



Transport & Mobility Forum

Cork City Council

Roads & Infrastructure Directorate
Roads Design & Construction Division
City Hall
Cork

Via online consultation portal

Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork
www.transportandmobilityforum.com
tmfcork@gmail.com

c/o Cork Environmental Forum
Bernadette Connolly
Mount Carmel, Kilcolman
Enniskeane, Co. Cork
P47 C578

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PART 8 Public Consultation – Response

Covid 19 Recovery pathway: Pedestrian Movement Phase 1 French Church St & Carey's Lane / Cook St & Marlboro St

Proposed Pedestrian One-Way System

*** for practicality reasons, we submit one document covering both consultations regarding all 4 streets ***

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork (TMF) is a representative group of organisations who have a common interest in sustainable travel *. The TMF fully supports sustainable modes of travel measures and policies. Sustainable and Active Travel helps reduce congestion on roads, improve air quality, supports a low carbon economy, reduces noise pollution and improves public health.



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The current COVID 19 crisis is a tremendous challenge for the entire country (and the world). Recovery from the lockdown for businesses and public life is dependent on safety measures regarding social distancing with new requirements for space needed by pedestrians.

Significantly more space is now needed in the city centre (and other neighbourhood centres) for pedestrians, if the necessary numbers of footfall shall be reached to bring back public life into the city and make it a vibrant place again for shoppers, workers, businesses and visitors alike.

While the TMF welcomes all measures to provide sufficient space for pedestrians (and cyclists), and to facilitate the safe movement of people facilitating social distancing while reviving the city centre from the COVID lockdown, we can neither clearly support nor contest the proposed measures. Introducing a one-way system for pedestrians, be it on footpaths or in pedestrianised streets, does not have any precedent for all we know and is quite unknown. In this sense, everybody involved is entering uncharted territory at this point.

While a one-way system for walking can help to avoid crowding in narrow streets and hence reduce the number of close “encounters” for pedestrians, the possible levels of acceptance and adverse effects on businesses must be taken into account.

Observations

The two pairs of proposed one-way pedestrian streets are different in the sense that French Church St/Cary’s Lane are far more narrow with a higher number of bars/restaurants than the other pair Cook/Marlboro Street. The latter are wider and have a more balanced number of shops and bars/restaurants with related outdoor seating.

Regarding the existing cycle racks at the Patrick St end of Cook St and the Oliver Plunkett St end of Marlboro St, we think that direct access to these cycle parking facilities must be maintained. A loss of these parking facilities would be counteracting the plans to create more cycle parking in the city centre.

Regarding acceptance it is unclear to what levels pedestrians are prepared to accept and adhere to a rule that is entirely novel in a city street setting.

Another related question is if a one-way system can actually be enforced and what would be the legal basis for doing so. It is likely that the system can only be introduced on an appeal-to-the-public basis.

While the provision of more space for social distancing and out-door queueing would be vital for businesses in those streets to re-open, it is unclear if a one-way system would have a detrimental effect on footfall to shops in the area, as people might be forced to take considerable detours to reach a certain shop.

In return, a one-way system will reduce the amount of space needed for pedestrian traffic / movements in the narrow streets, and leave more space for waiting and queuing outside shops where necessary. As one can observe around the English Market entrances, customers queuing while keeping social distance takes up a considerable amount of street space, leaving at best half of the available



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street width for actual pedestrian circulation, not to mention potential queues for entering adjoining shops that so far have mostly been closed.

Where one-way or lane arrangements can clearly work will be on short bottlenecks, like e.g. pedestrian bridges (Nano-Nagle-Bridge, Shandon Bridge, ...), with a centre line marking and requiring people to only walk on the right (or left?). Such measures could help in case to get pedestrians familiar with the idea of regulating pedestrian movements.

Outlook

We understand that the proposed here measures are the first steps for City Council to take in the process of street adaptation and road space redistribution responding to social distancing requirements, as laid out in its Discussion Paper of 04/05/2020. Other streets need to follow. This applies to streets both in the city centre, as well as in neighbourhood centres (e.g. Douglas Street) and main active travel arteries leading towards the centre.

While measures proposed so far concentrate on BEING IN the city centre, it will be equally important to ensure that people will get TO the city centre safely.

As public transport capacities are largely reduced due to distancing requirements, walking and cycling will play a more vital role in getting to the city centre, while car traffic will soon come to its limits on an even more finite road infrastructure. Hence pop-up cycling infrastructure (lanes on main roads, priorities on designated quiet routes) will be a next important step.

We explicitly want to make reference to our recently issued Open Letter "Safer Streets – The Urgent Need to Provide Space for Social Distancing and Active Travel during COVID 19 Restrictions" of 14/05/2020 to Cork City and County Councils (see attached) with meanwhile over 30 signatory organisations, where we outlined measures that should be taken short-term to support COVID recovery for businesses and public life, but also to be considered for promoting a lasting change in mobility patterns in the city and towns.

As we understand, funds are now being made available from the EU to explicitly promote active travel and fast-track improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure to support COVID recovery measures.

Conclusion

Given the novelty of the proposed measures and the lack of experience with same, we cannot express a clear pro or contra position on the proposed pedestrian one-way system. Given the different conditions (esp. widths), a one-way system for French Church St/Carey's Lane seems to be more necessary than for Marlboro/Cook Street. Only when more businesses are opening, the real demand for space (walking and queuing as well as outdoor seating) can be assessed and the effects of a one-way system be observed and evaluated.

Due to the many unknown factors and effects of a pedestrian one-way system, we suggest thorough monitoring and evaluation from the start and a timely review in case.



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We welcome the fact that the proposed COVID recovery measures are also made subject to a public consultation, allowing a wider stakeholder-input. We reiterate to offer our support and expertise while going forward with introducing further short-term and temporary measures. While these measures are primarily driven by social distancing requirements, we see them as a chance to enhance the vibrancy and attractiveness of Cork's city centre also in the long-term.

Should you require any clarifications, please email me at tmfcork@gmail.com .

Stephan Koch

Chair

Note: *The comments within this submission are solely the view of the Transport and Mobility Forum (TMF) as a whole and not the opinion or view of any individual partner of the TMF.*

*) A full list of partners in the Transport and Mobility Forum can be found at

<https://transportandmobilityforum.com/partners/>