

By email to:
Consultations@tfl.gov.uk

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To whom it may concern

Consultation on North-South and East-West Cycle Superhighways

I write to confirm strong support from CTC, the national cycling charity, for the creation of two cycle superhighways, running north-south from Kings Cross to Elephant & Castle via Blackfriars Bridge, and east-west from Tower Bridge to Acton via Embankment, Parliament Square, Hyde Park, Paddington and the Westway flyover.

The principle of reallocating roadspace to provide two iconic, high-profile cycle routes will help create the conditions where cycling becomes a safe, enjoyable and normal activity, for people of all ages and abilities.

We have some reservations about the detailed design of the schemes, principally with the decision to provide a two-way cycle track on one side only for the north-south superhighway. We fear this is likely to create delays and danger at junctions, a disbenefit which is not clearly offset by other benefits. At uncontrolled side-roads, there is a risk that drivers will fail to look out for cyclists approaching from both directions. It will also make some manoeuvres more dangerous and/or involve greater delays for those using the cycle track in the 'wrong' direction (i.e. southbound in this case).

Dutch cycle planning generally avoids two-way cycle tracks other than under the following circumstances:

- where this shortens the route for cyclists
- where it saves them from having to cross a busy road twice, or
- where there isn't enough room for a cycle track on both sides.

We are not convinced that the north-south cycle track meets these criteria.

To give specific examples of the problems, southbound cyclists wishing to turn left into Southwark Street or Union Street will have to cross the full width of the road, crossing from the side of the road where drivers and pedestrians will not expect them to be. It is unclear how the traffic signals at these junctions will work or how much signal-time cyclists making these manoeuvres will receive. At uncontrolled side-roads, drivers will not expect cyclists to approach them from both directions. The two-way track creates the need for a circuitous 'dog-leg' in the route alignment between St George's Circus and the Elephant & Castle. Finally, it is unclear whether or not the provision of a two-way track on the west side will provide a better connections though to Kings Cross, given that the route alignment north of Farringdon Station is unconfirmed.

It therefore seems likely that some southbound cyclists – particularly those whose journeys both start and end to the east of the superhighway corridor – will still prefer to use the southbound carriageway, rather than crossing the main road twice to benefit from the protection of the superhighway in between.

We therefore urge reconsideration of the decision to create a 2-way cycle track for the north-south route. Alternatively, if it is decided to proceed with a two-way track, we urge the retention of a southbound cycle lane (even if an unsegregated one) in the 'normal' road position, to avoid a situation where drivers act aggressively towards cyclists who choose not to use the southbound cycle track, either on grounds of safety or convenience.

These issues are far less of a problem with the east-west superhighway, due to the fact that much of its alignment runs parallel to the Thames. Hence there are relatively few junctions, and relatively light traffic flows at those junctions which do exist. Indeed, the two-way east-west cycle track has some important advantages. Along the Embankment between Westminster and Blackfriars Bridge, it will create an iconic cycle facility which will attract recreational cycle use and tourism at weekends and in the summer, as well as providing a great benefit for commuters and other 'utility' cyclists throughout the year. Within the City (where the track is aligned on the north side of Upper Thames Street), the connections which cyclists need to make (to access their destinations) are primarily on the north side. Hence it is entirely sensible to have a two-way cycle track which 'flips' from the north to the south side of the road at the junction with Blackfriars Bridge.

Key details remain to be clarified, notably the alignment through the Royal Parks. Without knowing how this will work, we question whether it would be better for the cycle track to be on the north side (rather than the south side) of Bridge Street as it passes Westminster tube station and the Palace of Westminster. This may depend on how the traffic signals work at Parliament Square. We also have concerns about the junctions at Tower Hill and Lancaster Gate.

We are aware that CTC London will be making a submission, and apologise that we have not managed to ensure co-ordination of the points we are raising. We urge TfL to give consideration to the points of detail raised in that submission, likewise those of the London Cycling Campaign, Cycling Embassy of Great Britain and Sustrans.

Having said that, our overwhelming message is that we wish to see the scheme proceed – and would not wish our concerns about the detailed design to cause delay to its implementation. The principle of significant roadspace reallocation to provide protected space for cycling is one CTC strongly supports. An iconic facility which embodies these principles will be worth having, regardless of any shortcomings in its design. It will undoubtedly help boost cycle use, helping to create a healthier, greener, and less congested city. London's environment and its economy – including the tourist economy – will be immeasurably improved by it.

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