

***Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) welcomes the proposals contained in the Bristol City Centre Transport Changes consultation, but raises some areas of concern. In particular, we applaud the pedestrianisation of Horsefair and Penn Street, but have major concerns about the impact of so many buses on the pedestrian environment in Nelson Street.***

*We use 'walking' and 'pedestrian' to include all people moving at walking speed, including those who use wheelchairs, mobility scooters or other aids to movement.*

## **Overall approach**

Previously, we strongly agreed with the overall vision for the Broadmead area in the City Centre Development and Delivery Plan (CCDDP), so it is welcome that the consequences for transport are being pursued at an early stage.

The scope of the proposed changes is greater than we have seen for several years, and we welcome the aim to improve the public realm in general across the city centre for pedestrians. We would like to see explicit recognition of the need to create, protect and enhance a network of pedestrian routes through the city in the same way as the proposals seek to provide bus and cycle networks.

We recognise that to complete the proposed transport changes within the CRSTS funding deadline of March 2027 will be a challenge, and that this may affect how much can be achieved. However, we are keen to see that the changes that are made are resilient to future modal shift away from cars towards public transport and active travel.

We have split our comments into two sections: scheme-wide concerns and location-specific issues.

## **Scheme-wide concerns**

One of the significant areas of change being proposed relates to **public transport routes** through the city centre. We agree that taking buses out of The Horsefair and Penn Street is necessary to allow pedestrianisation. But we are concerned that some of these proposals, particularly the re-routing of buses along Nelson Street and Fairfax Street, will have a knock-on effect on the pedestrian environment. The large increase in the number of buses will be particularly detrimental to the primary pedestrian route along Nelson Street, but will also affect other sections of footway and junctions.

With the changes in bus routes, there are also consequences for bus stops. We would expect all bus stops affected by these proposals to be equipped with shelters, seats and information displays. However, pedestrian **access to bus stops** is an area of concern. Stops for all routes through the centre must be within acceptable walking distances and the pedestrian desire lines to reach those stops must be sufficiently direct and accessible.

We are concerned that the proposed frequency of buses using Nelson Street / Fairfax Street / Broad Weir will lead to **congestion**, particularly when bunching may lead to multiple buses being stopped at the proposed bus stops. We would expect to see full modelling of bus frequency, latency, occupancy and passenger movements in order to be convinced that the proposal is viable.

With the other changes to traffic flows, there is the potential for pedestrian routes to encounter **road crossings** that need to be newly introduced, or existing crossings that will become signalised. When crossings interfere with pedestrian desire lines, or present long delays, there is the potential for them to dissuade rather than encourage pedestrian travel, contrary to the desired outcome.

Private motor traffic flows through the area could be reduced by **eliminating through-routes** between Old Market roundabout and Redcliffe Hill, and between Redcliffe Hill and Temple Gate. Eliminating those through-routes would remove traffic from Redcliffe Way, allowing it to be made into a more attractive key active travel route between Temple Meads and The Centre.

While we agree with improvements to the cycling/scooting infrastructure, this should be spatially segregated from pedestrians. The changes should be used to **eliminate shared use** of footways and crossings, particularly where there are high numbers of both pedestrians and cyclists.

The mobility hub in the new Galleries development will provide dedicated parking spaces for the disabled. However, it is not clear where space for e-scooters, e-bikes, cycles and car club vehicles will be made available, particularly for residents of the new city centre housing or those visiting the area. It is important that parking areas for these vehicles must **not be on pavements** or require travel across pavements to reach them.

Finally, when putting together a business case for these changes, we would expect to see explicit data for existing and **predicted traffic flows and bus occupancy** along the affected routes. These should predict pedestrian flows, including those generated to and from bus stops. The predicted flows should allow for the desired modal shifts, particularly to cater for the increased numbers of bus users and pedestrians that these measures are intended to support. Such data would then allow proper assessment of necessary pavement widths and crossing timings to accommodate pedestrians without creating unnecessary impediments to their progress.

