

"Sending out the right message"?

A confusing and inconsistent message is being sent out to drivers in Edinburgh about parking at bus stops.



"BUS STOP - so what?"

Some drivers do not appreciate this -
so more positive markings are necessary.



Is this the answer?

A comprehensive report on parking control at Edinburgh bus stops. Produced by the Bus and Coach Watchdog,
In cooperation with LivingStreets Scotland, Friends of the Earth Scotland, and TransformScotland.

August 2002

"Sending out the right message"?

Most people who receive this report will have read the Life in the Bus Lane report and the series of Hope Street Reports, This report takes those views further.

Many car drivers do not appreciate the world of life on the buses and many park at stops regardless of the consequence to buses and the passengers. The right message needs to be sent out to make it clear that parking at bus stops is not acceptable. This report gives some ideas on how to do this.

The main focus of this report is to show how the authorities are putting lines and signs to control parking in contradiction to the access needs of buses, where double yellow lines stop before and after the bus stop, or where bus stops are in loading restriction areas.

contents:



Good reasons not to park at bus stops. **see page 3**



Causing obstruction on the Public Highway: **see page 6**



Signs and road markings giving the wrong message. **see page 10**



How to give the right message: **see page 17**

Recommendations coming from this report:

- Single yellow lines and accompanying time restrictions should not exist at bus stops. As these indicate parking at bus stops is acceptable at some times.
- All bus stops should have signing to deter obstruction to buses and passengers. With - Clear markings, including double yellow lines and no waiting signs at all bus stops. Backed with official Clearway Status as soon as possible.
- Enforcement of parking restrictions at bus stops must be given top priority. This must be seen to be enforced to ensure drivers know this is taken seriously. - (Not only in the town centre but all areas need covering at some time as all bus stops need to be kept clear). (Outside areas should not go unchecked as drivers will then learn they can park at bus stops without interference, and so the problem would remain).
- The processing of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) needs to be simplified. Local authorities must be able to shift bus stops and their associated parking restrictions quickly.
- A campaign by the Scottish Executive should be mounted to educate drivers to show more consideration to buses and their passengers. Posters around the city would be very effective, but also signs at bus stops.
- The City of Edinburgh Council should set a target to introduce a comprehensive ban of vehicles at all stops within one year, whatever method is adopted.
- Bus companies should have the technical ability and powers to enforce parking control at bus stops, including instant reporting for bus drivers of vehicles causing obstruction to bus stops.
- Bus drivers and Inspectors should routinely report bus stops being obstructed by using their radios and in turn their company should report the obstruction to the enforcement agency efficiently and without delay. Problem hotspots can be analysed, investigated, and dealt with.
- Buses should be fitted with digital cameras so the driver can also photograph offending vehicles providing photographic evidence.

- If the bus companies are so concerned about their buses being obstructed at bus stops then they should get a dedicated team out on to the streets and monitor and report the situation to the authorities in order to get something done.

- The Highway Code needs gives little reference to parking at bus stops and so needs to be amended by government to emphasis it is not acceptable and why. (The current version is too weak on the importance of keeping bus stops clear).

- The term *do not park near a bus stop* is ill-defined and can mean drivers who park too near a stop can still prevent a bus getting in. -
So bus companies should specify how much space a bus needs to get in and out of a stop, and advise the planning department so road markings at bus stops give drivers a clear single of how far to park away from the stop.

- The Disability discrimination act should be taken into account. Discrimination against the disabled is illegal. A complete ban on parking at, and near bus stops will enable the disabled and the elderly to use buses without fear of getting on and off buses, or maybe not at all.

=====

Good reasons not to park at bus stops.

According to the Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and passengers) Regulations 1990;

A driver shall, when picking up or setting down passengers stop the vehicle as close as reasonably practicable to the left or near side of the road.

Also - A driver and a conductor shall take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of passengers who are on, or entering or leaving the vehicle.

Rule 217 of the Highway Code: *Do not park your vehicle or trailer on the road where it would endanger, inconvenience or obstruct pedestrians or other road users. For example do not stop at or near a bus stop.*

Rule 214 of the Highway Code:

Parking; Stop as close to the side as possible.

