

John Biggs AM

**Mayor of London
City Hall
London
SE1 2AA**

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA
Switchboard: 020 7983 4000
Minicom: 020 7983 4458
Web: www.london.gov.uk

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Dear Mr. Mayor,

I am writing to you regarding the Cycle Superhighway 2 Summit I held at City Hall on Thursday 28 November. This was attended by users of the CS2, London Assembly colleagues Val Shawcross AM, Caroline Pidgeon AM and Darren Johnson AM as well as Chief Executive of the London Cycling Campaign Dr Ashok Sinha and your Cycling Commissioner, Andrew Gilligan.

There was a lot of discussion about how safe CS2 is for cyclists, specifically the section which runs from Aldgate Gyratory to Bow roundabout. Members of the audience put forward their concerns about the route as well as suggestions for improving it, which I have included below.

I understand from the Cycling Commissioner that Transport for London is upgrading this section of the CS2. In its current state, CS2 is substandard. The western section of the route, eastbound between Vallance Road and Mile End, is in a bad state of disrepair, with faded surface markings. I would be grateful if you could take the suggestions I outline below into consideration when making changes to CS2. The people that attended the meeting last week regularly use the CS2 and want a safe and usable route for people of all cycling abilities.

Bow roundabout

Many concerns were voiced about Bow roundabout at the meeting – an issue I have raised with you many times. The Cycling Commissioner agreed to look at the early start signals for cyclists at the roundabout as currently, the time allowed for cyclists to move away before vehicles set off behind them is too short. I understand that the light phasing is different to what was agreed with Transport for London and vehicles are constantly jumping the lights. This delays cyclists from setting off from their advanced start position, despite vehicles chasing them from behind as the lights turn green for cyclists and vehicles at the same time. Furthermore, bus drivers who have contacted me have said that while the layout is an improvement, the new design at Bow appears unable to cope with large numbers of cyclists using the roundabout at the same time.

Recent enforcement of drivers at this roundabout has been useful but because this is a recurring problem, a regular police presence at this roundabout would be very welcome. I would be grateful if you

could provide me with details of when the early start signal for cyclists will be extended and whether a regular police presence at this roundabout could be put in place.

We also heard from two cycling instructors who teach people how to cycle safely, as well as teach HGV drivers about how to share the road safely with cyclists. They made the point that the segregation at Bow roundabout does not follow the safety standards. Cycling awareness courses teach cyclists that to remain safe it is best to hold their place in the middle of the lane, but the segregation at Bow roundabout pushes cyclists to the left and therefore into the danger zone.

The Cycling Commissioner set out various options for how Bow roundabout will be remodelled in the future. An audience member suggested introducing four toucan crossings on Bow Roundabout to make it fully segregated and allow pedestrian access. There are no facilities for pedestrians to cross from one side of the Bow Road to the other. The nearest pedestrian signals are just beyond the church, some 300m to the west. I would strongly support improvements to Bow roundabout that includes pedestrian facilities, particularly because of the development around the roundabout will mean an increase in the number of the pedestrians crossing at this junction.

Aldgate Gyrotory

There was a consensus that the pace of change for improvements to cycling infrastructure moves extremely slowly. This is particularly true of the Aldgate Gyrotory which I understand from Andrew Gilligan will be completely remodelled. Participants in the meeting put forward their suggestions that the redesign of Aldgate should include Bishopsgate as well and extend into the City of London. Furthermore, in a submission from UNITE who represents bus drivers working along the A11 have said they feel that this section of the CS2 is particularly confusing and does nothing to aid cycle safety.

Junctions

As Andrew Gilligan pointed out, 85 per cent of accidents are at junctions and 15 per cent happen on link roads, between junctions. This is the case on the CS2 where cyclists have died at almost every junction over the past ten years. It was felt that at busy junctions, cyclists need to be given their own phase on the signals. Depending on the circumstances, it may be possible to combine this with a pedestrian phase.

Most road users, including cyclists, are not sure who has priority at junctions, and this confusion is exacerbated where there is blue paint on the road. I was told by bus drivers along the route that where blue CS2 markings share bus lanes there is confusion as to who has right of way.

