

To:

Scrutiny Support Unit  
Leeds City Council  
Civic Hall  
Calverley Street  
Leeds  
LS1 1UR

#### Request for Scrutiny

I wish to make a request for scrutiny of the public health and wellbeing implications of the proposed scheme to permit Hackney Carriage use of bus lanes (Capital Scheme Number 16532-000-000; delegated decision, reference D39175).

As a cyclist and representative of Leeds Cycling Action Group, I am concerned that this decision will have a detrimental impact on levels of cycling in Leeds and therefore on the public health of the city population.

Leeds falls behind other UK cities for levels of cycling, and in view of the Council's stated strategies (e.g. Vision for Leeds p11) the Council has a duty to increase levels of walking and cycling. Allowing hackney carriages to use bus lanes is in direct opposition to these efforts. Fear of vehicles is a key deterrent preventing cycling (see British Social Attitudes survey 2011: public attitudes towards transport), and allowing more vehicles into bus/cycle lanes will only make this worse, particularly for those new or returning to cycling. Accident statistics are often used as a measure of success or failure (e.g. Mike Penning MP's comments to the Transport Select Committee that the cycling is four times safer in the UK than the Netherlands), perception of risk is much more important in individual decision making.

There is also a concern that allowing vehicles other than buses into bus lanes will also be open to abuse. Council has assured the cyclists of Leeds that "We have engaged with the Private Hire companies as part of the roll out of enforcement cameras and they are fully aware that they should not use the bus lanes." Presumably Private Hire drivers are also fully aware they should obey traffic signals, park so as not to obstruct pavements and cycle lanes, and keep within designated speed limits, and yet all these infringements occur on a daily basis in Leeds.

An additional concern is that in several UK localities, the distinction between licensed hackney carriages and private hire is being reconsidered. Should this be enacted in Leeds or nationally, this would have a massive impact on the use of bus lanes.

According to the Traffic Regulation Order on the Bus Lane Enforcement Project, bus companies say that vehicles using bus lanes illegally is "a major issue affecting service punctuality". However, correspondence from the Council has assured us that "hackney carriages can be accommodated largely without detrimental impacts". The experience of cyclists in Leeds is that the driving behaviour of hackney carriages and licensed private hire vehicles is much more relevant to cyclists than vehicles illegally using bus-and-cycle lanes.

The proposal for all licensed hackney carriages to use bus lanes is of great concern to the majority of cyclists in the city. I hope that the Scrutiny committee will be able to carefully consider the effects of this change on transport choices and therefore on the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Leeds.

Best wishes

Dr. Elizabeth Reather