

Brendan O'Brien, Head of Technical Services,
Environment & Transportation Department,
Dublin City Council,
Block 2 – Floor 7,
Civic Offices,
Wood Quay,
Dublin 8.

4th November 2020

Re: Strand Road

Dear Brendan,

I refer to your correspondence of 12th October seeking our views on alternative proposal which has been put forward in relation to Strand Road.

The NTA have been provided with a document titled "*Strand Road Trial Rapid Deployment Cycle Route – An Alternative Proposal*" from the STC Community Group. We have also been provided with a second document attaching to an email titled "*STC – Alternative Proposal 2*", proposing a shuttle running section of 270 metres in length at the Merrion Gates in addition to a number of sketches and photographs.

Option 1 Proposal

In reviewing the first document received - "*Strand Road Trial Rapid Deployment Cycle Route – An Alternative Proposal*" – the NTA does not consider that the proposal is workable, adequate, safe or appropriate for, *inter alia*, the following reasons:

1. There is insufficient footpath width available to safely accommodate two-way cycling. Sections of the footpath are less than 2.5 metres wide. The footpath simply does not provide sufficient width for a potentially busy 2-way amenity / commuter route;
2. In addition, there are numerous poles, signs and other street furniture located on the footpath, further reducing the effective width to an unacceptable level;
3. Given the space available for directional cycling, a kerb would need to be installed along the path edge. Again this further restricts the available width to an unacceptable level;

4. Under the first submission of this alternative proposal, no segregated cycling facilities are provided from approximately Merrion Hall through Merrion Gates to Merrion Road. This means that the benefits of any segregated cycling facility further north of this point, would be completely eroded by requiring cyclists to merge with general traffic along this section, which is the existing unsatisfactory arrangement; and
5. The proposed arrangements at bus stops are inadequate and unsafe for bus passengers seeking to board or alight at these locations. In addition, the layout creates potential conflict points between cyclists and bus passengers and could not be supported by the NTA for implementation.

There are various other issues with the proposed designs in this option, including the fact that the proposal removes the more heavily used footpath on the sea side from pedestrian use, moving all pedestrians to the narrowed and less used footpath on the other side, and away from the preferred desire line of most pedestrians which is along the seaward side of the road.

Option 2 Proposal

A second proposal was submitted by the STC Community Group on 23rd October, which proposed widening of the footpath on the bay side such that both a two-way cycle track and a 2 metre footpath would be provided along this side.

Some of the items referenced in relation to the first option still apply, but more specific concerns are set out below. Overall, the NTA does not consider that the proposal set out in Option 2 is suitable or appropriate for, *inter alia*, the following reasons:

1. Shuttle Running

A key issue with this suggestion is the proposal to deploy a shuttle running arrangement for general traffic between Merrion Hall and the Merrion Gates junction, a distance of about 270 metres. Under this arrangement, the section would operate as a single traffic lane, with alternating directional movement controlled by traffic signals.

This arrangement would not be supported by the NTA for a number of reasons. Among the most significant is the dramatically reduced capacity of this junction, while all current traffic movements are still retained. In addition to signaling each direction separately, given the need to ensure that the one lane section operates unimpeded, there will need to be additional red time added to the signal phasing to ensure that the “common” section is clear of opposing traffic before traffic release. Overall, this will reduce the capacity of the Merrion Gates junction to significantly less than half of its current capacity – additional work would be required to establish the full level of the capacity reduction.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, with this dramatic reduction in junction capacity, the level of traffic congestion and queuing on both sides of this area will similarly increase. Again, more work would be required to establish the level of increase in traffic congestion and traffic queuing, but it will be very significant, both on Strand Road and on Merrion Road.

2. Risk Profile at Level Crossing

Separate from the traffic congestion increase, the impacts of the proposed arrangement on the safety profile of the railway level crossing is a serious concern for the NTA. A risk evaluation would need to be carried out of the proposed arrangements, but the NTA has a concern that the provision of a long section of single lane running, directly in advance of the level crossing, may increase the level of risk at the railway crossing due to drivers perceiving an increased urgency to clear the one-lane section. Anything which increases risk levels at a level crossing, particular a vitally important level crossing such as this, has to be viewed negatively.

3. Inadequate Widths

In the first sketch of the provided document, the sketch dimensions indicate that the two-way cycle track along Section 1 will be 2.5 metre wide. The National Cycle Manual sets out guidance in relation to required widths for minimum provision, which is set out below:

Inside Edge Allowance	Cycling Regime	Outside Edge Allowance	Physical Width of Outside Traffic Divider	Total width Required for Basic Two-way
Footpath Kerb	Basic Two-way	Kerb / bollard		
0.25m	1.75m	0.5m	0.25	2.75m

The manual also advises additional width of 0.25m to cater for around schools, or for tourist (cargo-type) bicycles.

The above widths are minimum widths and the level of likely usage on this facility warrants provision of a wider facility above the minimum width.

In addition, it is noted that a component of the space to be assigned to the cycleway in Section 1, is part of the existing footpath, containing numerous poles, signs and other items of street furniture, further reducing the effective width of the cycle track to an unacceptable level.

Conclusion

While we acknowledge that the intent of the proposals being advanced by the STC Community Group is to achieve the objective of trialling the installation of safer cycling facilities along Strand Road while still retaining the existing traffic arrangements, the NTA would not be able to support, or fund, these proposals for the reasons set out above.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Creegan

Hugh Creegan,
Director of Transport Planning and Investment.