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## **Bristol Civic Society response to the Transport Improvements to the A4 Portway Route Consultation**

November 2023

### Summary

Bristol Civic Society strongly supports the Council's aims of improving bus services and the cycling and walking environment on this section of the A4. We make a number of comments of the different aspects of the scheme. A key decision is the allocation of road space, which has to be a balance between different considerations. We are not convinced of the need for an outbound bus lane.

### General

We think that there should be data and information accompanying the consultation which would allow consultees to come to an informed view on the pros and cons of the proposals. This information could include the consequences for people, the environment and travel choices, and even the overall carbon saving of the scheme.

The consultation does not mention any greening or landscaping scheme; in a world of much hotter temperatures, cyclists and pedestrians would benefit from more trees and greenery along their routes. Hard surfacing seems to be being increased to a greater degree than soft landscaping; adding to the city's heat island.

We note that there is no comment about the visual effect of the proposals and whether good quality materials and finish will be used to enhance the walking and cycling experience.

### New Bus Lanes

We understand that the new 24 hour inbound and outbound bus lanes are intended to deliver faster bus journeys, but traffic congestion tends to be less outbound, and so the need for a 24-hour dedicated bus lane would appear to be less pressing in that direction.

We support the inbound bus lane (which already exists for part of the route) but we are not convinced that of the need for an outbound bus lane. A segregated cycleway would benefit both cyclists and pedestrians. For pedestrians, it would move most of the traffic away from the pedestrian route beside the river, and significantly improve the pedestrian experience. It would give more separation between the pedestrians and the noise and pollution of the motor traffic, giving back a greater sense of the beauty of the gorge as a place.

It would have been helpful if the consultation had provided information to back up the proposed bus lane, for instance:

- how much faster bus journeys will be and what effect that will have on bus ridership
- what effect the proposals will have on road traffic congestion more generally and the carbon and air pollution consequences of any increased congestion.

- the numbers of bus passengers who would benefit from service improvements, given the services that use the Portway and their frequency. Of the 8 bus services quoted in the consultation document only one (9 Park and Ride) actually uses the route in this consultation for its whole length. The other services either use the Hotwells section, which is explicitly excluded from this consultation, or a very short length of the A4 Portway.

### Improved Pedestrian and Cycling Facilities

The earlier consultation identified 4 main concerns:

- Overhanging vegetation narrowing foot paths;
- The need for more frequent road crossing points, especially to bus stops;
- Traffic speed makes walking unpleasant; and
- the need for a segregated cycleway.

Disappointingly, only two of these problems are addressed in these proposals. The main proposal is for a widened shared use path. Our view is that cycle paths, particularly on a major arterial road, should be physically segregated and properly designed to facilitate cycle journeys and reduce pedestrian/cyclist interactions. We are also concerned about reducing pedestrian refuges to 2m when this is the minimum for acceptability and not likely to encourage pedestrians to use these crossing points.

Maintenance of both cycling and pedestrian routes are key to their use; poor quality maintenance reduces people's enthusiasm for using them, especially due to safety concerns.

### Speed Limit Reductions

We do not object to the speed limit reductions, but it would have been helpful if the consultation provided information on the consequences. Is this sufficient to encourage more walkers and, if so, how many? What are the effects on congestion and air pollution in the locality?

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