difficulties;
35. **Permission has not been sought for Private Hire vehicles to use bus lanes. It should remain the case that Private Hire vehicles are excluded from bus lanes in line with many other local Authorities.**
36. The Council holds contact details of all Private Hire drivers and Operators licensed with the Council. It would be for the Council to remind Private Hire drivers and Operators that only buses and Hackney taxis are allowed to use bus lanes and that offenders risk suspension or revocation of their relevant licences.
37. Many taxi drivers take other forms of employment and supplement their incomes with taxi driving. As a result there will be relatively few taxis in bus lanes at any given time.
38. **It is never the case that all 290 taxis are on the road at the same time and subsequently no risk whatsoever that bus lanes would be congested.**
39. Notwithstanding the above, the perceived risk that 'hurry call' systems and bus lanes becoming congested is negligible given the relatively few number of taxis using bus lanes at any given time and also when compared with Authorities with over 1100 licensed taxis and over 40 miles of bus lanes. *Systems such as 'hurry call' should be used to the benefit of all forms of public transport and not just buses.*
40. A recent High Court case found that it was lawful for Hackney Carriage taxis licensed with other Authorities to carry out private hire work in Stockton; the decision of the Court does not however prevent those Authorities from implementing license conditions to limit or prohibit the use of the vehicles it licenses from working in Stockton or indeed any other Authority area. There is evidence that some local Authorities have already implemented such conditions with others expected to follow.
41. Newcastle City Council has conditions attached to Operator licenses it issues prohibiting Operators from using Hackney taxis licensed with other Authorities within Newcastle. *To date Stockton Council has not introduced any such condition.*
42. The number of taxis licensed with other Authorities working in Stockton has been falling steadily. The risk that such taxis will abuse the permission for taxis to use bus lanes is therefore negligible.
43. It should also be noted that taxis are not only used by the 'general' public but also by the Council and other public bodies including the National Health Service (NHS). The duties that taxi drivers undertake on an almost daily basis include providing school transport, the cost of which is charged

to the Council. There are obvious benefits to allowing taxis to complete such journeys without being delayed in general traffic.

General comments

44. The Association welcomes proposals to re-generate Stockton town centre and in particular the Globe Theatre area. The Association further welcomes proposed taxi ranks in that area and will be pleased to assist the Council in determining any issue concerning the location of taxi ranks.
45. The Association is however concerned at proposals to remove the 24 car rank tank at the Southern end of Stockton High Street. This is a main rank serving the public at all times. It is hoped that the Council will discuss with the Association any proposal to removal the rank and provide assurances that a suitable alternative rank will be installed at or near the current location.
46. Waivers are available for taxi to travel along Stockton High Street along the restricted section however this waiver applies only to pick up or set down disabled passengers and is only available for wheel-chair accessible taxis or saloon taxis equipped with 'swivel seats' that allow access to disabled passengers.
47. Wheel chair accessible vehicles are approximately £35,000 to purchase new and in nearly all cases must be purchased by the individual owner of the vehicle. As a result of the relatively low number of wheel chair accessible vehicles only three taxis licensed by the Council have currently obtained the waiver.
48. Swivel seats are no longer fitted in saloon vehicles as they require other safety critical systems in the car to be de-activated. As a result saloon taxis cannot comply with waiver requirements.

Conclusion

49. Most local Authorities throughout the United Kingdom allow taxis to use bus lanes. It is likely that before such permission was granted the views of the relevant departments within those Authorities were obtained together with representations from local Bus Operators, transport bodies and taxi drivers.
50. With the exception of taxi drivers, it is likely that most of those bodies opposed taxis using bus lanes citing similar road safety, traffic management and bus punctuality concerns.
51. **Evidence obtained by the Association clearly demonstrates that those concerns would have eventually have remained unfounded and that the current concerns of the Council, Bus Operators and Tees Valley Unlimited are somewhat speculative and unfounded.**
52. The number of taxis also plays an important part. Taking into consideration the relatively low number of taxis (290) licensed by Stockton and comparing that figure 1100 taxis licensed with some other Authorities and the lack of evidence suggesting bus operations are being adversely affected in any way should alleviate any remaining concerns outlined by the Council, Bus Operators and TVU.
53. It is therefore requested that the Committee support the Associations request by allowing taxis to use bus lanes at all times.
54. That Private Hire vehicles should remain excluded from bus lanes principally because no permission has not been sought for these vehicles and such vehicles are similar to general traffic and not readily identifiable.

