

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

SURFACE TRANSPORT PANEL

SUBJECT: SUBWAYS

DATE: 24 FEBRUARY 2009

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This paper provides details of TfL's policy on, and processes for, replacing pedestrian subways with surface level crossings.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 TfL has a policy to remove subways and replace them with surface crossings where it is feasible to do so. Availability of funding, traffic flow (the Traffic Management Act states this includes both vehicular traffic as well as pedestrians), safety, accessibility and personal security are factors considered before any decision is taken to remove a subway.
- 2.2 TfL's Streetscape Guidance (2009) states that "when reviewing the streetscape of the TLRN, opportunities for introducing safe new at-grade pedestrian crossings as alternatives to subways should be explored".

3 DETAIL ON THE PROCESS OF REPLACING SUBWAYS

The benefits and disbenefits of retaining subways

- 3.1 The benefits and disbenefits of retaining subways vary greatly depending on the location. As discussed below, decisions to retain or replace subways are taken in the light of assessments under safety audit and highway management procedures.
- 3.2 The benefits of retaining subways relate to improved vehicular traffic flow, safety or local opinions. At complicated junctions such as Hanger Lane, it may be easier to retain subways due to the complicated junction design or traffic flow and the infeasibility or impracticality of surface crossing options. There are other locations where road safety advisors identify a preferred solution of retaining the subway. This usually occurs where traffic speeds are set above 30mph and assessment by road safety experts is unable to give assurance to the safety of surface crossings.
- 3.3 The disbenefits are wide ranging, and relate to accessibility, crime and convenience. Subways can be inaccessible to disabled people, due to the presence of steps or a combination of poor lighting, absence of handrails, length of ramps, or general lack of maintenance. Subways can cause pedestrian detours and lengthen journeys on foot, for example, the subways at Gants Hill. Subways offer a less direct and therefore less obvious walking route and this can deter people from walking.

- 3.4 The design of subways removes any natural surveillance which can act as a precursor to crime problems or fear of crime. Both outcomes can in turn reduce the number of journeys on foot. Subways provide a point of shelter which can result in anti-social and / or criminal behaviour, as well as a point for collecting wind borne rubbish thus making them unattractive to use.
- 3.5 The financial cost of replacement can be expensive but it should be borne in mind that crossings can be cheaper and easier to maintain than subways. The costs for maintaining subways increase significantly with the life of a subway. A BCR of 7.6:1 is given for replacement of subways with surface crossings. The benefit realised is split roughly between journey time and other savings (e.g. safety, lower maintenance costs).

How subways are identified for replacement to surface crossings

- 3.6 There are a number of different ways that subways are identified for replacement. TfL undertakes studies to identify where new, improved or additional pedestrian facilities are required. For example, a recent study of barriers to pedestrian movement across the TLRN highlighted a number of subways as such barriers.
- 3.7 A site may be identified for replacement as a result of local concern or opinion. TfL receives requests from local communities, often raised through the local Ward Councillor, MP or police to replace subways.
- 3.8 Sites may be identified as a result of road safety investigations and an increase in the incidences of pedestrian casualties while crossing (at surface level), suggesting pedestrian demand and desire lines are not being catered for.
- 3.9 Sites are also identified in liaison with the Road Network Management (RNM) Structures team where a subway's design life has expired and is incurring increasingly high maintenance costs.
- 3.10 Liaison also takes place with TfL's Crime Reduction team on subways with known crime problems to identify whether they could be replaced.

Process for replacing subways with at-grade crossings

- 3.11 Sites which are identified for replacement by TfL's Walking and Accessibility team are processed through the TLRN Planning Unit prioritisation scoring mechanism. This considers availability of funding, coordination with other programmes, engineering feasibility, stakeholder expectations, and impact on movement of people and goods.
- 3.12 Only those proposals which have manageable impacts on traffic flow, or can assist in the regulation of traffic in known congested areas, as well as meeting the other criteria identified above, will go forward to be designed and implemented.

Impact of replacing subways with surface crossings

- 3.13 The replacement of subways may result in additional signals on TLRN roads but, in the light of 3.12 above, do not increase traffic delay. Assurance on this matter is sought through the Directorate of Traffic Operations (DTO) and the Road Network Performance (RNP) Network Assurance Team (NAT), as well as RNM teams.

- 3.14 In addition, the replacement of subways enables TfL to fulfill its obligations under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 by reducing the opportunity for crime.
- 3.15 Finally, the use of surface crossings enables TfL to work towards its statutory duty as a service provider to make accessibility improvements. TfL's Disability Equality Scheme sets a requirement on TfL to remove obstructions and barriers to disabled people and install and upgrade surface crossings where feasible to do so. Replacement of subways can also be an effective and practicable means of reducing community severance and promoting social inclusion.

Examples of replaced subways

- 3.16 Examples of subways which have been replaced with at-grade crossings are shown in Appendix 1. The examples include the recently completed Marble Arch scheme on the TLRN as well as examples of partnership working on borough roads.

4 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 This paper sets out the current TfL policy and process to identify and assess the potential to replace subways with surface crossings, where it is feasible to do so.
- 4.2 A suggested next step is for TfL's Walking and Accessibility team to provide a definitive process to be detailed in the forthcoming TLRN Guidance on Walking Schemes. The Guidance is being produced, working together with the TLRN Planning Unit, to assist staff in TfL working on walking funded schemes. A section could be added on replacement of subways to provide additional guidance and detail a process to use in identifying whether or not a subway should be replaced.
- 4.3 There is limited funding available for this work programme. As a result, only a few schemes are delivered each year. Therefore, while a number of schemes are under consideration, it is likely that only one subway replacement will be progressed in 2009/10.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Panel is asked to NOTE this report.

6 CONTACT

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APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLES OF SUBWAY REPLACEMENTS

1 TLRN - Marble Arch

Before:



After:



2 TLRN – St Dunstan’s

Before:



After:



3 TLRN – Old Street proposals

Before:



After:



4 Borough (funded by TfL LIP) - Tolworth Broadway

Before:



After:

