

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 28th July 2014
Report for: Decision
[Draft] Report of: Executive Member for Environment and Operations

Report Title

Adoption of new policy on Cycle Lane Widths

Summary

In the past Trafford Council has installed Cycle Lanes on roads at a variety of widths, including some which are very narrow, typically less than 1.3m wide. Such narrow cycle lanes can encourage cyclists to position themselves too close to the kerb, where evidence suggests they are more vulnerable to being overtaken by motor vehicles where there is insufficient room. In most circumstances cyclists are likely to be safer with no cycle lane at all, that in a very narrow cycle lane.

However, in certain circumstances, we know that cyclists value the presence of a cycle facility, even if it is less than 1.5m, and that this can provide a significant benefit to cyclists. It is therefore proposed that the Council adopts a Position Statement produced by the Trafford Cycle Forum as the Council's new policy on cycle lane widths. This is attached at Annex 1.

The proposed policy adopts a standard minimum width of 1.5m, which is in line with national and local guidance, and recommends a number of particular circumstances where, through consultation with the Trafford Cycle Forum, the Council's Highways Department may use lesser widths.

Recommendation(s)

That the Council Adopts the Cycle Lane Width policy provided at Annex 1 with immediate effect.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Dominic Smith, Traffic Transport and Road Safety Manager
Extension: 4312

Background Papers: None

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	<p><i>The policy contributes to the delivery of the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan, which in turn is an important delivery mechanism for the Greater Manchester Strategy.</i></p> <p><i>The Policy will contribute to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities. Most particularly, the 4th priority "Services focussed on the most vulnerable people". Cyclists are one of the most vulnerable road user groups, being at higher risk of injury or death than many other road users. This policy will assist in affording cyclists the best possible facilities and minimising risk to their safety.</i></p>
Financial	<p><i>There is no programme proposed to amend existing cycle lanes so there will be no significant financial cost of adopting the proposed policy. The Council's maintenance regime will be amended such that most existing cycle lanes of less than 1.5m are either widened to at least 1.5m, or removed altogether, as and when they are affected by resurfacing or relining programmes. In instances where a road is being relined (as opposed to being resurfaced) and the Council wishes to widen an existing cycle lane, there will be a small cost associated with removing the original lines (as opposed to simply lining over them). This cost will be met from within the Traffic, Transport and Road Safety Team's revenue budgets.</i></p>
Legal Implications:	<p><i>No significant legal implications.</i></p>
Equality/Diversity Implications	<p><i>No significant equality/diversity implications.</i></p>
Sustainability Implications	<p><i>The policy promotes the use of cycling as a sustainable mode of transport, by insuring that cyclists are provided with adequate road space.</i></p>
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	<p><i>No significant staffing or e-government implications. The policy will have a slight impact on how the Council manages its highway assets, in that existing cycle lanes which are less than 1.5m width will either be replaced with wider cycle lanes, or removed altogether as and when they are treated as part of planned maintenance schemes.</i></p>
Risk Management Implications	<p><i>The proposed policy will, over time, reduce the risk of injury to cyclists on the Council's highway network, through provision of improved cycle facilities.</i></p>
Health & Wellbeing Implications	<p><i>The proposed policy will have a beneficial effect on health and wellbeing by encouraging greater take-up of cycling as an active and healthy mode of transport. Evidence suggests that building active travel into the daily routine is one of the most effective methods of getting the recommended level of physical activity.</i></p>
Health and Safety Implications	<p><i>The proposed policy will, over time, reduce the risk of injury to cyclists on the Council's highway network, through provision of improved cycle facilities.</i></p>

1.0 Background

1.1 In the past Trafford Council has installed a large number of advisory cycle lanes which are generally of sub-1.5m in width. Cycle lanes of less than 1.5m in width do not comply with current national guidance from the Department for Transport, or the recently adopted Greater Manchester Cycling Design Guidance. Current evidence and national guidance suggests that cyclists can be more vulnerable if they cycle too close to the edge of the road, because this can encourage motorists to overtake cyclists without leaving sufficient room to pass safely. Such narrow cycle lanes can encourage cyclists to position themselves too close to the kerb. In fact, in most circumstances cyclists are likely to be safer with no cycle lane at all, than in a very narrow cycle lane.

1.2 The Trafford Cycle Forum, the mechanism by which the Council consults with local cyclists, has consistently advised against the use of cycle lanes of less than 1.5m in width in recent years. As a result, for a number of years such the Council has adopted a policy of non-renewal of sub 1.5m cycle lanes when undertaking resurfacing/relining schemes, meaning that a number of previous cycle facilities have ‘disappeared’ from the road network following maintenance work. This has resulted in a number of comments and complaints from members of the public, whose perception is often that any cycle facility is better than no facility.

1.3 Whilst the Council’s Highways department agrees that generally cycle lanes should be at least 1.5m in width, there are certain circumstances where such a facility would be valuable even if it is less than 1.5m in width. For example, on approach to Advance Stop Lines, or at other locations where there are frequent instances of queuing traffic. The Council’s Traffic, Transport and Road Safety team has therefore sought to agree a revised position with the Cycle Forum which will enable a little more flexibility in approach to cycle lanes in order to consistently ensure that the best possible solution for cyclists is provided. The result of this work is the attached Position Statement, which it is proposed that the Council now adopts as its own policy on cycle lane widths.

