



## Transport & Mobility Forum

**Cork City Council**  
Traffic Operations  
City Hall  
Cork

*Via online consultation portal*

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2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

### **PART 8 Public Consultation – Response**

## **Oliver Plunkett Street and Connected Streets Pedestrianisation**

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.

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.

At the same time, the extension of pedestrianised spaces and streets in the city will be an important step to increase the attractiveness of the city centre (and other parts of the city), upgrade the public realm and improve conditions for modes of active travel (i.e. walking and cycling) as a way to get around in the city on a daily basis, safe and convenient for people of all ages and abilities.



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The **TMF strongly welcomes the proposed pedestrianisation arrangements** of Oliver Plunkett Street and adjoining streets for the above mentioned reasons. These streets only bear a limited load of motor traffic and their closure for car traffic can significantly contribute to increasing much needed extra space for commercial activity and active travel in the heart of the city centre.

### **Observations**

In the context of “pedestrianisation”, the **role of cycling often remains unclear**. When roads are closed for vehicular traffic, using the term *pedestrianisation* leaves the question whether or not the street will remain open for cycling. To us this underlines a still wide spread attitude (even in planning documents) that cycling gets lost somewhere between motor traffic and walking, and is not recognised and reflected as a form of transport in its own right. As forms of active travel shall be promoted and better facilitated as stated in many recent planning policy documents (RSES / Cork-MASP, CMATS etc.), cycling must be reflected in the same way as walking.

As in this present public consultation document, the scheme’s objectives are mentioned as “facilitating a safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists for longer periods on these streets.” (p.2), we understand that **cycling will be allowed** in general in the pedestrianised areas. This in our view should happen only at adequate speeds with respect and consideration to pedestrian traffic as the dominating form of travel in these mixed areas. Clarification of the role of cycling would be welcome in future public consultations.

In relation to **local cycling access and connectivity** in the area between Patrick Street and South Mall, the following points seem important to us:

With the **forthcoming 2-way cycle path on the southern side of South Mall**, access towards Oliver Plunkett Street from the South will primarily be at Pembroke Street and Princes Street, with signalled crossings of South Mall provided there, and from Parnell Place. **Pembroke Street** shall therefore be designed as the primary access towards Oliver Plunkett Street for cycling. A recommended passage for cycling should continue **through Caroline and Maylor Streets**, in order to avoid cycling e.g. through busy Winthorp St.

Further west, **Robert St and Morgan St** would be an ideal (cut-through) cycling connection between Patrick St and South Mall, as they have (almost) no shop fronts and hence far less pedestrian footfall than the neighbouring Streets.

Whether or not **Princes Street (south)** can be used for cycling (see above) will depend on the extent of outdoor dining facilities as proposed there.

**Additional bicycle parking** in the area, e.g. at the Post Office, would invite cyclists to park their bikes in the heart of Oliver Plunkett Street and continue on foot to do their shopping. Extended capacities of safe bicycle parking shall be considered in the area, as this would enhance accessibility to the city

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centre by bicycle and existing bike parking facilities are often at capacity already. This would also help to avoid (wide spread) casual bike parking e.g. at sign posts which now will be more of a nuisance and risk than ever as it often creates unnecessary pinch points and bottlenecks for the flow of pedestrians, maintaining the distancing required.

Provisional additional kerb ramps shall be considered where necessary to better allow for navigating e.g. wheelchairs and prams/buggies. Proper flow of stormwater to the drain gullies, however, must be maintained.

Regarding street furniture, consideration shall be given to mini-interventions using natural material for upgrading the public realm, e.g. timber planters that can serve as public seating or barriers instead of solely technical barrier installations and yellow lines (“tactical urbanism”). This can help to make the new pedestrianised spaces more attractive and create a better sense of place.

### **Outlook**

We understand that the closures of Oliver Plunkett Street and adjoining streets are part of 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. Further streets should 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.

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 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 with 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, allowing for safer active travel for people of all ages and abilities.

### **Conclusion**

We welcome the here proposed permanent road closures and the fact that positive experiences over the summer now lead to a long-term re-dedication of the streets around Oliver Plunkett Street. We reiterate to offer our support and expertise while going forward with introducing further short-term and temporary or permanent measures in this regard. 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.



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Should you require any clarifications, please email me at [tmfcork@gmail.com](mailto:tmfcork@gmail.com).

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephan Koch".

Stephan Koch (Chair)  
Transport and Mobility Forum

**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/>