Written evidence submitted Dominic Leggett to the Bus Services (No. 2) Public Bill Committee (BSB37)

This submission relates only to the clauses (30,31,32) and amendments (NC12,NC47,41,42,43) regarding 'floating' bus stops and bus boarders.

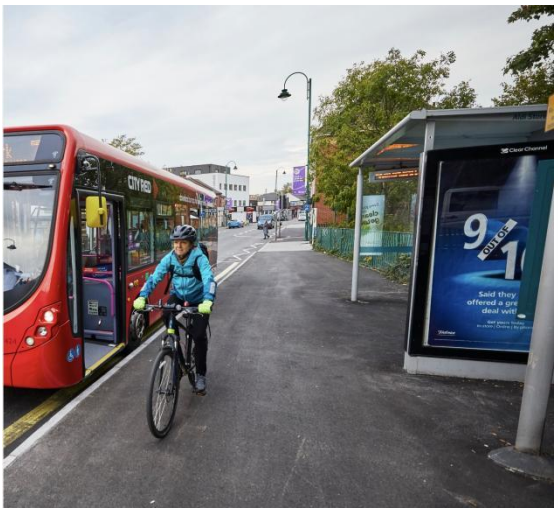
1) Continuous, safe cycle tracks on main roads enable use of low-cost, healthy, non-polluting transport options by a wide demographic who would not otherwise cycle on these roads due to the both real and perceived danger of sharing roadspace with heavy vehicles with substantial blind spots, including HGVs, buses, and vans.

2) This demographic includes the elderly, women, families, children - and substantial numbers of disabled people, not all of them visibly disabled, including mobility scooter and powered wheelchair users, handcycle users, and people with limited mobility on foot who are nevertheless able to use bikes and electric bikes.

3) Allowing a wide demographic to shift to cycling as a transport mode from car use, as separated cycle tracks let planners do, has substantial benefits to public health; reduced car use results in reduced pollution, and reduced road danger. This, in turn, has particular benefits to elderly and disabled people, and to children, who may be more adversely affected by pollution, or have more difficulty crossing the road.

4) Banning, or heavily regulating, the use of 'floating' bus stops effectively prevents planners building widespread cycle tracks on main roads, because it creates inevitable dangerous conflicts between cyclists, handcycle users, and mobility scooter users, and buses, in and around the bus stop cage.

5) Previously to the advent of cycle tracks and 'floating' bus stops, planners' solution to this problem of bus/cyclist conflict on main roads was most often a 'shared use' footway with bus stops placed on it (illustrated). The replacement of this nationally widely implemented solution with cycle tracks and floating bus stops is in fact a substantial improvement for blind people, as the two modes are nearly always separated; blind people are only forced to interact with cyclists on the crossing from the bus stop, not the entire length of the footway.



Bath Road's new shared cycleway and footway, passing a bus stop with a new electronic travel information display. (Image supplied by Buckinghamshire County Council)

6) It is clear that while implementing the short 'zebra' crossing between footway and bus stop - while a substantial improvement on the previous 'shared footway' solution ilustrated above - feel unsafe to use for some blind people - though there is no evidence so far of actual increased danger, or reduced usage. It appears that the fundamental difference between zebra crossings for bike tracks and zebra crossings for roads is that blind users can hear cars approaching, and therefore can decide for themselves when it is safe to cross, whereas, because they cannot hear cyclists, they have to trust the cyclist to keep them safe, and cannot assure their own safety. An improved design might provide a reliable aural signal when cyclists are approaching, to give blind users control over their own safety.

7) From the above, it becomes clear that any decision whether or not to implement a 'floating' bus stop entails balancing many potential costs and benefits, including the perceived safety of blind users, the actual and perceived safety of vulnerable and disabled cycle, handcycle, and mobility scooter users, and the interests of vulnerable communities and individuals impacted by pollution and road danger from excessive motor vehicle use. The decision will also be impacted by other factors including expected levels and demographic of cycling, bus frequency, footway use, and bus stop use.

8) Any legislation banning or severely restricting the use of 'floating' bus stops in the interest of one group of disabled users will permanently prevent the provision of substantial benefits to other groups of vulnerable and disabled users.

9) Legislation enforcing a particular design will mean planners are forced to ignore local context, details of specific locations, and design innovations - which will inevitably lead to sub-optimal solutions.

10) Decisions on details of cycle track and bus stop design should therefore be left to local planners and politicians, who best understand the local transport and political context, and who are best served by being given a set of tools to use, and the

evidence they need to use them well - and not enforced via central government legislation.

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