

The existing problems that Chester faces concerning traffic congestion are numerous and varied. They range from dangerous conditions to frequent delays and occur all over the city but mainly in the City Centre (CBD).

A number of solutions have been offered and Chester City Council have adopted lots of these ideas. Although some are believed to have worked, some have definitely not. I believe that some of the solutions, like Park and Ride schemes, which operate by collecting passengers on the edge of the city and dropping them off in the centre, have certainly failed to work, especially on Saturdays (a popular shopping day). My regular experiences of travelling with different Park and Ride services has taught me that it's just as easy to park your car on the edge of the CBD and walk into the centre of Chester than to use these special 'faster' services. I think this is the result of two decisive factors. Firstly, I don't think that there are enough bus lanes and secondly, the dense traffic congestion prevents the buses travelling efficiently at busy times outside the city, although once they enter into the 'no-cars' zone, their progress may be smoother and faster but pedestrians often walk in the centre of the road making it difficult to make smooth and steady progress. In light of these problems, I feel that Chester City Council should perhaps offer an extra bus lane and also advise pedestrians to walk on the footpaths at all times if possible. An extra bus lane would be expensive though and if the new addition was made, unless the road was made wider, then a car lane would have to be forfeited, increasing the traffic congestion to an even greater scale.

If a parking discount was available to shoppers/commuters who use Park and Ride services, it may attract more customers and therefore remove some of the cars from the busy areas of Chester. I personally, don't feel that this would have a wide spread effect and although it may a little, it wouldn't provide a long-term answer to Chester's traffic problems.

Another big problem that Chester faces is the amount of traffic there is in and around the centre of the city (excluding the main shopping streets where most vehicles are forbidden entry). There are a number of open solutions to combat this problem, one of them being to increase the number of car parks in the most congested areas of the city. I believe that this would help because whenever I go to Chester on a busy day, most of the car parks are full and quite often, you have to circle around ring roads and side streets for a long time until you find an available, legal, and wide enough space! Also, cars often give up or don't bother looking for a space in the first place. There is evidence of this all along most streets; lots of shoppers park their vehicles on the sides of busy roads, often illegal, parking places. This slows down all vehicles and therefore increases the congestion of traffic on Chester's roads. Hiring more Street Wardens in the affected places in Chester could solve this problem because if people get caught once, it might deter them from parking illegally again.

To charge cars to enter the city centre would be unfair, I feel, but if the designated price was not too much and it helped to lessen the problem of Chester's traffic congestion, I think it would be acceptable. Chester City Council should consider this option well, it may cause a number of disputes, but I feel that it would help.

Another way to reduce the amount of traffic in and around the city centre would be to use trams as a form of transport. You can find an example of tram-use in Blackpool

where thousands of people come to visit the illuminations and attractions along the famous Golden Mile beach every night. They are an effective way to transport people from place to place quickly and efficiently, without queues! This system does have a drawback though – it costs a lot to make the trams and lay them down. However, once they have been set out, they are pollution free - they run off electric power which is relatively inexpensive. I don't feel that this would work in Chester mainly because I don't think there is enough space. -The trams would not be able to journey for long stretches because the densely packed shops and roads provide little, if any space. The system would have to be built above ground and this would probably be even more ugly than if it was on flat ground. It would also be even more expensive.

Chester has another big problem – hundreds of people commute or journey for leisurely purposes on a regular basis to Chester by bicycles or simply by walking after a bus or train journey perhaps. You would think this might be safe when cars aren't moving at great speeds but in some parts of Chester, there are a number of different hazards which effect these particular people. In the centre of Chester, things, although unorganised, they are relatively safe below the traffic is generally slow moving because of queues etc. On other roads in Chester, such as the outer ring road and sometimes the inner ring road, traffic moves quite fast and the large numbers of pedestrians who cross these roads are taking a slight risk and, inevitably, some casualties will occur.

Although there are already speed limits in place all over Chester, including on the ring roads, people, as a whole, take little notice of them and are mostly oblivious as to the dangers they are presenting to cyclists and pedestrians. I believe that if more speeding cameras were placed on the ring roads in particular, it would limit the risks of crossing ring roads. This solution is relatively cheap and it's a source of income anyway, even if the money does proceed to the Government, some of it will eventually help Chester in some way or another.

Another solution to this particular problem would be to make more cycle routes and signpost them well so vehicle owners and cyclists are more aware of each other. This would not be too expensive and it requires little space so I believe this solution would work well.

Residents who live near the City Centre face a problem that again, concerns traffic. The commuters/shoppers often park in residential areas and then make their own way to their destination. In Upton, for example, there is a scheme which charges these people to park in the street but allows residents who have a pass to park free of charge in their street. This is a reasonable solution that isn't expensive and doesn't present any disadvantages to the local residents. Because of these reasons, I believe this scheme, and ones like it, should be more widespread.

Another suggestion that Chester City Council may have encountered is Computerised Traffic Lights. I don't think these would have a great effect; if anything, I think the sets of traffic lights already in place in Chester, especially on the roundabouts, do more harm than good. They probably aren't expensive but if it was up to me, I would not use these in Chester.

Overall, in my opinion, I think that if Chester City Council and it's residents want Chester to become less congested, traffic-wise, the Council needs to spend a lot of money implementing solutions such as widening roads and building a new lane specially for buses, building cycle routes and car parks and generally making more space for the ever-growing amount of cars on Britain's roads. All the solutions supplied have their own drawbacks but I feel that, in my opinion I have separated the good solutions from the bad ones.

My information was based on my own knowledge, my parents' knowledge (who travel to Chester regularly in different types of transport) and the worksheet: 'Problem's in Developed Cities.'