

London Assembly Transport Committee

Pedestrianisation of Oxford Street

Collated written evidence submissions

Table of contents

1	London Travelwatch
2	Marylebone Association
3	Unite
4	Westminster BID
5	London Cab Ranks Committee

Richard Berry
Scrutiny Manager
London Assembly Transport Committee
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

18 July 2016

Dear Richard

Oxford Street scrutiny

Thank you for inviting London TravelWatch to the scrutiny meeting looking at Oxford Street. In addition to our contribution at the meeting please would you consider a written summary of our views.

London TravelWatch strongly supports the Mayor in his ambition to improve the local environment of Oxford Street. London TravelWatch would wish to work with the Mayor to ensure that the best possible proposals are developed that take account of a wide view of the transport needs of central London and the impacts on users, particularly bus passengers, but also pedestrians, cyclists and users with disabilities.

We want to see the most efficient use of road space and the enabling of multi-modal journeys. This will mean prioritising the most space efficient modes over less efficient users of road space, i.e. prioritising pedestrians, buses and cycles on London's streets, and managing general traffic.

The benefits to pedestrians of using a pedestrianised Oxford street are clear. The needs of the 100,000 bus passengers, some of whom are disabled, pushing buggies, carrying shopping or otherwise encumbered, must also be considered. The arrival of Crossrail will be a significant opportunity for central London, but will not cater for all bus demand. There will still be many 10s thousands of bus passengers wanting to travel to and along Oxford Street every day.

The complete pedestrianisation of Oxford Street has seemed impractical to London TravelWatch in the past. Taking bus services away from passenger objectives will add either an extra bus journey or an additional walking leg. We know that passengers of any mode dislike interchange.

In response to calls for pedestrianisation we have previously made several suggestions for substantial, but incremental, improvement to the public realm, the traffic management of Oxford Street and the performance of bus services.

Any substantive plan to reduce the impact of motor vehicles on Oxford Street will lead to impacts elsewhere in central London. Vehicles will be displaced onto other central London streets, such as Piccadilly, Wigmore Street, Regent Street and Euston Road. These are streets which are already congested. The plan for Oxford

Street must be part of a wider traffic management plan that considers loading, parking and waiting controls, the one-way streets of central London and wider priority for buses and pedestrians.

We would welcome further investigation of the following, which we have previously suggested as part of an incremental improvement to Oxford Street and the bus services that use it:

1. TfL tell us that taxis use 37% of the capacity of Oxford Street, but carry only 1% of the passengers. Excluding taxis from part or all of Oxford Street and enabling them to operate from ranks on side roads would reduce the impact of motor vehicles significantly and improve bus operations. TfL's previous MD for Surface Transport supported this proposal at an Assembly scrutiny. The role of taxis in transporting disabled passengers should be accommodated.
2. Several of the north to south side roads along Oxford Street have been closed over the years. This very much improves the walking environment because the need to wait at numerous crossings along Oxford Street is reduced; there are less motor vehicles and the carriageway has been converted to footway. There are also benefits to buses and passengers because there is less interruption from traffic at these road junctions. We would welcome the closure of more of the side roads along Oxford Street.
3. Several bus services terminate and turn around along Oxford Street. They are therefore empty at the start and finish of their journey. There would be pedestrian benefits and benefits for bus passengers if buses terminated and turned around beyond Oxford Street or linked with other routes. This would require additional bus priority on these routes to maintain reliability and, of course somewhere else for them to terminate. A quick win could be the extension and linking of bus services so that terminate in Oxford Street that presently turn around in Great Portland Street, John Prince's Street and Holes Street. These roads could then be closed to through traffic.

The complete pedestrianisation of Oxford Street

Should the complete pedestrianisation of Oxford Street be proposed then the following needs to be considered and be presented as part of the consultation on the proposals:

1. Bus passengers will want to know where their bus will terminate or pass closest to Oxford Street and how they will be able to either walk to and from Oxford Street or catch a further bus.
2. Bus passengers that are travelling on through routes will want to know what route is proposed for their journey.

3. The arrangements for those that are disabled should be developed as part of the proposals.

4. The wider impacts of the proposal on other central London streets should be developed as part of the proposals.

Again there would need to be an associated wider traffic management plan for central London.

Consultation

It is very difficult to consult with bus passengers. It is therefore important that TfL actively seeks the views of bus passengers, particularly those that use the buses to get to work everyday.

Regards

██████████

██████████



3RD JUNE 2016

Dear Simon,

REF: The Transport Committee for the London Assembly - PROPOSALS FOR THE PEDESTRIANISATION OF OXFORD STREET

I write on behalf of the local amenity society for Marylebone serving the area north of Oxford Street from Marble Arch to Oxford Circus. We feel that anyone calling for the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street needs to be aware of the consequences for the surrounding areas.

