

Buses in Oxford Street - and traffic impacts

Date: 16 Dec 2018

Preface:

WCC developed a draft plan -out for consultation- for the Oxford Street District.

A Key proposal is to pedestrianise Oxford Circus -westbound and eastbound- between John Princes street and Great Portland Street, leaving Oxford Circus open to traffic on Regent Street only.

This will necessitate east-west traffic to be diverted via side streets north of oxford street, using Great Castle Street, Margaret Street and Mortimer street- and maybe some other streets in Marylebone.

There are no specific details nor has been the impact of this proposal been studied to great detail.

This makes commenting on this proposal fairly difficult.

We would like to discuss in general the impact this would have on bus services, and bus terminals in and around the immediate area.

What did we say last year?

This has been well explored last year, and we would like to repeat some of the key points in brief:

We focused on the importance of maintaining a 24/7/364 bus route network – with reduced frequencies- in oxford street, and on the issue of bus terminus/stands in and around Oxford Circus.

Bus usage across central London is in decline due to traffic congestion.

At the same time, buses are used by a significant number of people who depend on them.

It is usually people who can not use the tube for reasons on disability, inaccessibility, carry heavy luggage, or, [often ignored] people who cannot afford using the more expensive tube.

At late night time, we do not have 24/7/365 tube and rail network, and there is a significant number of workers around the area. Many of them are on very low wages, and they simply do not have any other means of getting to and from work.

The 'night economy' czar from the GLA's own incomplete figures reveal a higher proportion of workers who earn minimum or living wages working at night time than day time.

For those reason, when consulted last year, we supported retaining a bus network across oxford street- for day and night time. This has the advantage of getting people where they want to go, and allow easy interchange mode from one bus route to the other [at the same bus stop].

At the same time, we recognise that due to reduction in bus passenger usage, frequency reductions are inevitable.

An equally important issue was that of bus stands and movement to/from bus stands situated in the area west of Oxford Circus.

Developments in 2018:

Post the rejection of the plans to pedestrianise oxford street, in a politically inspired move, the Mayor announced that only 4 [daytime] buses would serve oxford street in the section between

Selfridges and Oxford Circus: routes 7 98 139 390. Everything else would be withdrawn by the time Crossrail becomes operational- now by Dec 2020.

That did not include 'east oxford street' – this section would be served by the 98 390 and also by the 55 and 73- both terminating at Oxford Circus.

Since then, TfL withdrew route 10, rerouting route 23, so both routes no longer serve oxford street. Route 25 was cut to Holborn Circus, but at night, the route still runs to Oxford Circus as the N25.

Some additional bus routes serve Oxford Street: 94 113 and 159- till Crossrail opens. When Crossrail opens, route 159 would be curtailed to Oxford Circus.

Bus service cuts, impact on traffic along Oxford Street:

In recent times, TfL drastically cut bus frequencies and bus routes serving oxford street.

The impact has been dramatic- no more wall to wall of red buses. However, we can see more taxis- the ratio is 4-5 taxis per bus. So, while we see around 60 buses per hour at the busiest sections, we see many more taxis.

In east oxford street, it is possible for other traffic to use this section, and we see constant tail back of westbound traffic queue stretching back to great Titchfield street, mostly consisting of taxis, private cars and commercial vehicle traffic.

Terminating bus routes:

Route 55 and 73 [and the night element plus the N25] terminate at Holles street [space required: 3-4 buses per route]

The buses come from TCR, turn left at OC to Regent Street, then right to terminate at Holles Steet.

There are 22 buses per hour mon-sat daytime. At night there are 8 bph.

Leaving the stand, the go around Cavendish Square, to Mortimer street, turning into Great Portland Street, left to Oxford Street.

Route 7 [and also the 113- till it is curtailed to Marble Arch in Dec 2020] come from Selfridges, terminating Oxford Street [outside J Lewis], then runs to Oxford Circus, turns left to Regent Street, left a great castle street into John Princes Street stand [room for 3 buses]. It departs the stand, turning right into Oxford Street. Frequency: 8 buses per hour. Space required for stand: 2-3 buses.

Buses coming from Regent street:

From the south: currently the 12,22 , changing to routes 12,311 and the curtailed 159 in Dec 2020.

Terminating from the south, buses turn at Margaret street into cavendish square:

The 22 [replaced by the 311] stand at the back of Debenhams [6 buses], the 12 circulates Cavendish Square to stand at Cavendish Place [4 buses].

Departing from the stand if via cavendish square, cavendish place into regent street.

