

No 2 Bus Route Improvement (A37/A4018) Proposal **Consultation response from Bristol City Centre Business Improvement District**

Having considered the publicly available documents and resources and consulted widely with its levy paying businesses, many of whom will be directly affected by this proposal in the Park Street and Queens Road section, Bristol City Centre BID does not support this proposal in its current form.

There is no evidence provided of any benefit that will accrue to the many businesses primarily in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors. Whilst there are clearly identified benefits for public transport, for pedestrians and for cyclists, there is no clear economic benefit for the area. In researching the proposal, there is no evidence provided of how a scheme such as this will benefit a 'high street'.

The most significant concerns are from businesses in the Hospitality or Retail sectors who have clearly articulated their concerns to the council on these proposals. These sectors have already suffered a number of challenges in recent years. Any proposal to make such a significant change should be clear that it will support the existence of those businesses if the council is serious about maintaining them and their economic benefit, in this area of the city centre.

The restrictions to vehicle movements will reduce the level of passing shoppers and effectively cut off Park Street from the rest of the City Centre. This comes at a time when we should be welcoming back visitors to our High Streets and developing an area which increases footfall, rather than creating further barriers to trade.

Bristol City Centre BID has been advocating for and acting in the best interests, of its levy paying businesses, since November 2017. Over 740 properties make up the city centre BID area and the businesses therein range from those in the retail or hospitality sector to multi-occupancy office blocks.

The current proposals look to achieve:

- bus infrastructure improvements to help buses move quickly through the traffic improving journey times and reliability.
- better pedestrian spaces providing safe crossing points and attractive streetscapes.
- reallocation of road space for cyclists to make it easier and safer to cycle”

The City Centre BID asks that they also seek to support the economic and business activity in the city centre to ensure that it remains a thriving and successful place.

Bristol City Centre BID welcomes all proposals to improve the city centre for those who work, study, visit or live within the area, having been mandated for a term of 5 years on themes which include improving the welcome, look & feel of the centre and representing the views of its levy payers.

Following the publication of the proposal, Bristol City Centre BID were approached by a number of levy paying businesses along Park Street, who voiced their concerns regarding its impact. To ensure adequate representation of the views of our levy payers, we undertook a survey where we invited responses from all levy paying businesses across the city centre.



The results of this survey are detailed below and form the basis of this consultation response.

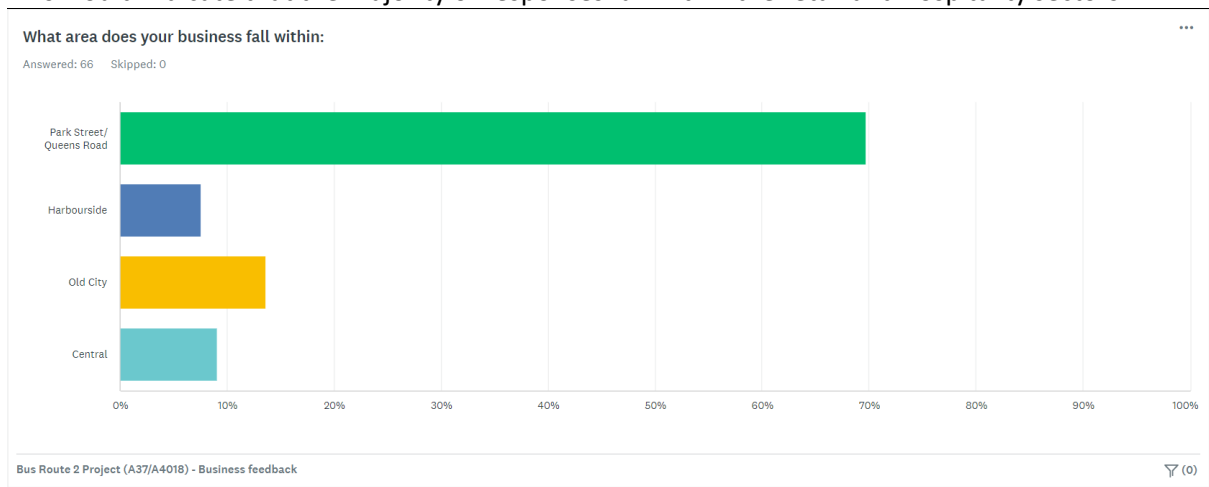
Survey

Responses were invited from all BID levy paying businesses to enable a variety of requirements and opinions with responses being received from 66 individual companies.