Our area is only one of a number that would be affected, but we would probably suffer the most as nearly all possible alternatives contemplate the use of Wigmore Street for the Oxford Street overflow, and Wigmore Street runs through Marylebone. Any such proposals would therefore meet with resistance from the Marylebone Association and many of the residents, schools, businesses and other institutions in the immediate area.

In addition the Marylebone Forum and the Marylebone Low Emissions Neighbourhood Group, which includes 3 Business Improvement Districts, including the New West End Company (previously advocates of closure), the Howard de Walden Estate, the Portman Estate, Westminster Councillors (at least as represented on this group), and local Ward Councillors, are all opposed. Equally, as far as we understand, there is no enthusiasm for it amongst the officers of Westminster Council.

Pollution is a serious and rising concern for all in our area, with all parts seeing regular breaches of the EU air quality standards. The area's stakeholders, as a result, have come together to form a Low Emission Neighbourhood for Marylebone. This does not sit



happily with proposals to push large amounts of extra buses and taxis through it. There are many medical institutions in the immediate area that would suffer, but it is not commonly appreciated that there are at least four schools in the proximity of Wigmore Street and many other institutions, and all of these would be adversely affected.

Even if the buses diverted through Marylebone were to be zero emission, which in itself is doubtful, this still leaves the massively polluting diesel taxis and the additional pollution resulting from the increased levels of congestion overall.

The congestion aspect from the resulting traffic displacement cannot be over emphasised. We found that the area was gummed up when we had the east-west closure of Oxford Street a few years ago. How much worse would that be if it were to be closed in both directions? Wigmore Street already runs to capacity taking virtually all the traffic that has already been banned from Oxford Street. Further, the knock on effects on Regent Street would be atrocious. Even now the time taken for Regent Street traffic to cross Oxford Street is extraordinary. With even more buses and taxis forced into the area north and south of Oxford Circus it would be even worse. The resulting effects on residents, business, visitors and emergency services would be unacceptable.

Aside from the direct undesirable consequences on Marylebone itself, we feel that pedestrianisation would be a mistake both for the users and retailers of Oxford Street and indeed this is a view that the New West End Company BID have come to share. Their research into this has dampened their initial enthusiasm for pedestrianisation, having discovered that retailers don't like it, as the servicing of their shops will be made more difficult and the shoppers don't, as they would have to walk a lot further with their shopping. BID's, in addition, do not represent the smaller business, but the Marylebone Association and the Marylebone Forum do, and they know that they are predominantly against these proposals.

In addition it would be undesirable for the night-time economy: a street such as Oxford Street, devoid of traffic, could result in the same sort of night time mayhem that we already see in many of our larger town pedestrianised centres, with the same social, security and lawlessness concerns, not to mention the cleaning up afterwards.

Bus routes in recent years have been rationalised. Oxford Street now takes 20% less buses than 5 to 6 years ago. In addition the actual number of passengers has steadily declined, probably because it is now quicker to walk down Oxford Street than ride down it. Crossrail will introduce significant changes to the immediate area and may make a number of existing bus routes unviable. If a decision was to be made to look at

possibilities of pedestrianisation this should at the very least be postponed until Crossrail is operational and we can see what effects it actually has. It can then be reviewed in the light of evidence gathered from this and the further rationalisation of bus routes .

In summary, the present proposals for pedestrianisation of Oxford Street are ill timed, impracticable, unworkable, unacceptable, and dangerous. Marylebone represents a fine and organic balance of residential, institutional, office and retail use. Very careful thought should be given to doing something that could upset this balance, create a smaller version of Oxford Street within Marylebone, and damage beyond repair the unique attributes of the area.

Kind regards,



MARYLEBONE ASSOCIATION
www.marylebone.org





**Unite the Union Cab Section submission to the London Assembly Investigation
into Oxford Street pedestrianisation
– 31st August 2016**

Introduction

- This response is submitted by Cab Section of Unite the Union, the UK's largest trade union with 1.42 million members across the private and public sectors. The unions members work in a range of industries including manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction, energy generation, chemicals, transport, local government, education, health and not for profit sectors.
- In the arena of transport Unite represents over a quarter of a million members in all transport modes, making it the largest transport union in the UK.
- Unite has obtained the views of our thousands of taxi driver members through our lay member committees. Therefore Unite is in a unique position to submit a response to this investigation.

Oxford Street has an iconic place in London's history and image around the world. Many of its landmark shops are known and loved by Londoners, visitors and tourists. It is a unique place in London for many reasons and attracts more attention than any other street in London. But for all of this there is no doubt that traffic is often at a standstill and it is one of the most polluted streets in London. Taxis and buses move slowly along the street, providing an essential service in moving people to and from the shops of Oxford Street.

