

To: Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th November 2008

Item No:

Report of: Head of Environmental Development

Title of Report: Low Emission Zone (LEZ) Feasibility Study Update

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide members with a brief overview of the status and progress with the LEZ feasibility study.

Report approved by:

Finance: Andy Collett

Legal: Clive Thomas

Head of Environmental Development: John Copley

Policy Framework: This work reflects the Council's Vision of improving performance and working with others to deliver shared goals. It specifically contributes to the strategic priority to improve the local environment, economy and quality of life, and the Community Strategy theme of working to create a better living environment.

Recommendation(s): To ask Members to note the current status of the LEZ Feasibility Study

Background

1. An update report was presented to Environment Scrutiny in April 2008. The development of the final traffic model has resulted in some delays in completion of the Feasibility Study programme.
2. The Feasibility Study Programme falls within the process of Local Air Quality Management in Oxford, as required under the Environment Act 1995. Central Oxford has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area since 2003.
3. This resulted in the declaration of an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) in 2006, integrated into the Local Transport Plan (LTP 2006-11), jointly approved by Oxfordshire County Council.
4. The AQAP identified that reductions in traffic emissions are required in order to achieve the air quality objectives as defined in the UK Air Quality Standards Regulations 2007.
5. The AQAP identified that emissions from buses, coaches and heavy goods vehicles are the main source of traffic emissions in central Oxford, and further measures to improve air quality need to focus on reducing them.
6. The AQAP highlighted that the option of reducing emissions from buses and coaches, by the introduction of a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) offered the greatest potential for reducing emissions.
7. A joint Steering Group involving Portfolio holders and lead officers from City and County was established in 2007 to oversee the progress of a Feasibility Study. The aim is to examine the costs and benefits, alongside the health and environmental, and climate change impacts of introducing a LEZ in Oxford.
8. The report provides an update on the final stages of the feasibility study. (The final report due in November, though further work may result).

LEZ Feasibility Study Progress

9. The first stage completed in March 2007 was a data gathering and scoping phase, setting the parameters for the remainder of the study.
10. The first stage report concluded
 - Emissions from congestion are highly significant in city centre urban traffic, thus attention to the contribution of congestion to total emissions is a priority in the development of the traffic emissions inventory.
 - The key outcome of the assessment was the finding that, in the first instance, it would be relatively more feasible and cost-effective to set emissions criteria for buses and coaches rather than setting controls on other types of vehicle
11. Following Stage 1, the Steering Group has considered
 - Options and timescales for implementation

- LEZ standards
- Consultation process with the bus and coach companies (see below)

12. The final assessment is based upon the development of a detailed traffic and emissions baseline, developed from a city centre traffic model. This work has been complex and time consuming, based upon the requirement to assess future traffic scenarios following planned developments in the city centre.

13. The Steering Group has determined that the final assessment will consider

- A bus and coach based LEZ, applying to all PSV operators
- LEZ options to be assessed for PM10 only, NOx only, and both PM₁₀ and NOx.
- Timescales – to look at 50% and 100% compliance by certain dates
- The assessment of scenarios for the impact of a LEZ on baseline traffic emissions, taking into account the impact of changes to current Bus Priority route, following Westgate development.

14. The September meeting of the Steering Group agreed the following outline timetable, leading up to presenting the final recommendations to City Executive on 7th January 2009 and County Cabinet on 8th January 2009.

31st October – Consultant's draft LEZ report available for officer inspection

3rd November - LEZ Steering Group meet to review draft report

Friday 7th November - Draft LEZ report sent out to bus operators (after making any changes requested by the Steering Group)

Monday 17th November* - Meeting with all bus companies

Monday 24th November* – deadline for bus companies' responses to draft final report

Wednesday 26th November – LEZ Steering Group agree recommendations for final reports to City Executive and County Cabinet

*** May be subject to revision**

15. Final consultations with the bus and coach operators and further consultations with the Health Authority and any other public interest groups are expected to take place in 2009, following the outcomes of the City Executive and County Cabinet in January.

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List of background papers:

LEZ Feasibility Study Stage 1 Report. Executive summary
Air Quality Progress Report to Environment Scrutiny April 2008