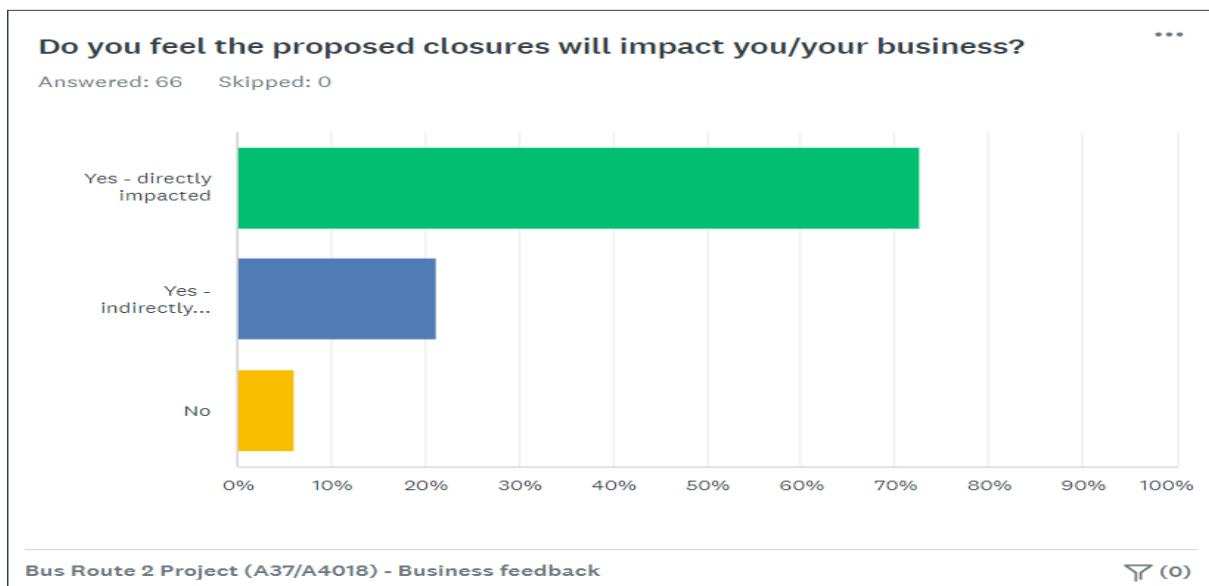
The table below shows that the respondents were divided as follows:

Park Street/Queens Road area	69.7%
Harbourside	7.58%
Old City	13.64%
Central	9.09%

This would indicate that the majority of responses fall within the retail and hospitality sectors.



As would be expected from the large percentage of responses from these sectors, 72.73% feel that they would be directly impacted by the proposal.



Options were given to ensure that respondents were able to consider both positive and negative aspects of the proposal which are listed below and displayed in the above chart.

Benefits:

- It will improve the area by creating a less polluted atmosphere
- Wider paving areas and seating will make the area more accessible to those with disabilities
- The proposal will decrease my journey time into work as they buses will run faster
- The ‘pocket parks’ will encourage more shoppers to stay on Park Street for longer rather than just using it as a thoroughfare
- It will encourage more sustainable travel within the city centre
- The widened paving will enable additional seating for shoppers
- More seating outside will create a nicer atmosphere
- Widened pavements and ‘pocket parks’ will enable businesses to hold outdoor events which will help to animate the street and attract more custom.