The above is to ensure buses in turn do not obstruct the flow of traffic in either direction, also to ensure passengers get to the curb safely without having to walk on the road or contend with curbs etc. It also ensures the disabled or elderly are able to get to the path level without obstruction. Especially the blind.

Loading and bus stops:

One of the main problems for buses is the multiple use of bus stop locations. This happens for example, where buses have to compete with loading zones. It is common to see loading allowed for vans and trucks at bus stops. As seen in this report there are areas where buses are not able to get to bus stops due to legally parked commercial vehicles.



Car parking bays provided right next to a bus stop at SilverKnoves.

Disability Access:

For some years now there has been buses which have built in ramps which automatically or manually come out to allow wheelchair users to get on and off the bus. And indeed under current legislation, all new buses must be of low-floor design in order to accommodate wheelchair users.

The problem is that these will only work if the bus can park next to the curb as the ramps are only designed to lower on to the kerb and not the road. Therefore if there are vehicles parked at the bus stop the ramp cannot be used as there is a gap of some 6 inches or so between the end of the ramp and the road surface.

Even if the ramps were able to touch the road surface the ramp would then become more steep and so be more difficult and dangerous, if not impossible to try and climb, especially for manual wheelchairs. Therefore these badly parked vehicles cause bad access for disabled people wanting to use buses".



Howe Street:

A bus users point of view of a blocked bus stop with vehicles causing an obstruction.

The consequences are;

- A bus driver will not be able to see waiting passengers at the stop.
- Waiting passengers will find it difficult or impossible to see buses coming.
- In bad weather they will not be able to stand in the shelter for protection, as they will have to stand well back to see the bus coming, - so the shelter will be useless.
- The passengers will have to walk out on the road to signal to the driver to stop.
- Wheelchair users who intend using Low Floor/ Easy Access type buses will find this awkward, if not impossible to see and stop a bus. Even if they do then getting on to the bus via the cobble road will be very difficult.

In practice wheelchair users would have to stay well back from the stop to see the bus coming, (also resulting in not being able to use the shelter in bad weather) and then have to rush forward on to the cobble road to stop the bus.

It is probable any wheelchair user would not even attempt this. - Would you?

"Parking at bus stops can be considered as causing an obstruction on the public highway. Sometimes it can just one vehicle parked ahead of a stop which can prevent buses being able to drive straight in to the bus stop area. This means they have to manoeuvre around the vehicle, and often the buses rear end causes an obstruction to other traffic. Worse still there are many times where there are two or three vehicles parked at bus stops so buses have to double park and cause an obstruction to other traffic".

These vehicles are literally causing an obstruction to buses getting into the stop in order for passengers to get on and off the bus with ease and safety. Especially causing an obstruction to the disabled and elderly.



Another sign of bus users given second place to cars.

Causing an obstruction on the Public Highway:

According to English Law and assuming there is little difference to Scottish law; the meaning of the term 'highway' for the purposes of the Highways Act 1980 is given in s 328 of that Act. This section states that the term includes the whole or part of a highway other than a ferry or waterway. Where a highway passes over a bridge or through a tunnel, the bridge or tunnel is, for the purposes of the Act, a part of the highway. Basically, a highway is a way over which all members of the public have the right to pass. This includes, carriageways, bridleways, and footpaths.

Obstruction of highway.

The Highways Act 1980, s 137 states that it is an offence for a person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way wilfully to obstruct the free passage along the highway of whatever type.

The Road Vehicle (construction and use) Regulations 1986 section 103 states.

No person in charge of a motor vehicle or trailer shall cause or permit the vehicle to stand on a road so as to cause any unnecessary obstruction of the road.

The oxford dictionary describes obstruction as

Obstruction; (considered relevant descriptions listed here only).

- 1 the act or an instance of blocking; the state of being blocked.
- 2 the act of making or the state of becoming more or less impassable.
- 3 an obstacle or blockage.

Before this bus arrived these vehicles were "not causing an actual obstruction" - only it seems a "potential obstruction".

But when the bus does arrive they are then "causing an *actual* obstruction" - to the bus, and in turn other traffic, and of course bus users.



Whether or not there was an obstruction is a question of degree for a court to decide; a complete blockage of the highway is not required. Whether or not a use of the highway amounts to an obstruction depends upon whether or not it was unreasonable having regard to all the circumstances of the case, including where it occurs, its duration, its nature, its extent and its purpose, and whether there is an actual as opposed to a potential obstruction.