We go into more detail on some of these concerns in our location-specific comments.

## Location-specific issues

### Nelson Street

Nelson Street is a **primary pedestrian route** between Broadmead and the Centre. It is designated as primary in the CCDDP, the City Centre Framework, the Nelson Street Public Realm Strategy, and the Public Realm and Movement Framework.

In the CCDDP it was suggested that Union Street would become the primary route for buses going in both directions. However, these new proposals require Nelson Street to accommodate many more buses than at present. The proposals would almost double the number of buses using Nelson Street, from one every two minutes to one every minute during the day.

By rerouting more buses along Nelson Street, the pedestrian environment will be affected by greater noise and pollution, making it a **less healthy street**. We believe any proposals should aim to improve

the environment on pedestrian routes, according to accepted Healthy Streets measures, not make it worse.

For pedestrians travelling along this primary pedestrian route it will also **impose more barriers to travel**. It will make crossing the junctions at Christmas Street, Bridewell Street, All Saints Street and Fairfax Street more difficult. Pedestrian desire lines will be crossed by buses both as they turn left into Nelson Street from Christmas Street and as they turn right into Fairfax Street from Nelson Street. Other vehicles, such as taxis, will be crossing pedestrian routes as they traverse Nelson Street from All Saints Street to Bridewell Street.

To mitigate the **crossing difficulties** that will be created for pedestrians on this route by the additional traffic, each of these junctions would require pedestrian priority measures, such as zebra or signalised crossings. However this would have the potential to delay bus services.

We cannot see how Nelson Street can be made a satisfactory primary route for both pedestrians and buses with these proposals. We understand the need to remove buses from The Horsefair and Penn Street, but are not convinced that this use of Nelson Street is the best option.

One alternative might be to use Bridewell Street rather than Christmas Street to route buses into Fairfax Street, so reducing the length of Nelson Street occupied by buses. This could be achieved by making Rupert Street two-way for buses and Lewins Mead two-way for other traffic.

Another alternative is to revert to making full use of Union Street for a two-way bus corridor, as proposed in CCDDP. We remain to be convinced that a rapid transit route requires a street all to itself.

## **Fairfax Street**

We support the proposal to remove motor traffic from the short section of Nelson Street between Silver Street and Union Street. However, the implication is that all motor vehicles will all have to use Fairfax Street, going from Nelson Street under the large new development that will replace the Galleries and into Broad Weir.

Fairfax Street, like Nelson Street, is relatively narrow. Apart from being a bus route it will also provide the only route to reach the mobility hub in the new Galleries development, including access to the majority of the disabled parking spaces for Broadmead.

It is proposed that there will be a **major new bus stop** at the Nelson Street end of Fairfax Street, serving many of the rerouted bus services. We are concerned that this stop will be significantly compromised in terms of the **space available** for waiting bus users and passing pedestrians. We get the impression that it will require significant road space for buses and other vehicles to be able to overtake those waiting at the bus stop, to the detriment of the available pedestrian space.

In addition, since this bus stop will replace ones currently on The Horsefair and Penn Street, it must be **easily accessed from the Broadmead area**. We would wish to see a wide footway (minimum 4m) joining the Fairfax Street bus stop, via the closed section of Nelson Street, to Broadmead. Since the stop will not be visible from Union Street and the rest of Broadmead, it would also need excellent signage for bus users alighting, or wishing to catch buses, from this stop.

Finally, the exit of Fairfax Street into Broad Weir will be a further point of contention between motor traffic and pedestrians crossing between Castle Park and Merchant Street, designated as a key

pedestrian gateway in the CCDDP. We would like to see further consideration being given to the other **super crossings** identified by CCDDP in the High Street / Wine Street / Newgate Street / Broad Weir / Lower Castle Street area which would provide pedestrian access to Castle Park.

