Agenda Item

GNLRT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

12th January 2016

INTERACTION BETWEEN PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS AND TRAMS ON WILFORD TOLL BRIDGE

1. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

1.1. With the introduction of trams across Wilford Toll Bridge, there has been a change to the environment for pedestrians and cyclists using the bridge. Now that there has been a period of familiarisation of the new shared space, it is considered that the bridge is being used according to the intended design and that users have adapted to the changes that have been introduced. There are no perceived road safety that require modifications to the layout across the bridge.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1. It is RECOMMENDED that the Committee notes this report.

3. DESIGN AND USAGE OF THE BRIDGE

3.1. Prior to the introduction of trams, Wilford Toll Bridge was only accessible to pedestrians and to cyclists. The bridge is used by children travelling to and from three schools that are situated on the south side of the Trent. Construction of NET commenced in 2012 and, during this period, access across the bridge remained open during the day time, although the width available was restricted and signs were erected requesting cyclists to dismount to avoid conflict with pedestrians.

3.2. In January 2015, the full width of the bridge was opened, allowing trams to undertake trial running. The bridge deck has been widened to accommodate the tramway and the layout has been designed as a shared space that can be used by pedestrians, cyclists and trams. To one side of the tramway is a footway that can be used by cyclists. The footway is 3.6 metres wide throughout most of its length, with two short sections that are 2.5 metres wide, adjacent to the bridge abutments. The layout has been designed with the approval of the Local Highway Authority and takes into account relevant guidance and legislation; the design was approved in full knowledge of the typical movements across the bridge, including those by children travelling to and from school. The footway is considerably wider than many other footpaths that run alongside the tramway and is, at all points, wider than the minimum required for a shared cycle / footway. Railings are not used to separate the tramway from the footway because they could result in a pedestrian becoming “trapped” on the tramway when a tram is approaching, with no easy means of escape.

3.3. Dialogue with local schools, about the introduction of the tram service, took place during the construction and testing phase, and safety briefings were given to the children.

Familiarisation activities took place locally, including parking the tram on the bridge for the children to board and to talk to road safety officers. When testing started, there was a gradual increase in tram speeds over the bridge over several days to help children gradually become accustomed to it. During the first weeks of full operations, NET staff visited the site at times when large numbers of children were using the bridge, to observe and assist.

3.4. The concept of trams sharing space with other users is common to other sections of NET and is accepted on other UK and European tram systems. Trams are driven on "line-of-sight", meaning that the drivers will drive appropriately for the area within which they are operating and they will react to particular conditions and events, similar to other road users. The tram drivers are professionally trained and have detailed knowledge of the characteristics of all sections of the route, travelling along it on numerous occasions every day.

3.5. The tram operator has reported that, having undertaken 8 months of trial running and more than 3 months of passenger service operations, they do not consider that the bridge presents any particular safety issues and that pedestrians and cyclists have become familiar with the way in which the layout is designed to function. Trams cross the bridge every 7 minutes in each direction at peak times on weekdays. Drivers expect to see large groups of children using the bridge at school arrival and leaving times and, whilst it may be appropriate at times to warn of their approach by sounding their bell or horn, they are trained not to bully or intimidate. Sight lines are very good and the bridge is well lit.

3.6. Whilst it is acknowledged that regular users of the bridge have undergone a significant change with the introduction of trams, recent observations indicate that pedestrians and cyclists have quickly become accustomed to the new environment, and are comfortable with sharing the space. The full width of the bridge is frequently used, but there is an awareness that, when trams do approach, their path is well defined by the presence of the tracks and it is necessary to make way for them. On occasions when trams are present, the drivers will drive at an appropriate speed and, if necessary, will let pedestrians and cyclists know that they are approaching by use of the bell or horn.

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