

Safety Concerns for Disabled & Older People using Bus Stop Bypasses, Shared Use Bus Boarders and Bus Gates: Information Sheet for consideration in relation to City of York Council Draft Transport Strategy

York Disability Rights Forum welcomes the City of York Council's commitment to make York a 'healthier, fairer, more affordable, more sustainable and more accessible place, where everyone feels valued'. We welcome its draft Local Transport Strategy's intention to improve air quality and disability access but believe it must think again about the features illustrated below if it is to be inclusive and human-rights informed. Please read it and have your say!

Bus Stop ByPasses (also known as a "Floating bus stops")

A bus stop bypass is a cycle lane located behind a bus stop to provide continuous segregation from motor traffic for cyclists. These have been introduced as part of Active Travel Schemes. They continue parallel to the road thereby creating a bus stop 'island' between the cycle lane and the road (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: A cyclist on a cycle lane with a bus stop bypass island between it and the road.

Bus passengers alight onto the bus stop 'island'. Guidance LTN/120 says these should be at least 2.5 metres wide to allow for a ramp to be deployed from the bus and space for people using mobility aids to be able to manoeuvre in the space.

Where there is a zebra crossing on a raised table to enable people to get from the pavement to the bus stop bypass island and back, Belisha Beacons should be provided but not in such a position to inhibit movement (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: A cycle lane with a zebra crossing and Belisha beacons next to a bus stop bypass island adjacent to a road.

Shared Use Bus Boarders

An alternative to bus stop by-passes is Shared Use Bus Boarders (SUBB). These come in two types. The first has a small section of raised zebra crossing on the cycle lane where bus passengers board and alight. These should only be deployed where buses have a single door because of the wands protecting the cycle lane (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: A Shared Use Bus Boarder with a raised zebra crossing across the cycle lane

The second type requires bus passengers to board and alight directly to and from a cycle lane but with no requirement for line markings to tell cyclists that they should give way (see Figure 4).

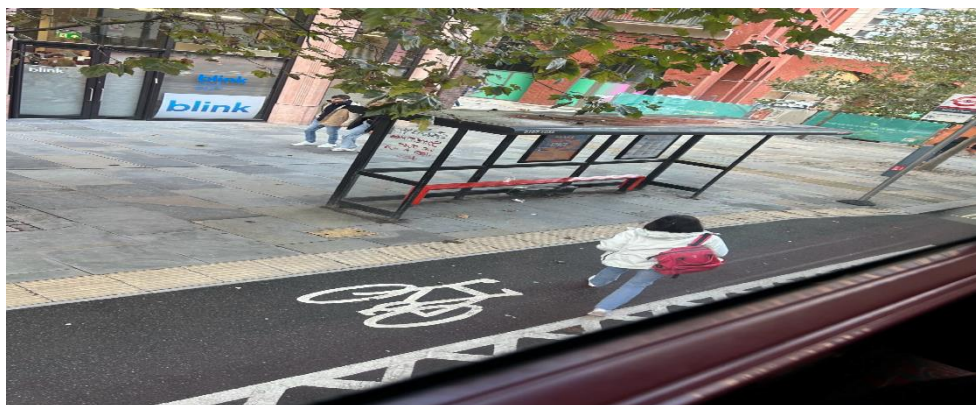


Figure 4: A Shared Use Bus Boarder devoid of indications for cyclists to give way to passengers

All the images shared above are of one-directional cycle lanes and largely devoid of cyclists or pedestrians. Where bi-directional cycle lanes are in use, cyclists travel in opposite directions within the same cycle lane, thus requiring pedestrians to cross two lanes of cyclists at once and causing even more hazards for them and cyclists.

Safety Concerns posed by Bus Stop ByPasses & Shared Use Bus Boarders

Safety concerns are posed for disabled people across multiple impairment groups due to the need to cross cycle lanes. These include:

- *Cyclists' behaviours* - evidence increasingly shows that cyclists using such routes routinely fail to give way and that they increase their speed. Research by Transport Research Laboratory (TRL, 2018) found that Belisha Beacons made "little difference" and zebra crossings made "few differences". An article in March

2023 reported that only 1 in 10 cyclists in London stopped at the pedestrian crossings.

- *Loss of confidence and independence* - disabled and older people are reported to increasingly become afraid to venture into these areas, thus losing their independence. A TRL report prepared in 2020 for the Department of Transport, including stakeholders' views, cited concerns: for Guide Dogs being trained to follow a kerb; for those using a navigation guide; and for those using a wheelchair fearing that cyclists might not stop:

*"Generally, the view was that **bus stop bypasses were currently too dangerous for older and disabled pedestrians to use them**, and that work was required in order to make them safer and thus more inclusive."*

Written evidence submitted by the National Federation of Blind People of the UK (NFBUK) to the Transport Select Committee in 2019 highlighted that "the Canadian Federation of the Blind (CFB) won a human rights tribunal against the use of bus stop bypasses".

The 2021 Department for Transport's "Inclusive Mobility: A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure" recommends early engagement with groups representing older and disabled persons, as well as older and disabled persons themselves, in the early planning and design process for any bus bypasses.

In March 2023, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, promised to look at the safety of bus stop bypasses after the NFBUK submitted a petition supported by 164 organisations, calling for "urgent action".

The RNIB has advised:

"Bus stops that require pedestrians to cross a cycle lanerender buses inaccessible to many people who otherwise rely on bus travel" (see Figure 5)



Figure 5: A busy cycle lane with a bus stop bypass island full of people waiting and other bus passengers waiting on the pavement

Bus Gates

A bus gate is a section of road which can only be accessed by buses and authorised traffic (see Figure 6)



Figure 6: A road with "BUS GATE" markings and plantings on each side of the road

A bus gate potentially restricts access to Blue Badge holders unless exemptions are granted. Councillors in Aberdeen for example have been asked to pass Blue Badge exemptions to ensure disabled peoples' rights are not restricted.

Safety Concerns posed by Bus Gates

Bus gates pose safety concerns across multiple impairment groups. Here are some of the concerns that have been expressed:

- They increase difficulties in accessing services and parts of the city, restricting the ability to travel and freedom of movement
- They can create longer journey times and this can disproportionately affect some disabled people
- Even where Blue Badge exemptions are granted by local authorities, there is evidence from current UK schemes that Bus Gate enforcement is inadequate to distinguish these users accurately. This can lead to fines and wrongful requests for payment causing undue stress. An example from Nottingham shows how a disabled motorist was penalised for passing through a Bus Gate, despite it showing signage that an exemption was in place.

References available on request

Have your say! Talk to your Councillor! Come to our open online meeting at **6pm on Monday 15th Jan** - <http://tinyurl.com/YorkDraftLTS>. The Draft Local Transport Strategy consultation closes on 4th Feb and is available in paper copies at libraries, West Offices, ward & Parish meetings; by phoning 01904 551550; or online at <https://www.york.gov.uk/BigTransportConversation>.

York Disability Rights Forum is led by disabled people and works to promote equal access to human rights for all disabled people who live or work in York. You can contact us by email at hello@ydrf.org.uk; by leaving us a voicemail message at 01904 326781 and we'll call you back or write to us c/o Centre for Applied Human Rights, 6 Innovation Close, York YO10 5ZF