Transport & Mobility Forum

Submission to the Cork City Centre Movement Strategy (CCMS) Parts 1 and 2 (June 2015) Grenville Place / Grattan Street (Middle Parish) and Patrick Street

General Comments:

The Transport and Mobility Forum welcomes the proposals of the CCMS in relation to the new traffic arrangements in Patrick Street, prioritising buses, taxis and cyclists in Patrick St for the afternoons / evenings. This in our view will highly contribute to the attractiveness of Patrick Street as a destination for shoppers, upgrade of the public realm and also enhance quality of public transport. Buses will experience fewer delays in this core part of the Cork City bus network, so public transport throughout the city will become more reliable and a better alternative to private car use.

The down side of this is that remaining car traffic needs to be diverted to other channels in the wider city centre, which leads to the proposed one-way arrangement in Grenville Place and Grattan Street. Although it is assumed that only few drivers will have used Patrick Street as a thoroughfare in the past (during daytime), traffic volumes along Grattan Street and Grenville Place must be expected to rise in the near future.

Negative impacts of higher motor traffic volumes must be expected along Grenville Place and Grattan Street, which surround the Middle Parish neighbourhood, one of the most densely populated areas in the city centre and home to schools, senior citizen housing, a community centre, the Mercy Hospital and other institutions with a high footfall of the general public and partly vulnerable road users (children, elderly, mobility impaired persons).
The proposed one-way systems also have a **highly negative impact on the route network available to cyclists, particularly around the St. Vincent footbridge** linking Grenville Place and the North Mall, as it will cut off the possibility for cyclists to travel south / west from the footbridge in a direct way.

This submission will make some proposals to mitigate the negative impacts of the planned alterations. One specific aspect to be addressed here is a **speed limit of 30km/h** for the area.

Expected negative impacts of the scheme to the Middle Parish and connectivity to bicycle traffic

It is expected that volumes of through motor traffic will rise in Grattan Street, and particularly in Prospect Row / Grenville Place / Bachelors Quay, the latter also as a result of the one-way system planned for the southern end of Grattan Street.
The one-way scheme in Prospect Row / Grenville Place / Bachelors Quay will cut off an important cycling link from the North Mall and Sunday's Well to Washington Street / Western Road via St. Vincent footbridge in the southbound direction (affecting e.g. the Tyndall Institute, Presentation Bros College etc.). It will also cut off the link to the UCC Campus and the Mardyke at times when the River Lee greenway is closed.
Cyclists travelling south from St. Vincent footbridge would need to travel south through Millerd Street and Moore Street, where right turn (to the west) is not possible (Sheare's St being one-way eastbound), and a crossing into Little Hanover St would be unprotected. Considerable detours and dangerous crossings would be necessary to reach the Mardyke / Western Road area from Sunday's Well and Popes Quay / North Mall, the latter having become an excellent cycling route lately with the new cycle lanes.
Increased traffic volumes on Grenville Place and Grattan Street will impact on the safety of pedestrians around the Mercy Hospital and create a "barrier" (Grattan Street) in the transition from the Middle Parish to the North Main St area, with effects on a high proportion of vulnerable road users in the area (see above).

Suggestions

Routing for Bicycle Traffic:
As we understand, the cross section of Grenville Place near St. Vincent's Bridge is too narrow to allow for a footpath also on the river side and a contra-flow cycle lane. As an alternative, the following routing for southbound bicycle traffic from St. Vincent Bridge seems to be essential:
Bachelors Quay (east), right turn into Millerd Street, right turn into Henry Street, left turn into Prospect Row with a contra-flow there (which at a later stage shall continue through Dyke Parade (mostly wide footpath now) up to Mardyke Street in order to access Western Road).
Also at the southern end of Grattan Street (to be one-way), a short contra-flow lane (or facility, e.g. combined foot/cycle path) is needed between Sheare's St and Broad St, in order to maintain a link for cyclists from Liberty St into the Middle Parish, and to facilitate egress from the Public Bike station in this location, other than towards Washington St.
Millerd St should then be declared a cyclist priority street, with appropriate signage, especially at the narrow junction with Francis St, while in Henry St (west), the mixed use of the roadway by cyclists and (slow) motor traffic shall be highlighted on the tarmac (cycling symbols or similar).

Access to St Vincent footbridge / pedestrian crossing
At present, the access to the bridge from Bachelor's Quay included a rather high step, which is an obstacle for both cyclists and mobility impaired pedestrians. As a mitigation measure, the proposed river side **footpath shall be raised to the bridge level**, with short **ramps** on both sides, secured by a railing to the roadway immediately at the bridge. With either a lowered kerb or a raised table at the

proposed pedestrian crossing just west of it, seamless access for cyclists from the roadway to the bridge shall be provided.