It remains to be seen where route 159 stand would be- space required: 2-3 buses.

Route C2 terminates at Oxford Street from the north, but it is due be merged with a revised 88.

Night buses follow a similar pattern- depending on their routing.

Buses using oxford Street- east- west- between J Princes Street and Great Portland Street- the section proposed for pedestrianisation:

Route 7 – terminating, routes 98 and 390 across, route 139- turn to/from Regent Street, and routes 55 and 73- terminating at oxford circus. In addition, there are the night buses.

Route frequency: current

Route	in minutes	buses per hour
7	7-8 [average 7.5]	8
98	7-8 [average 7.5]	8
139	8	7.5
390	5-6 [average 5.5]	11
55	6	10
73	4-5 taken at 5	12

Note: I ignore routes 94 and 159 due to be curtailed once Crossrail opens in Dec 2020]

Displaced bus route movements:

Crossing oxford street-east west: routes 98 390- 19 buses per hour

Turning: to/from regent street: route 139- 7.5 buses per hour

Total 26 buses per hour.

Terminating from the 'east- routes 55 73- 22 buses per hour.

Total movement: 56.5 buses per hour.

Alternative routing:

The proposal mentions the diversion of the 98 and 390 via Great Castle Street [presume: east bound] and Margaret Street [presume: west bound as the existing traffic flow]- or 19 buses per hour.

Here are our queries to WCC:

What about the terminating 55 and 73 and night buses from the 'east' -22 buses per hour?

Where would you find space for terminating buses on both routes to replace the Holles street stands and how would they arrive and depart the bus stands?

If you block oxford circus, how would they reach and depart their bus stand at Holles street? If there is a wish to serve east oxford street, and a political pledge to limit bus routes in a certain section of oxford street to 4,[Selfridges to OC] - how would it work?

What about route 139? It appears that it will have to use Margaret street [westwards] or great castle street [eastwards] to get to regent street. How it will be diverted?

What about route 7? Where would it stand? How would it be re-routed?

Where would route 159 stand once curtailed permanently to Oxford Circus?

General Traffic congestion:

The current road grid and traffic light phasing greatly benefits pedestrian crossing at Oxford Street.

But it comes at a price: constant southbound congestion in Regent Street between the BBC and Oxford Street, and along Oxford Street- westbound queue of traffic between Oxford Circus and Great Titchfield street and beyond.

Impact of proposals:

In fact, there would be no east- west movement across Oxford Street, so it might well eliminate the southbound congestion along Regent Street, but it will most likely disperse the traffic congestion along Oxford Street Westbound to other streets around. Impact unknown.

Proposals to make Oxford Street one lane only in each direction:

In East Oxford Street, WCC implemented a good road outlay structure- it is one lane each way, except at the two designated bus stops, where the road is widened to two lanes each way. The stops are not opposite each other. This allows for traffic to overtake buses or taxis stopping to load/offload, and relieves traffic jam build up. The bus stops are situated well away from the Oxford Street or TCR area. This is a sensible arrangement, and we urge WCC to implement this throughout the whole of Oxford Street.

East Oxford Street- non bus or taxi movements:

This is currently allowed, and contributes to the traffic congestion, particularly the westbound traffic.

We would like to see a ban placed on this movement, certainly during the severe congestion hours- mainly Mon-Sat pm.

Bus route 94: switch between route 7 and 94 in Oxford Street

Although not part of the current consultation, London Buses still promote their own proposal to curtail the route at the Marble Arch area, with a new bus stand created at North Row.

Local residents strongly object to this proposal, pointing out the impact of having 24/7 bus stand at the heart of a residential side street, and the costs of implementing the scheme.

Had it not been for the political commitment of 4 bus routes serving Oxford Street, the sensible alternative would have been to curtail the 94 at Oxford Circus- there is an existing bus stand in J Princes Street.

Reflecting on current proposals, it is proposed that we support the extension of route 94 to Oxford Circus, replacing route 7 over this section. Route 7 would be terminating at Marble Arch.

If we look at the two routes, the 7 parallels the existing 98 between Edgware Road and Marble Arch and as far as Oxford Circus, so if you curtail route 7 at Marble Arch, there would be same bus stop interchange facility between route 7 and 98.

We think that the proposal to curtail the 7 at Marble Arch, standing at either Park Lane or Marble Arch and curtailing the 94 at Oxford Circus instead of Marble Arch with a stand at North Row is a better alternative to what is proposed by London Buses.

