

# SPOKES *The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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## **Spokes Response to the Spaces for People Proposals: Tollcross July 2020**

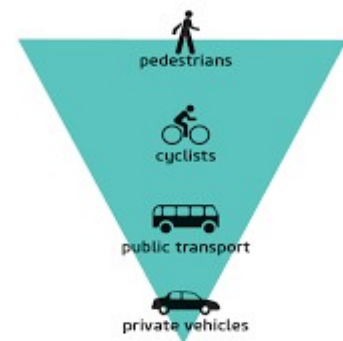
*Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign* is pleased to give its response to these proposals.

This is a very busy part of the city centre, with very heavily trafficked multi-lane arterial roads, a complex junction and its associated gyratory system; all combined with neighbourhood shopping. As such, it is a challenging area to transform from its current traffic dominated situation to one which has more people space for safe walking and cycling.

### **Summary**

1. We are pleased to welcome the extended-footway provision for pedestrians, which are very comprehensive, reflecting the top of the hierarchy.

2. The cycling interventions are insufficient in relation to private vehicles, in contravention of the hierarchy; they will not encourage people to use bike instead of bus or car. Thus, the Council risks inadequate spacing inside buses and a shift from bus to car, which would be disastrous for congestion. Nor will they encourage families to shop locally or accompany their children to school by bicycle.



We are extremely concerned that:

3.1 the cycle lanes lack continuity and physical segregation, both of which are essential for encouraging modal shift and for keeping moving and stationary traffic out of the cycle lanes. We **recommend** that this should be urgently reviewed.

3.2 a northbound cycle-lane on Earl Grey Street is not included. People will look in disbelief at the current 6.5 lane width of Earl Grey Street and be shocked that it is not considered wide enough to accommodate a cycle lane on both sides, especially when the part-lane width of hatching has been retained in the middle. We appreciate that for this type of intervention the central signal islands must remain in place, but is our view that that does not prevent the repurposing some of the central hatched area (opposite the loading bays) and including it in the area occupied by northbound lanes by slewing them. We **recommend** that this be reviewed urgently, with the objective of including a northbound cycle-lane.

3.3 here is nothing in these proposals to make cycling through the complex 5-way Tollcross junction (and its associated gyratory system) a less daunting prospect . The challenges are a combination of traffic volumes and the sheer size and complexity of the exposure. As such, it will continue to present a significant deterrent to encouraging new people to transfer to cycling. We **recommend** that this be the subject of a comprehensive review in the next phase.

3.4 nothing in these proposals appears to make walking and cycling access to *Tollcross Primary School*, located adjacent to the busy West Tollcross gyratory system, any safer; or to encourage active travel to school. We **recommend** that all of these proposals are reviewed with specific reference to how walking and cycling access can be improved, by making it safer and more attractive; including a review the whole gyratory system.

## **Detailed Points and Other Recommendations**

### ***Earl Grey Street - Northbound***

4. If this street's design is not changed in accordance with our **recommendation** in point 3.2 above, cyclists will be sharing a single traffic lane with all traffic, thus suffering the fear of traffic behind which is keen to overtake but unable to do so safely. In addition to deterring existing and potential cycle use, and combined with much wider footways, this is likely to increase the prevalence of footway cycling.

### ***Earl Grey Street – Southbound***

5. The new southbound cycle lane has the potential to work well, except that it stops short of Tollcross, having to yield to a Brougham Street/Lauriston Place left-turn traffic lane, giving potential left-turning traffic conflict and danger.

6. Cyclists will have to make an advance choice as far back as Lothian Road at the Fountainbridge junction depending on their desired route to exit the Tollcross junction. Choosing either, the new cycle lane for Lauriston Place or Brougham Street or the centre bus lane for Home Street. (Accessing the bus lane, can be quite difficult as one needs to be in the centre of the ASL box on exiting Lothian Road, or, if not stopped at the signals, to cross a lane of traffic to get over to it) .

7. Our **recommendation** to address all this is to extend the new Earl Grey Street cycle lane, as a segregated lane, all the way to the full-width ASL at the Tollcross Junction and, importantly, give cyclists an advanced signal phase during which they can take any of the 3 route options. Less confident cyclists need no longer use the bus lane and this solves a number of existing and potential problems.

### ***King's Theatre Junction***

8. We **recommend** that full-width ASLs with long lead-ins are provided on all legs of this busy and space constrained junction. Currently, there are none southbound in Home street and only in the inside lane northbound at Leven Street. Without an ASL, the right turn from Home Street to Gilmore Place is very difficult. We also **recommend** cycle advance-start signalling being provided at all three junctions. See also points 19 & 20.