Something needs to be done about Oxford Street starting with the revitalising of the Eastern end of Oxford Street. But of more concern is the traffic problems that exist. Unite is sceptical about whether pedestrianisation of Oxford Street can actually work and is feasible. Since the 2004 Mayoral election, the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street has been on the agenda but so far no acceptable solutions have come forward. We note that there are plans to reduce the number of buses moving along Oxford Street in the next few years and Sadiq Khan plans to complete pedestrianisation by 2020.

There are a number of problems that need to be addressed. These include identifying where the current traffic can be moved to, how will shoppers be affected, will disadvantaged people be excluded even more from accessing areas they wish to go, how will the workers and staff be affected, what will be the overall effect on shopping and businesses with the whole West End area and how will the environment be impacted

both visually and in terms of air quality. Simply moving the traffic gridlock from Oxford Street to surrounding areas is not a solution.

From our point of view representing taxi drivers, it is imperative that taxis continue to have a key, strategic role in any solution. 15,000 taxi passengers are picked up, set down, or carried along Oxford Street every day. Taxis provide a vital link between the passengers and the business of Oxford Street and the surrounding areas. Moving traffic onto neighbouring streets, such as Wigmore St, would not work and would destroy the whole area. There needs to be a holistic approach that looks at the whole West End area to identify how traffic can be moved efficiently, but the main focus must be on public transport, buses and taxis, along with cyclists and pedestrians. There must be priority for these users over all other forms of surface transport. Car use must have the lowest priority and efficient access and egress must be such that there is an improvement over the current situation. Only in this event should the scheme be considered.

At the moment taxi use could be improved. More use could be made of taxi ranks in and around Oxford Street, particularly in side streets leading to and from Oxford Street. Having taxis waiting at ranks rather than driving empty along Oxford Street would be welcome by all. Clear signage on where to get taxis would direct people to taxi ranks. A more efficient use of taxis now would be an immediate benefit.

In the longer term Unite Cab Section is keen to be involved in all discussions around the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street and use our knowledge to help come up with solutions that work for everyone, but we hope that pedestrianisation will only go ahead if it is clear that a better Oxford Street and West End can be created that caters for the needs of everyone and the solution is a real improvement on the current situation.

Pedestrianisation of Oxford Street: Submission to the Transport Committee

1 September 2016

ABOUT US

Collectively, we represent each of the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the City of Westminster through our seven constituent organisations:

- Baker Street Quarter Partnership
- Heart of London Business Alliance
- Marble Arch Partnership
- New West End Company
- The Northbank
- PaddingtonNow
- Victoria BID

Our BID areas cover a significant proportion of London's Central Activities Zone and make a larger contribution to the UK economy than Wales. They encompass a huge range of sectors and attract millions of visitors. Our organisations represent both businesses and property-owners in Westminster, all of whom share a common interest in the capital's future and prosperity. On behalf of our members, we are making a joint response to the London Assembly Transport Committee's review of the proposed pedestrianisation of Oxford Street.

SUBMISSION

The Chairman of the New West End Company, Sir Peter Rogers, has already given evidence at the Transport Committee's meeting on 15 June 2016, which examined the current problems on Oxford Street and options around pedestrianisation. Sir Peter was able to state his views on what should happen next. Given the significant implications of full or partial pedestrianisation, the purpose of this response is to

provide the Committee with the wider context, explaining the points on which all seven Westminster BID organisations agree. We hope to see this reflected in Transport for London's work on bus routes. It also reflects our contributions within the West End Partnership, to which five of our organisations belong, as it seeks to formulate options for consultation.

A case for change

Visitors' experience of Oxford Street is impaired by the congestion from buses and taxis, which contribute to poor air quality, while the pavements struggle to accommodate the current footfall. The western side now accounts for two-thirds of accidents on Oxford Street. It is no coincidence that the road layout on that side has not been altered since 1993, while changes have successfully reduced incidents at Oxford Circus and to the east. With Crossrail predicted to increase visitor numbers by another 150,000 per day, we recognise that there is a case for change.

Equally, Oxford Street cannot be viewed in isolation from the rest of central London. It encapsulates the problems of a bus network based on single journeys, with long routes to and across the centre that passengers rarely take end-to-end. Too many empty buses pass through the West End simply to sustain other sections of those routes, with inevitable disruption. Any pedestrianisation of Oxford Street must address this problem directly, rather than displacing bus routes to surrounding streets, which would result in unacceptable increases in traffic and air pollution. It must also avoid buses idling, as currently occurs at Cavendish Square and Marble Arch. The roads surrounding Oxford Street should be free of route-termination points or turnaround points for buses, which inevitably result in stationary vehicles that emit pollutants and cause congestion.

