

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is a dedicated bus lane needed through Slough?**

The Bath Road/ A4 trial scheme includes the provision of a bus and cycle lane, replacing a single east and westbound traffic lane along most of the route. It has been designed and implemented in response to the government's initiative to get people to actively travel in the wake of the coronavirus crisis and to prepare for the Borough's recovery as lockdown is eased. This is just one, of a series of temporary changes, proposed to bring about a green restart to local travel with the Department for Transport providing funding to fast track measures.

Reducing bus journey times, making the bus service more attractive as well as facilitating active travel are fundamental components of the Local Transport Plan.

We also wish to maintain improvements to Air Quality experienced during the lockdown. Five AQMA's have indicated that in terms of NO<sub>2</sub> there has been a reduction of between 30%-41% and in respect of NO<sub>x</sub>, there has been a reduction of between 45%-59% using modelled scenarios.

Removal of a single lane of most east and west bound traffic during peak hours will improve Air Quality throughout the borough. The reduction in private car use and take-up of sustainable modes including buses will support this aim.

### **Is it safe to use buses? Government guidance used to suggest we should avoid public transport during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

We know that local bus services provide a vital means of accessing services for many of our residents. Within Slough, over a quarter of households do not have access to a car.

In line with Government guidance, face coverings must be worn, over your nose and mouth, for the full duration of journeys on the public transport network.

We have placed hand sanitisers at various locations including Slough bus station.

Operators have implemented social distancing and enhanced cleaning, and are now back to running normal frequencies.

### **It is a waste of time and it causes hold ups.**

This is a temporary intervention during which time we will review the issues. Observations will be made throughout the period of this trial to understand movements across the bus lane to reach general traffic lanes, or to access shops. Travelling along the length of the bus lane, even for short distances is not allowed during the hours of operation, except for exempt vehicles.

### **The scheme is an unnecessary expense.**

Central government released funding to introduce measures in response to Covid-19 and social distancing.

The Council sets its own annual transport budgets in accordance with the objectives in its Local Transport Plan. Reducing bus journey times and thereby making the bus service more attractive as well as facilitating active travel are fundamental components of the LTP strategy.

### **The scheme has impacted traffic flows.**

The main short-term focus of the scheme is the reduction of journey times for bus passengers and to facilitate cycling, not a reduction in traffic flows. It is hoped that in the longer term the increased attractiveness of the bus service will help to encourage transfer of travel to buses from the private car.

The general traffic lanes on the bus lanes are reduced in sections than previously, but the increased care and reduced speeds which motorists need to observe has been viewed as a benefit rather than a disadvantage in transport terms.

### **There has been no real consultation process.**

In response to Covid 19, lockdown and social distancing requirements, the scheme was introduced on the ground to respond quickly to the immediate issues. However, we are mindful that residents will want to have their say and that is why we introduced this scheme under Experimental Traffic Orders (ETROs). For a six month period following the introduction of an ETRO, those who live and work in the borough are able to comment. Following the change in the scheme from 4 December 2020 we have improved our consultation process – you can now read information about the scheme at <https://slough.citizenspace.com/transport/experimental-a4-bus-and-cycle-lanes> and give your views using an online survey or alternatively email or write to us. A new six month consultation period started on 4 December 2020 and finishes on 4 June 2021.

## **If bus occupancy is low, especially after 9 a.m., is there a call for a bus lane?**

From 4 December 2020 the bus lanes are only operational during peak times, from Monday to Friday during the hours of 7am-10am and 3pm-7pm (previously they were operational at all times).

## **There is a risk of accidents / fatalities through being forced to pull out across pedestrians, cyclists and speeding double decker buses into the main stream of traffic.**

At present motorists leaving side roads onto the A4 have to exercise care.

Motorists should show caution upon entering the highway and consideration for all forms of traffic.

There is a cycle/pedestrian shared path along most of the A4 for less confident cyclists. This has provided to date, a way of enabling cyclists to travel through Slough who consider it unsafe to use the carriageway. This shared path remains operational but is supported by the A4 improvements for cyclists. As this is a temporary measure we have not introduced junction improvements for cyclists.

Cyclists on routes such as this have a responsibility to ride responsibly and with care to other users.

## **Which buses use the A4?**

Bus route 4 providing a key connection between Maidenhead, Cippenham, Bath Road, central Slough and London Road to Heathrow

Bus route 81 providing a key link between Slough, Colnbrook, Heathrow Airport North and Hounslow

Bus route BR providing a fast link between Slough rail station and the Bath Road employment area

A number of other routes use the bus lanes for parts of their journeys providing links to Langley, Heathrow Airport, Uxbridge and High Wycombe

## **How is the A4 bus lane authorised?**

Bus lanes are created by Traffic Regulation Orders using powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. A 'Bus Lane' is defined in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1994 as a traffic lane reserved for buses (and pedal cycles) where indicated by the signs.

## **How are the A4 bus lanes enforced?**

Powers were granted for civil enforcement of traffic contraventions by approved Local Authorities in the Traffic Management Act 2004. Slough Borough Council is an approved Local Authority under the Bus Lane Contraventions (Approved Local Authorities) (England) Order 2005 for the purposes of S.144 of the Transport Act 2000 (civil penalties for bus lane contraventions).

## **Who can use the A4 bus lane?**

During its hours of operation, only buses, pedal cycles, solo motorcycles, taxis, private hire vehicles (“minicabs”) operated under licences issued by Slough Borough Council, zero emission vehicles displaying green number plates under a forthcoming scheme, and electric scooters hired from Neuron Mobility under a government trial scheme are allowed to use the bus lane. The definition of a bus contained in the Traffic Signs Regulation and Directions 2002 is ‘motor vehicles constructed or adapted to carry more than eight passengers (exclusive of the driver).

Emergency vehicles can use the bus lane at any time.

## **Can Blue Badge holders use bus lanes?**

As with other forms of moving traffic offences, disabled drivers are not exempt from bus lane enforcement measures and penalty charge notices.

## **Can I park in a bus lane?**

Parking is not allowed in a bus lane during its hours of operation even when a Blue (Disabled) Badge is displayed.

## **Can I load in a bus lane?**

Vehicles are not permitted to stop in an operational bus lane to load and unload goods.

## **What happens if I am caught driving in an operational bus lane by the cameras?**

You can expect to receive a Penalty Charge Notice addressed to the registered keeper of the vehicle. It will contain details of the alleged contravention, details of the vehicle and photographs

## **Buses do not always use the bus lane.**

Buses do not need to use the bus lane unless they anticipate journey time savings. Bus operators are encouraging drivers to use the bus lane where journey time can be saved.

## **What if a Bus speeds down a bus lane?**

Buses are not exempted from adhering to the legal speed limit by using the bus lane. Vehicles emerging at an appropriate speed from adjoining streets should be presented with no greater problems when coming onto a bus lane than a conventional traffic lane, particularly having regard to the greater time between passing vehicles, even at peak hours.

## **The bus lane has caused a serious peak hour queuing problem.**

Video surveys before and after implementation of the scheme will be used to analyse Journey time savings which will be measured and reviewed at the end of the trial period.

## **How can disabled persons wishing to visit park up safely without contravening the restrictions?**

If there is a medical need that means you need to pull up on the side of the road and you are issued with a Penalty Charge Notice, you would need to write to Slough Borough Council stating this and provide medical proof as part of your challenge.