The term 'wilfully' in this context means that the particular obstruction was occasioned by some deliberate act which was freely carried out by the defendant;

Section 25 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 gives a constable the power to arrest where the service of a summons is impracticable or inappropriate because one of the general arrest necessary to prevent the person causing an unlawful obstruction of the highway

Keeping in mind the above acts plus Rule 217. of the Highway Code:

Do not park your vehicle or trailer on the road where it would endanger, inconvenience or obstruct pedestrians or other users.

For example do not park at or near a bus stop. ---

Why do the authorities not combine the above acts and rules to ensure it is an offence to obstruct buses by parking at bus stops and so effectively or potentially causing an obstruction to the buses themselves and passengers. This can also in turn obstruct or restrict the flow of traffic which may be obstructed, due to the obstructed bus having to park at an angle, or worse still being double parked as it is not able to use its designated parking area.

Considering the Highways Act 1980, s 137 states that *it is an offence for a person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way wilfully to obstruct the free passage along the highway of whatever type and a complete blockage of the highway is not required*, plus the term 'wilfully' in this context means *that the particular obstruction was occasioned by some deliberate act which was freely carried out by the defendant.* The latter (wilfully) surely must include wilfully parking at a bus stop knowing that it will cause an obstruction to buses who do have a right to park there.

The following statement in the Highways Act 1980, s 137 *whether there is an actual as opposed to a potential obstruction* is a bit unclear as it appears to suggest that there has to be an actual obstruction to the flow of traffic. Yet a potential obstruction (ie a vehicle which may be parked in a siding or special parking area for designated vehicles e.g. a bus stop or taxi rank) is less likely to be accepted as causing an obstruction. But how does this relate to the fact a bus stop etc is on the public highway and a complete blockage of the highway is not required?

The term 'potentially' causing an obstruction should keep in mind that it is obvious that as it is a bus stop this is prone to buses having to park there so a vehicle that is other than a bus which is parked there is most likely to cause an obstruction when a bus or buses arrive.

As parking offences have now been decriminalised in decriminalised it is obvious this is a step back from controlling parking and effectively gives a signal to drivers to park as they please including at bus stops. This is especially poignant when there is little or no monitoring or action taken of "offenders". And is in turn ignored by the authorities as it is so common in Edinburgh. This is another sign of the authorities giving the car priority over public transport and it's users, including the elderly and disabled who especially need easy access between buses and the bus stops.

Pictures on the next 2 pages show the consequences of bus stops being blocked.



Great Junction Street, Leith.

One or two (empty) vehicles stopped at or near a bus stop can override the welfare of many other bus users. There will also be a hold up of traffic behind the bus too.

As seen here;

A line of traffic back around the corner due to one car.

No road markings such as double yellow lines demonstrate the lack of control the relevant authorities exercise over car parking.



Great Junction Street and Easter Road.

Elderly people can have problems getting on and off buses. Vehicles stopping buses getting into the kerb makes things worse.



A good place for a bus boarder, but lack of parking control would make this impossible to use.



Signs and road markings giving the wrong message.

It is time drivers are not given so much priority over buses and to give them a clear message that parking at bus stops is socially unacceptable. And can create social exclusion for bus users.

A colleague at Living Streets/ (previously known as the Pedestrian Association), talked to several officials within the City Development Department dealing with bus stops and with the processing of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to restrict parking. The situation is that they are keen to pursue and implement general restrictions on the parking and stopping of vehicles at bus stops, either through blanket restrictions with no parking at any time, or perhaps a two category scheme whereby parking would not be banned at certain times at stops in the second category. There is some pressure for weaker restrictions in tenemented areas because of the pressure for residents parking, but any relaxations here we should firmly resist!

Progress has been held up by the slow emergence from the Department of Transport of revisions to the Traffic Signs Regulations. Under these revisions one of the proposals would make it much easier to introduce blanket restrictions similar to those which already exist in many countries on the continent - in effect by giving bus stops Clearway status. This would have a real advantage in removing the need to process new TRO orders every time bus stops are moved. The revised regulations are now expected to be issued next month, which makes your excellent report very timely. It should enable us to put pressure on to get a systematic ban under the new regulations as soon as possible.

