

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

11th JUNE 2003

BUS STOP CLEARWAYS

Purpose of Report

1. To establish a policy on the marking of bus stops in line with the changes introduced by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) 2002.

Background

2. The TSRGD set out the road signs and markings that can be applied on the highway. At the 5th March meeting of the Committee it was agreed that this report be produced to deal specifically with the markings for bus stops.
3. Before the TSRGD 2002 there were three options for road markings at a bus stop:-
 - no road markings
 - the familiar Bus Stop Bay markings
 - a Bus Stop Clearway, which involved a Traffic Regulation Order and statutory consultation procedure
4. Visually, the Bus Stop Clearway differs little from the Bus Stop Bay, the only differences being the addition of a wide, unbroken yellow line at the carriageway edge for the length of the bus stop and a yellow upright sign on the adjacent pole indicating the period of restriction. However, whereas the Bus Stop Bay was advisory in nature, the Bus Stop Clearway makes parking and loading a legal offence. The period and days of the restriction are at the discretion of the Highway Authority and must be indicated on an adjacent yellow plate.
5. The new TSRGD removes the option of the Bus Stop Bay. In future bus stops must either have no road markings or have the Bus Stop Clearway markings. However, a Traffic Regulation Order is no longer required for enforcement. Existing Bus Stop Bays must be changed or removed by 31st December 2006. The Bus Stop flag and pole continue to be legal road signs and no changes to them are necessary.

Options Considered

6. Because of the need to remove existing Bus Stop Bays by 2006 there is not an option to do nothing. A clear decision is needed on whether to apply a Bus Stop Clearway or no road markings at all for each bus stop currently marked with a Bus Stop Bay. A range of options is possible for the three elements of the decision required:-
 - Where should Bus Stop Clearways be used?
 - For what time periods should Bus Stop Clearways apply?
 - How should consultation be structured?

Where should Bus Stop Clearways be used?

7. Bus Stop Bays help to prevent bus stops from being blocked by parked cars or lorries unloading. They do so by informing other road users where the bus will stop and are largely self-enforcing, as considerate motorists leave the space clear. The Bus Stop Clearway markings provide the same information to road users, but also allow enforcement where this is disregarded.
8. It is particularly important to keep stops clear where raised kerbs are provided as in Salisbury and on the Key Bus Route Network of inter urban routes outlined in the Local Transport Plan (LTP). They depend on the bus being able to pull up square against the boarding point so any obstruction, even for relatively short periods, makes boarding difficult, delays the bus service, and so prevents the full utilisation of the Council's investment. Ramps or wheelchair lifts, as fitted to National Express coaches in the north of the County, similarly require a clear access area to be effective.
9. Even where raised kerbs and low floor buses are not in use, there are some situations, such as outside schools or in town centres, where inconsiderate parking can prevent buses getting to the bus stop. As well as causing difficulties and delays for bus users, this can lead to road safety concerns or delays to other traffic.
10. However, Bus Stop Clearways could be difficult to justify at some locations. For instance, where the bus service is sparse and/or there are no aids to boarding at the stop there may be little benefit to passengers from keeping the stop clear, but the inability to stop other vehicles legally may cause difficulties for residents or traders. Another example might be stops in areas of open countryside, where parking or loading is unlikely but the visual impact of road markings might be considered deleterious to the rural environment.

For what time periods should Bus Stop Clearways apply?

11. The DfT recommends that the hours of operation and enforcement should take account of when buses are operating. It is considered that, while making all bus stop clearways "at all times" is too inflexible, the application of different time restrictions should be minimised in order to send a clear, simple message to road users. The recommendation therefore focuses on two time periods - a 24-hour restriction when the bus service runs in the evening and an alternative 8.00 am - 6.00 pm restriction when it does not. The proposed days of restriction are similarly matched to the days the bus service is expected to run. In most cases this will be every day or Monday-Saturday, but other combinations may be appropriate in certain circumstances, such as Monday-Friday where provided for a school.

How should consultation be structured?

12. The Department for Transport also recommends that those likely to be affected should be consulted over the location and times of operation of clearway restrictions. Previously a statutory consultation procedure was necessary before a Bus Stop Clearway could be implemented. This was relatively expensive and involved the referral of all objections to the appropriate Council Committee. The new TSRGD removes the statutory requirement for consultation and so it is recommended that a streamlined procedure be adopted involving those likely to be affected. This has the advantage that it could be integrated into the general consultation process when bus stop improvements are proposed, saving time, effort and money whilst making the process more understandable to the public.

