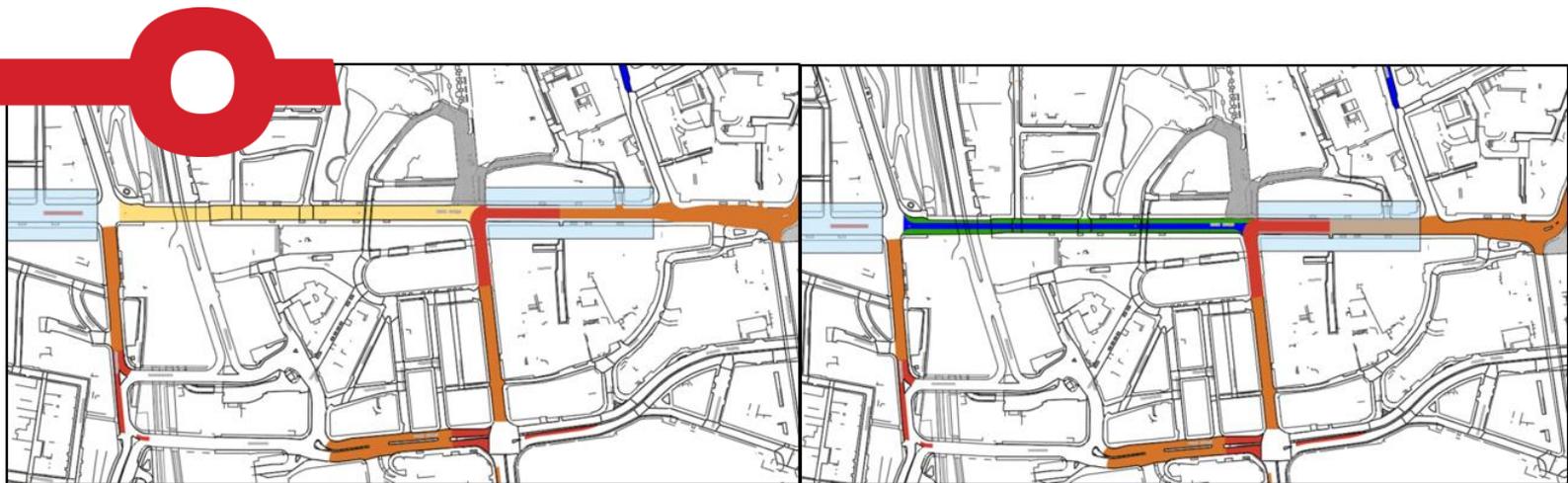




**ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN
TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN
PHASE 1 – CENTRAL UNION STREET AREA
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



SYSTRA

ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN REVIEW

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN. PHASE 1: CENTRAL UNION STREET AREA

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Report Summary

- 1.1.1 SYSTRA Ltd (SYSTRA) was commissioned by Aberdeen City Council in September 2021 to develop a Traffic Management (TM) Plan to facilitate the next stage of delivery of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (CCMP).
- 1.1.2 This report details the initial Phase 1 of the project, focusing on the central section of Union Street and associated network operation.
- 1.1.3 As part of the streetscape improvement proposals on central Union Street (section between Bridge Street junction and Market Street junction), there are two potential operational scenarios. These are:
- **Option 1** – Full pedestrianisation of Central Union Street (except for cycles and time limited servicing)
 - **Option 2** – Buses and cycles only, with bus stops removed (except for time limited servicing)
- 1.1.4 Initial traffic operational plans for the two Union Street options were discussed with key shareholders: bus operators, taxi operators, cycle groups, Accessible Users (ACTUP)
- 1.1.5 Through traffic model testing (Ref: *Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan – Sensitivity Testing Report*, Oct 2021) a package of measures was identified to support the pedestrianisation of central Union Street (Option 1) and minimise the impacts to bus journey times and reliability. The model report concluded that if buses are to be removed from Union Street, then additional bus priority measures on the following routes would have significant benefits for bus reliability and journey times:
- Bridge Street – Bus, taxi and Cycle only (both directions)
 - Guild Street (east of Carmelite Street) – Bus, taxi and Cycle only (both directions)
 - Market Street (north of Guild Street) – Bus, taxi and Cycle only (both directions)
- 1.1.6 For Option 2, the traffic modelling found that retaining the buses through Union Street but providing no additional network restrictions through the Bridge Street / Guild Street/ Market Street corridor resulted in the following issues:
- 40% increase in traffic flow through Guild Street (due to restrictions on Union Street and Schoolhill)
 - Difficulty for buses egressing the station on Guild Street due to traffic queuing along Guild Street
- 1.1.7 In addition, through consultation on the proposals with various stakeholders, including cycle groups and bus operators, they highlighted the congestion levels experienced through Guild Street and the lack of safe and easy connection between the bus/rail station and the city centre for cyclists and pedestrians. The operation of Guild Street as a primary traffic route essentially cuts off the bus and rail station from the city centre.

- 1.1.8 For this reason, and to provide bus operators with alternative routing options to central Union Street, the proposed additional bus priority measures on Bridge Street, Guild Street and Market Street identified for Option 1, would also be required under the Option 2 for Central Union Street. This is of critical importance in retaining current passengers, many of whom rely on buses to get to work, education, services and leisure. It is also a fundamental part of the local, national and global effort to reduce travel related carbon emissions via mass and sustainable transport. A reliable, punctual and competitive bus network is key to attracting more passengers and enabling a significant increase in city centre footfall.
- 1.1.9 In order to determine which central Union Street option provides the greatest benefits, a detailed comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of each option was undertaken.
- 1.1.10 From the option comparison, it was clear that a number of considered impacts of the proposed restrictions on Central Union Street are the same for both options. For example, the need for additional supporting bus/ cycle/ taxi priority was deemed to be the same regardless of whether buses can route through central Union Street or are required to reroute via Guild Street.
- 1.1.11 It was found that there are clearly more benefits to the sustainable travel hierarchy of road users for full pedestrianisation compared to allowing buses to route through the central section. Whilst buses are required to divert from their existing route, the additional bus priority measures ensure that a reliable and accessible bus service is provided. The full pedestrianisation option maximises the central Union Street area for pedestrians and cyclists and facilitates streetscaping that best allows for the creation of a vibrant city centre ‘place’.