Further network improvements for bicycle traffic

In order to attain a higher degree of connectivity for bicycle traffic in the area, two additional measures would be desirable:

A **short contra-flow** facility at the northern end of **North Main St** (between Adelaide St and the Gates Cinema) would allow cyclists from Shandon to travel directly southbound into North Main Street, avoiding the detour via Bachelors Quay and Grattan St with heavy motor traffic.

A **right-turn facility** for cyclists from **Bachelors Quay** (east) into Grattan Street would allow better access into e.g. Adelaide St. While for cars, space for right turns might be tight, a waiting area for right tuning cyclists seems doable.

Speed limit of 30km/h as a safety measure

From our point of view it is vital that the entire area of the Middle Parish, including Prospect Row / Grenville Place / Bachelors Quay and Grattan St, becomes a 30km/h zone, which means an extension of the existing 30km/h zone in the core city centre as far as the Mercy Hospital.

Streets inside Middle Parish:

The streets inside the three thoroughfares (Grattan St, Sheare's St and Grenville Place) are mostly very narrow and single lane only, with only some of them having a one-way system. The only exception here is Henry St. They are mostly residential with a high population density. Creating a 30km/h zone here would only acknowledge the physical nature of these streets. The two proposed raised-table junctions along Peter St underline this. (As we understand, the option of creating a Shared-Space-zone was ruled out just due to cost reasons.) Extremely narrow streets like Millerd St and Francis St at an official speed limit of 50km/h would seem ridiculous and life threatening, even more if Millerd St is to become part of a cycle route to circumvent the one-way on Grenville Place.

Henry Street mostly serves as access to the Mercy Hospital. In its western end, high density (perpendicular) parking will lead to high levels of parking manoeuvring, mostly for visitors to the hospital. At the eastern end (junction with Grattan St), traffic must either slow down to turn into Grattan St or will enter into an existing traffic calming zone in Adelaide St. The short stretch of c. 200m would hardly justify a lifting of 30km/h.

Grenville Place:

The street narrows down in the access to St Vincent's Bridge and has a tight bend there, with limited sight lines. Just before the bend, a pedestrian crossing to the footbridge is proposed (welcomed!). Cyclists will need to share the roadway with motor traffic in this area, with a high proportion of them likely to leave the roadway and to access the bridge. South travelling cyclists from the bridge must join the shared traffic lane right at the bend. Further, there will be parking for ambulances and visitors, incl. 2 disabled spaces right outside the Mercy Hospital, and pedestrians will cross the roadway to and from the taxi rank proposed, a higher than average proportion of them likely to have physical impairments (hospital).

Prospect Row:
As we consider a contra-flow lane for southbound bicycle traffic essential here, a lower speed limit would enhance safety in this area.

Bachelors Quay:
As part of a here proposed dedicated cycle route (bridge to Millerd St), cyclists will weave in and out of motor traffic in this area. For the remaining c. 200m (east of Millerd St) in the approach to the junction with Grattan St (limited sight line there), speeds might be kept low for safety and consistency reasons.

Grattan St:
A 30km/h speed limit here would be less due the roadway's physical nature, but more because of the street surroundings (housing on both sides, Community centre, senior citizen housing, primary school with pick-up / set-down at times, perpendicular parking). It is the border between the Middle Parish residential area and the city centre (Adelaide St / North Main St), with a high volume of (partly vulnerable) pedestrians to cross it. In order to mitigate the separating impact of the street for pedestrians (safety), traffic calming measures like a 30km/h limit would be justified. It would also contribute to noise reduction in a densely populated residential street. A last aspect would be the consistency of an extended city centre 30km/h zone, where Grattan St as an exception would appear as a stranger.

Greening of the City Centre

The City Centre Movement Strategy which will improve opportunities for more sustainable travel in the city also gives an opportunity to provide in parallel, at relatively low cost, enhanced spaces to meet some of the social and environmental needs of the residents and visitors to the city. In parallel, this would also improve the experience of pedestrians, walking in the city in a more pleasant environment and hence have a positive effect on active travel (cycling, walking, physical activity).

Cork City Biodiversity Plan highlights the need to value and improve the green space, biodiversity and recreational opportunities in the urban environment. "*Our natural environment influences our social and mental wellbeing. Wildlife and our urban green spaces provide a sense of 'well being' and give people and communities pride in where they spend time."*

Each area of the city is in itself an "urban village" and this is particularly true in the Middle Parish which has a high residential density as well as many community facilities aforementioned.

We suggest that it would be hugely beneficial to develop the pockets of space (on corners, junctions etc.) as appropriate with seating, planters, shrubs and trees to enhance the natural environment for the community where people can sit and meet in aesthetically pleasing settings and which can help with improving the biodiversity of the city.

