



RetailNI

Standing up for
Independent Retailers

Options for Glider Extension

Written by
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INTRODUCTION

Given the huge change to public transport that the Glider Extension will make, Retail NI commissioned Kevin McShane Ltd to conduct an independent study into possible routes and what needs to be done to support traders that will be impacted by the new service.

Retail NI believes that we need to make the right investment in public transport to make it shoppers first option, rather than their last and to promote, where possible, cycling and walking options. To achieve this goal, we need Government to work in partnership with retailers and other high street businesses.

The Glider extension should not disadvantage or restrict in any way, small businesses on its route and agreement with them on the way forward is vital.

The full report is available at www.retailni.com

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ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The DFI appraisal concentrated on the viability of the glider and the transfer from existing services. The review discounted several routes in the assessment. The assessment primarily considers a north route (N), a south route (S) and an extension to the Titanic G2 service to Queens University and Belfast City Hospital. We have considered each of the routes separately and note that the north route evaluated two corridors along Shore Road and Antrim Road whereas the southern route assessed only the Saintfield Road / Ormeau Road corridor discounting other options. We suggest two additional routes and conduct a preliminary review of these options.



ECONOMIC APPROACH / TRANSFER OF TRIPS

The review of the routes considered the potential transfer of trips from existing Quality Bus Corridors rather than opening the appraisal to a full economic approach. The transfer of trips from private cars must be the goal on assessing the routes and therefore other corridors not currently served by a Quality Bus Corridor should also have been assessed. The existing assessment will lead to the already assessed routes being viable as they will have the benefit of transferring trips from the existing Metro services to the new route. We do acknowledge that the transfer of trips does make these routes viable and that the evidence from G1 did lead to additional car trips transferring to public transport. One of the primary reasons for achieving this additional transfer was the disbenefit introduced to existing private car traffic by introducing priority bus measures and dedicated bus lanes. We do agree that such measures should feature in the new north south route to achieve a better transfer of trips. This will lead to increased movement of people along the same length of road and must be one of the driving goals.



SOUTHERN ROUTE

It is clear from the published report that the only route assessed in detail for the southern route approach was the Saintfield Road corridor. The alignment considered both the Ravenhill Road and Ormeau Road but discounted the Ravenhill Road approach and highlighted that part of the route would duplicate service over the Albertbridge Road. As such the assessment concentrated only on the Saintfield road / Ormeau Road corridor (S1). We have considered the possibility of a 5.2-mile route via Saintfield Road – A55 – Cregagh Road – Woodstock Road – Newtownards Road known as the Cregagh Road (S2) and the Cairnshill – Purdysburn road – Milltown Road – Malone Road (S3) route. The merits of each are discussed below.



S1 – ORMEAU ROAD

This route from the Cairnshill Park and Ride to the city centre is the most direct route along the Saintfield Road and Ormeau Road with an off-peak journey time of circa 16 minutes and a route of 4 miles. It uses a Quality Bus Corridor and already has established bus lanes that can be used by the Glider. It does raise concerns over servicing for existing businesses and the loss of car parking for existing business users. We note that there is minimal car parking for residential units along this route.

S2 – CREGAGH ROAD

This route does not contain a Quality Bus Corridor but for circa 90% of the route the road consists of four lanes or adequate corridor width allowing for the introduction of new bus lanes. However, the remaining length would require vesting of private gardens to widen the road. This would also lead to the loss of onstreet car parking. The last mile of the route would duplicate the service provided by G1. The Cregagh Route has been discounted as a viable option.

S3 – MALONE ROAD ROUTE

This does not contain a Quality Bus Corridor nor existing bus lanes. The first portion along Purdysburn Road would require additional works and road widening to provide a bus lane but from Milltown Road and Malone Road four lanes already exist. There is minimal onstreet residential parking along this route and limited building frontage. It would establish a new bus corridor offering the maximum transfer of trips from

private car. It is unlikely to achieve as high a patronage as the Ormeau Corridor but should still be assessed. It would have the largest impact on commuting traffic into the city centre. It would further require full signalisation of the House of Sport Roundabout and amendments to existing junctions to create bus priority measures. It would be c 5.2 miles in length and has an offpeak journey time of circa 16 minutes. It does provide a viable option and allows for the connection to Queens University and City Hospital without the need to provide the G2 extension.

NORTHERN APPROACH

The Departments appraisal is centred along the Shore Road and Antrim Road approaches. Realistically these are the routes that would provide the best connectivity to the city centre. Both operate on Quality Bus Corridors and will require additional road widening in places to accommodate the needs of the Glider.



N1 – ANTRIM ROAD APPROACH

The Northern Route 1 along Antrim Road runs from the existing G1/G2 network at Belfast City Hall to Donegall Place - Royal Avenue - Donegall Street - Clifton Street - Carlisle Circus Roundabout- Antrim Road - Proposed Park & Ride/Interchange facility on O'Neill Road. The Park & Ride/Interchange location is proposed on O'Neill Road to facilitate those who wish to use their car for part of their journey and access an interchange to a local bus service/active travel. This is essential to maximise the transfer of trips from private car. The location of the Park and Ride would serve Glengormley and Newtownabbey while the existing facility at Templepatrick would accommodate commuters from further afield. The lower Antrim Road does provide some onstreet parking for residents and servicing for existing businesses. The servicing arrangements would have to be accommodated within this proposal. One of the advantages of this route is access to Mater Hospital.