Challenges:

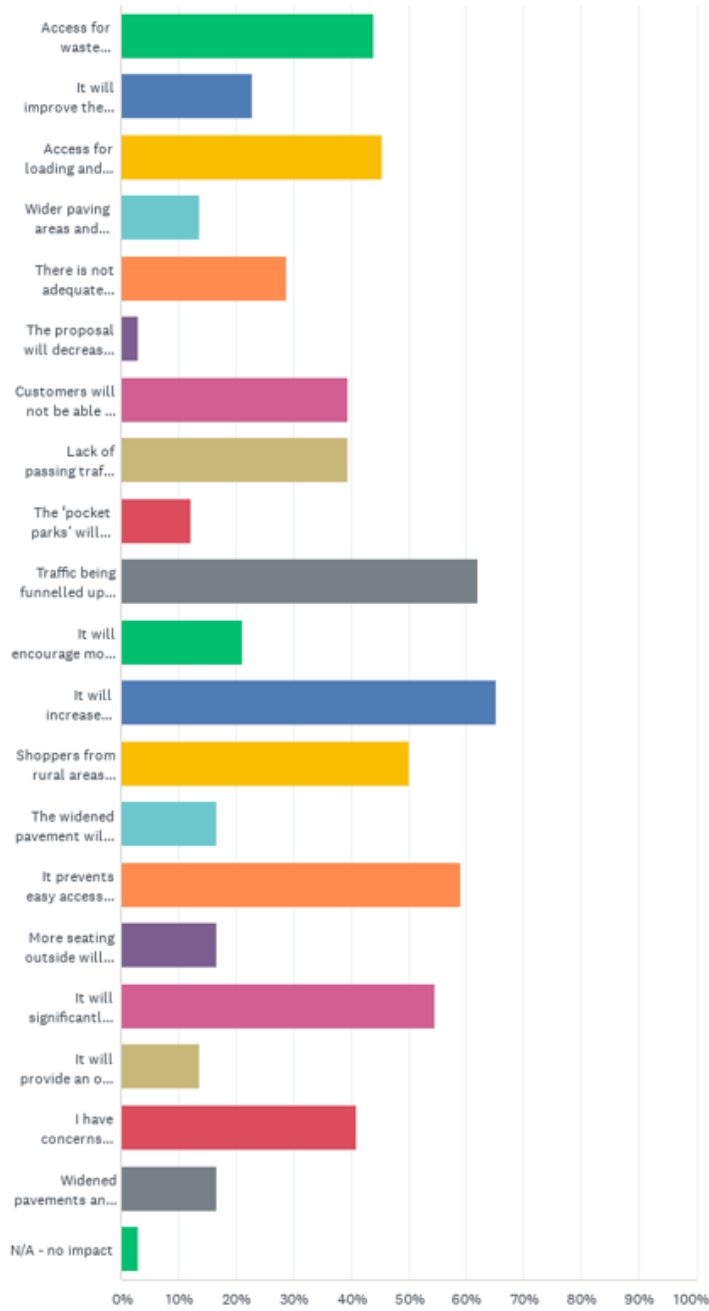
- Access for waste collections will be adversely impacted
- Access for loading/deliveries will be adversely impacted
- There is not adequate parking on the street for access to my building
- Customers will not be able to park and collect large/heavy items
- Lack of passing traffic will have a detrimental impact upon my business revenue
- Traffic being funnelled along Great George Street to reach Charlotte Street will cause congestion as Hill Street is very narrow
- It will increase traffic past the hospital thereby creating further pollution and delays
- Shoppers from rural areas will no longer travel into the city centre as bus services are not adequate to service small villages with few potential passengers
- It prevents easy access around the city centre making it less appealing to shoppers
- It will significantly increase my journey time into work
- It will provide an open space which will have the potential for an increase in street-based anti-social behaviour, causing issues for traders and shoppers whilst creating an increased burden on the Police.
- I have concerns regarding access and turning at the College Green bus gate area.

As you will see from the chart below, the main concerns are the displacement of traffic causing increases in congestion and pollution in other areas of the centre, access around the centre as a whole and the increase in journey times. Only 3% of respondents feel that they will not be impacted and 22.7% feel that the improvements will have a positive impact on pollution levels.