Appendices

Copy of general email enquiry to the aforementioned Authorities.

Dear Sir,

We are currently responding to a consultation by Stockton Borough Council to determine whether Hackney Carriage taxis should be allowed use of bus lanes with Stockton-on-Tees.

I would be obliged if you could confirm whether your council allows use of bus lanes by taxis and if there is any evidence of adverse affect to bus operations or increased accidents.

If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,
For and on behalf of Stockton Hackney Drivers Association,

Javid Khazir

Edinburgh

Dear Mr Khazir

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST RELATING TO THE USE OF BUS LANES BY HACKNEY CARRIAGES

Thank you for your enquiry of 29 December 2010 concerning Edinburgh' policy regarding taxis using bus lanes and if the Council has any evidence of adverse effect to bus operations or increased accidents as a results of taxis being allowed into bus lanes.

Currently, the use of bus lanes in Edinburgh is currently limited to buses, taxis (that is hackneyed '*black*' cabs), bicycles and emergency vehicles. Currently, Edinburgh has approximately 65 kilometres of bus lanes and there are 1286 hackneyed black cabs operating in Edinburgh. Requests are regularly received to allow access to bus lanes by other types of vehicles which include private hire cars, motorcycles and freight.

The Council does not currently hold any evidence regarding adverse effects to bus operations or increased accidents as a result of the Council's policy of allowing taxis into bus lanes.

If you require further information please can you contact Len Vallance on (0131) 469 3629 or by e-mail (len.vallance@edinburgh.gov.uk).

Note: If you are not happy with this response, or want to complain about the way in which we handled your application, please write to the Director of Corporate Services, Waverley Court, Level 2/7, 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8BG. If you wish to take up this option you should do so within 40 working days of receipt of this response.

If, after you have received a reply from the Director of Corporate Services, you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner: Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, ST ANDREWS, KY16 9DS Telephone 01334 464610. Fax 01334 464611. E-mail: enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info.

If you wish to take up this option you should do so within 6 months of receipt of the response from the Director of Corporate Services.

For further information please phone us on 0131 200 2340 or visit our Website at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/foi

Yours sincerely

Ewan Kennedy
Policy and Planning Manager

--- On Fri, 21/1/11, Transport (VIP Use) <Transport.VIP@edinburgh.gov.uk> wrote:

Newcastle

Mr Khazir,

I can confirm that Taxis, both Hackney and Private Hire are generally permitted access to Bus Lanes and No Car Lanes throughout the City Council's area.

The arrangement works satisfactorily and we have had no particular issues regarding highway safety.

Hope this information is useful.

regards

Keith Taylor

Keith Taylor
Principal Engineer

Environment & Regeneration Directorate
Website www.newcastle.gov.uk
Technical Services
Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Civic Centre
Barras Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8PD

Tel +44 0191 211 6145
Fax +44 0191 211 4843
Mob 07967 394329
e-mail ktay@newcastle.gov.uk

North Tyneside

Kevin Ridpath *BSC (Hons) MIHT Dip Mang*
Highway Network and Transportation Manager
Development Directorate
Quadrant, The Silverlink North
Cobalt Business Park
North Tyneside, NE27 0BY
Phone (0191) 643 6089 Fax (0191) 643 2420
Email kevin.ridpath@northtyneside.gov.uk

From: Kevin Ridpath
Sent: 04 January 2011 15:09
To: 'mailto:mjavidkhazir@yahoo.co.uk'
Subject: Use of Bus lanes by Taxis

We currently allow HCV to use bus lanes but not PHV although this is not enforced

Kevin Ridpath *BSC (Hons) MIHT Dip Mang*
Highway Network and Transportation Manager
Development Directorate
Quadrant, The Silverlink North
Cobalt Business Park
North Tyneside, NE27 0BY
Phone (0191) 643 6089 Fax (0191) 643 2420
Email kevin.ridpath@northtyneside.gov.uk

Bradford City Council

Dear Sir

Bradford Council allows hackney carriages the use of their bus lanes but not private hire vehicles and we know of no evidence of adverse affect to bus operations or increased accidents.

Regards

Carol Wiggins
Licensing Officer
Hackney Carriage Unit
01274 433821

Sheffield

Dear Mr Khazir,

Thank you for contacting us.