## Union Street

As part of making Union Street into a rapid transit corridor, we note that it is proposed that the rapid transit stops in both directions on this route are in the northern half of the street, removing the existing bus stops in the higher southern half of the street. We support this as it has the benefit that on the uphill cycle lane, which will run from Nelson Street to Newgate, there will be **no bus stop bypasses** which would be a danger to pedestrians in this busy area.

When making the new rapid-transit junction between Union Street and Haymarket, it will be important not to disrupt the **primary pedestrian route** between Union Street and the Bus Station and Hospitals, but rather to enhance it.

## Bond Street

It is proposed that rerouted buses going from east to west will travel around the north of Broadmead via Temple Way and Bond Street. There are already a bus lane and bus stops on the Broadmead side of Bond Street with access from The Horsefair via an indirect **ramp along Barrs Court**. We would expect this access to be made wider, better signposted and conformant to accessibility standards in terms of gradient and landings. The proposed new public realm within the Debenhams development, between Merchant Street and St James Barton Roundabout, will not provide an easily accessible route to the bus stops.

No mention is made of upgrading the **signalised crossing of Bond Street** between Hannover Court and Gloucester Street. It was designated as a future super crossing in CCDDP. This will become a significant link on the proposed north-south segregated cycle route continuing along Penn Street, and it is on a significant desire line for pedestrians. Currently the Bond Street crossing is two-stage with limited space in the central reservation between the two sections. We believe this crossing should also allow the segregation of pedestrians from cyclists, with separate sections within the central reservation. Preferably it would be a one-stage parallel crossing, though we understand the time taken to cross six lanes in one movement might cause too great a delay to motor traffic.

## Redcliffe

The footways at Redcliffe Roundabout will still require pedestrians to travel around the outside of the roundabout, which is a significant diversion on an important desire line. We are told that a wide roundabout is needed to accommodate bus movements, and the roundabout cannot be removed because of the cost impact of disturbing underground services.

Moreover, it is proposed to replace the current zebra crossings on the entrances to the roundabout by **signalised crossings**. This means that, rather than pedestrians having priority, they will have to wait for the motor traffic flow sequencing before they can safely cross. Instead, we repeat our suggestion to **reduce flow** by eliminating through routes for private motor traffic on the roads going north and east from the roundabout, allowing the zebra crossings to remain adequate. Failing this, we would expect signalised crossings to default to green for pedestrians in order to reduce pedestrian delay.

On Redcliffe Way, we see the need for an **additional pedestrian crossing** on the long stretch between Redcliffe Roundabout and Temple Gate.

On Redcliffe Hill we are pleased to see that the central barrier and the **underpass are to be removed** and the surface-level pedestrian crossing widened. Since it only has to cross 4 lanes, this crossing should be a good candidate for being **made single-stage**, helped by the reduction in motor traffic mentioned above.

We would suggest the **road junctions** along Redcliffe Hill, including Guinea Street, Prewett Street, Colston Parade and Redcliffe Parade should have pedestrian priority measures such as raised tables or continuous pavements.

## **Bedminster Bridge**

We welcome the changes to the Bedminster Bridge circulation to allow faster transit for buses. There will also be some benefits for pedestrians.

There will still be multiple signal-controlled crossings, with pedestrian flow interrupted by the need to keep motor vehicles flowing. However, we fully support the proposals that the crossings of Cumberland Road and Commercial Road should be made **single-stage crossings**, halving the number of times pedestrians will have to wait for the lights. There also will be some benefit from parallel crossings being used to segregate pedestrians and cyclists.

However, we believe there must be an **additional pedestrian crossing** of Bedminster Parade where Boot Lane joins it. With the developments at Bedminster Green, a new pedestrian route will be created along Clarke Street, Stillhouse Lane and Boot Lane for those walking into the city centre.

## **Temple Way**

CCDDP suggested that the pedestrian crossing, currently 3-stage, on the primary pedestrian route between Castlemead and Champion Square would be improved into a **super crossing**, but there is no mention of it in these proposals. This crossing is also a candidate for segregation of pedestrians and cycles, given it is also on a primary cycle route.

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