

## Emergency legislation on Traffic Orders - CPT response

20th May 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on proposals to adapt traffic order procedures. We believe it is important first to set some context for our response and we shall then make some more specific comments.

Throughout the pandemic, CPT and its members have been working closely with the Department to ensure that bus services continue to operate for key workers and others who need them to access essential services. As you will be aware, we are currently working on arrangements for a ramp up of bus services to facilitate an easing of lockdown and the beginning of economic recovery. Operators continue to face a range of enormous operational challenges but a general lack of congestion and relative traffic free-flow has to date enabled the operation of significantly more efficient services than would normally operate on weekdays and Saturdays. This has meant that limited resources have been utilised very effectively. A continuation of such favourable operating conditions will be a vital part of plans to significantly increase service levels again. Significant numbers of drivers will remain unavailable and we have previously supplied data to the Department indicating that operators expect to have between 72 and 89% of their normal driving cohort available. Given social distancing guidelines and the limits they impose upon capacity, operators will in many cases wish to have spare vehicles and drivers available to supplement services where required. This all highlights the requirement for bus services to be able to operate efficiently in order to meet the needs of critical workers, the vulnerable and others who need to use them.

CPT and its members recognise the need for measures to support the Government's environmental aims and active travel as part of the restart and recovery phase. We therefore support the principle of time limited, pragmatic measures to reduce consultation periods and adopt more flexible publication criteria for traffic orders facilitating these aims. However, operators are already seeing proposals for reallocating road space and widening pavements that would have significant negative impacts on the ability to operate bus services efficiently and ignoring such impacts could have very serious consequences. If such measures are taken forward, buses will not be able to play as significant a role in the ramp up and recovery and the long term viability of bus and coach services may be affected as they are perceived as slow and poor at accessing key destinations like town and city centres. Therefore, any streamlined consultation process must still take full and proper account of operator comments and include a right of appeal to the Secretary of State who would have powers to prohibit or reverse schemes that negatively affect bus or coach services. Where the desired objective is to increase space for cycling/walking, this must not be at the expense of bus services and those who depend on them. Government guidance to local authorities should be strengthened to ensure that impacts on bus/coach journey times and access distances for passengers (where services are diverted) are properly assessed and accounted for.

Where changes that have negative impacts on bus/coach services cannot be avoided because of the need to ensure pedestrian safety, equivalent compensatory measures that give buses and coaches priority elsewhere should be a requirement. Guidance should also be strengthened to highlight the importance of allowing bus services to operate efficiently as part of the ramp up and recovery package; currently guidance places greater emphasis on walking and cycling. The pandemic presents an opportunity to reduce congestion in the longer term and this should not be wasted. Bus services operating during the COVID-19 emergency have benefitted from lighter traffic conditions and we need to ensure that these benefits are not lost as car traffic return. We should stress that operators wish to work in partnership with authorities to ensure safe and positive outcomes all round and we believe that clear advice and protections for bus services will help to achieve this. Guidance should encourage early and detailed engagement with operators to help maximise win-win opportunities for cycling/walking and bus, and to minimise occasions where bus priority is lost.

We should also like to clarify that the sunset clause refers to any traffic orders that are made under any revised legislation, rather than the ability to make those traffic orders, i.e. that without further amendments to legislation, any COVID-19 related measures adopted under the emergency provisions would need to revert to the original highway arrangements.

We are content with the 7 day timescale and alternative means of publication as set out in the outline document.

Kind regards

Keith

**Keith McNally**

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