N2 – SHORE ROAD

The N2 route considered the use of the Shore Road to O'Neill Road. This option runs along Donegall Place- Royal Avenue - York Street – York Road - Shore Road - Longwood Road – to a Proposed Park & Ride/Interchange location at O'Neill Road. It is essential that this route provides the park and ride to maximise the transfer of trips

from the private car. We believe that this should also be extended to O'Neill Road rather than at Longwood Road as this offers a potential to accommodate further passengers. The advantage of this route is that it would enhance access to Ulster University and Longwood retail Park. However, we note that UU is a 10-minute walk from the front of City Hall via Royal Avenue or a 5-minute walk from Clifton Street. The proximity of the M5 to the Shore Road Corridor provides a restriction on the catchment for the Shore Road route as it cannot easily accommodate passengers from the Harbour Estate.

GLIDER G2 EXTENSION

The use of the extension to the existing G2 route to Queens University and Belfast City Hospital will be a good addition to the network. However, the route appraisal failed to identify constraints along these routes and the extension of G2 may not be the most appropriate option if the Malone Road route was introduced. The current Covid restrictions along Dublin Road mean that if a bus stops it also blocks all the straight-ahead vehicular traffic meaning that service vehicles and car users regularly queue back to Bruce Street and Great Victoria Street. This would need to be amended to any proposed route along this corridor.



The S2 route via Malone Road could route to provide a connection from Queens University and Belfast City Hospital rather than creating a new G2 Extension. However, we do note that at peak times Queens would be a major attractor and the G2 extension may be better placed as a separate service from the City Hall hub to Queens University to avoid congestion on the overall route to the south.

CONSTRAINTS

If the S1 Ormeau Road is considered as the southern approach the design needs to sympathetically look at how the existing businesses are serviced. Currently businesses must avoid night-time servicing to minimise noise impacts and the existing bus lane already restricts serving after 0930. If a 12-hour bus lane is introduced additional measures need provided to accommodate servicing. This may result in the removal of car parking laybys with a restriction at certain times for service vehicles only. Such restrictions need detailed discussion with the traders.



Dublin Road has already been noted as a restriction on the network. It is also noted that Carlisle Circus, Grosvenor Road / Great Victoria Street, and other junctions would require additional bus priority measures to ensure a guaranteed journey time.

PARKING

Consideration must be given to the control of car parking along the preferred corridors. Portions of the route already operate with car parking based on a one-hour limit along the laybys, but this leads to prominent levels of double parking on the inside lane during busier trading times. Enforcement of the one-hour parking must be conducted to prevent all day parkers and from those having to double park to use the facilities.



BUS LANE TIMES

Parts of the Glider network operate on a 12-hour bus lane whereas other areas such as Lower Ormeau already operate for 2.5 hours during the morning peak. To ensure the viability of the new route it is essential that the journey time of the Glider can be guaranteed as this ensures the level of service is achieved and that the timetable is met. To achieve this DFI will want to maximise the restrictions on the operating times of the bus lanes, but this leads to difficulty in servicing existing businesses. Appropriate servicing facilities must be provided which may result in restricting car parking in existing laybys.



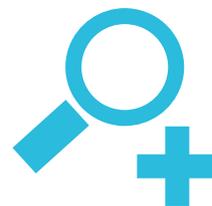
SERVICING

The ability to service the existing retail outlets along the corridor is an essential criterion to the route selection. Initial data from the Ormeau Road retailers identified over 300 deliveries per week to just 7 operators. This highlights a need to maintain servicing along the preferred corridors.



RECOMMENDED ROUTE

To facilitate the most direct route from Cairnshill Park and Ride to City Hall the optimum route is the shorter route along the Ormeau Road where a Quality Bus Corridor already exists. However, this will involve the transfer of trips from the existing Metro services. The servicing of Business premises along this route is a major issue and to accommodate the servicing it will be necessary to provide appropriate service laybys off the main line route which unfortunately will lead to a loss of onstreet car parking. We contend that the servicing is a more important issue that must be accommodated.



The Antrim Road route would be preferable to the Shore Road. The route must include Donegall Place and Royal Avenue to ensure that connectivity is provided to the new Ulster University Campus. The route along Antrim Road allows for connectivity to Mater Hospital and provides for access to a wider catchment. It must terminate at a park and ride facility to maximise the transfer of trips. Like the Ormeau Road the lower Antrim Road will have to accommodate servicing and onstreet car parking for existing businesses. This needs to be considered in more detail at the next stage.

G2 EXTENSION

Given the ardent desire line of Queens University and Belfast City Hospital we agree that this should form the basis of a hub for an extended service. The connection to the Titanic route is a reasonable approach. The route from Queens to Titanic would allow for transfer from other G1 and G3 services from the other routes. The dedicated route would ensure that the North South route is not congested with users of Queens and the Hospital ensuring that there is an even spread of users over the three different routes.

**This report was commissioned by Retail NI
and was written by Karen McShane**

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