

## **Thamesmead bus lane, walking and cycling proposals: London TravelWatch's response**

London TravelWatch is London's independent transport watchdog, using evidence to campaign to improve journeys, and advocate for all people travelling in London. It is in this role that we are responding to TfL's consultation about proposed changes to roads between Woolwich and Abbey Wood via Thamesmead.

We make the following comments:

### **Responding to safety concerns**

TfL explain that safety concerns have informed their work, which includes a number of collisions in Thamesmead in recent years. London TravelWatch supports TfL's aims in this proposal to meet their Vision Zero target ambition by 2041.

### **Changes for bus passengers**

#### Improving journey times

TfL say that they want buses along the main roads through Thamesmead to run as efficiently as possible and provide an attractive and reliable service to customers. They say that bus journey times will be improved through bus priority, which will make them more reliable. London TravelWatch supports this approach, having long called for bus priority to help improve journey times. This is especially the case with average bus speeds in London being so low. Our research found that faster journey times are one of the top factors people say would encourage them to use buses more<sup>1</sup>, so it is important this fall in average bus speeds is reversed.

TfL want to futureproof bus services in the area to accommodate increased demand by providing new bus lanes where space allows. We support these new bus lanes and the plan to operate them 24/7 and that they will also be available for cyclists and taxis. However, there is a need to enforce these restrictions to ensure that the bus lanes are effective.

#### Flagship bus stops

It is positive to read that the scheme is going to be developed in accordance with Secure by Design principles, to provide new flagship bus stops to improve passenger ambiance and safety. This will include CCTV and real time information, whether the latter is the traditional Countdown screen or a different 'appropriate solution' for the relevant bus stops. We trust that seating and lighting will also be included, to further help with accessibility and to give waiting passengers a greater sense of security.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Next Stop: Making London's buses better](#), London TravelWatch 2024

## Bus stop by-passes

TfL are proposing to make bus stops more accessible, more spacious and easier to get to and from. Some of the bus stops would in future include bus stop by-passes, where bus users cross over a cycle lane to reach the bus stop and board the bus.

TfL point out that their [2024 Bus stop bypass safety review](#) concluded 'there is a very low risk of a pedestrian being injured by someone cycling at a bus stop bypass in London.' However, London TravelWatch would point out that the review also acknowledged that:

'Some disabled people, particularly blind and visually impaired people, remain concerned that bus stop bypasses are not safe for them to use.'

'Our disabled stakeholders explain that some people have no choice over what bus stop they can use and that the review of data doesn't capture the anxiety and fear they feel when using them.'

TfL say in this consultation's Equality Impact Assessment that they believe that the bus stop on Central Way where they will be placing a bus stop bypass is 'low risk.' TfL 'welcome feedback' during the consultation from those who have experience and concerns about bus stop bypasses but given TfL's views about bus stop bypasses, there is no sense that this feedback will lead TfL to make any changes to their plans.

Further, whilst London TravelWatch welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback to TfL's Bus Stop Bypass design enhancements guidance review, we ask why they are simultaneously pressing ahead with introducing new bus stop bypasses. This is not least because - as far as we are aware - no design improvements have yet been agreed. We believe that TfL should focus its efforts on improving current bus stop bypasses rather than installing new ones, particularly as they may not be compliant with the final revised guidance and so end up requiring further changes.

### **Improvements for pedestrians**

We support the proposed new pedestrian crossings at key locations to help make walking around Thamesmead safer and more comfortable, and accessing bus stops easier.

### **Improvements for cyclists**

Except where cycle lanes are to be navigated around bus stops, we support the improved new cycle lanes away from general traffic, as well as the improved links with existing cycle networks.