The meeting welcomed the Cycling Commissioner's pledge to redesign junctions along the route. It was felt that junctions should give priority to the most vulnerable users, especially on the A11 which constantly has large vehicles travelling very fast along the entire route.

CS2 Extension

Most audience members were positive about the extension of the CS2 from Bow Roundabout to Stratford. However, there were several suggestions for how to improve this section still further. The raised dividers between the new cycle lanes and the vehicular lanes are constructed out of granite with

sharp sections which could cause lacerations to anyone who hits it. It has been suggested that standard hydraulically pressed concrete battered, half battered, or bullnosed kerb would cause fewer injuries.

It has been reported that this section of the CS2 has flooded since it opened a few months ago and this is not acceptable as it pushes cyclists into the traffic in an effort to avoid cycling through a large puddle. Also, at the meeting an audience member raised their concerns about the left hooks along this section and the lack of cycling infrastructure around the Stratford gyratory. This comes back to the overarching problem for cyclists who use the CS2. TfL is encouraging cyclists to use the CS2 but are effectively abandoning them at the beginning and end of the route and failing to provide cycle safe infrastructure at the most difficult junctions.

20mph Limit

The audience were very supportive of a 20mph limit along the CS2. Cyclists who use the CS2 said there is currently very little enforcement of the speed limit. Londoners who would like to cycle but are often scared because of the speed with which other vehicles move. This is a policy initiative supported by the London Cycling Campaign through their Space for Cycling campaign would encourage more people to cycle and save lives.

HGV Restrictions

There was widespread support at the meeting for a better design of HGVs. The Cycling Commissioner said that TfL is currently trying to get sign off on lorry cab design from the European Union, which would allow HGV drivers far greater visibility.

At the meeting we also discussed the possibility of introducing restrictions of HGVs and I understand that TfL is currently putting together proposals for different options. I would be grateful if you could send me a copy of this once it is complete as it is a subject that was discussed by a number of participants at our meeting.

Planning Developments

There were a number of points raised about the development around Bow roundabout and the Aldgate Gyratory suggesting that the Greater London Authority should incorporate land swaps when approving planning applications in these areas. For instance, I understand that planning approval has been granted for a large housing development by IKEA on the southeast corner of Bow roundabout. Would you consider using your ability to call in planning applications to ensure developments on and around cycling routes incorporate facilities for cyclists, if appropriate?

International Best Practice

Several audience members raised concerns that current cycling infrastructure is not designed to meet international best practice. The Cycling Commissioner said if everything was designed to international then it will take longer to get a solution. However, the general feeling was that establishing consistency for cyclists is incredibly important. An audience member rightly made the point that because of the lack of consistency for cyclists in London, let alone the rest of the UK, cyclists can often seem unpredictable. We need national standards on cycling infrastructure as there is for drivers.

Timed loading bays along the route cause cyclists to swerve into traffic.

Unite London Passenger Section, representing bus workers and taxi drivers is in favour of fully segregated cycle lanes utilising quiet roads. We also feel more resources should be focused on safe local routes around local schools, markets and business areas.

Space for Cycling

As mentioned above, the LCC's Space for Cycling campaign has outlined six policy themes which they feel will create cycling conditions that would cycling accessible for all ages. They include:

- Protected space on main roads
- No through-motor-traffic zones
- 20mph speed limits
- Safer cycle routes to schools
- Liveable high streets
- More parkland routes

I would be interested in whether TfL will take these themes, where appropriate, into consideration when setting out the improvements to the CS2.

In conclusion, it is essential that cycling infrastructure is consistent and predictable so that cyclists know what to expect when approaching junctions and travelling along link roads. Whichever option is chosen to improve CS2, Transport for London should be mindful that cyclists could benefit from national standards. The junctions along the entire route have to be redesigned to ensure that vulnerable road users are protected, including Aldgate gyratory and Bow roundabout. Lastly, I would be grateful if TfL could implement the measures the LCC has outlined in their Space for Cycling campaign.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



John Biggs AM

Member for City and East London

cc. Andrew Gilligan, Cycling Commissioner
Peter Hendy, Transport for London