

EXECUTIVE – 15 APRIL 2003**CARTERTON, WITNEY AND OXFORD – TRANSPORT LINKS****Report by Assistant Director (Transport Development)****Introduction**

1. Last October, the Executive considered a report setting out a proposed three phase transport strategy for the A40 corridor, west of Oxford. The Executive endorsed the strategy for consultation with local councils, councillors and other groups. This report summarises the results of that consultation process.

The Proposed A40 Strategy

2. Details of the proposed A40 Strategy were set out in the October report. In summary, the strategy would be implemented over three phases with the first phase comprising a number of individual schemes and measures to be introduced over the next five years. These would be designed to reduce traffic congestion and increase bus priority and would include a new highway link between the A40 and the A44. The second phase would be based on the implementation of the proposed Oxford Guided Transport Express (GTE) guided bus links from Pear Tree Park & Ride to Redbridge Park & Ride via Oxford Railway Station. The northern guideway would be constructed in such a way as to allow buses travelling to and from West Oxfordshire (along the A40) to use the guideway to get in to the City centre. Phase 3 of the strategy would involve the introduction of the GTE guideways out to Witney and Carterton (via Eynsham). The significant costs and the complex procedures mean that this phase of the strategy would be at least a decade away. An outline of the individual components of each of the 3 phases of the strategy is reproduced in Annex 1 to this report.

Extent Of Consultation

3. In order to gauge the level of support for the proposed strategy amongst key stakeholders, a small scale initial local consultation has been undertaken over the last few months. It should be emphasised that further consultation will be required on the individual elements of the strategy in accordance with normal highway and planning procedures. Those consulted as part of the initial consultation have been:

- Local County Councillors
- District Councils
- Local Parish Councils
- Landowners affected by the A40/A44 link
- Other groups/local organisations

4. Information about the new strategy was sent to the consultees in the form of a letter explaining the background together with a copy of the October report to the Executive. A questionnaire asking consultees to express a view about the general strategy and the individual components was also included.

Consultation Response

5. In total, 35 individuals and organisations were consulted and 25 responses were received by the deadline in early February. The responses not only came in the form of completed questionnaires but were also supplemented in many cases by letters containing more detailed comments. Copies of the responses to the consultation have been placed in the Members' Resource Centre.

6. An analysis of the responses has been carried out and the results are summarised in Annex 2 of this report. The response to the general strategy has been very supportive with over 70% of those responding being in favour. Broadly similar levels of support have also been expressed for individual elements of the scheme such as the proposed improvements to Wolvercote Roundabout, the A40 to A44/A34 highway link and the proposed upgrading of Pear Tree Park & Ride. There has been less support for some of the bus priority elements of the strategy, most notably the idea of bus priority on the approach to Swinford Toll Bridge. There are also rather fewer votes in favour of Phase 3 of the strategy than there are for the first two phases. All in all, however, the response to both the general strategy and the individual elements has been very supportive.

Main Issues Raised in Written Comments

7. The main comments and concerns raised by respondents (that are directly relevant to the proposed strategy) are summarised in Annex 3. The bullet point list in Annex 3 represents only a brief summary of comments submitted about the strategy and many of the issues raised will need to be looked at in more detail if and when individual elements of the Strategy are being progressed. As mentioned above, copies of the returned questionnaires and letters are available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre.

Officer Response to Comments

8. Cassington Junction has been referred to by a number of respondents some of whom mentioned that the junction is now operating much more efficiently (following changes made to the signal timings by the Highways Agency). Officers feel, however, that there could be scope for further improvement and that the junction should be looked at in more detail. The signal control of the junction allows pedestrians to cross the A40 much more safely than would be the case if a roundabout were to be introduced.
9. A number of respondents felt strongly about the potential for environmental damage caused by bus priority on the approach to Swinford Toll Bridge. This route will continue to be important for a large number of buses travelling to Oxford via Farmoor and Botley and officers feel that the potential for reducing delays to buses at the Toll Bridge should be properly examined. One design option could involve using signals some way from the bridge itself to hold back traffic on the approach of a bus. If this type of arrangement were possible, impact on the traffic capacity and the environment could be kept to a minimum. It is suggested that as with the other schemes, some preliminary design work should be undertaken so that the impacts can be more fully understood before a decision is taken on this element of the strategy.
10. A number of comments were made about the ability of the proposed strategy to cope with existing and projected travel demands arising over the next decade or so and the need for all three phases to be introduced as soon as possible. West Oxfordshire District Council suggested that a much more detailed analysis of the impact of the strategy should be undertaken. The local Council for the Protection of Rural England group raised similar concerns but went further, raising structure plan and local plan issues and arguing that no further development should take place along the A40 corridor. Concerns about the ability of the strategy to cope led to various alternatives being suggested ranging from a heavy rail link to the introduction of a dual carriageway or possibly a new road link.
11. Previous reports have explained why there is no realistic prospect of funding support for a dual carriageway (which would need to continue well beyond Wolvercote Roundabout). Similarly, given the significant environmental impacts and capital costs, there is no prospect of a heavy rail link being supported by the Strategic Rail Authority. Carterton Town Council's suggestion of a new road across the Green Belt on the western edge of Oxford (to link with the existing road network at Cumnor) would have significant environmental impacts and would involve the costs associated with a new crossing of the Thames.