"Maintaining our connection with nature is a fundamental need and has significant implications for the quality of life of city dwellers", Making Space for Biodiversity in Urban Areas.

Some designs can incorporate shrubs, flowers and seating and take up little space but can have a really positive impact.

With footpaths being widened at several locations as part of the CCMS plan (e.g. at junctions Grattan St with Bachelors Quay and Henry St), the City Council shall take the opportunity to increase the number of trees in the city's street space.

In connection with this, the proposed **bus gate at Sheare's St / Grattan St** raises some concern. While the positive effect for public transport must be welcomed, it seems unclear how an entire 3rd lane will fit in at this location. According to the drawings, angle-parking on the southern kerb will be replaced by kerb parallel parking, so apparently the right lane will move further to the south. As regards urban green space, it seems vital that the mature tree at this corner (outside the barber's shop) will be unaffected by this, as well as the bicycle racks being kept, serving the customers of the nearby shops.

Positive health effects

Traffic calming measures like lower speed of motor traffic, widened footpaths and urban green space will also have a positive effect on public health. Noise and air pollution will be reduced for both residents and pedestrians, and forms of active travel (cycling and walking) are encouraged.

Choosing active forms of travel can bring about immediate health benefits for individuals primarily through increasing their levels of physical activity. Population level benefits accrue when more people switch from car travel to walking and cycling as this leads to less road traffic injuries and improved quality of life in neighbourhoods as well as increased safety from anti-social behaviour due to more people on foot or bicycle in the area. This and the following statements are taken from "Active Travel – Healthy Lives", IPH Inst. Of Public Health in Ireland, 2011.
Regarding speed limits, it says that *fast vehicle traffic is commonly cited as a barrier to walking and cycling while the availability of paths and cycle ways increases the likelihood of people walking and cycling to reach their destination. As levels of active travel increase, rates of pedestrian, cyclist and overall road traffic injuries have been observed to decline, suggesting a 'safety in numbers' effect. In countries such as Germany and the Netherlands where walking and cycling rates are high, pedestrian fatalities per billion kilometres walked are less than a tenth and bicyclist fatalities are only a quarter of those in the USA where travel by private car remains the dominant mode. Elsewhere, it has been*

calculated that the risk of collision between motorist and pedestrian or cyclist declines by more than one third if walking and cycling double in an area.

Further, motor traffic speeds are a key factor to the frequency and severity of pedestrian and cyclist injuries in case of an accident, and injury levels decline drastically with lower speed limits.

As a key recommendation, the report suggests that *there should be a balanced approach to the provision of incentives for active travel and disincentives for sedentary travel. Measures to slow down traffic and to help pedestrians negotiate busy streets can be effective in increasing physical activity and improving safety. Motor vehicle speed should be limited to 30kph in residential areas and near schools to improve pedestrian and cycle safety. Where possible, speed should be controlled by the provision of road surfaces and markings which indicate shared space between all road users.*

Conclusion

While the overall idea of diverting general car traffic further around the core city centre (Patrick St) and thus prioritise and improve public transport, the permeability of the Middle Parish neighbourhood for cyclists must be maintained. The proposed plans will have a severe negative effects on the connectivity of the cycling network and need to be re-addressed in this regard.

In the wake of the recent national debate on 30km/h speed limits ("Jake's Legacy campaign" etc.), Cork City Council is asked to set a clear signal for improved safety of vulnerable road users (pedestrians in general, school children, elderly and hospital patients here in particular, cyclists) in and around a densely populated inner city neighbourhood. Calming of road traffic will lead to more safety and less noise levels and encourage more people to use active means of travel, both of which contributes to the goals of Cork as a *WHO Healthy City*, with attractive and vibrant inner city neighbourhoods.

Street space regained from motor traffic also needs to be used to upgrade the public realm with "green infrastructure", particularly with inner urban trees. "Greening" of the urban environment would highly support Cork's application for the title of *European Green Capital*.

The Cork City Centre Movement Strategy provides an ideal opportunity to correct mistakes that have been made in past decades and we hope and believe that Cork City will continue to consequently follow the path of the programmes the City has committed to, and turn Cork into a healthy, green, vibrant and even more attractive city of the 21st century.

Cork, 05/06/2015

The Transport and Mobility Forum Cork is a group of organisations who have a common interest in sustainable travel.

For the list of members, see document attached or see online
http://transportandmobilityforum.com/partners/

Chair: Stephan Koch, UCC
Vice Cahir: Bryan Riney, Cork County Council / SWRA
Spokesperson: Shirley O'Shea, HSE

Contact:

On behalf of the TMF:

Cork Environmental Forum
c/o Bernadette Connolly
Mount Carmel
Kilcolman
Enniskeane
Co. Cork

bernadette@cef.ie