

Highway Works Blocking Cycle Tracks: March 2002

On 7th March the entire Royal College Street cycle track at the Plender Street junction was fenced off, preventing use of the track by cyclists. This appeared to be due to works associated with the installation of a speed table at that junction.

As the track offers two way cycle flow, and Royal College Street is one way northbound for motorists, this meant that southbound cyclists had no legal route through and should thus have backtracked northwards and sought an alternative route. The absence of any signage meant that some cyclists cycled the wrong down the main carriageway... given the traffic speeds and junction complexity this is a highly dangerous course of action to take.

Following representations from CCC the track was partially opened, but two weeks later, 1 lane of the track continues to be fenced off; its location adjacent to a side road means that these works are responsible for increased hazards for cyclists. The Royal College Street track has been closed on a number of occasions in the past (eg due to Boulevardde works, cable laying).

Key issues arising

Impact on cycle facility usage

Closures of this type (especially when not even signposted) will undermine cycle flows along the cycle track. CCC anticipates that after such closures there will be a significant drop in use for weeks or even months, as the inconvenience suffered by cyclists cause them find other routes and they will be unwilling to return to the track due to the risk of re-encountering delayed journeys or safety hazards. Where cycle traffic recorders have been installed in the track (eg as in Royal College St) this will impact the data gathered.

It should be noted that the Royal College St cycle flow statistics (provided by Festus last year) were instrumental in saving the entire LCN programme from being axed, as they were as far as we are aware only one of 2 sets of figures provided to TfL which demonstrated that cycle facilities do increase cycle flows.

Legal implications

There is a potential legal issue here, as those responsible for cycle track closures may be in effect closing a road to one direction of cyclists (as in the case of Royal College St.). We believe that some type of legal instrument (eg a traffic order) is required when scheduled works will result in a road closure for motor traffic. Thus such procedures must surely be necessary when for whatever reason cyclists are not able to use the main carriageway following the scheduled closure of a cycle track .

Better planning

CCC strongly believes that the Royal College St works currently being undertaken could have been done in such a way that cyclists permeability along the track was maintained (a day after our complaint the track was partially reopened). When such works are scheduled in future, forward planning effort must be expended on organising the works such that cycle tracks can be kept open.

Diversionsary signage

CCC does not recall ever seeing warning or diversionsary signage deployed for cyclists on the several occasions this track has been closed for scheduled works.

Looking ahead to the next time this happens, we recommend that either all of Camden's term contractors are instructed to acquire suitable signage to permit them to provide warnings and diversionsary signage as required for segregated cycle tracks, or the council purchase such signage and make it available to contractors.