

# COVID-19 Walking and Cycling Emergency Response Measures: East End, Waverley Bridge, and surrounds

Response from Spokes – the Lothian Cycle Campaign, June 2020

*This is a combined response to the proposals shared by the Spaces for People Team on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 for North Bridge, Waverley Bridge, and east Princes Street / South St David Street*

## General comments

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.

We welcome the reduction in general traffic provided by the bus gates across these proposals. However we're very disappointed that there are no specific measures to support cyclists. Indeed, the proposals create no dedicated space for cycling whatsoever. In some cases they make provision worse, and in one case they actively make cycling less safe.

While the reduction in general traffic will provide some improvement for cyclists, ultimately they're still left to share space with large buses and weave around them when queued on approach to junctions. We do not believe this will encourage new cyclists, and nor do we believe that this promotes social distancing between cyclists. As such, we're left unconvinced that these proposals deliver on the Council's own objectives.

We recognise that there is a need to move fast with these measures and that there are constraints on what can be achieved with limited time. However, we believe that there are straightforward improvements that would deliver a much better outcome for cyclists while still retaining widened footways and other pedestrian improvements. In summary:

1. Urgently review the proposed footway extension on Princes Street
2. Provide ASL lead-ins at all junctions and review ASL lengths
3. Provide segregated cycle lanes, as a minimum on Leith Street and South St David Street
4. Ensure that road closures are cycle permeable
5. Ensure that guardrail removal does not reduce cycle parking

We urge the Council to consider our suggestions carefully. We also hope that the proposals (and our suggestions) are shared with the Council's Active Travel team for their expert review as we're concerned that the proposals have not had sufficient cycling expertise input.

## Suggestion 1: Urgently review the proposed footway extension on Princes Street

As proposed, the widening of the north-side Princes Street footway east of the South St David Street is unacceptable from a cycle safety perspective. The reallocation of the full inside lane pushes cyclists into a single lane, with dangerous tram tracks, all the way from South St David Street to South St Andrew Street – a long way to be followed by a queue of buses and taxis. It also makes the right turn into Waverley Bridge extremely hazardous as cyclists have no room to get the minimum 45° angle across the tram tracks.

Today, there is an existing single lane section like this immediately east of the proposed footway widening (at the pedestrian crossing). The proposed footway widening would be a significant extension of this narrow section. Several cyclists who have reported tramline crashes at the South St Andrew Street tramline crossing have mentioned that traffic pressures in this narrow section contributed to the crash – we provide a summary in Appendix 1.

The Council has explicitly recognised this danger by proposing a mandatory cycle lane at the edge of the adjacent wide footway<sup>1</sup> leading also to a safer crossing of the tramlines. This cycle lane and crossing form part of Phase 3 of the Council's *Tram Route Cycle Safety Improvements* project<sup>2</sup> which, after previous delays, were due to be installed in autumn 2019 but are still not in place. Not only do the current Spaces for People proposals significantly worsen the danger, but they make the tramline safety project more difficult.

In view of the above, we strongly recommend that:

1. The inside traffic lane is divided between a footway extension and mandatory cycle lane. The footway here is already wide so there is easily sufficient space for both pedestrians and cyclists to have a share of the repurposed lane. Cycle use of that lane would allow eastbound cyclists to be in a protected position as far as opposite the end of Waverley Bridge, enabling a safer right-turn.
2. The cycle lane in (1) should be continued to South St Andrew Street, using the edge of the very wide footway, as proposed in the Phase 3 tram route cycle safety improvements, albeit in a temporary version if necessary.

## Suggestion 2: 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, often in two lanes. 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 they're forced to compromise on social distancing. An ASL lead-in allows for cyclists to queue one behind each other, naturally 2m apart. Additionally, ASLs should be lengthened to increase capacity while social distancing.

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

1. **Leith Street on approach to East End junction:** Reducing the footway extension slightly would provide space for an ASL lead-in.