There is one disadvantage though with the proposed mechanism if, as I assume, the police will be responsible for enforcement under Clearway status. They are apparently not keen on it because it is perceived that motorists are not familiar with Clearways! The real reason of course will be that they do not want to bother with the enforcement job, and I fear that enforcement will continue to be lax unless enforcement can be the responsibility of the City through its own contractor.

The alternative would be to introduce double yellows and boxes at all, or all but a subset of stops, under the TRO procedure. This would potentially take longer and would be more cumbersome in that any subsequent changes to stop locations would also require TROs. It could though leave enforcement with the City rather than the Police.

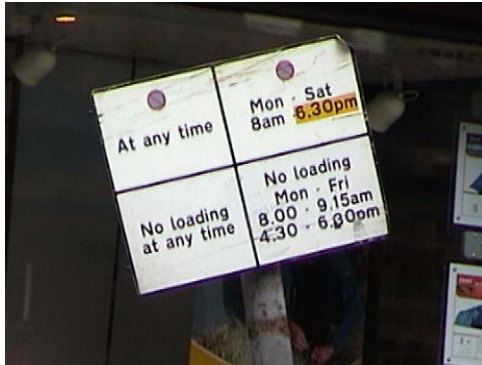
The Watchdog agrees with Living Streets suggestion to press for a comprehensive ban to be introduced as soon as possible under either of these mechanisms. And to stress that this should be a top priority if the City is to be seen as serious in its support of public

transport and that there can be no excuse for continuing delay. I would urge that the City should set a target to introduce a comprehensive scheme within a year. The enforcement issue is important but is secondary and can be followed up once the comprehensive ban is in place.

Also that the ban should operate throughout the hours of operation (or likely operation under any changes the operators might make) should be a 24 hours one. only stops where there is very unlikely to be late night or all night services might be considered for some relaxation of the hours of operation of the ban. Even so, since these stops are likely to be in more suburban locations where there is less pressure on space for parking on street. There should not see any great problems arising there from a 24 hour ban. Also with reference to the Disability Discrimination Act in support of a total ban, since all buses must be able to reach the kerb if good access is to be maintained for disabled users.

As seen in this report a 24 hour ban is less likely to create confusion or excuses among car drivers etc. As currently there are too many different time restrictions etc. It would also mean it would be simpler to enforce. A key reason for a blanket ban on parking at bus stops at all times is - who can say when a bus stop can be allowed to be obstructed when they do not know when a disabled person may need to use that bus stop. Who may need to use the buses ramp to board or alight the bus. - this is paramount to putting a curfew on when wheelchair users, the blind and the elderly can go out on public transport.

Please see over for pictures and comment.



Frederick Street. Stops here can sometimes be clear and sometimes not. The sign in the top picture indicates loading time restrictions for the bus stop area and yet on the other side of the sign is double yellow lines. See below.



The left side shows No Parking or Loading at anytime, Yet on the bus stops side of the sign No Waiting only applies between 8am and 6.30pm, - so parking is allowed either side of these times, plus all day Sunday. - This does not take into account that buses need clear access here during these times. - Why is there No Waiting indicated all time for the bus stop area?



However, even double yellow lines can mean nothing to some drivers and so this van has caused problems for this bus. The bus rear end causing restrictions to the flow of traffic.

The road markings tend to show how the stop has been put into a category of less importance regarding parking control. - Why were the double yellow lines not extended to cover the bus stop area.?



As BUS STOP is ignored it is evident that Rule 217 of the Highway Code is not taken seriously, so as seen later, bus stops need much clearer signing and markings.



Western General Hospital.

Another example where the stop has been given limited parking restrictions. Single yellow lines show parking is acceptable here at certain times.



This sign shows parking is allowed early morning, evenings and weekends.



Yet a tiny portion on the corner is given double yellow lines. - Why was this not extended all the way down the bay to give the stop a no waiting status?

Considering this is a hospital stop, the infirm, elderly and wheelchair users will have to get out into the road if a vehicle is parked at the stop.



Crewe Road with the Western General Hospital in the background.

Here is another example where parking at bus stops is allowed at certain times.



