

27th November 2006
Our ref: C 06 039

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Gonville Place Toucan Crossing - Conclusions and Recommendations

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1 Key Aims

1.1 *Reduce conflict between Cyclists and Pedestrians*

How ?

1.1.1 Restore crossing width to original condition.

1.1.2 Stream cyclists and pedestrians across the Toucan by:

- Use coloured surfacing to distinguish between crossing places for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Restore the crossing point for pedestrians immediately east of the current crossing. Relocate blister paving to this crossing.
- Use street furniture and paving to guide pedestrians directly onto the footway, and discourage them from short cutting across the cycle path.
- Remove all push button units from the cycle track crossing to discourage pedestrians from waiting there. Use loop detectors to register cyclists.
- Relocate the crossing indicator for cyclists on the Gresham Rd side to the back of the pavement, to discourage cyclists from queuing across the pavement.



1.1.3 Stream cyclists and pedestrians on the Gresham Rd approach by:

- Remove the west side pavement in Gresham Rd and widen the east side pavement instead. At present both pavements are too narrow.
- Treat the mouth of Gresham Rd as a road junction, using kerbs and blister paving to alert visually impaired pedestrians to the likelihood of cyclists emerging.
- Remove the bollards that currently hamper flows and encourage pedestrians to walk in the cycle way.

1.2 *Remove the difficult turn onto Parkers Piece cycle path*

How ?

1.2.1 Move signal head pole to its previous location (no longer supporting a pedestrian demand unit). Use a cranked pole to maximize clearance.

1.2.2 Remove poles supporting signs and push button unit in the middle of the cycle path.

1.2.3 Reduce obstruction by pedestrians at the turn by:

- Guide pedestrians away from the cycle lane, as described in previous section.
- Remove push button units as described in previous section.



1.3 *Reduce harassment by, and conflict with, drivers*

How ?

- 1.3.1 Re-align all crossing indicators so that drivers cannot see them.
- 1.3.2 Use detector loops to extend the green phase for approaching cyclists so that they are not perceived to be joining on red.
- 1.3.3 Highlight the presence of the crossing by coloured surfacing.
- 1.3.4 Put the crossing on a raised, flat topped platform.
- 1.3.5 Restore the crossing width to reduce obstruction by queuing vehicles.
- 1.3.6 Install light violation cameras.

1.4 *Improve crossing convenience for users*

How ?

- 1.4.1 Restore automatic detection for cyclists. To:

- Detect approaching cyclists and register a demand. If no demand was registered in the previous cycle then the lights should be timed to change to green so that the cyclists does not need to stop - as for road traffic. (People are less likely to cycle along the pavement if the lights clear them to join the road immediately).
- Prolong the green phase if a cyclist is detected approaching the crossing while it is on green. The green phase is incredibly short - only 7 seconds, compared to 1 min 45 seconds for the nearby road junction, and does not allow anybody to join the crossing smoothly. ie as for road traffic. Prolonging the green phase allows people to join the crossing without feeling harassed and so reduces the temptation to "jump the lights".
- We note that in busy periods that the pedestrian / cycle green phase will be limited by a fixed cycle time. A short wait followed by a short crossing period is preferable to a long wait, as the latter encourages people to cross on red.
- Re-align all crossing indicators so that cyclists can see them on approach.



1.5 *Protect cyclists turning right from Gonville Place*

How ?

- 1.5.1 Reinstate central islands to protect confident right turning cyclists. This will undoubtedly be controversial however we believe that queuing is a very poor use of road space and is self defeating – more road space fuels demand for more road space. The current narrow lanes create a dangerous and intimidating environment. We believe that this road space was more appropriately used in the previous arrangement.



- 1.5.2 Create an approach ramp on both sides to allow

less confident cyclists to pull off the road onto the pavement and await the light change.

2 Suggested Programme

2.1 Immediate Action

- Remove all unnecessary poles and bollards
- Re-align all crossing indicators so that they are not visible to traffic.
- Re-activate cycle detector loops.
- Remove "End of cycleway" signs and replace them with direction signs indicating the cycle route to the station etc.

2.2 Medium term action

- Re-locate signal posts.
- Restore original pedestrian crossing and re-locate blister paving.
- Remove push button request units on cycle path side.
- Use surface colouring to highlight crossing routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Rearrange pavement in Gresham Rd.
- Put the crossing on a raised platform.
- Create slips for cyclists to get off the road onto the pavement to turn right.

2.3 Long term action

- Reinstate protective islands.
- Convert the nearby two stage pelican crossing to a single stage toucan (currently this is used by cyclists to travel between Mill Rd and Parkers Piece).
- Review the road environment in Gonville Place. Is this really how we want it to be ?

