



The Lothian Cycle Campaign

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3.4.14

Dear Len Vallance

CEC BUS LANE USERS SURVEY

Thank you very much for your email enclosing the above survey.

Unfortunately the survey proved difficult to reply to on your survey form as the questions do not cover all the points relevant to cycling, some of the questions are irrelevant to cycling, and the 1-10 scales are difficult to use because some respects may be good and others poor. Furthermore there were some technical difficulties trying to use the official response form.

We shall therefore respond via this email, and trust that this will be acceptable.

SURFACES

The **general state of surfacing** of bus lanes is not good. There are many potholes and ripples in the surfacing, caused by the weight and the braking and restarting of buses. The solution to the rippling of the bus lane surface is to resurface carriageways to a higher specification at bus stops to withstand the greater forces on the surface. The current spec, as far as we can see, does not last very long at bus stops.

Secondly, this road surface damage is not caused by cyclists and therefore should be repaired **as part of the general maintenance budget**. We understand that currently a proportion of the cost comes from the cycle budget - *if so, this should cease*.

Finally, the **colour** of bus lanes has deteriorated in many areas. We understand that bus lanes are gradually being renewed using the red chip method. As you will be aware Spokes has several major concerns over red-chipping for cycle lanes – these also apply to bus lanes, though perhaps less so given their greater width and visual prominence. Our concerns, and background evidence, are stated in the paper¹ which we submitted to the council a year ago and which has still not been properly addressed. We will not repeat that evidence and our specific concerns here, but they remain substantial.

¹ <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/Spokes-colour-paper-v3-final.pdf>

HOURS OF OPERATION

The hours of operation of bus lanes should be as long as possible; the current bus lane peak period does not now cover the entire rush hour and should be extended.

In particular, car parking in cycle or bus/cycle lanes is scary and potentially dangerous for cyclists, due to the risk of 'dooring.' Whilst the proper solution is mandatory and/or segregated lanes, increasing the hours of bus lane operation would be of some assistance.

BUS LANE EFFECTIVENESS

Vehicles generally keep out of bus lanes fairly well but there are violations and they can cause serious problems. Enforcement by static and mobile cameras should be pursued as a deterrent and camera evidence from bus cameras should be employed for lane and parking violations.

CLASSES OF VEHICLES

The possible use of bus lanes by motor cycles and private hire vehicles is a major concern. The more classes of vehicles allowed in bus lanes, the less effective they are for buses and cyclists. Bus priority is the primary purpose of bus lanes and the advantage to buses is greatly diminished if these extra classes of vehicles are allowed.

Also, the more other vehicles are allowed into bus lanes the more dangerous they become, and are perceived to be, for cyclists. Extending the permitted classes of vehicles will reduce the attractiveness of cycling, thus cutting use, contrary to the council's policies and targets.

Private hire vehicles are difficult to distinguish from ordinary cars and so car drivers seeing private hire vehicles in bus lanes will imagine that enforcement is lax and/or that they too are permitted. Thus law compliance will diminish - *this is a serious potential problem for enforcement.*

Motorcycles represent a threat and deterrent to cyclists by virtue of speed and noise. Furthermore some have a fuel consumption equivalent to a small car, and so are hard to justify on 'green' grounds.

BUS LANES ON TRAMLINES

Some of the bus lanes associated with the tram scheme have a bicycle symbol on them. Although legally acceptable, this implies to ordinary members of the public that bicycles should travel in the middle of the lane between the tram tracks - a dangerous invitation which should have been identified in the tram safety audit as it adds to the risk of cycle wheels getting caught in, or sliding along, the tram tracks. We suggest that the symbol is replaced by the word "bicycles". Cyclists could then keep to the nearside of the lane without wondering whether they are behaving illegally or unwisely and without therefore being tempted to cross the tram tracks (at a dangerous angle).

I hope these comments are helpful and would be pleased to discuss them if useful.

Sandy Scotland
Convenor, Spokes Planning Group