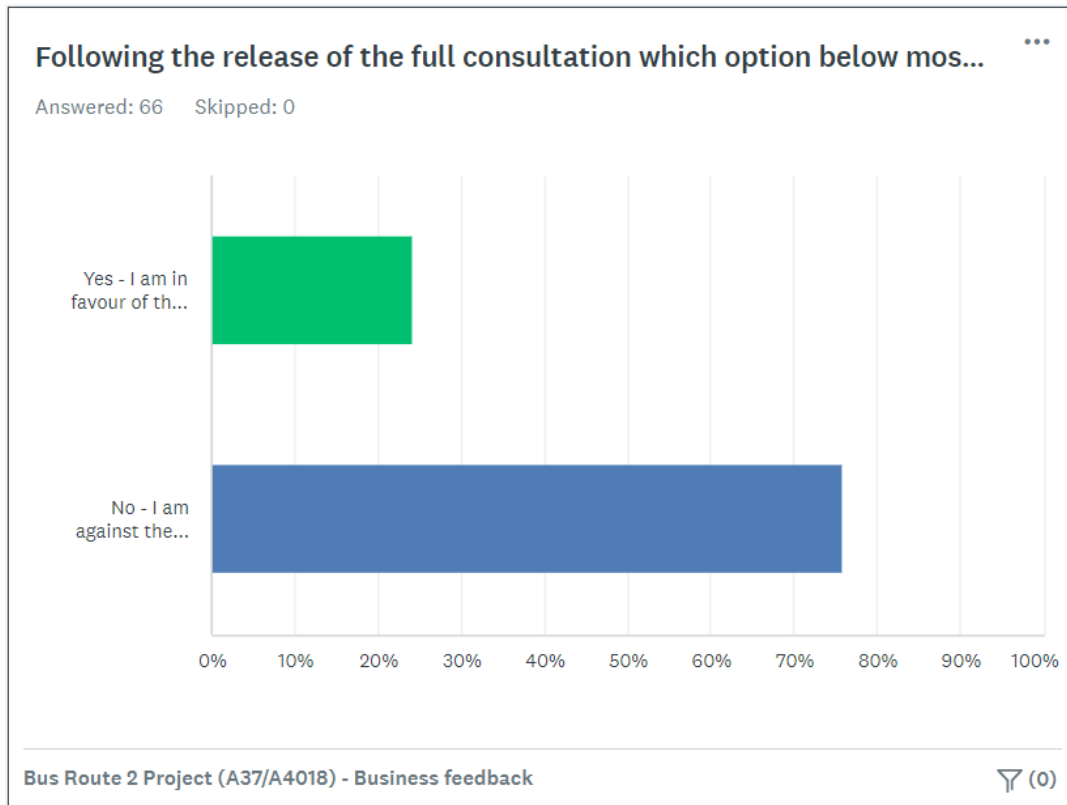
These perceptions seem to be in direct conflict with the aims of the proposal of:
“..improving the transport system as a whole, making it accessible to everyone in Bristol”
and
“..tackling the problems of pollution and congestion.”



Q6 How do you feel you/your business will be impacted? (Please select all that apply)



The final question in the survey asked, “Following the release of the full consultation which statement most accurately represents your opinion on the proposal?”



24.24% are in favour of the proposal
 75.76% are against the proposal

Individual comments were also invited and these are included as an Addendum below.

Following a review of the survey responses we would invite Bristol City Council to give further consideration to the proposal and work with the Bristol City Centre BID and the impacted businesses (particularly those on Park Street/Queens Road) to revise the proposal to the benefit of all parties.



Conclusion

In addition to the responses outlined in the Addendum, we would suggest that further additional consideration be given to the following points:

- Pedestrian crossings or solutions to allow for easy and safe access to both sides of the street.
- Permits for access to business premises to allow for operational access through either bus gates during business hours.
- Consultation with strategic partners to discuss the potential challenges regarding anti-social behaviour caused by additional seating areas and open spaces.
- Innovative solutions for creating a destination street.

We would welcome conversations to further develop a vision for the street which looks to overcome some of the challenges faced by the businesses, particularly with regard to the reduction in footfall and the resulting impact on trade. To this end, we have commissioned a piece of work from a local architectural and design practice in order to work with businesses on seeking their vision for the future of the area.



Addendum

Further comments received.

