

Manchester Friends of the Earth / Love Your Bike campaign
Green Fish Resource Centre
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23rd March 2011

re: Consultation on Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority, Stockport Council and Manchester City Council proposal for a Quality Partnership Scheme (QPS) along the A6 Corridor between Manchester, Stockport and Hazel Grove.

Manchester Friends of the Earth welcomes the creation of a Quality Partnership Scheme (QPS) along the A6 corridor between Manchester, Stockport and Hazel Grove. We note that the “A6 corridor operates with the most frequent single bus service in Greater Manchester (the 192) and carries over 10 million passengers per year. It provides a key link into Manchester City Centre.”

We would highlight that this corridor¹ is also a key cycle commute / utility route. To help make this route more pleasant to cycle and therefore help increase cycling levels there are a number of improvements that Manchester Friends of the Earth would like to see included in the Quality Partnership Scheme. These are detailed in the four sections below.

1) Highway Maintenance and ‘Potholes’

There is not a common policy across Greater Manchester for when a 'sharp edge trip' (or pothole) becomes 'actionable' e.g. meets the criteria to be repaired. One of the main criteria is the size of the 'sharp edge trip' - or in other words, how deep is the pothole. However, as the table below illustrates there are widely different criteria used across the Greater Manchester local authorities.

Pothole depth	Local Authority
50mm	Salford
40mm	Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford
35mm	Rochdale
30mm	Manchester
25mm	Wigan

Manchester Friends of the Earth believe that the Quality Partnership Scheme partners should encourage Manchester City Council and Stockport Council to operate the same criteria (30mm) for classing a pothole as 'actionable' (i.e. potentially dangerous).

Recommendations:

- GMPTTE should work with the Quality Partnership Scheme partners to establish a common criteria for when 'sharp edge trips' (potholes) are actionable for repair along the QPS route.

¹ http://www.gmpte.com/QPS/Scheme_Area_Plan_A6.pdf

2) Extending the bus lane network

Manchester Friends of the Earth believe that as part of the Quality Partnership Scheme the extent of the highway network allocated for bus lanes should be increased. This would help improve the quality and reliability of the bus service but could also help meet part of the core cycle network commitment as outlined in the Local Transport Plan (LTP3):

“However, as a priority the local highway authorities will each continue to work towards completing a core cycle network (of local, regional and national routes) providing direct, continuous, safe, attractive, comfortable and coherent cycle routes. This will include links with cycle routes outside Greater Manchester, such as the National Cycle Network. The network will link residential areas to key services (primarily employment and education but also health, leisure and retail) and into district/local centres. Whilst a whole route approach will be adopted to identify and plan routes, they will be delivered incrementally. The focus for investment will be on cycling routes that enable short trips or facilitate longer-distance trips through interchange with public transport. The routes will cater for all levels of ability (new and existing cyclists), eg both on-road, signed routes and quieter off-road routes.”²

Recommendations:

- GMPTE should work with the Quality Partnership Scheme partners to identify where additional roadspace can be re-allocated for the bus lane network along the A6 corridor.

3. Bus priority at traffic signals / junctions.

Manchester Friends of the Earth believe that the Quality Partnership Scheme should also seek to develop more bus and cycle friendly traffic signalling at junctions. For example, traffic signals can be programmed such that an approaching bus is recognised and allowed to pass through. Such a system aids the flow and reliability of public transport. Such ‘selective vehicle detection’ schemes are already in operation in a number of English cities including London,³ Bath⁴ and Merseyside.⁵

Recommendations:

GMPTE should work with the Quality Partnership Scheme partners to identify opportunities for the introduction of bus priority at traffic signals.

4. Bus Driver - cyclist awareness training

In February 2010, Greater Manchester’s Love Your Bike campaign (part of Manchester FoE) invited those who cycle in the area to answer a short questionnaire on their experiences of sharing the roads with buses. This issue had previously been raised, both in more general surveys and in conversations with the public, as an issue that not only raises safety concerns for those who cycle, but also deters some people from cycling.

² Local Transport Plan (LTP3) Page 100/101. www.gmita.gov.uk/downloads/file/3400/item_07_appendix_1

³ <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/businessandpartners/svd-brochure-2006.pdf>

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www.bathnes.gov.uk/transportandstreets/roadsafety/roadsafetytrafficschemes/Pages/BusPriorityMeasures.aspx

⁵ www.merseytravel.gov.uk/articleimages/MS_Bus_route_improvements.pdf

A survey was carried out using an Internet application and was promoted through cycling email lists, word of mouth, at the monthly Bike Friday rides and through the media⁶. In total 736 responses were received. Over 80% of the respondents cycled at least once a week in Greater Manchester. Just under half (46%) reported that they cycled every day.⁷

Amongst other questions, respondents were asked to select which 3 items from a list of 10 bus driver behaviours were most likely to make them feel unsafe when cycling. The list of driver behaviours had been drawn up by running short focus group sessions at meetings of Manchester FoE and Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign and asking for suggestions by email on various cycling-related email lists. The results show a clear 'top 3' bus driver behaviours that are of concern:

- 1) **'Passing too close to you' (76% of respondents selected this)**
- 2) **'Pulling out from bus stops without looking and signalling' (60%)**
- 3) **'Overtaking when not necessary (in busy traffic or approaching a bus stop)' (43%)**

- 4) 'Blocking advanced stop lines / boxes at traffic lights' (30%)
- 5) 'Driving in cycle lanes' (17%)
- 6) 'Opening the doors and letting people off when bus is not at bus stop' (16%)
- 7) 'Break suddenly without warning' (11%)
- 'Driving too fast.' (11%)
- 8) 'Driving through red lights.' (7%)
- 9) 'Other' (6%)
- 10) 'Telling you that you should not be in road and should be on the cycle lane.' (5%)

The high number and content of the responses reinforces the anecdotal evidence obtained from speaking to people who already cycle and those that are 'maybe cyclists' that sharing the roads with buses raises concern for people who cycle in Greater Manchester. This issue needs to be taken onboard by those agencies and organisations seeking to increase levels of cycling within Greater Manchester. Such cyclist awareness training has already been developed and delivered to bus operators providing services to Transport for London (TfL).

Manchester Friends of the Earth recommends that GMPTE and the Quality Partnership Scheme partners should ensure that the franchise negotiations under the new Quality Bus Partnerships require bus operators to provide cyclist awareness training for all bus drivers.

Recommendations:

- The Quality Partnership Scheme recognise the need for cyclist awareness training for bus drivers and other large vehicle operators.

We look forward to receiving an update on the results of the Quality Partnership Scheme consultation.

Yours sincerely

Pete Abel, Dr Graeme Sherriff, Catherine Thomson
on behalf of Manchester Friends of the Earth.

⁶ 'Love Bikes but Hate Buses?' Manchester Evening News 4th March 2010.

⁷ A full copy of the Bicycle and Bus Driver survey report is available on the Love Your Bike website.
www.loveyourbike.org