The recommendation for Central Union St is to provide full pedestrianisation through this corridor with access for cycles and time restricted servicing.

Additional Network Detail

- 1.1.12 Based upon the recommendation for central Union Street to be fully pedestrianised, further detail of the traffic management plan around the core city centre area was developed, including specific measures, such as taxi ranks, accessible parking bays etc. This is summarised as follows:

Schoolhill/Upperkirkgate Operation

- Pedestrian zone between Harriet Street and Flourmill Lane
- Traffic modelling suggests traffic flows would increase (without a pedestrian zone) when restrictions were also in place on central Union Street and Guild Street
- Pedestrian and cycle safety measure

Union Terrace Operation

- No vehicle restrictions proposed along Union Terrace
- Right turn from Union Terrace to Rosemount Viaduct for buses, taxis and cycles only
- Extensive modelling of options along this corridor and in combination with Schoolhill measures

- Proposals allow access to parking on Union Terrace and also an exit strategy for general traffic on Union Street
- Modelling suggests traffic flows to be significantly lower than normal network operation (70% reduction in model testing)

Back Wynd / Belmont Street Area

- Removal of all vehicles with the exception of time limited loading access to support the cafe culture vision for the area
- Taxi ranks to be relocated

Hadden Street / Carmelite Street Area

- Complex area that will require further consideration of the various, potentially conflicting, requirements for pedestrians, residents, taxi operators, access requirements for the new Market, loading bays, accessible parking and restrictions to prevent rat running.
- Taxi rank on Hadden Street and Exchange Street to remain

City Centre Cycle Routing

- Cycles permitted through all routes within the city centre area, including the proposed pedestrian areas on central Union Street and Schoolhill/Upperkirkgate
- Improved safety due to the level of general traffic restrictions around core central area resulting in significant reductions in traffic levels (up to 90%)
- Phase 2 of the TM plan will consider cycle measures on east and west Union Street

City Centre Loading / Servicing Arrangements

- central Union Street loading access considered from west to east (eastbound) direction only. Limited to between 18:00-10:00.
- Need to rationalise loading times within the wider city centre for consistency and transparency.
- Phase 2 of the TM plan will review current on-street parking restrictions (single and double yellow lines) as well as refuse storage and collection

City Centre Bus Routing & Stopping Arrangements

- Buses will need to re-route from central Union Street to Bridge Street, Guild Street and Market Street
- The bus priority measures through these diverted routes have significant benefit for bus reliability and journey times as general traffic levels are reduced by up to 90%
- In addition, there are opportunities to provide enhanced stopping facilities on Bridge Street, Guild Street and Market Street
- Phase 2 of the TM plan will consider placement of bus stops on east and west Union Street with an opportunity to rationalise the existing bus stop operation through this corridor and potentially provide locations for focussed 'bus hubs'.

City Centre Accessible Parking Arrangements

- Due to the proposals for more pedestrian friendly streetscape, some of the existing accessible parking bays (blue badge parking) will require to be removed (Schoolhill-North side, Union Terrace-west side, Back Wynd, Little Belmont St)
- Replacement bays are proposed on Schoolhill-south side and Union Terrace-east side
- An objective for the TM Plan is that the measures proposed will result in no net detriment to the number of Accessible Parking bays within the city centre area.
- Phase 2 of the TM will continue to explore opportunities for additional accessible parking bays, including locations in the vicinity of the new Market

City Centre Taxi Rank Arrangements

- Review of taxi rank use undertaken , both long term ranks and *Spaces For People* temporary ranks
- Due to the proposals for more pedestrian friendly streetscape, some of the existing taxi ranks will require to be removed (Back Wynd)
- Replacement bays are currently being considered with opportunities for new bays potentially on Union Terrace (east side) or South Silver Street
- As part of Phase 2 of the plan, consideration of a centrally located night-time taxi rank (12am-5am) will be paramount for public safety. Ideally a night-time rank will be provided at the west end of Union Street
- An objective for the Traffic Management Plan is that the measures proposed will result in no net detriment to the number of taxi rank bays within the city centre area.

Enforcement of Traffic Restrictions

- Enforcement of the restrictions is essential to retain the necessary efficient operation and safety of the traffic network.
- Bus, taxi and cycle gates are proposed through the city centre at strategic points to restrict general traffic routing through the city centre.
- Access to vehicular destinations will be maintained e.g. Queen Street, the Adelphi, Carmelite St area, Golden Square, but the access strategy will be designed to limit the opportunity for rat-running around the enforcement points.

1.2 Next Stage of the Traffic Management Plan Development

- Ongoing development of central area detail
- Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders
- Consideration of the operation of the wider Union Street corridor, out-with the central section
- Operation of servicing including bin storage and collection
- Review of current on street restrictions / regulations (single and double yellow lines)
- Continued dialogue with key stakeholders in the refinement of the Traffic Management Plan
- Development of a schedule of Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) required to deliver the optimum Traffic Management Plan for the whole of Union Street.

SYSTRA provides advice on transport, to central, regional and local government, agencies, developers, operators and financiers.

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