

Executive Summary – BS2W monitoring report

Baker Street Two Way project is now complete, and this report presents the results of monitoring surveys and observations undertaken both before and after implementation. Construction began in July 2017; the two-way switchover happened in February 2019 and the remaining works were completed in September 2019. The main objectives of the project were to provide significant improvement to the quality of public realm; reduce traffic dominance by introducing two-way working; reduce vehicle speed; reduce vehicle travel distances; improve the environment for pedestrians; improve public transport accessibility; improve conditions for cyclists; maintain adequate kerb side capacity for loading, servicing etc.; avoid any unacceptable impact to traffic operation and provide a safe environment for all road users.

During public consultation, concerns were raised regarding potential traffic impact, including rat-running on local roads. A monitoring strategy was therefore put in place to assess the impact of proposed measures and as part of this, various surveys were undertaken, before works started, in June - July 2017 and then after all works were completed, in October 2019. These surveys have now been analysed.

Generally, the Baker Street Two Way project has had a neutral impact on traffic volumes for most roads within the study area. The project was always promoted to be broadly traffic neutral in terms of overall volumes.

There are a few isolated locations where the traffic flows have increased during certain time periods; this increase is no more than 2-3 vehicles per minute during the AM and PM peaks. There has also been a small increase in cycling activity across the network. This increase is more pronounced during the AM peak where cyclist flows have increased by between 15% to 20% on both Gloucester Place and Baker Street corridors. The cyclist volumes have remained at similar levels during the Inter and PM peaks, although there is a minor increase reported on Baker Street northbound.

Vehicle speeds have generally fallen by approximately 25-30% in the area, which is beneficial for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. The reduction in vehicle speed was a key objective because of the benefits to road user safety and is the natural reaction to the removal of the urban-motorway multi-lane layout, widening of footways and creation of a high street environment with two-way traffic.

There has been an increase of pedestrian activity along all sections of Baker Street in all peak periods, most notably in the Inter peak (84%). It is likely that pedestrian footfall has increased as a direct result of the improved pedestrian space provided by the scheme and the improved pedestrian facilities at the junctions. These changes have made Baker Street more desirable for walking. There has also been an increase in the number of pedestrians using the pedestrian facilities for most locations within the study area. Most of the increase in pedestrian crossing activity occurs on Baker Street where new/improved pedestrian facilities have been introduced. On average, pedestrian crossing activity on Baker Street has increased by 29% in the AM peak, 20% in the inter peak and 35% in the PM peak.

The project has not resulted in any major delays to vehicle traffic on the network and journey times have improved in many instances. The journey times for Baker Street southbound have increased by 1 minute in the AM peak and 2 minutes in the Inter and PM peaks. The journey times for Gloucester

Place northbound have improved by around 1 minute in all peaks, despite the introduction of new pedestrian crossing stages at a number of junctions. Bus journey times have not changed by more than 2 minutes within the network. There are savings to some southbound routes on Gloucester Place. However, journey times for northbound routes have increased for most services, particularly those services now travelling northbound on Baker Street. The routes on Baker Street incur more delays as these routes now travel slightly further and through junctions that feature new or improved pedestrian crossing facilities, whereas previously on Gloucester Place there were no additional delays.

In terms of air quality, when compared against the measurements made in 2017 (pre-scheme), very significant reductions in annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations were observed at all the sites, ranging between 35-50%. When compared to other monitoring sites within central London that fall within the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), the reductions are similar. However, when compared to a monitoring site on the boundary of ULEZ (part of the scheme area is outside ULEZ), the reductions across the area are greater than those recorded at this monitoring site.

In addition to presenting these survey results, the monitoring report also addresses various issues/concerns that were raised soon after the switch to two-way working. Repeated and sustained observations (as opposed to single, limited observations) have been undertaken at several locations using a combination of video surveys and multiple site visits. Based on these observations, the issues have been analysed and mitigation measures recommended as required. Some of these mitigation measures are already being discussed with TfL for future implementation and we will start discussion on the others as well.

The monitoring survey results address the concerns raised at consultation and demonstrate that the scheme has not resulted in rat-running on local roads or worsening of air quality in the area. It is therefore concluded that the project has succeeded in meeting its objectives.