Sheffield Council has always allowed taxis, both hackney carriage and private hire, to use its bus lanes (and most bus gates). Therefore, we are unable to compare accidents in bus lanes where taxis are allowed, with a situation where they are not allowed.

Having said that, I can confirm that we have no particular concerns about taxis using bus lanes from a road safety point of view.

I have spoken to Andy Wright at the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (email address above) and he confirms that the use of bus lanes by taxis has not been raised as a particular issue by local bus operators, in terms of accidents or delays. This is probably because there are relatively few taxis, if any, in any given bus lane, at any particular time.

You may also wish to contact Hafeas Rheman of the Sheffield Taxi Trade Association (email address above) for his views.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you think that I may be of further assistance.

Regards,
Dick Skelton
Senior Transport Planning Officer
Development Services
Sheffield City Council
Howden House, 1 Union Street
Sheffield
S1 2SH
(0114) 27 34479
www.sheffield.gov.uk

Stoke-on-Trent

Green light for taxis to use city bus lanes

By iain robinson iain.robinson@thesentinel.co.uk

CONTROVERSIAL measures to allow taxis into bus lanes to cut journey times have been approved.

Members of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's cabinet last night gave the go-ahead to a plan which will open up the city's 12 designated bus lanes.

But the decision is likely to anger private hire drivers, who remain barred from using the bus lanes due to legal restrictions.

The idea of opening up the lanes to taxis was first raised in June as part of a package of measures drawn up to bolster the hackney carriage trade and defuse growing anger among drivers over mounting licence fee increases.

Drivers had pointed out that they would be able to save fuel, and thereby reduce their overheads, if they could use city centre bus lanes to get to their ranks instead of driving around the congested ring road.

City Independent leader [Brian Ward](#), the cabinet member for housing, planning and transportation, said he was aware that the bus lanes initiative would not be welcomed by private hire firms.

But he added the authority's hands were tied by the legislation governing bus lanes.

Mr Ward, pictured left, said: "Hackney carriages are able to be hailed and can wait at designated ranks in the city centre and various towns, so they should be able to benefit from the bus lanes.

"This will also help to cut congestion by keeping more private cars off the road."

The cabinet member added that officials had also consulted with bus companies, which had raised no objections to the proposal.

"We are also aware of the concerns of many private hire operators," he said, "but there are complex enforcement reasons why we cannot extend this scheme to them."

Mr Ward added: "The legislation simply doesn't allow it to happen, and I think there seems to be a lack of understanding about that."

The council has recently spent about £80,000 buying a mobile CCTV camera to clamp down on motorists who use bus lanes illegally.

The camera, which began operating a month ago, uses number-plate recognition to send £60 fines to drivers caught flouting regulations.

But there are concerns that the system would not recognise private hire cars because they are often too difficult to distinguish from ordinary private cars.

Deputy council leader [Ross Irving](#), who sits on the authority's licensing and registration panel, which regulates taxis and private hire vehicles, said transport officers had been asked to review the current bus lanes in the city.

He added: "There are some concerns about the location and suitability of some of the bus lanes.

"This is going to be an interesting period where we find out how the hackney carriage scheme operates and whether the bus lanes are doing what they are supposed to do."

- THIS SENTINEL , FEB 7 2011

Swindon

Use of Bus Lanes by Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles.

- Find out more about this issue

Decision Maker: Cabinet

Decision Type: Key

Decision Status: Recommendations Approved

Is Key decision?: Yes

Is subject to Call In?: No

Decisions:

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Strategic Planning and the Interim Director of Highways submitted a joint report concerning issues associated with permitting the use of bus lanes and 'bus gates' in Swindon by taxis and private hire vehicles.

Councillor Peter Greenhalgh, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Strategic Planning, referred to the benefits associated with the opening up of bus lanes to taxis and private hire vehicles. He believed that, subject to the introduction of adequate controls, particularly to make it clear to other road users which vehicles were entitled to use bus lanes, such action could assist in promoting the development of demand responsive transport services for the residents of Swindon. He confirmed that if the proposal was supported it would be carefully monitored in order that problems could be identified and appropriate action taken to overcome them. He advised that, as technology was not yet in place in Swindon that would allow the controlled use of bus gates by taxis and private hire vehicles, he believed that it was inappropriate to allow access at this time, although the possibility of permitting such use would remain under review.

