Transport

Watch: Southampton bus drivers poised to strike over 'dangerous' diversion

Southampton bus drivers are poised to strike over a ‘dangerous’ diversion route.

GMB members working for Unilink – Southampton's bus service provider – has today [Friday] begun a consultative industrial action ballot over management’s insistence on the enforced use of an unsafe diversion route which could endanger staff, passengers and the public.

The change to the U6 route now means a dangerous sharp right turn for buses at the city's Six Dials junction, causing buses to cross two lanes of fast flowing oncoming traffic to gain access to the bus lane heading into the city centre.

The junction, which is extremely busy on a normal day, sees a huge increase in volumes of speeding traffic during rush hour and Saints home games.

Such an abnormal right turn is putting driver, passengers and members of the public at potential risk of a serious road traffic collision.

The consultative ballot which will close on Friday 22 September could be followed immediately by a formal industrial action ballot.

Any full walkout of drivers would result in disruption of all Unilink city wide services as early November.

Nicky Nixon, GMB Regional Organiser, said:

"This thrown together so-called risk assessment [1], was rushed through when GMB and drivers questioned safety aspects of such a dangerous diversion.

"Unilink clearly pushed on with the change and have no interest in protecting the safety of either the public or their own drivers.

"It's more a question of when a serious incident happens and not if.

"GMB will seek advice from traffic commissioners – we believe Unilink's actions breach it's required adherence to traffic regulations and conditions required under their operator's licence.

"When an accident happens our members know Unilink will try to blame the driver, who will then have his employment and own license placed at risk through the company's incompetence.

"I suggest that Unilink re-think this diversion sooner rather than later and listen to those best suited to see the imminent danger this route change puts everyone in.

"Otherwise GMB we will be forced to support a driver walk out

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