9. Please note that assisting the right-turn into Gilmore Place will also be important as there is an opportunity for Gilmore Place/ Polwarth Terrace/ Colinton Road to be developed as a segregated cycle-lane alternative to a busy stretch of the Union Canal towpath.

## **Tollcross Junction**

*This is a very busy junction desperately needing to be made safe. No novice cyclist would be safe in it. You need to be confident, assertive and fairly fast to get through it.*  
*Comment from Spokes member*

10. Eventually, we would like to see the Council move towards replacing junctions such as this with much more pedestrian and cycle friendly junction designs, such as the *Cyclops* design being introduced in Manchester.



11. In this phase we **recommend** that all of the signals be altered to give cyclists an advance start ahead of the general traffic. Some of the transit distances are very long.

## **Home Street - Northbound**

12. We **recommend** moving the remaining west-side loading bays to Lochrin Place, which could become a **local delivery hub**; and continuing the cycle-lane further north, perhaps past floating a bus stop.

13. We **recommend** that the inside lane approaching the West Tollcross junction (proposed for coning off because of the footway build out at the junction), instead be repurposed to become a lead-in lane to the ASL, which will make it easier and safer to approach the junction out of the main traffic lane. See also points 19 & 20.

## **Home Street – Southbound**

14. Whether arriving from Earl Grey Street or from Lauriston Place, negotiating the first stretch of Home Street is usually desperate jockeying for position with buses entering bus stops, cars entering and leaving loading bays and space for two further lanes for traffic. Will a single bus stop not just mean buses queueing to enter, so perhaps no advantage?

## **Thornybark**

15. We **recommend** that consideration be given to restricting the Thornybark / Home Street junction to fire lane use only, to simplify that area for walking and cycling.

## **Leven Street**

16. We **recommend** that traffic management and use of cones etc relating to the construction work at the Scotmid should be done so as to still permit northbound cyclists to easily turn right into Valleyfield, because this route to the Meadows and Lauriston Place by-passes the main Tollcross junction (where the approach from Home Street to the Tollcross junction, if turning right, takes courage when it's busy).

17. We **recommend** that the existing southbound advisory cycle-lane be upgraded to a segregated lane.

## ***Lauriston Place***

18. We **recommend** that dropped kerbs be provided to facilitate cycling connections to Grassmarket via High Riggs at the 2 white plastic bollards west of the taxi rank.

## ***Provide ASL lead-ins at all junctions and review ASL lengths***

19. 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.

20. 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 queueing 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.

## ***Bike Parking***

21. We **recommend** that every opportunity should be taken to introduce additional cycle parking facilities. Our members have particularly highlighted:

- Lochrin Place as a location which would encourage family trips to “shop-local” because of its accessibility from the canal
- Tarvit Street, because of its accessibility from the east and the Meadows cyclepath network
- at High Riggs
- at *Realfoods* on Brougham Street where there are many bikes on railings and on lampposts.

## ***Guardrail***

22. While we agree with Council's policy to remove guardrail, it's important to be aware that some guardrail is used as cycle parking where facilities don't exist or are at capacity. We **recommend** that alternative cycle parking is provided for locations where guardrail is removed. This not only supports access for cyclists, but also improves conditions for pedestrians, by avoiding bikes being left in awkward positions on the footway. The railings outside the King's Theatre are heavily used for bike parking.

## ***Temporary Signage***

23. We **recommend** that all advance warning signs, such as where bus lanes are split be carefully located such as not to impede safe passage by bicycle.

## ***Cyclelane Surface Treatment (including at Crossing Junction Mouths)***

24. Please note that, for reasons of safety, it is vital that temporary cycle lanes crossing junction mouths are as prominent as possible. They absolutely must be red-screeded (as is already planned in some but not all schemes) and where possible they should also be widened. The example at the West Woods junction on Crewe Road South, with just white dots delineating

the cycle lane across the junction is unacceptable.

25. Secondly, all stretches of unsegregated cycle lane should be either red-screeded or red-chipped, and this should also be done on segregated sections where schemes would not be delayed as a result.

### ***Interface with Other Schemes***

26. It is important that these proposals interface with the Meadows to Canal project and any upcoming proposals for (the 6-lane wide) Lothian Road.

We are always happy to answer questions or respond to queries about our comments.

Ewan Jeffrey for Spokes Planning Group  
16 July 2020