



Transport & Mobility Forum

Cork City Council

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

Via online consultation portal

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c/o Cork Environmental Forum
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PART 8 Public Consultation - Response

MacCurtain Street Public Transport Improvement Scheme

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.

We welcome and support the proposed improvements for the MacCurtain Street area with upgrades of public transport, walking and cycling infrastructures and the public realm.

The redirecting of bus routes on the proposed bus priority corridors will make public transport more attractive and reliable, with large parts of the city benefitting from more predictable travel times.

The installation of a continuous East-West cycle route on a segregated 2-way cycle path along the North Channel Quays will give cycling in Cork a new quality and will contribute to an urgently needed improved cohesiveness of the city centre's cycling infrastructure.

The general make-over of MacCurtain Street, turning it into a people-friendly destination area without the character of a major thoroughfare road, will create an important link and extension of the City Centre towards Kent Station and the new city quarter around Horgan's Quay.

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The extension of the city centre's 30km/h streets to include Bridge Street, Coburg Street and MacCurtain Street are fully supported in this respect, as it supports pedestrian and cycling safety and placemaking.

Observations

Relating to the proposed scheme, we want to share some critical observations.

Buses

We support the **creation of priority bus corridors** through MacCurtain St, Bridge St, Coburg St etc. as they will direct buses more into destination areas. The new bus connections into MacCurtain Street for inbound routes (208, and supposedly 205) will underline the street's new character of a destination.

Unfortunately **no indication was given** to resulting **changes in the bus network** (i.e. redirecting of bus routes) that the new bus corridors shall facilitate. This would have been necessary to get the full picture of the effect of the scheme (which is labelled "Public Transport Improvement").

Cycling:

We fully welcome and support the plans for the extensive set-up of segregated (2-way) cycle paths.

The continuous **route along the northern Quays** between Pope's Quay and Penrose Quay will serve as a **high quality East-West route** for cycling into and through the city centre. It will complement the southern route via Mary Elmes Bridge, Parnell Place and Anglesea St and connect to **the Lee to Sea** route towards the East via Victoria Road and further towards the Blackrock greenway.

Contra flow lanes and the shared use of contra-flow bus lanes will secure further connectivity of the cycling network.

However, we must **criticise the layout of several junctions** in connection with the cycle paths. The segregated (2-way) paths often end in the approach to junctions and **cyclists are forced into mixed areas with pedestrians** which will cause conflicts. **Transition** of cyclists from/onto the carriageway is also often unclear.

This applies in particular to the junctions at:

- Leitrim Street (middle and northern end)
- Lower Glanmire Rd at junction with Brian Boru St
- Merchands Quay at crossing to Parnell Place
- Merchand's Quay at Patrick's Bridge
- Anderson's Quay at Brian Boru Bridge
- Pope's Quay at new pedestrian gateway
- Christy Ring Bridge / Lavitt's Quay
- Mulgrave Rd joining the Quays' cycle path

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Mixing cyclists and pedestrians in the approach to signalled junctions should be avoided or at least minimised. The cycle paths should instead continue into a toucan crossing.

Situations like planned at Leirim Street / Pine Street where cyclists shall mix in a larger space with pedestrians are not ideal. The same situation can be seen today at Parnell Place where Oliver Plunket St and Maylor Street end and there is no marking of the busy primary 2-way cycle route across the area.

The **continuous 2-way segregated cycle path along the northern Quays**, including several busy junctions, is a **novelty** to Cork (especially with cyclist in one direction being on the “wrong” side of the road). The continuation of the cycle path through the junctions at Brian Boru (unlike now), Patrick and Christy Ring Bridges is very positive. Arrangements for **turning cyclists**, however, are often **unclear**. This applies in particular to cyclists turning north from the cycle path, situated on the southern side of the carriageway.

While there are waiting areas defined for cyclists travelling east to north, there is nothing indicated for cyclists from west (contraflow) to north. What signal phases will apply to them? Where will they wait while letting straight going cycle traffic pass? Will there be a separate cycling signal phase (like in the Netherlands) or will the pedestrian signal apply to them, which can cause severe conflicts?

Unfortunately, there are **no cross-sections** for the northern Quays provided in the drawings. For a clear and safe segregation between the cycle path and the carriageway, there should be a **verge with different surface material between the cycle path and the kerb** of at least 500mm. Having the marked cycle path extending right to the kerb would compromise its convenience and safety (see e.g. on Old Kinsale Rd near Harvey Normans).

As the **cycle path along the northern Quays** will be an important city centre link between the two sides of the **Lee to Sea route**, special attention should be given here to the quality, safety and convenience of the cycling infrastructure.

