

BusPlus route 55 proposals for Hackney Road

Comments by
the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney

For the attention of
Iain Blackmore and Sophie Isbell at WS Atkins

1 Introduction

As well as travelling by cycle, most of London's 650,000 regular cyclists are also regular users of public transport, so we welcome the emergence of extra bus lanes on both counts. They are as a valuable shared resource giving priority to the less destructive travel modes. We would like to see it strongly emphasised that these are shared bus-and-cycle lanes.

We are pleased to hear that the importance of integration of the needs of bus traffic with those of walking and cycling is recognised in the busPlus initiative. For completeness, you might care to amend your stock description of the function of bus lanes to read: "Dedicated lanes which segregate buses _and cycles_ from other traffic..."

We begin by making specific points on Hackney Road, to which we append the general points we have made to all agencies carrying out consultation and design work for TfL on busPlus.

2 Motor vehicle parking bays

Parked motor vehicles adversely affect sightlines and cause difficulty for cycle traffic, bringing it into conflict with motor traffic, so it is in the interests of road danger reduction to reduce on-street parking as much as possible.

We do welcome the fact that there is some reduction in on-street parking in the proposals, but for our liking there are still a relatively large number of parking bays retained. This is especially critical down at the Shoreditch end where the street is narrower. We are aware of at least one cyclist fatality at this end of Hackney Road in recent years.

3 Goldsmith's Row junction

Since there is some serious realignment work being planned at and around this junction, we believe an opportunity exists to provide enhance 'permeability' for cyclists using Goldsmith's Row.

The cycle route which runs along Goldsmith's Row is an example of the now rather dated segregationist approach, and as a 'facility' is of at best mixed merit. One of its several failings is that it has abetted the removal of direct southbound exit of cycle traffic from Goldsmith's Row right and left onto Hackney Road and across into Warner Place.

There is a strong argument for the removal of Goldsmith's Row's obnoxious on footway vehicle parking, now that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, for which it was provided, has closed down. As well as returning space robbed from long-suffering pedestrians, this would permit sufficient width for a contraflow cycle lane on Goldsmith's Row.

We propose that TfL take this opportunity to co-ordinate with the transport department of the local authority to safeguard the delivery of this southbound access

when LA budgets permit. To this end, we would request that you ensure that work carried out on this junction now in connection with busPlus will permit the straightforward installation of a cycle 'slip' facilitating the exit of southbound cycle traffic from Goldsmith's Row.

4 New toucan on LCN route

We fully appreciate and support what we guess to be the reasoning behind the proposed new toucan: that the original separated crossing did not acknowledge that the pedestrian desire line is identical with the cycle crossing section. We would be interested to see and comment on the detailed plans for the remodelled crossing.

5 General points on busPlus

5.1 Bus lane hours of operation

We support 24-hour operation for all bus lanes. Where bus lanes are currently envisaged to operate 7am to 7pm, we would propose extending their hours of operation as close as possible to 24 hours. The same goes for the many cases in which bus lanes are envisaged to operate during peak hours only (7am–10am and 4pm–7pm). Private motor traffic spreads throughout the day outside of peak hours, with the 'rush hour' phenomenon having become less and less distinct. In fact, if you are prepared to have roadspace restriction for private motor vehicles, it seems illogical to allow them into bus-and-cycle lanes off-peak, apart from permitting parking and loading, as the extra space is only be used for pointless and dangerous speeding and overtaking (or even worse, undertaking).

5.2 Waiting and loading restrictions

We support all waiting and loading restrictions along bus routes. As with bus lanes, we support their being further extended.

5.3 Enforcement

Enforcement is vital for the success of the two above measures, and we are in favour of prioritising it strongly.

5.4 Width of bus lanes

The width of bus-and-cycle lanes has an obvious significance for cycle traffic. It would therefore be useful if in future consultations information could be provided on the widths of proposed lanes.

Wherever possible, we of course prefer bus lanes wide enough so that a bus can overtake a cyclist without having to leave the bus lane. However, it is clear that on Hackney Road bus lanes will mostly be narrower than four metres, requiring patience and skill of bus drivers in the vicinity of cyclists. We would like to see briefing and training of bus drivers to discourage them from overtaking cyclists dangerously or driving too close behind them.

5.5 Wide kerb lanes

Where sufficient width is available, we advocate the use of 'wide kerb lanes' rather than the designation of a cycle lane plus narrow bus lanes.

5.6 On-street parking

Along bus routes, on-street parking should be avoided.

5.7 Railings

Many stretches of the routes being consulted on feature guide railings. In our view, the removal of railings would complement bus priority measures by reducing the sense of priority of motor traffic, especially private motor traffic, over pedestrians and cyclists. These are the reasons why we favour the removal of guide railings:

- * They force people to take long detours, and any reduction in permeability for pedestrians and cyclists leads to a reduction in passing trade for local traders and shops.
- * Create conflict between pedestrians approaching or waiting at pedestrian crossings when cyclists stop near their destination and are forced to get onto the footway at pedestrian crossings or bus stops, where the gaps in the railings exist.
- * Have contributed to cyclists' deaths and severe injuries when long vehicles turned left across them and squashed them against railings. Had the cyclists concerned been able to escape onto the pavement, they could have avoided death or injury.
- * Encourage motorists to speed up, which in turn leads to more congestion and uneven speeds (i.e., too fast from one set of traffic lights to the next, then stationary again at this set of traffic lights) cause queues to build up, delaying buses. Railings should therefore only be used, if at all, for those short stretches where the sightlines are particularly bad. Everywhere else, they should go.

5.8 Bus stop improvements

It would always be useful for us to know the details of proposed bus stop improvements, particularly where they might include altered kerb lines, which can cause difficulties for cyclists.

5.9 Standardisation of hours

We generally support the discernible drive by the LBI to standardise operating hours of bus lanes, as this will make public awareness easier.

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The London Cycling Campaign (www.lcc.org.uk) has 8000 members throughout London, 550 of whom live in the London borough of Hackney.