A classic combination:

The above bus stop flag pole has a sign saying waiting is allowed at this stop at early mornings, evenings and weekends.



The nearby pole doubling the message.

More mixed messages giving drivers an inconsistent view of how to treat bus stops.

Different rules or none at all for different stops. The authorities obviously do not see many stops in Edinburgh as places to be kept clear.



Waterloo Place.

Good.

A clear signal to show no parking at any time.

A small but weather-protecting shelter.

And a road which is in good condition.

Naturally to give a good image to tourists which is well praised, but Edinburgh residents and workers in Edinburgh are not always given such respect. See below:



Bottom of Orchard Brae.

Bad.

The double yellow lines stop before the bus bay and indicate that "waiting" is acceptable here. - Again why did the council not make the effort to extend these double yellow lines along the bus stop area?

Are bus users not worth the extra amount of paint??



Drylaw shops.

Very bad.

No markings at all to help prevent other vehicles parking here.

Before this area was patched up some time ago, the potholes were terrible, causing the bus to bump and sway when it pulled in, or left. But it is still bad. - Another sign of the council's lack of attention to bus stop status.

The right picture shows the 'O' of Bus Stop with a pothole in the middle. This area has been neglected so long that the road markings have virtually disappeared.



How to give the right message:

Teaching drivers to give more respect and giving higher status to buses.



My old home town of **Whickham Gateshead Tyne and Wear** where there are few sightings of vehicles parked at bus stops, and in fact the rest of Gateshead.

These two stops are shown as examples which are on Whickham Front Street.

Though this road looks quiet being on a Sunday, it can be very busy other times of the week.

Double yellow lines help send out the right message.



Left: Gateshead. - Another good example where a clear signal is given to drivers that no waiting is allowed at this bus stop.

Though the Watchdog has been told "Most bus stops in the City Centre, incorporate a single yellow line, meaning that waiting is not allowed at any time during the controlled hours; it would be better to put double yellow lines at all bus stops to indicate no waiting at any time instead of sending a signal to drivers that outside these single yellow line hours it is okay to park at stops.

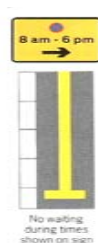
In effect it means out of these hours, cars etc can "legally" park at bus stops. Some believe that Rule 217 is enough to ensure drivers will keep bus stops clear, but many ignore it as it is a guide

What some fail to realise is that buses continue on late into the evening so buses can then be blocked by other vehicles parked at stops. Considering some single yellow line areas only include Monday to Friday hours, then weekends also can allow parking at bus stops. Considering 5 minute observations apply to single yellow line areas this also gives drivers some flexibility to stay a few minutes (or as long as there is no Parking Attendant around) at stops. Ask any bus driver.

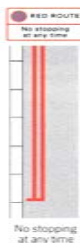
One clear message about parking at bus stops should be sent to all drivers instead of the confusing message they are given.



Right Double yellow lines at bus stops to indicate no waiting.



Left. Single yellow lines at bus stops gives the wrong message, and out of hours indicated by the signs then allows parking. (In reality)



Better Still: (left)

"No Stopping" would be much more effective. - Double red lines at bus stops. This would give buses priority and a more respectable image of buses to the drivers of other vehicles.

The present system is weak by not being consistent and giving different signals in different areas.

In effect there is no real system to effectively control parking at bus stops.

It does not matter where bus stops are, buses need reliable access, - so having different restrictions at different bus stops is misunderstanding the true access needs of buses and the passengers.

Right No waiting at any time (unless it is out of the hours stated) - along with a 5 minute observation time seems confusing.

The council have not ensured this sign is facing the road, again showing lack of regard to parking control.



Should bus stops be low profile and blend in to the background so not to cause inconvenience to car users? -

Or should they be HIGH PROFILE to promote public transport?



Though these red lines are only here at these bus stops because they are already on bus lanes, (and maybe not all stops is Edinburgh could have these), - it could be possible for known stops which have regular obstructing problems for buses such as Hope Street etc could have HIGH PROFILE parking control indication.

This would give no doubt to drivers that NO STOPPING at any time is in force at the bus stop area.

Another idea is that all bus stops should have road markings saying:

BUS STOP
KEEPCLEAR
 or
BUS STOP
NO PARKING





Known problem stops for regular obstruction and many other stops could have signing which give no uncertain terms.