Councillor Stan Pajak expressed his opposition to the proposed opening up of bus lanes and referred to the potential problems and increased risks that would arise for cyclists and motorcyclists when sharing bus lanes with more vehicles. He also referred to the problem of enforcement, particularly as other motorists may find it difficult to differentiate between private hire vehicles and private cars, which could encourage more abuse of the bus lane regulations. He referred to problems in other authorities where this type of shared use had been permitted. He believed there were few "green" benefits from allowing vehicles with a mostly single or two-person occupancy to use bus lanes that had been established to enable transit of vehicles carrying considerable numbers of passengers.

Councillor David Glaholm referred to the need for clear identification of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles so that other road users were clear of their status and ability to use bus lanes. He supported the use of bus gates at times of peak demand for taxis, particularly in the late evening when bus use was limited.

Councillor Peter Greenhalgh, responded to the issues raised and stressed that use would be carefully monitored and complaints investigated and that if problems were identified action would be taken to overcome them.

Resolved – (1) That approval, in principle, be given to the use of Swindon Bus Lanes by licensed taxis and private hire vehicles.

(2) That the use of Bus Gates in Swindon by licensed taxis and private hire vehicles be not approved.

(3) That the Head of Highway Network Management be authorised to advertise changes to existing Traffic Regulation Orders for Bus Lanes, so as to allow their use by taxis and private hire vehicles, as outlined in paragraphs 2.33 and 2.34 of the joint report, and to prioritise this initiative within Local Transport Plan expenditure for 2009/10.

(4) That the Licensing Committee (Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Sub-Committee) be recommended to note the Cabinet's decision, and consider

variations to licensing conditions to ensure compliance with a requirement that private hire vehicles display a plate clearly indicating that they are private hire vehicles and enabling them to be clearly identified as being permitted to use existing bus lanes in Swindon, and that private hire vehicle owners be responsible for funding the purchase of this plate.

The reasons for the decision and any alternative options considered are as set out in the report to the meeting.

Report Author: Head of Commercial Regulation

Publication Date: 03/11/2008

Date of Decision: 22/10/2008

Decided at Meeting: 22/10/2008 - Cabinet

Accompanying Documents:

- [Use of Bus Lanes by Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles](#) PDF 32 KB
- [Appendix 1 - Locations of Bus Lanes in Swindon](#) PDF 1 MB

Gloucester

Gloucester City Council are now enforcing the laws relating to Bus/Taxi Lanes.

Cameras will be used to detect drivers using Bus/Taxi Lanes illegally and a £60 fine will be issued to those that break the law.

The charge is £60, reduced to £30 if paid within 14 days.

Immediate action should be taken to either [pay the penalty](#) or [appeal in writing](#), failure to do so within 28 days will result in an increased fine of £90.

ALL REPRESENTATIONS MUST BE PUT IN WRITING TO:-

Gloucester City Council
Parking Services
Herbert Warehouse
The Docks
Gloucester
GL1 2EQ

PLEASE NOTE NO TELEPHONE REPRESENTATIONS OR APPEALS WILL BE ACCEPTED

[See frequently asked questions on Bus/Taxi Lane enforcement](#)

More information can be found on the [Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London \(PATROL\) website](#) (link to Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London (PATROL) website)

Last Modified: Friday 27 August 2010

London

Dear Mr Khazir,

Thank you for your email regarding the use of bus lanes by licensed taxis (Hackney Carriages).

Licensed taxis in London are permitted to use the majority of bus lanes, there are some exceptions to this where allowing taxis access to the bus lanes would cause disruption to the bus service or there are safety issues.

We are not aware of any increase in road traffic accidents as a result of taxis being allowed to use bus lanes but allowing taxis access does mean that journey times can be shorter, which is obviously beneficial for the passenger, it is easier for the driver to pick-up and drop-off passengers and there is a reduced risk of the passenger hailing a taxi and then having to cross the bus lane to enter the vehicle.

If you have any questions regarding this please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards
Darren Crowson
Information & Marketing Manager
Transport for London - Taxi and Private Hire
Palestra, 197 Blackfriars Road
4th Floor – Yellow Zone (4Y7)
Southwark, London
SE1 8NJ
Tel: 020 3054 2945 (internal 82945)
Fax: 020 3054 3160

Oxford

Mr Khazir

Licensed vehicles are allowed to use the bus lanes in Oxford City District. We are not the highways authority, that is Oxford County Council. You will need to speak to someone in the Transport department to find out if there have been any adverse affects.

