

# TfL Disability Equality Scheme Consultation 2009

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This is a response to the Consultation document produced by TfL in September 2009

## My Perspective

I am aged 60, I have a cerebral palsy as the result of a birth injury, and I have been a regular cyclist in London (and other parts of the UK) for 45 years. About twelve years ago I made a deliberate decision to increase my cycling in order to preserve my fitness and mobility as I got older, and I have been cycling to work (about eight miles each way) regularly for the last five years. My current job involves booking clients for cycling training, I am active as a volunteer for both CTC and the London Cycling Campaign, and for the last two years I have been a trustee for a charity promoting cycling for people with disabilities. I took part in the TfL consultation with disabled cyclists and walkers on use of urban Greenways; at the suggestion of London Cycling Campaign.

Like other cyclists with long experience of cycling in London, I have noticed that whereas the experience changed little throughout the last century (since, say, 1950) there has been a step-change in the last five years: in the numbers of cyclists and in the awareness of other road users. Greater consideration by motorists has created a virtuous spiral in which more people are prepared to cycle and the overwhelming demographic of young, predominantly male, cyclists in sports clothing and a hurry is breaking down. The gender balance is apparently changing, there are more older people cycling and more people cycling in suits, high-heeled boots and fashion clothing.

Cyclists with disabilities will increase as the general population of cyclists increases. Cycling is excellent exercise for many people as it is rhythmic, non-weightbearing (does not put excess pressure on leg joints and the lower spine) and will tend to improve respiratory efficiency, muscle tone and strength and reduce weight. It also improves self-confidence, spatial abilities and social skills and the hormonal effects of exercise will help to improve mood. There are many groups around the country encouraging people with disabilities to cycle; including:

- people with Asperger's syndrome or on the autistic spectrum
- people with learning difficulties
- adults and children with serious weight problems
- people with mobility impairments
- people with visual impairments, riding on tandems
- disabled sports cyclists

There is a wide range of equipment and cycle adaptations available for these people: tricycles, recumbents, wheelchair cycles, hand-cycles, adapted transmissions for people with only one leg able to give a power stroke or who are unable to make a full turn of the pedals and adaptations for people with prostheses. Some of these people will never have the degree of control or anticipation sufficient to allow them to cycle on the road but many of them do and TfL has a duty to provide for them as for other road users in London. Cycling can greatly increase the range of a disabled person's activities and for many disabled people, even when they are walking, the cycle acts as a mobility aid; as one man calls it, his "inline Zimmer."

## General Comment

The Jury assembled for this consultation does not appear to have had any cyclists included: it has addressed issues faced primarily by pedestrians and public transport users. Had the Jury set out to address issues of importance to cyclists, these might have included:

- 1 Where cycle lanes are provided, on- or off-road they should be of sufficient width throughout to be easily passable by a disabled cyclist on a recumbent tricycle. This would have implications both for their width and the minimum radius for curves.
- 2 Where cycle lanes are temporarily closed for road works (as is frequent at present) there should be adequate warning with an alternative route signposted. It is not reasonable to assume that a disabled cyclist can easily dismount and walk around a hazard.
- 3 Provision for disabled cyclists to cycle through pedestrian areas, possibly on defined routes. This is not a plea for disabled cyclists to be allowed to bomb through a pedestrian area at 15 mph or so, but for cyclists travelling at about 4 mph, similar to a mobility scooter.
- 4 Consideration for the problem of disabled cyclists in stations, both where there are unavoidable staircases and long walks from the station entrance to the train door. Although this is more likely to be an issue on main-line stations than the Underground or Overground, cyclists don't have the benefit of the buggies provided for other disabled passengers, and they often have to walk to the far end of the train from the barrier for cycle storage, and then back down the train to find a seat.

## Particular Comments

### Cyclists on Pavements (Page 16)

The TfL response has not addressed this concern of the Jury, possibly on the assumption that this is not a TfL concern. However, cycling on pavements is an incivility which attracts massive negative impact from pedestrians, particularly those who feel vulnerable as a result of disability. It may concern TfL in the following ways:

- 1 Many people, adults and children, cycle on pavements in the (possibly mistaken) expectation that they will be safer there. There are actually more hazards for cyclists on pavements than in the road, but they don't weigh a quarter-ton or more and travel at up to 50 mph. Statistically a cyclist is four times as likely to have an accident and suffer injury on the pavement than on the road. TfL is in an excellent position to educate people on this reality – and to improve the road environment to encourage them off the pavement.
- 2 Many parents are conflicted between the risk to their children from cycling on the road and the anti-social nature of cycling on the pavement. This is a training driver, as parents seek to equip their children with the skills to make them safe on the roads, and TfL is a source of funds for Boroughs providing training for cyclists.
- 3 The existence of cycling routes on pavements creates ambiguity about the rights of cyclists and this is amplified by the frequency with which the beginning and end of pavement cycle routes are not clearly marked. Too often a route is only marked by blue discs at infrequent intervals. If used, these should be visible from every side junction.
- 4 Segregated cycle routes on pavements have a confusing range of colours; from self-colour (the route is only defined by a white line on each side) to black, pink or green. The

colouring should be consistent (green is the most prominent colour) and it should be supported by bicycle stencils, metal signs and clearly marked start and end of the path. Give way signs on both sides of a junction give an indication that the cycle route continues across the junction.

