64843 A1/A199 Bus Lane Trial and Service 44 Delays

I am writing to request information concerning the proposed 7am–7pm, seven-days-a-week bus lane trial between Milton Road East and London Road.

The Council's publicity states that the purpose of the trial is to improve bus times and reduce delays, and Service 44 has been cited as being particularly affected. The leaflet confirms that the proposed operating hours will be 7am–7pm every day.

I would be grateful for the following information. To keep the request proportionate, I am primarily seeking existing data, reports, analyses, briefings or presentations, rather than asking the Council to undertake new analysis.

Please provide any existing report, analysis, briefing or dataset used to support the statement that Service 44 is one of the bus services most affected by delays on this corridor.

Please refer to the attached information boards used at the drop-in events held in advance of the Bus Lane trial. Key extracts from the information boards are as follows:

- Board No2: *Travel patterns have changed significantly since the current bus lane hours were introduced. Since 2019, Lothian Buses have identified that bus journey times are 22% slower along the A1 corridor.*
- Board No2: *Outside current bus lane operating hours, bus journeys can be slower and less reliable, with some journeys (e.g., Friday lunchtimes), taking up to 20% longer.*
- Board No2: Graph indicates that the longest average bus journey times on a section between Milton Road East to Leith Walk occur either at weekends (orange line) and interpeak weekdays (Friday blue line) when bus lanes are currently not in operation.

Bus journey time data has been provided by Lothian Bus under a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) as it is commercial sensitive. This, therefore, prevents the specific datasets being shared in the public domain.

Where already held in an accessible form, please provide data showing delays or journey times for Service 44, broken down by:

o weekday and weekend; and

o time of day.

I am particularly interested in whether delays occur outside the existing weekday peak periods.

Please refer to the attached information boards used at the drop-in events. Specifically, Board No2, where the graph presented indicates that the longest average bus journey times on a section between Milton Road East to Leith Walk occur either at weekends (orange line) and interpeak weekdays (Friday = blue line).

As detailed in A1 above, the Lothian Buses journey time data was provided to us under a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) and cannot be provided. The NDA prevents more detailed datasets being shared in the public domain.

Please provide any existing analysis used to justify operating the proposed bus lanes:

o between 10am and 4pm on weekdays;

o on Saturdays; and

o on Sundays.

Prior to 2019, travel demand primarily concentrated around traditional Monday to Friday morning and evening commuting peaks. Since then, transport operators (such as ScotRail) have reported a significant shift, with Saturdays now emerging as the peak travel day and weekday inter-peak periods experiencing substantially higher volumes.

In 2021 the agreed City Mobility Plan (https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/29320/city-mobility-plan-2021-2030-updated-february-2024) included **Policy Measure MOVEMENT 4** - Bus Priority Measures Expand and enforce public transport priority measures to improve journey time reliability and operational efficiency within the city and wider region.

This policy measure highlighted: *"Bus priority corridors ensure that buses and other forms of sustainable transport have dedicated road space so are not subject to delay or congestion caused by other traffic. These corridors often operate during peak traffic times, when roads are busiest,* ***however extending operating hours ensures that buses are not delayed at other times of the day****".*

A following report to the Transport and Envormnet Committee in February 2024 requested that "*officers to come forward with a proposal for a 7-7-7 Bus Lane trial on a suitable corridor*". See Notice of meeting and agenda - https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s67776/Item 3.1 -Minute 01.02.24.pdf - Page 9 Decision: (1.9).

Further background information and downloads can be found on the Council's 7-7-7 Bus Lane Trial webpages at:

https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/buses-coaches/bus-lane-trial

The webpages include Frequently Asked Questions (https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/buses-coaches/bus-lane-trial/6) that provide further information and explain why this corridor is suitable for the trial.

Please also refer to the attached information boards used at the drop-in events held in advance of the Bus Lane trial which highlights slower journey times along the route outwith the AM and PM peaks and at Weekends:

- Board No2: *Travel patterns have changed significantly since the current bus lane hours were introduced. Since 2019, Lothian Buses have identified that bus journey times are 22% slower along the A1 corridor.*
- Board No2: *Outside current bus lane operating hours, bus journeys can be slower and less reliable, with some journeys (e.g., Friday lunchtimes), taking up to 20% longer.*
- Board No2: Graph indicates that the longest average bus journey times on a section between Milton Road East to Leith Walk occur either at weekends (orange line) and interpeak weekdays (Friday blue line) when bus lanes are currently not in operation.

Please provide any existing assessment or options appraisal comparing the proposed 7am–7pm, seven-days-a-week operation with less extensive alternatives, for example:

o peak-period operation;

o weekday-only operation;

o shorter weekend operating hours; or

o restrictions applying only to sections of the corridor where significant delays have been identified.

The starting point for the trial recognises that there are more journeys at the weekend and weekday inter-peak, and that journey times outwith the Monday to Friday AM peak and PM peak periods are experiencing delays.

The purpose of the 7-7-7 Bus Lane trial is to gather data, conduct rigorous analysis, and assess the net benefits and impacts of this operational model to inform future Bus Lane hours of operation. The evidence collected during the trial, alongside feedback from the statutory consultation, will be evaluated and compiled into a comprehensive report and presented to the Council's Transport and Environment Committee. Based on the evidence presented, Councillors will ultimately decide whether to make the 7-7-7 operational hours permanent, revert to weekday peak-only restrictions, or implement an alternative recommendation supported by the data (for example: Monday to Friday 7am to 7pm or other).

It would be premature to judge the outcomes of the trial, however, below are some initial responses to the examples provided above:

o peak-period operation; Monday to Friday Peak Only is the existing arrangement and therefore would not offer as a test alternative for the trial.

o weekday-only operation; Initial analysis (see information boards) shows there is a case to examine Bus Lanes operating at weekends to reflect post-2019 travel conditions.

o shorter weekend operating hours; This could be a potential recommendation following the trial if supported by the data. One benefit of 7-7-7 is that it provides a consistent and regular operating period.

o restrictions applying only to sections of the corridor where significant delays have been identified; Having different hours/days of operation for different sections of the same corridor could be confusing for users and would likely decrease legibility/compliance.

Please provide the document or documents setting out the criteria by which the trial will be judged successful or unsuccessful, including any numerical targets for changes in bus journey times, reliability or traffic conditions.

The 7-7-7 trial will be assessed through a comprehensive monitoring programme covering the corridor as a whole and at key segments. Monitoring and Evaluation activities that will be undertaken during the trial will include:

- Bus journey times and reliability
- General traffic journey times

- Traffic levels along the route
- Parking and loading activity
- Feedback raised by businesses and residents, including through a business survey

Evidence collected during the trial will provide a transparent, evidence-based assessment of changes in delay and reliability. Quantitative monitoring data, including bus journey times and variability, will be considered alongside qualitative evidence, such as residents, business and stakeholder feedback, to determine the overall effectiveness of the trial and assess any disbenefits. The trial will be assessed without any predetermined fixed numerical targets.

Further information on trial monitoring can be found on our website at:

https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/buses-coaches/bus-lane-trial/7

Please provide any existing assessment of the anticipated effects of the extended bus-lane hours on:

o parking and loading;

o businesses along the route; and

o traffic displacement onto adjacent roads.

The link to the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is published at:

https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/40658/integrated-impact-assessment

This covers the potential impacts on all those affected by the trial. The IIA will be maintained throughout the course of the trial.