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<sup>1</sup> RSO/18/08 from August 2018

<sup>2</sup> <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/tram-route-cycle-safety-improvements/>

2. **South St. David Street on approach to south St. Andrew Square junction:** One of the two traffic lanes is marked “Rose Street only” – it seems wholly unnecessary to dedicate a whole lane to the tiny volume of traffic turning into a pedestrianised street. Dropping this lane would provide space for an ASL lead-in.
3. **South St. David Street on approach to Princes Street junction:** The proposals for extending the CCWEL<sup>3</sup> show only one bus lane on approach to this junction. Like those proposals, these ones also remove general traffic so it’s not clear why two lanes are needed here. Dropping one would provide space for an ASL lead-in.
4. **North Bridge on approach to Royal Mile junction:** It’s unclear what the orange posts are for in the drawing. Regardless, there is plenty of space for an ASL lead-in while still allowing for some footway widening too.

## Suggestion 3: Provide segregated cycle lanes

In general, the Council must provide segregated cycling facilities so as to encourage more use of bikes for everyday travel. The reduction in general traffic can and should be used to do this, in keeping with the Council’s own plans for the City Centre Transformation and extending the CCWEL.

We hope the Council will consider opportunities across the area of these proposals, however we draw specific attention to these locations:

### 1) Leith Street southbound

The need for an uphill cycle lane received considerable attention when the Leith Street traffic orders were debated by Transport and Environment Committee. Indeed, several objections to the RSO were on this very issue. At the debate the Director of Place stated that “there was a strong and clear need for the uphill lane”. He stated that its feasibility had been discussed by officers but that the restricted width at the top of Leith Street made a cycle lane impossible while maintaining two traffic lanes. However, he stated explicitly that every attempt would be made to create the lane when traffic reduction measures were undertaken – now is that time! His assurances to the Committee must be addressed in these proposals.

Given that an uphill traffic lane is to be removed the space should be reallocated to an uphill cycle lane and wider footway. We recognise the trade-off between greater footway widening and a cycle lane, but we believe that the cycle lane is vital for safety reasons and would still allow significant footway widening.

Without the cycle lane, cyclists will have to share a single traffic lane with buses (and some other traffic) on this steeply uphill stretch where many cyclists will be travelling slowly. This is even worse than the situation today where the two lanes of traffic – while not ideal – still allow cyclists to use the inside lane and allow other vehicles to overtake. Including the cycle lane will continue to allow this, and moreover result in cyclists being much better protected on a tricky, uphill junction approach that forms a key connection between Leith and the south of Edinburgh.

### 2) South St. David Street southbound

The ASL lead-ins we describe above can be combined to form a segregated cycleway along the entire street, providing a much better experience for cycling inline with the Council’s own plans to extend the CCWEL.

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<sup>3</sup> Specifically, drawing TDD\_636809\_5\_DR\_M2\_Z\_SK\_0005 that was shared with Spokes in August 2019.

## **Suggestion 4: Ensure that road closures are cycle permeable**

We welcome the proposed road closures at Waverley Bridge and the High Street. We recognise that their primary function is to provide space for pedestrians. Nonetheless, it's important that cyclists are still able to navigate these closures to ensure access to amenities and through routes, particularly for access to Waverley Station from both the north and south.

Some specific suggestions:

1. Ensure that all planters and other measures are spaced such that cyclists can – with care – make their way through the pedestrian priority areas.
2. Ensure that “road closed” signage is amended to be clear that considerate cycling is permitted.
3. Remove the temporary central reservation on Princes Street opposite the mouth of Waverley Bridge. As proposed, this will effectively prohibit cyclists from being able to turn right in and out of Waverley Bridge. This isn't acceptable since this is a main cycling route to the station.