Unfortunately, there is a ca. **100m gap remaining** between the eastern end of the Quays cycle path and the cycle route **along Horgan’s Quay**. While the **junction at Penrose Bridge** is not part of the present scope, there should at least be **signage installed** on both approached to Penrose Bridge junction, telling cyclists how and where to continue their journey through and beyond the junction.

Both ends of Mary Elmes Bridge need special attention regarding the potential conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians.

At the **northern end** (Patrick’s Quay), the interruption of the cycle path does not seem ideal. The nature of the area, however, implies that there is a node for active travel, with mixed spaces continuing onto the bridge and along Harley Street.

At the **southern end** (Merchand’s Quay), the proposed continuous cycle path is supported and is an improvement to the present situation of a mixed area. The **crossing of Merchand’s Quay to Parnell Place, however, should be revisited**. On the river side, the interruption of the cycle path at the

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pedestrian crossing is dangerous, as eastbound cyclists will go right into pedestrians, waiting at the red light to cross. Further, the signal mast (at present) is right in the line of the cycle path. As there are **space limitation** on the footpath, a **short boardwalk extension** should be considered at this key location in the active travel network.

Westbound cyclists on the Merchand's Quay cycle path are supposedly meant to be only coming from Mary Elmes Bridge, as there is no way for westbound cyclists on Anderson's Quay to join this path.

On the **Parnell Place side of the crossing**, the cycle path ends way before the crossing and mixes cycle and pedestrian traffic in a **dangerous** way. Given the character of this cycle route as a primary route, heading towards the primary east-west-route, a **continuous cycle path up to the crossing**, then leading **into a toucan crossing**, shall be installed here.

While the segregated 2-way path on **Christy Ring Bridge** is positive, questions remain how cyclists should continue at its southern end. A toucan crossing towards Emmett Place would be desirable. It is also unclear how cyclists travelling eastbound from Lavitt's Quay should join the cycle path on Christy Ring Bridge.

At **MacCurtain Street's eastern end**, it will be unclear for eastbound cyclists how to reach the 2-way path on the southern side of the Lower Glanmire "triangle". Cyclists unfamiliar with the locality wouldn't even know about the path ahead. The same applies to cyclists coming from Summerhill North or Brian Boru Street.

In general, cyclists must be informed **how to navigate larger size junctions** and how to continue their route when infrastructure features change (esp between on-street and segregated, on other side of carriageway), by signage, road markings or clear design.

Regarding **cycling connectivity towards Blackpool**, the proposals suggest that the main cycle route will be through Leitrim Street onto the **North City Link Road**. The latter is a heavily trafficked dual carriageway (N20) with no cycling facilities yet, but proposed to be a primary cycle route under the Cork Cycle Network Plan. An **alternative quiet route would be along Knapp's Square and Lower John Street**. Access from the Coburg St area would be through Devonshire St, which is now turned into a westbound one-way. This connection however should also be considered as part of the local cycling network, as for quite some time, the North Link Road will remain hostile for cycling.

The detailed drawings for the **urban re-design** of MacCurtain Street, Coburg and Bridge Street are very welcome. We fully support the massive redistribution of street space in favour of pedestrians and the entirely new character of MacCurtain Street. The inclusion of a large amount of trees is clearly positive.

There seems to be, however, a **lack of cycle parking in MacCurtain Street**, as cycle racks are only indicated at the eastern end of the street. Also there is none in Coburg Street. Cycle parking must be available in the area if the streets shall become a destination, also for people cycling.



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Space for an additional **BikeSharing station** should also be earmarked **in MacCurtain Street**, as the only stations so far are in Coburg Street and on the Lower Glanmire “triangle” near Ship Street.

Public Realm

The significant upgrade of the public realm is strongly supported and welcome. The large number of trees to be planted, along with seating and high quality surface materials, will hugely transform the area in the sense of placemaking.

While there is a comprehensive greening programme for MacCurtain Street and Coburg Street, tree planting should also be considered along the north Quays., and at the (rather bleak looking) Lower Glanmire “triangle” (between MacCurtain St and Alfred St/Ship St).

The northern end of Mary Elmes Bridge would also benefit of trees, i.e. to create a green frame at the entrance to the Victorian Quarter.

Conclusion

In general, the proposed scheme finds our support as it will lead to a tremendous improvement for public transport, walking and cycling in the entire area with positive effects reaching far beyond the immediate locality. Nonetheless we still see issues in a number of details as indicated above, especially in unclear junction design for cyclists.

We trust that our observations will be considered in the present public consultation process.

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

Kind regards

Stephan Koch

Transport and Mobility Forum - 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/>