12. None of the suggestions offer a realistic alternative to the strategy suggested and unfortunately, owing to the planning and funding procedures, no prospect that Phase 3 of the strategy can be delivered more quickly than the 10 to 15 year timescale identified. The point about a more detailed analysis of the impact of the strategy is a matter that will need to be pursued as preliminary design work commences, when we have a greater understanding about the potential contribution of individual elements.

Next Steps

13. On the basis of the consultation responses it is considered that the Executive should endorse the strategy so that progress can commence on the design and implementation of the Phase 1 measures (see Annex 1). The individual measures in the Strategy will need to be subject to further consultation and report back to the Transport Implementation Committee prior to the authorisation of detailed design and implementation.

Financial and Staff Implications

14. Considerable officer input will be required to oversee the ongoing design and development of the strategy and its individual components, including the consultation. This officer input can be accommodated within existing staff resources with appropriate support from consultants. Implementation of the individual elements will be subject to the allocation of funds from the Transport Capital Programme at the appropriate times.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. **The Executive is RECOMMENDED to:**
- (a) **note the results of the local consultation as summarised in Annex 2 and 3 of the report which indicate significant support for the proposed three phase transport strategy for the A40 corridor Strategy amongst key stakeholders;**
 - (b) **on the basis of this support approve the commencement of design work on individual elements of the strategy including appropriate consultation in accordance with normal highway and planning procedures; and**
 - (c) **ask officers to report back to the Executive or Transport Implementation Committee as appropriate when design and consultation work has progressed to relevant stages to seek authorisation for the implementation of the individual elements of the strategy.**

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Background papers: Responses to consultation.

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Proposed Strategy

Phase 1 (5 years)

- Improvements to Wolvercote Roundabout
- A40 to A44/A34 Link Road
- Bus Priority on A40 approach to Link Road
- Improvement at Cassington Signals (including bus priority)
- Improvement at Eynsham Roundabout (including bus priority)
- Upgrading of Pear Tree Park and Ride
- Extension of A44 Bus Lane
- Bus priority on the B4044 at the approaches to Swinford Toll Bridge

Phase 2 (5 to 10 years)

- GTE Oxford
- Witney Park and Ride
- Additional Bus Priority on A40 (if required)

Phase 3 (10 to 15 years)

- GTE Extension (Witney to Eynsham)
- GTE Extension (Carterton to Witney)
- GTE Extension (Eynsham to Oxford)

ANNEX 2**A40 Corridor Consultation Questionnaire Results**

35 questionnaires originally sent – plus an additional 1 requested

25 responses received

- 20 questionnaires
- 5 letters

Responses

County Councillors =	6
City/District Councils =	3
Town/Parish Councils =	11
CPRE/Green Belt Network =	3
Landowners =	2

Total	25
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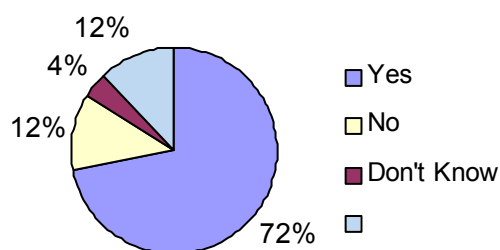
Question 1 - General Support

Yes = 18 (72%)

No = 3 (12%)

Don't Know = 1 (4%)

Blanks = 3 (12%)

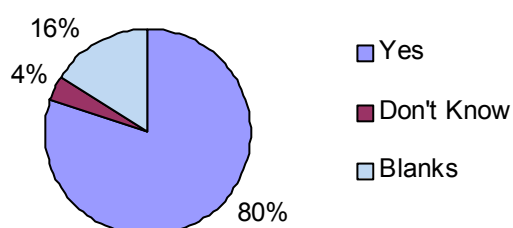
**Question 2 –
Phase 1 (Individual Elements)****Improvements to Wolvercote Roundabout**