## **Suggestion 5: Ensure that guardrail removal does not reduce cycle parking**

We note that guardrail will be removed in a few locations. While this is something that we welcome in general, we urge care that guardrail removal does not reduce cycle parking capacity. There are some locations, notably at the East End outside the Waverley Gate office building, where the guardrail is routinely filled with bikes because the council provided cycle racks are at capacity.

If guard rail is to be removed here, or anywhere else it is used as cycle parking, then alternative cycle parking must be installed at the same time.

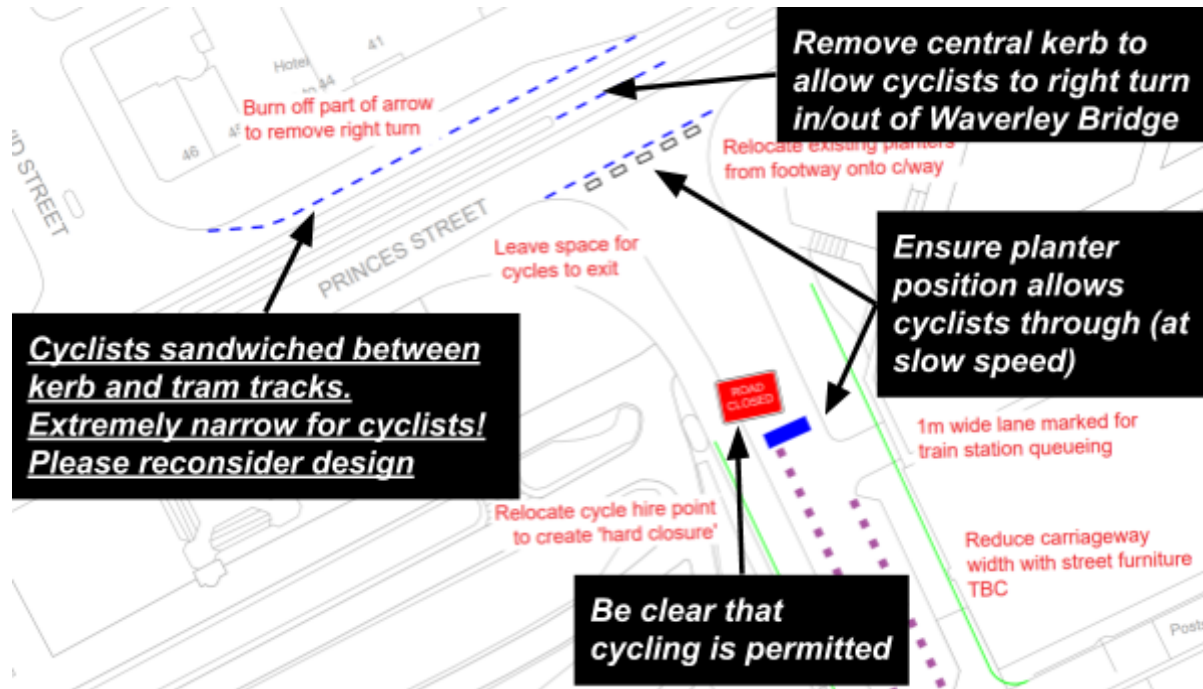
# Appendix 1: Tramline crash reports

These reports are from cyclists who crashed on the tramlines at the Princes Street / South St David street junction and shared details of their incident with Spokes.

- 19.10.19 minor injuries; taxi behind but stopped in time
- 2.11.18 acute pain in back and neck, attended WGH. Bus swerved at junction to avoid victim
- 14.5.18 damage to bike and clothing, no injuries
- 2.5.18 knee and ankle minor injuries [this lady works nearby and told us that 3 of her colleagues have also come off here, but not reported their crashes]
- ???.1.16 many bruises and painful shoulder
- 17.11.14 bruised and strained arm, grazing, torn clothes. Almost hit by a following car
- 10.1.14 injuries to hip & shoulder; ambulance attended

# Appendix 2: Figures

TDD-637129-01



TDD-637129-03