1. My main concern is attracting people to the area from outside the area. I run a business on Queens Road and things are difficult enough as it is, if car parking will be restricted further it will have a huge impact on my footfall and ultimately result in me not having a sustainable business.
2. Just don't do it. Please stop thinking up ways to deter businesses from operating out of the city centre. There is good reason why companies operate in the centre. We have many clients nearby and all our staff live all over Bristol, the city centre is surprisingly the most central point. I personally think a proposal should be put forward for moving the council buildings to an industrial estate 10 miles out of Bristol.
3. There are far better ways to improve the city than making it inaccessible by car. Public transport within the city needs far more improvement than just closing a few roads and making massive cycle lanes before it will be a viable option for many over a car.
4. This is madness. All global urban studies have shown that pedestrianising areas leads to their downfall and an increase in crime, eg. Broadmead.
5. The negative impact on the retailers outweighs the benefits
6. I like the idea of it, but do not think it has been thought through carefully - it will just increase the traffic burden on other surrounding roads and make the city more congested/poorer air quality
7. We are a business based on Hill St that works with and employs disabled people. Being able to easily drive to our private car park at 7 Hill St is critical. We are in favour of reducing unnecessary driving in the centre but please consider non-retail businesses and the impact on them. If this makes it hard for people to commute or inaccessible it will force us to leave Bristol City Centre.
8. We haven't recovered from RPZ and this is another nail in the retail coffin!
9. As a disabled driver access via Park Street is important for me to be able to get to work.
10. Please don't do it. Yet another idea which will make the City Centre worse. This will not reduce traffic, it will just push all the existing traffic into fewer street, therefore causing more chaos. Shocking idea!
11. Preventing vehicular access by citizens' cars will make Queens Road and Park Street inaccessible to many with mobility disabilities, or with bags of shopping, or with children. More traffic will be forced onto St George's Road. Half of that road is over a decaying and structurally compromised viaduct that is already weak, and, to quote a Bristol City Council Highways Principal Engineer "only theoretically safe for 7.5t lorries on the road..." (email dated 27/01/2009). The closure of Bristol Bridge has already resulted in increased congestion and pollution, and this will only make it worse. Access to Bristol Cathedral Choir



School will be carnage, since Hotwell Road is already jammed, and the closure of Park Street will force traffic onto Jacobs Wells Road, which will be unpassable at peak times. The only way to access and maintain our buildings on Park Street and Queens Road would be by Jacobs Wells Road. Since the Council closed Bristol Bridge building contractors either quote huge prices to price-in the wasted time and hassle, or simply won't do work in the affected areas, and the same will hit Park Street and Queens Road. This will cause the buildings to degrade, and with falling rents and capital values, there will not be the money to pay for the rising cost of maintenance, let alone meeting rising energy efficiency standards. Holding meetings at our premises for our business and our tenants' will not be possible, as many professionals are worth over £200 per hour, for whom waiting on a bus and walking to and from bus stops is not a commercially viable proposition. Many jobs and vital functions simply cannot be undertaken by bus, bicycle or foot. Car traffic is self-regulating in that the users vote for what they want by their choice, which demonstrates that the Council does not have the peoples' mandate to force them off the roads their taxes pay for. Improved public transport should be solution-led, whilst the proposal is to force people on to an expensive, unpleasant and unreliable bus services on pollution producing buses. Either by design or lack of awareness the Council are conflating the reduction of air pollution with constricting the arteries of the city and forcing citizens off the roads. If the Council does not deliberately cause congestion that was not previously such a problem, citizens' car use is not necessarily a problem, especially while buses are diesel and not as efficient as cars unless over half full and especially if poorly maintained and regulated. Reduced emissions is better managed by tougher emissions standards, requirements for alternative power usage (electric or gas), and Emissions Control Zones. The proposals are apparently planned for the next 5 to 15 years, yet by 2030 no new fossil-fuelled cars will be sold in the UK by law, and already many cars on Bristol's roads are electric or hybrid. Had central government not erroneously incentivised people to buy diesel cars, the air would be cleaner, and this is a problem that is being corrected. Bristol is already haemorrhaging investment, business, retail and leisure to South Gloucestershire (Cribbs Causeway shopping, ice rink, surfing lake, Bristol Zoo moving out to "Wild Place", etc), which will accelerate as the Council continues to throttle the arteries of the city (what happens to any organism when you stop it's arteries?)..