No stopping at any time.

Should the sign below be on all bus stops?



In key problem areas this could be reworded:

ACCESS FOR BUSES ONLY.

**OFFENDING VEHICLES
WILL BE WHEEL CLAMPED.**

RELEASE FEE £20.00



A sign at on a ramp going down to Waverley (train) Station.

Could this type of sign be used along with a bylaw to control parking at busy bus stops? -

**MOTORISTS FAILING TO COMPLY
WITH PARKING RESTRICTIONS
AT THIS BUS STOP ARE LIABLE
TO PROSECUTION UNDER XX**



More pictures to show the necessity for such a scheme.

This page includes pictures from the Life in the Bus Lane report. But as this problem is common more action could be taken straight away.

A single yellow line allowing parking near the bus stop.

The white van prevents the bus getting into the kerb.



BUS STOP is not enough to tell drivers not to park here, so more positive markings and signs are necessary. Along with monitoring and enforcement of city centre and rural areas of Edinburgh.

Blatant inconsiderate parking means this bus cannot get into the stop.

The many passengers getting on and off the bus are put second place by the one car user.





A queue of bus users at the stop look on as they know what will happen when a bus comes round the corner.

Bus companies should specify how much space a bus needs to get in and out of a stop. As the term near a bus stop can mean any distance a driver thinks a bus can get in, - and they are often wrong. Drivers who park too near a stop can still prevent a bus getting in.

Right picture. This bus shelter is located in the wrong place, because a bus that could get in here would have to park way ahead of the shelter. - This is bad planning with no idea of the needs of bus drivers and bus users. The shelter should either be relocated further up so the bus can drive close to the shelter, or the shelter should be put on a build out.



Professional drivers should know better.

Would this taxi driver mind if a bus parked at his taxirank and prevented him getting in?

Battle steps up for better bus access

Call for city to alter kerbs to help OAPs

THOUSANDS of Edinburgh pensioners will be frozen out of free bus services unless public transport is made more accessible, it was claimed today.

Campaigners warned that it is often "almost impossible" for the elderly to board buses in Edinburgh.

With free off-peak travel set to be introduced in the city from October, pressure groups have called on the council to invest in far more "bus boarders", train station-style pavements that are level with bus floors.

Crucial

The bus boarders increase the height of the kerb, allowing the elderly to alight with ease.

A handful of bus boarders have already been installed in Edinburgh, but campaign groups are calling for more.

John Wilson, national president of the Scottish Pensioners' Association, said: "Bus boarders should be a priority. Many elderly people have difficulties raising their legs, and buses should be easily accessible to everyone."

Phyllis Herriot, chairwoman of

By **JASON CUMMING**

the Scottish Pensioners' Forum, said: "There's not much point in having free bus services if you can't access the bus."

A spokesman for Help the Aged added: "Buses at the moment aren't terribly accessible so there needs to be changes."

"It is crucial that older people will not only be able to benefit from a free bus service but also an efficient service meeting their needs."

Sustainable transport campaigners highlighted Aberdeen as a city which had successfully dealt with the problem.

Colin Howden, of TRANSform Scotland, said: "For people with mobility problems, like many of the elderly, there are things the council should be investing in."

"The bus companies have put a lot of money into low-floor buses, but we have not seen the council put the same amount of attention into the pavement side of things."

"Every single time they sort out a pavement, facilities for boarding buses should be built in."

Friends of the Earth Scotland chief executive Kevin Dunion added: "Thanks to the Executive's free off-peak travel scheme we will

soon see a massive jump in the number of elderly and disabled able to use local buses. Unless action is taken, by local authorities and bus companies, to improve conditions for these people, then this well-intentioned scheme could well be undermined."

Steven Copeland, of the Bus and Coach Watchdog users' group, said: "Steps from the road to the path can make it almost impossible for access between buses and the bus stop. It is up to the local authority to make sure that buses are accessible."

Eligible

City transport leader Andrew Burns today said bus boarders would be a key component of the Leith to Straiton "quality bus corridor" - on schedule for 2004.

Clr Burns said: "A whole array of bus boarders will be built in. As we develop quality bus corridors and upgrade Greenways, we will put in bus boarders where we can."

