

SPOKES *The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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Response from Spokes to the COVID-19 Walking and Cycling Emergency Measures for:

South Bridge, The Mound, George IV Bridge and Forrest Road

This is our combined response to the proposals shared by the *Spaces for People Team* on 9 June 2020 for South Bridge, The Mound, George IV Bridge, and Forrest Road.

1. General comments

1.1 *Spokes* is supportive of the Council's initiatives to support walking and cycling at this time of national emergency. We agree that it's vital to provide quality space for walking and cycling, so that people can feel safe and confident in choosing sustainable modes of travel as lockdown measures are relaxed. In doing so, this reduces the load on public transport, so that its limited capacity can be used by those that most need it, while avoiding people turning to cars and choking the city as they do so.

1.2 In most respects this is a welcome and well thought-out set of proposals, which have given consideration to walking, cycling and public transport. In particular, we welcome the reduction in general traffic provided by the bus gates across these proposals and the segregated cycle lanes on most of the roads affected.

However, there are several places where we see straightforward improvements that would deliver a better outcome, whilst still benefiting pedestrians and public transport.

Our main concern in these proposals is the lack of segregated cycle lanes on South Bridge and we ask the Council to consider our alternative proposal. We consider the present proposals to be possibly dangerous, and certainly a deterrent to many novice, nervous and/or potential cyclists.

1.3 We consider that it is important that it is understood who is the "design cyclist" that you are making these changes for. Our view is that it is not experienced commuter cyclists. It's the people that have recently taken to their bikes during the pandemic; those who are trying out cycling to work, shops etc in preference to car or public transport; families with children on bikes. The city centre needs to be permeable, welcoming and to look and feel safe to all of these people, in order to keep them cycling.

2. Throughout

2.1 Please provide ASL lead-ins at all junctions and review ASL lengths.

The main roads covered by these proposals are arterial bus routes and so even the reduction in general traffic will still mean that it is typical for there to be several buses queued on junction approaches. It is vital that ASL lead-ins are provided so that cyclists can safely access the ASL, where they can be visible ahead of the queueing buses rather than hidden amongst them. Indeed, the need for social distancing makes clear access to the ASL even more important.

Without a lead-in lane, cyclists are forced to filter through the queuing traffic (intimidating in the first place) and cannot see if the ASL is clear. They may filter through only to find that the ASL is full and be forced to compromise on social distancing. An ASL lead-in allows for cyclists to queue one behind each other, naturally 2m apart. Therefore, ASLs should also be lengthened to increase capacity while social distancing.

We suggest ASL lead-in lanes at the following locations:

1. South Bridge southbound at the Chambers Street junction - it's often full today and the proposed footway widening will reduce capacity by half, which is unacceptable, especially given the need for some cyclists to be positioned correctly for the commonly-made right turn into Chambers Street. Please lengthen the ASL box to maintain capacity;
2. George IV Bridge southbound as it flows into Bristo Place - also a busy one that is sometimes full today.

We suggest additional ASLs at:

3. Greyfriars Place/Forrest Road, northbound, as it flows onto George IV Bridge. There isn't one there today as the only path is forward and so an ASL is not typically provided. But in practice cyclists are already lining up for the right turn into Chambers Street and it will be even more important than today to be positioned right with all the diverted traffic coming out of Chambers Street;
4. The Mound/Market St junction northbound, where it would be particularly helpful for right-turning cyclists

2.2 We have a general concern about the interrelationship between lane widths, temporary segregation methods and mandatory lanes, which we ask be considered.

In our experience, drivers (including bus drivers) often treat the painted white line (with or without wands) as though it were a physical boundary and drive close to it - meaning that they can be too close to safely pass anybody on a bike, unless the cycle lane is wide enough. That is why the usual standard for segregation is a 500mm wide kerb. If the lanes aren't wide enough and there is no gap, then they really aren't "safe" and people are being given a false sense of security.

3. South Bridge

3.1 We very strongly recommend that the inside traffic lane on South Bridge is divided between a footway extension and a mandatory cycle lane; in preference to requiring cyclists to share a single lane with buses and taxis. There looks to be sufficient space to accommodate this, as the red dashed line indicating 3m out from the building line, is seldom within the inside lane, other than at the approach to the High Street Junction. However, this can be alleviated northbound by providing an ASL in the bus lane, accessed from the cycle lane; and some pedestrians may choose to walk round the other side of the Tron.

A single lane to be used by cyclists as well as buses and taxis is much more scary and indeed dangerous than a normal bus lane with an adjacent traffic lane. Buses and taxis will sometimes be reluctant, or unable, to move sufficiently to the right to overtake cyclists in a safe and non-scary manner, because they will face oncoming traffic. Some taxi drivers may choose to overtake nonetheless, whilst others will get frustrated sitting behind slower cyclists or those with trailers, cargo bikes, trikes for people with disabilities, etc. Even where space is available for a safe overtake, this is absolutely not the kind of situation to encourage people to use a bike. Yet this is a major cycle connection between residential South Edinburgh and the employment opportunities in Leith.

The inclusion of the cycle lane proposed above would also achieve consistency with George IV Bridge and avoid confusion for cyclists; in South Bridge cyclists use the road side of the barriers, whereas in George IV Bridge cyclists use the pavement side!

If this recommendation is not accepted, we ask that serious consideration be given to a widening of the bus lanes and, importantly, to the creation of a ASL with lead-in at the High Street junction northbound – with the lead-in space being in the inside lane.

4. The Mound

4.1 Instead of having two lanes southbound at Bank Street, when all buses go straight ahead, we suggest using the space to widen the existing narrow cycle lanes.

4.2 If possible, widen the southbound traffic lane on the bend prior to Market St, as buses often encroach into the existing cycle lane there.

4.3 If possible, widen the downhill cycle lane at the corner of Bank Street as drivers often cut the corner .

4.4 Please note that vehicles loading/waiting at start of Bank Street northbound is currently a problem.

4.5 Repairs to the surface in the uphill cycle lane would be very beneficial.

5. George IV Bridge (and Chambers Street)

5.1 The advisory cycle lane in Greyfriars Place should be segregated, or at least made mandatory, as a lot of northbound traffic from Forrest Row cuts the corner here.

5.2 Please repeat the cycle symbols within the cycle/pedestrian space as a reminder to

pedestrians eg when they are joining midway. Cycle symbols should be within the cycling space where it starts, rather than ahead of it.

5.3 We suggest that wands be installed between the cycle lane and the footway extension

5.4 Appropriately located gaps will require to be provided in the segregation barrier for right-turning cyclists coming out of both Victoria Street and Chambers Street

5.5 If the Chambers Street delivery hub replace the cycle racks at the east end of the street, please install alternative racks close-by.

6. Forrest Road

6.1 Appropriately located gaps will require to be provided in the segregation barrier:

- a) at the south end of Forrest Road to allow cyclists coming from Teviot Place to enter the cycle lane
- b) for cyclists heading from Candlemaker Row to Bristo Street.

6.2 Please apply kerb segregation to mandatory lane between bus stop and the traffic signals.

Ewan Jeffrey
Submitted on behalf of *Spokes Planning Group*
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