Yes = 20 (80%)

No = 0 (0%)

Don't Know = 1 (4%)

Blanks = 4 (16%)

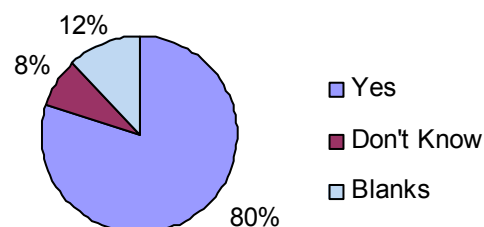
**A40 to A44/A34 Link Road**

Yes = 20 (80%)

No = 0 (0%)

Don't Know = 2 (8%)

Blanks = 3 (12%)



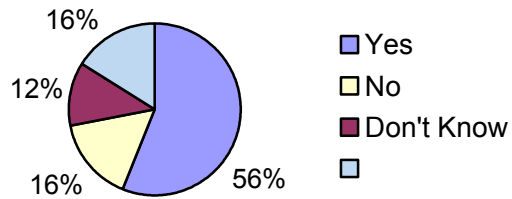
A40 Bus Priority

Yes = 14 (56%)

No = 4 (16%)

Don't Know = 3 (12%)

Blanks = 4 (16%)

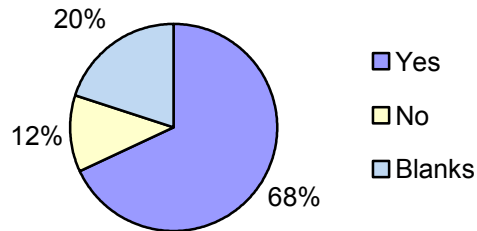
**Improvement at Cassington Signals
(including bus priority)**

Yes = 17 (68%)

No = 3 (12%)

Don't Know = 0 (0%)

Blanks = 5 (20%)

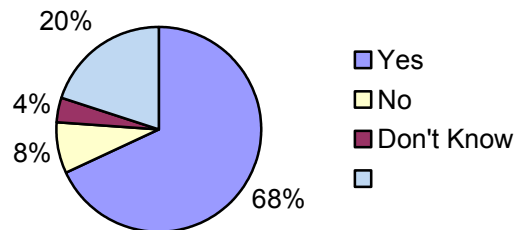
**Improvement at Eynsham Roundabout
(including bus priority)**

Yes = 17 (68%)

No = 2 (8%)

Don't Know = 1 (4%)

Blanks = 5 (20%)

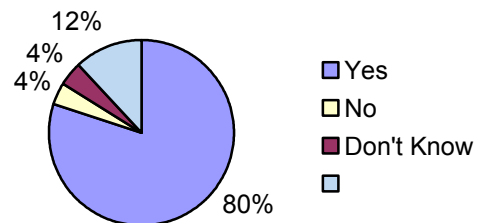
**Upgrading of Pear Tree Park and Ride**

Yes = 20 (80%)

No = 1 (4%)

Don't Know = 1 (4%)

Blanks = 3 (12%)

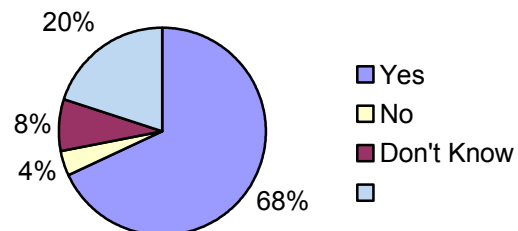
**Extension of A44 Bus Lane**

Yes = 17 (68%)

No = 1 (4%)

Don't Know = 2 (8%)

Blanks = 5 (20%)



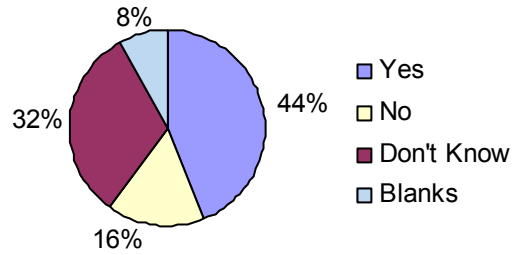
Bus Priority on the B4044 at the approaches to Swinford Toll Bridge

Yes = 11 (44%)

No = 4 (16%)