Jill Cramer
Licensing Officer

From: mohammed javid khazir [mailto:mjavidkhazir@yahoo.co.uk]

Posted At: 27 January 2011 13:14

Posted To: taxilicensing@oxford.gov.uk

Conversation: Bus Lane Enquiry

Subject: Bus Lane Enquiry

Dear Sir,

We are currently responding to a consultation by Stockton Borough Council to determine whether Hackney Carriage taxis should be allowed use of bus lanes with Stockton-on-Tees.

I would be obliged if you could confirm whether your council allows use of bus lanes by taxis and if there is any evidence of adverse affect to bus operations or increased accidents.

If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

For and on behalf of Stockton Hackney Drivers Association,

Javid Khazir

If you would like to make any comments or have any queries on the contents of this report please contact us on the details below:

Javid Khazir
Stockton Hackney Drivers Association
46 Breckon Hill Road
Middlesbrough
TS4 2DR

Email: mjavidkhazir@yahoo.co.uk



**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL
SPECIAL OFFICERS TRAFFIC GROUP**

288th Meeting – 20th January 2011

Present:

R Rust	:	(Network Safety) SBC
S Milner	:	(Network Safety) SBC
M Vaines	:	(Community Protection) SBC
R Pluck	:	Traffic Management Cleveland Police
J Khazir	:	SHDA
M Amin	:	SHDA
M Reeves	:	Stockton Police
K Purcell	:	Arriva
I Charlton	:	Tees Valley Unlimited

Apologies:

None.

1) Matters Arising

Item		Action
1/11	SM confirmed that the special OTG meeting formed part of the Consultation process, regarding the Draft report on the use of Taxis in Bus Lanes, detailed in November 2010, but would not form the 'official' response for the Stockton Hackney Drivers Association (SHDA), which should be submitted separately. The deadline for responses was 14 th February 2011, and all present were urged to make their responses in writing before the deadline. The report would then be considered by the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee, prior to a decision being taken. JK confirmed that SHDA will be responding in detail prior to the deadline.	ALL
2/11	SM confirmed the report had been prepared following a request from SHDA for permission for hackney taxis to utilise existing and any new bus lanes and outlined the benefits SHDA put forward for passengers and taxi drivers including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taxis are a valid form of public transport that provides a public service and should be afforded the same advantages as buses. 2. Taxis have to take circuitous routes to destinations, particularly around Stockton Town Centre, to the disadvantage of drivers and passengers, who complain of the additional time, taken, and increased charges. 3. Complaints are received from disabled passengers that they cannot alight taxis near their destinations if it is within the prohibited section of Stockton High Street (Northbound 09:30 – 16:30). 	ALL
3/11	The current legitimate use of bus lanes by type/class of vehicle, their aims and locations were discussed. Accident rates in the bus lanes were highlighted and it was noted that bus lanes have accident rates that generally approximate to the expected rate for the category of road.	ALL

4/11	SM referred to future redevelopment of The Globe Theatre and High Street Improvements including possible new taxi rank bay considered, which may include relaxing restrictions on the Bishopton Lane bus lane. KP stated that the bus operators have had issues with taxis entering the bus lane contravening the order and had evidence to substantiate this.	ALL
5/11	<p>The aims and funding mechanism of the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements were discussed and concerns raised that the use of taxis in the bus lanes could potentially lead to delays in bus timings, therefore, negating any present improvements in journey times. SHDA stated that the number of taxis using the lanes and their effect upon the bus movements in the bus lanes were exaggerated, as it included all types of taxis, and they were only representing the hackney trade.</p> <p>The recommendation to allow all Hackney Carriages to apply for waivers to allow disabled passengers to be dropped off / picked up in the High Street (northbound) on experimental basis required clarification and consideration against the requirements of the Disability & Equality Act 2010. It was agreed that clarification of the criteria to apply for a 'waiver' will be sought.</p>	ALL T&RSM
6/11	<p>Licensing described the difference between a Hackney Carriage and a Private Hire Vehicle. SHDA wished to confirm that the request for taxis to utilise bus lanes was originated by them and at present does not include Private Hire vehicles. MV suggested consideration should be given to consultation with Private Hire, who would no doubt wish to utilise bus lanes if approval was given.</p> <p>Government are currently considering moving away from a 2 tier licensing system towards a single system and that SBC licensing had powers to remove the licence of drivers found to be guilty of traffic offences etc. SHDA felt that the figures relating to the number of taxis and drivers within Stockton are misleading and should be put into context i.e. only a fraction of the 255 hackney drivers would be using a bus lane at any one time. SHDA confirmed that Paragraph 3.4 should include the need to pass a hackney driving test.</p>	T&RSM
7/11	<p>Consultation comments included within the report from Tees Valley Unlimited, bus operators and other authorities were then discussed, and the following were some of the main issues highlighted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties in identifying between Hackney, Private Hire and members of the public vehicles within bus lanes. MV highlighted possible option of the taxi identification number being placed on a taxi's roof, as is currently the case within Middlesbrough. • Taxis stopping at the kerbside after being 'hailed' by a customer could lead to delays to following buses. • Taxis would have an adverse effect on 'hurry calls' installed at junctions as they would always call it resulting in taking capacity from other legs of the junction, and causing congestion issues. • Middlesbrough Council allow both types of taxi in bus lanes, and Cleveland Police are responsible for enforcement, when possible. Problems with abuse by general traffic on Wilson Street bus lane highlighted. Arriva do not use bus lanes on Linthorpe Road because of abuse by taxis and other traffic. 	ALL

