

Consultation response

About us

Wheels for Wellbeing is an inclusive cycling charity based in Brixton. We are a grassroots disability organisation, running five sessions a week at our three inclusive cycling hubs. Using any of our fleet of over 200 cycles (handcycles, tandems, tricycles, recumbents, wheelchair cycles, side-by-sides and bicycles) Disabled people of all ages can discover or rediscover cycling, whilst enjoying its health and wellbeing benefits. Every year around 1,200 Disabled Londoners, aged from 18 months to 99 years-old, cycle at our hubs. We are also increasingly recognised as the voice of Disabled cyclists in the UK.

1. What does an inclusive and accessible transport network mean to you?

As we've made clear in our award-nominated [Guide to Inclusive Cycling](#), it is a regrettable fact that, up to now, cycle networks have been almost exclusively designed around the two-wheeled bicycle and able-bodied cyclist. This, of course, excludes many other types of cyclists, including those who use handcycles, recumbents and tricycles.

It is our firm belief that a cycle network that meets the needs of Disabled cyclists - by being step-free, barrier-free and spacious - is, by default, accessible to everyone: two-wheeled bicycle users, as well as individuals, families and businesses who use tricycles, tandems, trailers and cargobikes. Equally, any measures enabling cycling by Disabled people are likely to support a growth in cycling by novice cyclists, including children and young people, as well as older people. We would suggest that a good indicator of a well-designed inclusive cycle network is the variety of users from under-represented groups using it (including Disabled people, women, children and older people).

When designing and building cycle infrastructure in London, transport professionals and engineers should at the very least be asking themselves the question "Would a competent 12 year-old on a tricycle or handcycle be comfortable cycling here?" This should be the yardstick by which all cycle infrastructure is measured and will go a long way to increasing the numbers and diversity of people cycling in London.

Finally, an essential part of any inclusive transport network must be to ensure the integration of transport modes. Providing an attractive, whole-journey experience is crucial to encouraging more Disabled people to cycle, who often rely on multiple modes of transport to get around. What's more, Disabled people are more likely to be adversely affected by a lack of integrated transport modes as they already have to go to considerable lengths to plan a

journey. Still, it remains the case that accessing public transport is all but impossible for many Disabled cyclists who use their cycle as a mobility aid (instead of a wheelchair or mobility scooter); be it taking a tricycle on a bus or storing a tandem on a train.

"I've been challenged when bringing my handcycle on Virgin trains, the Newcastle Metro and the London Underground. In all instances I argued with the people who were challenging me and 'won' the argument, but it is always distressing to be challenged in this way" (anonymous Disabled cyclist)

2. Have you noticed any improvement over the past few years regarding accessibility and inclusion within London's transport network and streets? If so where? This could be either an area of London or a part of the network.

Generally speaking, the cycle infrastructure in London that consists of Cycle Superhighways is some of the most inclusive we have seen to date, with some particularly good sections being fully segregated, step-free, wide and clearly marked. Any future cycle infrastructure should be built to similarly high standards, making reference to the London Cycling Design Standards' 'inclusive cycle' concept.

We are also pleased to see that TfL has made a conscious effort to begin renaming and rebranding the existing network of cycle lanes as 'Cycleways', which replaces the previous 'Superhighways' with much more inclusive language.

We would like to see Mini Hollands (now Liveable Neighbourhoods) flourish across London. Waltham Forest, in particular, is a wonderful example of how the public realm can be transformed into a welcoming, healthy, inclusive and attractive environment.

3. What do you see as the main barriers keeping people from using the transport network and streets comfortably and confidently?

According to our research, inaccessible cycle infrastructure remains the single biggest barrier to cycling for Disabled people. We would argue that, at the most basic level, inclusive cycle infrastructure should be step-free, offer a continuous and uninterrupted journey, and have clear and accessible wayfinding. In addition, Disabled people can be barred from even considering cycling at all by the often terrible quality of footways where, like any other cyclist, they need to begin and end their journey (e.g. missing cut-curbs; cracked pavements; illegal pavement parking; pavement clutter). Walking and

cycling infrastructure should also be providing spaces where people feel safe and comfortable.

However, without inclusive cycle facilities to boot, cycle networks will remain inaccessible for many Disabled cyclists. In particular, there is a significant lack of cycle parking facilities in London that cater for larger and non-standard cycles. It is encouraging to see a shift in thinking around this of late, but much more work remains to be done in this area. We recommend that, where new cycle parking facilities are installed, 5% of all spaces should be allocated for use by Disabled cyclists - matching equivalent provision for Disabled car drivers.

4. Where are these barriers? Are different parts of the network better than others?

Barriers to inclusive cycling can be physical: for example, they could be tight bollards that exclude a tricycle, or kissing gates that prevent a handcycle or tandem from passing through (or that require a person to dismount and physically lift their cycle up and over). But barriers to inclusive cycling can also be financial, attitudinal or otherwise.

The cost of non-standard cycles, for one, is a significant barrier for many Disabled people, particularly given that they are more likely to work part-time or be unemployed than non-disabled people.

But attitudinal barriers are perhaps the biggest reason why more Disabled people don't cycle: namely, the fact that Disabled people are often overlooked as cyclists in transport policy and, as a consequence, cycles are not recognised as a mobility aid (even though, according to our research, three-quarters of Disabled cyclists use their cycle in this way). This creates significant challenges for those Disabled cyclists who use their cycle as a mobility aid, especially on footways, in pedestrianised areas and 'cyclists dismount' zones, where wheelchair and mobility scooters are typically allowed, but cycles and cycling are not.

5. What are the main impacts of these barriers?

Whenever Disabled cyclists encounter inaccessible cycle infrastructure and facilities, are challenged for using their cycle as a mobility aid in a pedestrianised space, or experience disparaging comments from passers-by, this discourages them from cycling and from pursuing healthy, independent, active lifestyles. Some may even stop cycling altogether. With Disabled people more likely to be physically inactive and experience social isolation than non-disabled people, this is a scenario that, as a society, we can ill afford.

6. What are your top priorities for the transport network and streets?

There are a number of steps that we would like to see the GLA take to help make London the world's most inclusive cycling capital. Our top priorities include:

1. Pushing for the London Cycling Design Standards to be mandatory, and calling on the Mayor of London to lobby government for a set of national cycle design standards, in order that predictably inclusive cycle infrastructure is available nationwide (and with inclusive design training for transport professionals to match)
2. Piloting a world-first 'Blue Badge' scheme for Disabled cyclists in London, granting Disabled cyclists permission to cycle considerately in non-cycling areas and access to specially allocated cycle parking facilities
3. Supporting and investing in a London-wide network of inclusive cycling 'hubs': ensuring that every Borough provides opportunities for local Disabled people to access cycling
4. Working with TfL and inclusive cycling hubs in London to develop a fully inclusive cycle hire service to complement the existing Santander cycle scheme

7. Should some areas be prioritised more than others? For example, technology, infrastructure, or streets.

Given that inaccessible cycle infrastructure (including facilities) is the biggest barrier to accessing cycling for Disabled people, this should be the focus of initial efforts. However, this should not detract from other measures that are of equal importance and necessity, such as improving public awareness of inclusive cycling, boosting recognition of cycles as a mobility aid and overcoming the huge financial barriers faced by Disabled people wishing to cycle.