2.0 Proposed New Policy

2.1 It is proposed that the Council adopts the Position Statement recently agreed by the Trafford Cycle Forum, and attached as Annex 1, as its current policy on cycle lane widths. The position statement adopts the following core principles in relation to cycle lanes:

- The appropriateness, or otherwise, of a cycle lane, should be considered on a scheme by scheme basis, and there should not be a presumption that a cycle lane is automatically the best solution in order to provide for cyclists on any particular stretch of road.
- Where a cycle lane is considered the appropriate solution, as a general rule 1.5m should be considered as the minimum width for a cycle lane, and no cycle lanes of less than this width should be installed or reinstated by Trafford Council without prior consultation with the Trafford Cycle Forum.
- In line with DfT guidance LTN 1/04, and with regard to its statutory duties under the Traffic Management Act 2004, the Council will adopt the DfT’s “hierarchy of users” concept on all traffic management schemes, placing pedestrians and cyclists at the top, with unaccompanied private car-users last. It is noted that, as stated in LTN 1/04 “the objective of such a hierarchy is to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable road users are fully considered in all highway schemes, but not necessarily to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists in every location.”
- In line with DfT guidance LTN 2/08, before any cycle lanes less than 1.5m width are considered, all opportunities for redistributing space within the highway should be explored, along with measures to reduce vehicle speeds, in order to ensure a cycle infrastructure that is “perceived to be safe” by cyclists.
- However, there are exceptions to the above rule, where a cycle lane of less than 1.5m width may be appropriate, if it is judged that such a facility will be of benefit for cyclists in a particular individual situation. Such situations could include, though may not be limited to:

- On approach to Advanced Stop Lines (ASL) at junctions
 - At locations where there are frequent instances of queuing motor vehicles where a cycle lane would serve to keep traffic away from the kerb and afford a journey time advantage to cyclists
 - To tie into existing facilities of less than 1.5m in width when resurfacing adjoining sections of road
 - To provide continuity of facilities where short sections of reduced carriageway widths prevent a continuous lane of 1.5m from being provided.
 - Where local consultation indicates that an existing sub-1.5m cycle lane is particularly valued by local cyclists.
- The Cycle advocates the use of standalone cycle icons as a good solution where a cycle lane of 1.5m cannot be accommodated. Examples are those used by Manchester City Council on Stretford Road and Ashton Road, and those recently installed in Trafford as part of the Bridgewater Way access route on Ashburton Road West. The Council has obtained permission from the Department for Transport to use these icons, in conjunction with a signed cycle route. Such provision gives a clear statement to all road users that this is a route used regularly by cyclists and that the roadspace indicated by the icons should primarily be used by cyclists.

3.0 Effect and Application of the Proposed Policy

3.1 The effect of the proposed policy will be that cycle lanes in Trafford are gradually converted to 1.5m wide where it is possible to do so. It will also mean that, where a cycle lane which is currently less than 1.5m wide is known to provide a significant amenity for cyclists, for example in affording a route through traffic congestion, such lanes are not simply lost as they have been in the recent past. Instead, the Council will consult with the Trafford Cycle Forum over the best way forward.

3.2 It is noted that the proposed new policy is unrelated to the recent cycle lane scheme on Talbot Road. This was part of a much wider scheme which was partially funded by Sustrans, and the installation of wider than standard (1.8m-2.0m) cycle lanes on Talbot Road was necessary in order to secure the funds, which were specifically associated with particularly high quality cycle facilities. By contrast, the purpose of the proposed new policy is not to widen all the Council's cycle lanes, but to prevent the installation of dangerously narrow cycle lanes (where evidence suggests cyclists are better off with no cycle lane at all) and also to prevent the loss of existing facilities which are only slightly less than 1.5m, where these provide a significant benefit for cyclists.

3.3 In the application of this Policy, the Council will always have due regard to its duties under the Traffic Management Act 2004 (Section 16) to secure 'the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network'. This duty applies to traffic of all vehicle types.

4.0 Other Options

4.1 The main alternative is to maintain the status quo, which would continue to result in cycle lanes of less than 1.5m in width being lost without consideration or consultation, and potentially also to the installation of new sub-standard cycle lanes.

4.2 A further alternative would be to propose a different set of principles for cycle lanes for adoption. However, this is not recommended as the principles set out in this report, and the attached Position Statement, have been discussed in detail and agreed in principle between the Council's Highways Department and the Trafford Cycle Forum

5.0 Consultation

5.1 Extensive consultation has already been undertaken with local cyclists via the Trafford Cycle Forum. The Position Statement attached at Annex 1 has been agreed by the Trafford Cycle Forum. Senior officers within the Council's highway maintenance depot were also consulted, have been informed of the proposed policy and are supportive of it. The views of other cyclists, not members of the Trafford Cycle Forum, have also been taken into account following the numerous observations the Council's Highways department receives from such cyclists on the issue of cycle lane widths. No further consultation is proposed to be undertaken.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendation

6.1 It is recommended that the Council Adopts the Cycle Lane Width policy provided at Annex 1 with immediate effect for the following reasons:

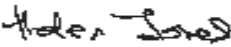
- This is a policy position which has been agreed with local cyclists through the Trafford Cycle Forum.
- The policy will enable the Council to provide facilities which enhance cyclists' safety and amenity.
- The policy will enable the Council to retain some sub-standard width cycle lanes which provide a particularly important amenity for cyclists, through consultation with the Trafford Cycle Forum on a location-specific basis.

Key Decision: Yes

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? Yes

Finance Officer Clearance (type in initials).....GB.....

Legal Officer Clearance (type in initials).....CK.....

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE (electronic)..... 

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.