Even under TfL's plans for a 20% to 40% reduction in buses on Oxford Street over the next two years, pedestrianisation could still funnel over a hundred extra buses an hour down parallel streets. Crossrail and transferable bus tickets are an opportunity for the "more radical assessment of the bus network for central London" conjectured by TfL's Managing Director for Planning.

Economic impact

The economic impact of options for pedestrianisation must be the primary consideration, both for retailers and offices on Oxford Street and for businesses in surrounding areas. There would be a negative impact from doing nothing, but options short of full pedestrianisation may provide an optimum balance between competing needs, particularly if the bus network is modified instead of being redrawn. Ambition needs to be tempered by an evidence-led approach, as getting the changes wrong could be profoundly damaging for the West End, with negative consequences for businesses, visitors, workers and residents.

We believe that an open-minded approach should be taken towards the following issues:

- Hours of operation
- Length/extent of pedestrianisation
- North-south permeability
- Phasing (e.g. Selfridges to Oxford Circus as phase 1)
- Freight consolidation
- Reliance on future ULEZ restrictions

If a phased approach is taken, it is essential that the first phase is already in place when Crossrail opens in 2018-19. Likewise, air quality assessments should take account of emerging policy for the Ultra-Low Emissions Zone, but changes must be acceptable at the point of implementation, not rely on the ULEZ to make them acceptable at a later date.

CONTACT DETAILS

For matters relating to this response, please contact: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



London Cab Ranks Committee response to the London Assembly: Oxford Street - a feet street only?

About the London Cab Ranks Committee:

The London Cab Ranks Committee is one of the London trade's oldest taxi driver working committees, for many years working with the former Public Carriage Office on cab rank issues.

Today the London Cab Ranks Committee meets with Transport for London as the recognised licensed taxi driver body which represents London taxi drivers' views and concerns regarding taxi rank and highways issues. The London Cab Ranks Committee is currently comprised of three driver groups; Unite the union Cab Section, the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association and the London Cab Drivers' Club.

Oxford Street: 15,000 taxi passengers are picked up, set down, or carried along Oxford Street every day...

Oxford Street is iconic in London's history and image around the world. Its landmark shops are known and loved by Londoners and visitors. It is prominent in London for many reasons and attracts more attention than many of the other streets in the city. Taxis and buses provide an essential service in moving people to and from the shops. However, there is no doubt that traffic in Oxford street is often at a standstill and because of this it has become one of the most polluted roads in London. Something needs to be done about Oxford Street starting with the revitalising of its the Eastern end. But of more concern is the traffic problems that exist. The London Cab Ranks Committee (LCRC) is sceptical about whether pedestrianisation of Oxford Street can actually work or is feasible.

Since the 2004 Mayoral election, the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street has been on the agenda but so far no acceptable solutions have been put forward. We note that there are plans to reduce the number of buses moving along Oxford Street in the next few years and that Westminster Council intend to reintroduce and enforce pre-existing traffic controls restricting private traffic along Oxford Street. We also note that Camden Council's plans to restrict traffic in Tottenham Court Road will further impact congestion in the area.

There are a number of problems that need to be addressed. These include identifying where the current traffic can be moved to, how will shoppers be affected, will disadvantaged people be excluded even more from accessing areas they wish to go, how will workers and staff be affected, what will be the overall effect on shopping and businesses with the whole West End area and how will the environment be impacted both visually and in terms of air quality. Simply moving the traffic gridlock from Oxford Street to surrounding areas is not a solution.

It is imperative that taxis continue to have a key, strategic role in any solution. Taxis provide a vital link between the passengers and the business of Oxford Street and the surrounding areas. Moving traffic onto neighbouring streets, such as Wigmore St, would not work and would impact the whole area. There needs to be a holistic approach that looks at the whole of the West End area to identify how traffic can be moved efficiently, but the main focus must be on accessible public transport, taxis and buses, along with cyclists and pedestrians. There must be priority for these users over all other forms of surface transport. Car use must have the lowest priority and efficient access and egress must be such that there is an improvement over the current situation. Only in this event should the scheme be considered.

At the moment taxi use could be improved. More use could be made of taxi ranks in and around Oxford Street, particularly in side streets leading to and from Oxford Street. Having taxis waiting at ranks rather than driving empty along Oxford Street would be welcome by all. Clear signage on where to get taxis would direct people to taxi ranks. A more efficient use of taxis would be an immediate benefit.

In the longer term the London Cab Ranks Committee is keen to be involved in all discussions around the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street and use our knowledge to help come up with solutions that work for everyone, but we hope that pedestrianisation will only go ahead if it is clear that a better Oxford Street and West End can be created that caters for the needs of everyone and the solution is a real improvement on the current situation.

END