- 5 Pedestrians often seem to be strangely attracted to cycle routes as the best place to walk. Sometimes this is because they are the smoothest route and the surrounding paving is cracked or uneven. Greater consistency in marking routes would make it possible to educate pedestrians to keep away from cycle routes. An example where conflict arises is the ramp to the north-bound side of Waterloo Bridge from Belvedere Road SE1. This is frequently used by pedestrians coming out of the National Theatre and Royal Festival Hall, looking to get to Waterloo station, even though it is clearly marked as a cycle route, there is a more direct pedestrian route to the station from concert Hall Approach nearby and the only pedestrian route from the top of the ramp is across the bridge: there is no route alongside the gyratory towards York Road.
- 6 A grooved surface might be preferable to a white line to demarcate the edges of a segregated pavement cycle route and be more easily detectable for people with vision impairment.

Major cycling organisations, including CTC and London Cycling Campaign support the DfT Hierarchy of Provision, in which shared use footways should be considered as the last option for cyclists. Pavement routes and pavement crossings are more desirable when they improve permeability; providing routes for cyclists that are quicker and quieter than the routes available to motorists.

The Jury raise an issue about cycles chained to seating. More cycle stands and some monitoring of abandoned cycles left chained in them might address this problem, but it has to be said that the rate of growth in cycling has made it very difficult to keep up with provision of facilities. The introduction of the Mayor's cycle hire scheme in 2010 may have an impact on this.

Enforcement (the Jury ask for cyclists who offend to be prosecuted) could certainly have an impact in improving cyclist behaviour in very many ways, but it would need to be consistent and continuous. The current 'system' by which Community Support officers will have a raid on a particular target on a quiet day is neither effective in changing behaviour nor perceived as fair. Effective enforcement which did change behaviour would have an impact in reducing the disfavour with which cyclists are viewed, encouraging more non-cyclists to take up cycling and building towards TfL targets.

### Shared Space (Page 17)

It is worth pointing out that segregated cycle lanes whether on or off road may create barriers for people with disabilities in the form of kerbs, bollards or railings. These hard engineering solutions are also relatively inflexible and can be overwhelmed by sudden growth in cycle use.

It is also worth pointing out that some disabled cyclists need a kerb or a vertical support (wall, pole, bollard or railings) to assist in mounting and dismounting. Well designed 'Sheffield' type stands can fulfil this role, but clearing out 'street clutter' too enthusiastically will disadvantage some users.

## Cycling on Greenways (Page 46)

There was a consultation in the autumn of 2007, managed for TfL by an outside consultancy. There are a number of quite complex points about urban Greenways:

- There are different types of Greenway requiring different management and appropriate for different uses; e.g. towpaths, railway paths or paths through parks. Towpaths are the narrowest and most likely to spark conflict, but are not under the direct control of TfL.
- Similarly the uses to which cyclists put these Greenways varies: commuting, leisure, exercise, social, shopping or other local journeys. Long distance commuting –over five miles – is most likely to cause conflict as cyclists may be seeking to travel at 15-20 mph. This use could sometimes be diverted onto roads: cyclists use the path beside Rotten Row through Hyde Park because it leads directly from the route through Kensington Gardens, but the South Carriage Drive would be more appropriate for commuters.
- Types of use and traffic volumes can change during the day. Commuting cyclists use the east-west route through Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park in large numbers during the early morning when other users are relatively sparse. The same cyclists return in the late afternoon, when the parks are much busier.
- Greenways are often desirable to cyclists because they are free of junctions and so allow a high average speed or because they are perceived as safe. In some cases a railway path or a towpath offers an alternative to busy main roads where there is a very limited minor road network. This is true in west London where various railway lines form barriers to travel and the Park Royal Partnership has worked with British Waterways to encourage employees in the industrial estate to cycle to work along the Grand Union Canal towpath.
- Problems often arise at pinch points where the capacity of a path is constricted, typically because it is narrower, or a junction creates higher traffic flows.

Cyclists and pedestrians can comfortably co-exist on urban Greenways. Pedestrians are often so unfamiliar with seeing cyclists that they are unable to judge whether their speed and direction forms a hazard or not. Statistically, a cyclist is killed on our roads every 21,000 cyclist-years (based on average annual cycling mileage): on the same statistics cyclists cause a fatal accident in every 650,000 cyclist-years.

Perceptions of danger are as important as the reality, and they can damage the amenity of green spaces. Education and enforcement are important, and there are informal resources as well as formal ones: Sustrans volunteer rangers, or local cycling clubs. Planning authorities such as TfL do need to have a complex understanding of Greenways and consider the demands of users over the whole of a route.

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