Don't Know = 8 (32%)

Blanks = 2 (8%)

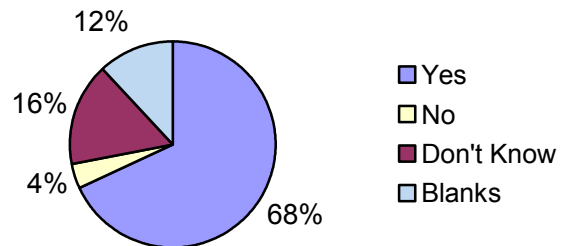
**Question 3 –
Phase 2 – Individual Elements****GTE Oxford**

Yes = 17 (68%)

No = 1 (4%)

Don't Know = 4 (16%)

Blanks = 3 (12%)

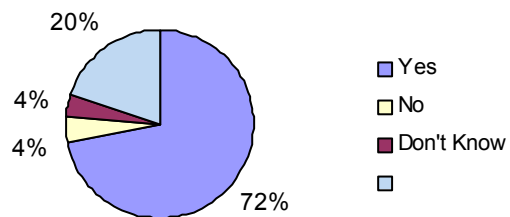
**Witney Park and Ride**

Yes = 18 (72%)

No = 1 (4%)

Don't Know = 1 (4%)

Blanks = 5 (20%)

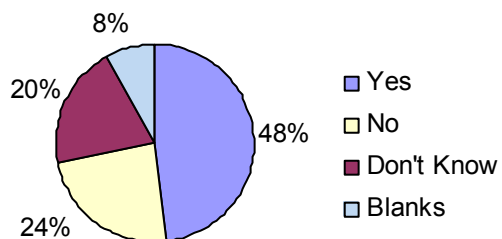
**Additional Bus Priority on A40 (if required)**

Yes = 12 (48%)

No = 6 (24%)

Don't Know = 5 (20%)

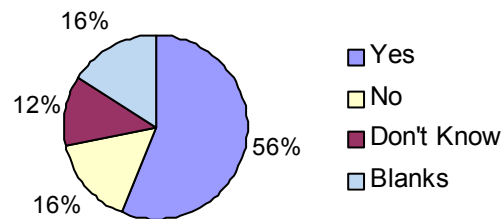
Blanks = 2 (8%)



Question 4
Phase 3 – Individual Elements

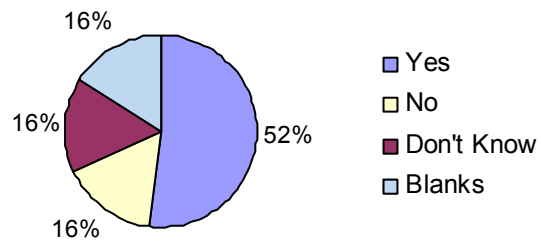
GTE Extension (Witney to Eynsham)

Yes = 14 (56%)
 No = 4 (16%)
 Don't Know = 3 (12%)
 Blanks = 4 (16%)



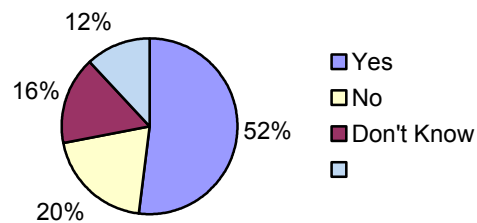
GTE Extension (Carterton to Witney)

Yes = 13 (52%)
 No = 4 (16%)
 Don't Know = 4 (16%)
 Blanks = 4 (16%)



GTE Extension (Eynsham to Oxford)

Yes = 13 (52%)
 No = 5 (20%)
 Don't Know = 4 (16%)
 Blanks = 3 (12%)



Question 5 – Additional Comments

21 respondents made additional comments

ANNEX 3

Brief Summary of main issues raised in consultation responses

- The performance of Cassington signals has improved and it is no longer necessary to treat this junction
- Cassington signals should be replaced with a roundabout
- Bus priority measures at Swinford Toll bridge will be environmentally intrusive and will cause extra congestion along the B4044 route
- The GTE link to West Oxfordshire is needed much sooner than the 10 to 15 years identified in the Strategy.
- The measures identified within the strategy will not be sufficient to cope with the traffic demands arising from housing development
- The Strategy needs to include a more detailed analysis of the impact of the measures on traffic congestion and travelling conditions
- A train service out to Carterton would be better than a GTE link
- We need to revisit the case for dual carriageway
- Strategy should include a new road link into Oxford via Cumnor