12. What are they thinking!!!
13. Please spend our money where it is really needed.
14. Whilst I agree with addressing the traffic and pollution in the city centre, I think the onus is always on the individual when there should be incentives to give up cars by offering improved public transport services. Also, there is absolutely no mention of provisions and/or access for those with disabilities and users of wheelchairs. There is also no mention of a pedestrian crossing in the proposal.
15. The cost of the proposal should be released to the public - Have the looked at the impact of the air quality for the residents of the street surrounding Park Street where all the traffic will now be redirected through. All the Park Street traffic will be sent past a sixth form college



which is very unsafe. They haven't driven the routes they are proposing to Park Street in rush hour. They are not viable options. Can I see the data as to who will actually use these buses -certainly no one who works in our business as it doesn't service any of the areas where they live!!!!

16. More consultancy needs to be done. Park Street Traders and the wider community have not been included in the proposal at any point and decisions have been made without ask what they would like to see. A lot of assumptions have been made. There seems to be no real data in terms on how it will positively affect the people of Bristol and how it will increase revenue for businesses. A scheme like this will kill off any trade to Park Street. WFH and the pandemic has already had a massive effect on trade on Park Street and by stopping people accessing the road, will pushing workers and shoppers even further out which will be devastating. The steep incline on Park Street, is not accessible for those in wheelchairs or hard of walking anyway but, from the plans, the parking is on the wrong side of the road for us personal, and it is not clear how a wheelchair user is supposed to cross a street with no crossings on an incline. The increase of big buses, bikes and electric scooters, we feel will make it more dangerous.
17. Please be more ambitious! Rickshaw rides up and down Park St, underground, Metro, trams. Access hours for lifts to and from work
18. I think this is a bad idea there are fewer and fewer available routes into the city centre and restricting this further will be a mistake. Park Street is on a large hill which does not lend itself to pedestrianisation, it is a poorly thought-out scheme which i believe will cause many more problems than it solves.
19. I think that this is a step in the right direction, and I commend BCC for biting the bullet. I would however say that transport links to my town (Clevedon) need to be improved if I am to stop using my car. This would be my preference but as things stand this is unworkable. I imagine that many other rural commuter belt towns face similar issues. I would also say that trams should be the solution in the centre, not buses.
20. If you really want to improve the bus times, then route the number two around the harbour
21. Please take Businesses comment seriously. Many of us was hit hard by the COVID situation and any other restrictions (closing/narrowing roads for car traffic etc.) may result in closing businesses. Thank you
22. Completely against it along with the vast majority of traders
23. The available responses for the online consultation are ambiguous and can be interpreted to be either for or against the proposal. Absolute sham...
24. Stupid idea, ill thought out once again by BCC



25. if this goes ahead this store will close and 5 people will be out of work. didn't anyone learn from the Clifton village nightmare? the Cotham hill closures? why are you trying to close more stores?
26. Really, really hope it doesn't go ahead, and if it does, we feel there should be a drop off / turning circle at the bottom of park street opposite the Marriott.
27. Concerned about the impact on surrounding streets and possibility of rat runs. Also, other proposed traffic changes such as Colston Street going one way and impact on large vehicle access for loading and unloading, which is required 24/7.
28. Traffic will be 'pushed out' to other areas, increasing traffic and associated delays on already busy roads.
29. As levy payers, Sustrans strongly supports these proposals. We think there are of course significant improvements that could be made to the layout of Park Street to provide more space for shoppers and visitors, with less space for parking. We had tried a number of years ago to work with the BID and Stride Treglown to propose improvements to the Council, but the BID hadn't been interested at that time. We hope this project could be supported and improved.
30. The basic concept is flawed - park street is a massive hill. This is not a restaurant location and external seating is of no value to the vast majority of businesses and / or customers. This will never be a plaza location. Reducing traffic flow on Park Street will relocate pollution from this area but will not have a net reduction on pollution across the city - possibly the reverse. Focussing on delivering protected and clear to follow bicycle lanes through the city will have a greater positive imp