Enforcement

13. Whether carried out by police or, as in south Wiltshire, by the District Council, there will be limited resources available for enforcement. However, experience shows that bus stop road markings are to a large extent self-enforcing. In fact the existing bus stop bays would be of no value if it were not the case that most motorists understand the reason for them and keep them clear. There will, of course, be a need for some level of enforcement in fairness to the law-abiding and to prevent the rules falling into disrepute. As the recommended criteria for Bus Stop Clearways are related to the Council's long-term objectives to encourage public transport use, the necessary enforcement measures are justified.

Financial Implications

14. For future bus stop improvements the carriageway markings and signing can be incorporated into the overall cost of the improvement. Markings can also be revised as part of routine road re-surfacing. The yellow upright sign required by the regulations can in many cases be attached to the same pole as the bus stop flag.
15. As the old style Bus Stop Bays will no longer be allowed on the highway after 2006, there may be a cost of reviewing the network between 2003 and 2006 to identify any outstanding Bus Stop Bays and include the cost of any rectification work in budgets for future years. Although there are 3,800 bus stops in Wiltshire, the proportion of these that will require work is not known at present. However, it is estimated that in any event approximately 20% of the total number of stops would be dealt with by 2006 as part of planned improvement works.

Reasons for Recommendation

16. The County Council's LTP 2001-2006 sets out the key components of its transport strategy (paragraph 5.3) and the following components are relevant:
 - Using transport investment and planning powers to improve accessibility by non-car modes, especially from rural areas, to bring environmental and social benefits.
 - Maximising the use of existing assets through effective maintenance and space utilisation to improve the attractiveness and safety of public transport, walking and cycling.

These components are also in line with Central Government transport objective:

- To promote accessibility to everyday facilities for all, especially those without access to a car.

Recommendation

17. That:-

- (i) Bus Stop Clearways be provided in accordance with the criteria and procedure set out in **Appendix 1** to this report.
- (ii) If objections cannot be determined by reference to the criteria and procedure set out in **Appendix 1**, the matter be reported to Committee for determination.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None

**BUS STOP CLEARWAYS -
CRITERIA FOR PROVISION**

1. Bus Stop Clearways will be considered in any of the following circumstances:-
 - (i) Where they form part of a wider strategy that has been the subject of consultation with the community.
 - (ii) Where raised kerbs are provided at bus stops in built up areas or adjacent to premises, but not in open countryside where there is no other reason for carriageway markings.
 - (iii) Where there is a special need for the bus to stop in a precise location (e.g. for wheelchair access by lift).
 - (iv) Where parking and/or unloading is known or expected to commonly obstruct the bus stop.
 - (v) Where there is a benefit to road safety (e.g. outside schools).
 - (vi) Where a Bus Stop Clearway, general parking or loading restriction already exists.
2. Where the surrounding area is subject to parking or loading restrictions, the bus stop clearway restrictions may apply at different times to the general restrictions, because the two restrictions serve different purposes.
3. Where there is an evening bus service, or a reasonable prospect of one being introduced, the restriction will normally be 24 hours. Where there is no evening bus service, the restriction will normally be 8.00 am - 6.00 pm. Where the bus stop is only provided for the use of school transport, the restriction will normally be 8.00 am - 6.00 pm, Monday-Friday.
4. The restriction will normally be applied for all days on which the bus service operates or on which there is a reasonable prospect of the service operating in future.

Consultation

Consultation on the introduction of bus clearway markings be carried out as follows:-

5. Bus operators using the stop, District, Parish and Town Councils, the local County Council Member and the enforcement authority will be consulted about the proposals. (This may be carried out as part of consultation on a wider strategy or project).
6. At the detailed design stage members of the public who are likely to be affected will be consulted by placing a notice at the site and by letter to any houses or frontages immediately adjacent. This will give at least two weeks for comments to be made to an appropriate officer of the Council.
7. Where the Bus Stop Clearway forms one element of a scheme, consultation may be integrated into a consultation about the whole scheme.
8. Following consultation, the decision to implement or to make any changes to the proposals will be delegated to the Director of Environmental Services in consultation with the local Member, taking into account the comments received.