

Report on SPC Motion in the name of Councillor Jane Horgan Jones

For an assessment of the advantages and the disadvantages of running bus routes against the flow of traffic on the quays in the city centre to be undertaken by Dublin City Council, with a view to the findings being presented to Dublin Bus and the NTA. For example, buses heading to Heuston Station would no longer run on the south-side of the river, they would run on the north side, on the river-side of the road, adjacent to the boardwalk. The potential advantages of this are as follows:

- use of riverside footpaths can reduce antisocial behaviour on the boardwalks.
- Reduce conflict between bus passengers and cyclists at bus stops on the business/shop side of the road. Make better use of footpaths on the riverside.
- Increased and so allow the bike lane to revert to the left side of the road, from the current riverside bike lane. This is a more suitable side of the road for cyclists.
- Reduce bus passengers clogging up footpaths on the building-side of the quays.
- Makes it easier for restaurants and cafés to open out on to the footpaths, as there would no longer be bus stops. This would be more beneficial to the sunnier north-side of the quays.
- If cyclists could use the contraflow bus routes, it would allow cyclists cycle in either direction on both sides of the river. This could potentially reduce the amount of space needed for the bike lane.

Reply:

Below is a brief assessment regarding the advantage, disadvantages and considerations required for introducing contra flow bus lanes on the river side of the North and South Quays.

To be clear then what is being examined in this report is a proposal to implement contra flow bus lanes on the North and South Quays on the river side of both the North and South Quays. This would mean all stops would be relocated to the river side and all junctions would have to be modified for a contra flow bus lane.

Such a concept does present some advantages, as Councillor Jane Horgan Jones has listed out. By compartmentalising the kerb side & footpath usage for pedestrians availing of public transportation to the river side of the city Quays does present an opportunity to utilise the building side of the Quays for other purposes.

The introduction of Contra flow bus lanes means that these lanes are kept for the exclusive use of buses and taxis cannot use them. In addition general traffic would be substantially discouraged from using the bus lanes and this would be advantageous over the unfortunately wide spread non adherence to bus lane regulations by private vehicles at present. No stopping or loading would also be permitted in these lanes and again this would assist with journey time reliability in these lanes.

But given the aspects of the current road space on the city Quays, the accessibility requirements for pedestrian, the high demand for public transportation along the Quays and the element of shelter that the building side of the Quays offers to pedestrians, it is clear that the proposed concept would require a significant amount of investment in order to meet the current level of service provided.

Considerations would need to be given to the following aspects.

Safety element

Generally bus stops are placed at the best approximate location to the pedestrian desire line while giving consideration to provide walking/traversing space for this desire line. The building side bus stops provides efficient access for pedestrians as they are located close to the pedestrian desire line. If such bus stops are relocated on the river side of the Quays, there would be a concern that pedestrians would risk crossing the road onto moving traffic when they see their required bus approaching.

Dedicated pedestrian crossings required.

To facilitate 'accessibility for all' to these riverside bus stops, dedicated pedestrian crossings would be required as this proposal alters the pedestrian desire line along the quays. At locations where multiple bus stops are located along the Quays, it would be difficult to determine the best desire line for all stops between existing junctions.

Riverside footpath is very narrow.

Along the riverside the foot path is very narrow and would require substantial investment to establish a waiting space for pedestrian at bus stops and for the increase of pedestrian numbers on this side. Areas such as Ellis Quay and Aaron Quay have very narrow footpaths and have only 2 traffic lanes. This results in reducing that area of the quays to one lane for all other inbound traffic including taxis.

In other areas such as outside the four Courts, Ormonde Quay and Bachelors Walk the new bus stops would have to integrate with the Interim Liffey Cycle Route and some trees may need to be removed.

For the majority of the quays, where the footpath is too narrow then there would be a requirement to extend the footpath and thus reducing road space for buses, segregate cycle lanes and general traffic.

Disadvantage for Taxi service.

Reversing the flow for buses via a contra bus lane disadvantages taxi services as they would be excluded from using these lanes.

Riverside bus stop are exposed to the elements.

Building side bus stops provide significant shelter to pedestrians for both waiting and when accessing the bus stops. Also in the events of flash flooding, there is significant reduction of the possibility of flooding on the building side.

Consideration where the Quays are narrow

Ellis Quay and Aaron Quay are only 2 lanes wide for a distance of 500m and thus this area would be reduced to having all traffic in one lane for both directions, one for the contra flow bus lane and the other for general traffic and taxis. On the south Quays at Grattan Bridge presents the same issue. Such locations would create pinch points unless significant investment is provided to address this.

Junction updates.

Not all buses traversing the quays are on public transport city routes and/or will proceed the length of the quays. The current layout provides flexibility for vehicles permitted on bus lanes to turn left from the quays onto the side roads.

For a contra-flow bus lane, all junctions would need to be reviewed to determine what junctions would need to be analysed and changed in order to accommodate for right turning vehicles from this proposed lane contra flow bus lane onto the side roads.

In introducing this extra traffic movement, it will reduce the efficiency of the junction and introduce delays. In not introducing this extra traffic movement would require a right-turn ban for such vehicles on approach to these junctions and thus reduce the current flexibility and options that buses currently have. (i.e to be able to turn onto a side road from the Quays)

Crossing the river.

A number of bridges are one way and they would need to be reviewed to determine if buses need to take a left turn from the proposed contra flow bus lane onto these crossing points. Again similar to the junction updates, for the proposed a contra-flow bus lane, all junctions would need to be analysed and changed in order to accommodate for left turning vehicles from this lane. Also the crossing movement would need to be reviewed.

In introducing this extra traffic movement, it will reduce the efficiency of the junction and introduce delays. In not introducing this extra traffic movement would require a left-turn ban for such vehicles on approach to these junctions and thus reduce the current flexibility and options buses currently have. (i.e. to be able to use that crossing point)

Conclusion

Although it is a novel idea and presents some advantages, there are also considerable disadvantages, including the significant investment that would be required in order to meet the current level of service. Thus it viewed that the current directional flow for bus lanes is the most practical and efficient use of the City Quays in providing access for pedestrian for public transportation. As the City Quays are an important strategic area for the city for transportations links, economic development, and tourism and for the enjoyment of its citizens. There are currently a number of ongoing projects in improving the City Quays and its adjoining streets taking into consideration the balance required for its multiple uses and the evolving needs of the city's citizens. To conclude DCC traffic department would not recommend this proposal.

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