3 Developing a better understanding of cyclists

We were disturbed to discover that the County Council's engineers have taken a number of retrograde policy decisions, apparently without consulting either the public or elected representatives. If cycling and walking are to be encouraged, it is vital that officials are not allowed to bring in damaging policies by the back door. In particular, we are concerned that designers recognize the following:

- Bicycles are vehicles, and cycle tracks are roads, for the sole use of cyclists. Cyclists do not behave like pedestrians on wheels, cycle tracks are not footways, and the design philosophy must recognize this fact.
- Cycle crossings must be designed in the same way as road crossings. As cycle crossings are invariably called on demand only, the waiting time should be minimized. If not, the crossing will act as a deterrent to cycling. Unreasonably long waiting times or unreasonably short crossing times, encourage people to cross on red - with a considerable increase in risk.
- Shared use paths and crossings can be either segregated or un-segregated. The need for, and degree of segregation should be assessed on a practical, case by case basis. It should not be determined from an ideological standpoint. In general, all users prefer segregation from each other, and segregation will provide better quality infrastructure. This is reflected in most guidance. For lightly used facilities segregation may not be necessary, economic or effective.
- Safety issues must be assessed pragmatically. It is widely recognized that traffic and pedestrians can mingle safely at speeds less than 20 mph. Few casual cyclists can achieve speeds even close to 20 mph in an urban environment and so present little risk to other road users.
- It is nonsense to push cyclists and pedestrians together into a mixed environment and then insist on taking measures to "slow cyclists down". If mixing cyclists and pedestrians is considered dangerous (and we would robustly challenge any such assertion) then the answer is to avoid pushing them into unnecessarily uncomfortable proximity.
- All cycle infrastructure must be subjected to a Cycle Audit as well as, or in place of the Safety Audit. Regrettably few Safety Auditors appear to have much experience or understanding of cycling issues. As a result safety audits often result in awkward, barrier strewn infrastructure. This does nothing for safety, and often results in greater danger for those riders who try to circumvent the barriers. Inappropriate "safety" measures (eg barriers and chicanes) are a deterrent to cycling and a hazard.
- Guidelines must be applied responsibly and realistically. Changes must not be made to existing infrastructure that is working well, merely to satisfy particular elements of guidelines. This is particularly true where those guidelines which have been written with different road users in mind (eg Puffin crossing guidance, aimed predominantly at pedestrian crossings). The designer's first responsibility is to the user, and to create an environment that is safe and convenient for those users.
- Guidelines must also be read with a flexible interpretation. There is a marked difference between the interpretation of regulations put forward by Cambridge County Council, and the interpretation of those same regulations by other Highway Authorities.

4 Removing the turning ban at parallel crossings

Cambridge has in the past been at the forefront of development of cycle crossings. It was disappointing to see such an unimaginative approach to dealing with the right turn ban. There is no objection in principle to the conversion of a parallel crossing to a toucan, provided that the beneficial characteristics of that crossing are not discarded for purely ideological reasons. We do not however believe that it represented a sensible or economic means by which to remove the turning ban.

There is nothing in the design of a Toucan crossing that makes a right turn safer than it was in the previous Parallel crossing. In fact the new arrangement results in considerably more conflict than before.

The constructive approach would have been as follows:

- It is acknowledged that Toucan crossings allow cyclists and pedestrians to mingle safely, and perform crossing maneuvers on and of the road. Since nothing in the design of the Toucan crossing makes this safer than at a parallel crossing, it is clear that the turning ban is not necessary.
- The Toucan crossing came into existence because cyclists were making use of Pelican crossings - illegally, but without causing any problems. This was established by observation and controlled studies, and so the Toucan was born. In the same way, cyclists ignore the turning bans at parallel crossings. Many are not even aware of the bans. This does not result in any problems and there are no records of accidents associated with cyclists performing banned turns.
- We request that the County Council perform a trial removal of a banned turn at one of the parallel crossings in Cambridge, in conjunction with the DfT. Before and after studies should be performed to assess changes in behaviour and attitudes of users. We believe that there will not be any measurable changes.
- Having successfully performed a trial, we request that the County Council simply remove the turning bans at parallel crossings, leaving the crossings otherwise unchanged. This is clearly a much more economic approach than replacing all the signal gear at a junction, and leaves scarce resources available for more pressing problems.
- Having demonstrated that the turning ban is unnecessary and counter productive, we request that the County Council approach the DfT and ask that the regulations be changed nationwide.