

COVID-19 RESPONSE - EMERGENCY DECISION

DECISION MAKER: HEAD OF PAID SERVICES

1. **Date of decision:** 24.04.20
2. **Decision title:** Transport Strategy COVID-19 Emergency Response
3. **Report author:** Simon Phillips, Transport and Public Realm Strategy Manager, Planning, Transport and Development, 0207 926 4067, sphillips2@lambeth.gov.uk
4. **Key Decision:** No
5. **Recommendation:**
 1. To approve the Council's Transport Response to Covid-19 (Appendix 1 of this report).
 2. To approve the release of £78,500 to enable immediate changes to the highway to allow physical distancing to take place at high priority locations in line with Government guidance.
 3. To delegate authority to the Strategic Directors for Sustainable Growth and Opportunity to amend and develop the response as necessary in consultation with the Strategic Director, Resident's Services and the Deputy Leader of the Council (Environment and Clean Air).

6. Reasons for decision:

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in profound changes to travel patterns and how people are using streets in Lambeth and beyond. This is likely to continue even after the current emergency period has passed. There is an immediate need to enable physical distancing in order to limit contagion and prevent a second surge, and this cannot always be safely accommodated within existing transport networks and infrastructure.

At the same time, essential trips must also be enabled in a safe and sustainable manner and there is an increasing amount of evidence that speeding, which was already a significant road danger issue, is worsening during lock down. Transport for London has reported that some areas have seen speeds increase by more than 50% and such increases have been observed in Lambeth.

In the near to medium term, as trip making increases, there is also a need to ensure that that this does not result in excessive motor traffic levels and the resulting negative safety impacts this would bring.

Looking further ahead there is a need to plan for a sustainable recovery that protects public health in the long term as well as supporting the economy and ensuring carbon reduction targets can be met.

Officers have drawn up a list of interventions, including where acute problems have been identified due to the unexpected and sudden change in the public's use of the public realm as a result of COVID-19, and where planned measures in the adopted Transport Strategy Implementation Plan can help address current need. Appendix A contains the proposed scheme list.

7. Other options considered:

'Do nothing' has been considered, but is not considered appropriate as this is likely to result in:

- Inability of residents to comply with Government guidance on 'social distancing';
- Increased road danger as a result of higher motor traffic levels, speeds, collisions and harmful emissions;

- Modal shift away from sustainable modes to private cars;
- Increased inequalities as those that can work from home do so, or drive. National research shows these tend to be higher income earners; and,
- Weaker and less diverse economy as small businesses struggle to adapt to new conditions.

8. Reason(s) for urgency:

A delayed decision will increase the risk of the outcomes identified in Section 6 above.

9. Financial comments:

The first tranche of works focusing on temporary footway widening (Phase 1 at Appendix A) is estimated to cost £75,000 including layout design, materials, implementation and maintenance. A further £3,500 is required for traffic orders resulting in a total of £78,500.

In order to bring forward existing planned projects such as Healthy Routes, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and Brixton Liveable Neighbourhood, continued TfL funding has been expected. However, there is considerable uncertainty over TfL funding to boroughs going forward and it may necessary to seek further emergency funds to carry forward these elements of our response.

It may be necessary to suspend parking bays at some locations to deliver the identified measures and consideration will need to be given to any revenue implications (as well as the need for essential access). At the current time development work is being carried out within existing officer resources.

10. Legal comments:

While it is considered that proposed intervention do not require additional legal provisions, it is recommended that a borough-wide traffic order is made in order to cover a range of interventions and remove the need to make traffic orders for each one. A similar order already exists covering the VNEB area. Such an order must be made on the basis of protecting the public from danger.

Urgent measures such as narrowing / reducing traffic lanes to increase footway space do not require a traffic order and can be implemented under the highway permitting process.

There is considered to be an increased risk of challenge when bringing forward changes to the highway with reduced levels of public engagement, but minimum requirements will be met as below.

11. Democratic Services Comments

The decision is taken under the delegated authority of the Head of Paid Service who has delegated authority to take any decisions as required to enable the Council to respond effectively and appropriately to the COVID-19 emergency and in consultation with the Leader. This decision will be taken using the Monitoring Officer's power to waive the five day's notification period as immediate action is required to enable physical distancing on the public highway as well as across the wider public estate.

12. Risks associated with the decision:

Risks associated with 'do something' include legal, equality, democratic and technical issues summarised as follows:

Risk 1: Changes to the public highway are subject to legislative requirements and procedures under the Highways Act and these must be followed in order to avert legal challenge.

Mitigation 1: Consult with Legal Services, Lambeth Highways and other relevant authorities, such as the emergency services, as necessary.

Risk 2: Changes to the public highway are subject to the Equalities Duty and may result in detrimental impacts if not properly considered.

Mitigation 2: All Traffic Orders will be subject to EQIA and key stakeholders will be engaged.

Risk 3: The accelerated delivery of Transport Strategy projects, without the full suite of public engagement measures, may be considered unreasonable by stakeholders and the wider public.

Mitigation 3: This Emergency Response to be communicated to stakeholders alongside appropriate justification. Any measures requiring Traffic Orders to be subject to informal engagement with key stakeholders in advance of implementation.

Risk 4: Accelerating the delivery process results in compressing the normal technical project stages and may lead to oversight of key factors.

Mitigation 4: Establish a working group of key officers to identify and advise on key requirements.

13. Equalities considerations:

Measures expected to be brought forward are principally intended to reduce inequality by protecting public health by enabling physical distancing, safe and sustainable journeys and reducing harmful impacts of motor traffic.

The Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan 2019 was subject to a full EIA and any measures brought forward as part of the Emergency Response will either be a) already included in the agreed strategy and / or b) consistent with the Guiding Principles and Actions set out in the Strategy. All Traffic Orders required as part of the Response will be subject to EIA. It is acknowledged that the Covid-19 restrictions will make meaningful engagement with disabled and elderly people more challenging.

Is a separate exempt (private) information report to also be produced? No

AUDIT TRAIL		
Name/Position	Lambeth directorate / department or partner	Date cleared
Councillor Jack Hopkins	Leader of the Council	24.04.20
Councillor Claire Holland	Deputy Leader (Sustainable Transport, Environment and Clean Air)	24.04.20
Andrew Travers	Chief Executive	24.04.20
Eleanor Purser / Sara Waller, Strategic Director	Sustainable Growth and Opportunity	24.04.20
Bayo Dosunmu, Strategic Director	Resident Services	24.04.20
Covid 19 Strategic Group		24.04.20