- Bus operators confirm they are opposed to taxis in bus lanes and are concerned about road safety problems and reduced punctuality / reliability.
- Whilst both Arriva and Stagecoach were unable to make representation when the bus lanes were introduced in Middlesbrough, there are numerous recorded complaints from the operators to MBC regarding problems within the bus lanes involving taxis and private cars.
- Allowing taxis to use bus lanes outside normal bus operating times, could be the first step to eroding the principle of bus lanes within Stockton.
- Newcastle City Council has a policy of 'no car' bus lanes but can be used by Private Hire and Hackney Carriages. The lanes tend to be long straight routes and are enforced by police. Initial resistance from bus operators, however, few reported problems and opposition has subsided.
- Birmingham City Council carried out a trial for a period of 18 months to allow Private Hire vehicles and many of the concerns mentioned above where highlighted. Due to the concerns the trial was ended.

Conclusions and recommendations in the report were discussed.

Arriva confirmed their concerns and could provide details of Taxis using bus lanes if necessary. TVU confirmed their concerns highlighted in the report.

Cleveland / Stockton Police, main concerns were that taxis in bus lanes would lead to an increase in collisions, casualty injury rate and to road safety issues in the mainly pedestrianised Stockton High Street with confusion and possible resulting accidents, involving pedestrians. There would also be unrealistic enforcement demands for the police.

SHDA confirmed they were willing to work with all parties, including some sort of experimental trial if necessary. However, they had evidence from other taxi users and authorities that taxis can use bus lanes with minimal problems and any problems that do arise are generally exaggerated. SHDA believe that Hackneys can still use bus lanes in Birmingham and problems only arose when private hires were allowed into the bus lanes.

8/11	<p>SM concluded the discussion by confirming the recommendations in the report as follows:-</p> <p>It is recommended that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The request to allow taxis to use Bus Lanes at all times is not supported at this time. 2. There is further discussion with TVU/Bus Operators/SHA on night time and Sunday use of with-flow bus lanes. 3. The current Council policy of prohibiting all traffic except buses and cycles from contra-flow Bus Lanes and pre-signal approaches be confirmed. 4. The revocation of the contra-flow Bus Lane on Bishopton Lane is implemented in conjunction with other proposals associated with the regeneration of the north end of the High Street. 5. The Urban Realm and Regeneration proposals for the Town Centre, approved by the Council in August 2010, be supported. 6. All Hackney Carriages be allowed to apply for waivers to allow disabled passengers to be dropped off/picked up in the High Street during the daytime from the northbound restricted lane on an experimental basis. 	
9/11	<p>Request for additional Taxi Ranks</p> <p>SHDA, had raised the need for additional taxi ranks at the following locations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thornaby Town Centre. 2. Teesside Park. 3. Yarm High Street, adjacent to Cross Keys. 4. Prince Regent Street, Stockton, adjacent to KU Bar. <p>Agreed that next OTG site visits should include visits to Yarm High Street and Prince Regent Street. The previous background / history to requests at Thornaby and Teesside Park will be given to SHDA in due course.</p>	T&RSM
	<p><u>Date of next meeting</u></p> <p>10th February 2011 in K2 Conference Room, Kingsway House at 10.00am.</p>	