Under an £80 million deal signed last month between the Executive and local authorities, men aged 65 and over and women aged 60 and over will be eligible for free passes from the autumn.

► **Comment - Page 10**

All aboard

PEOPLE in Edinburgh have got used to hearing about proposed multimillion pound schemes to tackle the Capital's transport problems.

But for thousands of pensioners, there is a simple and relatively inexpensive measure which would help them to get around the city by bus.

Campaigners are calling for the introduction of "bus boarders", which raise the edge of pavements to create train station-style platforms, making it easier for older people to get on without a huge step up.

Many modern buses now have low-floor access to help not only the elderly and disabled but also parents with push chairs and prams. But it will be some time before all buses include this feature.

The council has said bus boarders will be built into the new "quality bus corridor" between Leith and Straiton, due to be completed by 2004.

But the campaigners sensibly suggest they could be included every time the council has to carry out work on pavements.

Bus boarders may not have the same high-profile appeal as tram schemes or new railway lines, but they are a practical way to make a difference to the lives of many ordinary people.

As the council and the Scottish Executive work on ambitious plans to sort out Edinburgh's transport, they should not forget the simple needs of a large group of bus users.

5th April 2002

Campaigners call for concerted action against illegal parking at bus lanes and stops – By Mike Gerber

Report laments lack of thought for the needs of bus passengers

Bus and Coach Watchdog, an Edinburgh-based passengers' group, launched a report this week berating Scottish local authorities' record on providing for the needs of bus passengers.

The report, *Life in the bus lane*, calls for concerted action to improve the quality of services marred by inconsiderate or illegal parking in bus lanes or bus stops and for radically improved bus shelters.

It urges criminalisation of parking at bus stops, with bus drivers armed with radios to instantly report obstructing vehicles. All bus stops would also have double yellow lines and 'no waiting' signs.

A blitz by police, traffic wardens and parking attendants is urged to tackle the problem throughout Edinburgh along with the use of cameras to police bus lanes.

The report, endorsed by Transport Scotland and Friends of the Earth, highlights the fact that investment in low-floor and wheelchair-accessible buses is wasted if buses cannot get to the kerb.

It also claims that the Scottish Executive's scheme to provide free off-peak travel for the disabled

and elderly will be undermined unless concerted action is taken to improve access for wheelchair users and shelters offer more protection against harsh weather.

'Bus passengers are too often overlooked in discussions over transport,' says group spokesman Steven Copeland. 'In all the hysteria over rail travel, it is usually forgotten that most public transport

journeys are actually made by bus.'

It concludes: 'All the authorities need to start putting effort into researching the feelings and practical needs of passengers, if they really want to see car use reduced.'

● The report comes as Transport for London hailed its recent pilot of a £25M-a-year scheme to po-

lice bus lanes and buses as a success. The pilot of 'operation presence', which will see 240 Metropolitan police officers assigned to 27 major bus lane routes to ensure the smooth movement of buses, took place over two weeks in January on two bus routes in south London.

In the two weeks of patrolling the TfL red routes running from Brixton to Croydon, 922 tickets were issued to people illegally parked, 2,010 drivers were given verbal warnings, 33 vehicles were removed and a further 108 un-taxed vehicles were caught.

A TfL spokesman said: 'We were very pleased with the results, as were the police. The Met was also pleased with the smooth co-operation between us.'

A dedicated control room is being opened to get the scheme up and running on two routes by June, rising to 27 routes by next spring. The Association of London Government remains concerned that the unit will be unable to issue tickets on borough roads without a change in legislation, and is discussing this with the mayor (*Surveyor*, 17 January).



The group calls for cameras to police vehicles blocking bus lanes



The Bus and Coach Watchdog

Working with authorities and bus and coach companies
to monitor and improve their services.

Author member of:

The Bus and Coach Watchdog

Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Friends of the Earth Derwentside (local group in England)

Friends of the Earth Scotland

Gateshead Access Panel

Gateshead Transport Advisory Committee as a member of NECTAR

Living Streets Scotland

NEAT (North East Action on Transport)

Newcastle Healthy Cities Project

North East (of England) Combined Activists Round Table (NECTAR)

Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance

TRANSform Scotland

Transport 2000 Northumbria