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Campbell, Jacqui

From: Roads Eastern Srit
Sent: 10 March 2015 15:43
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: York Street Interchange Formal Consultation

John

Thank you for your response to the consultation on the proposals for the York Street Interchange. Your views have been recorded as part of this process and will contribute to the decision on whether The Department should hold a Public Inquiry into the scheme.

Regards

Colin Pentland

Strategic Road Improvements

DRD - Eastern Division, Hydebank, 4 Hospital Road, Belfast BT8 8JL.

From: John Ferguson [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 March 2015 12:39
To: Roads Eastern Srit
Subject: York Street Interchange Consultation

Dear Sir or Madam,

The proposed redesign for the York Street Interchange is a welcome one for motorists who must use the Belfast-centric road infrastructure to get to a destination on the other side of the city, e.g. from the North to Boucher road or beyond or vice versa, the so-called strategic traffic.

However, I worry about the consequences for the people who must live and work nearby the York Street Interchange. The plan's stated objective is to maintain access for pedestrians and cyclists, but the existing provision for cyclists and pedestrians is limited and sometimes scary, which gives little hope for the future. For several years when I lived near Ballymena, I used the North Side Park and Ride at York street, and walked to the city centre where I worked because it was more convenient for me than using the bus, which didn't go on a suitable route and I could not be bothered waiting for it. The 15-minute walk to the Waterfront was good for me, too. However, getting on to Nelson Street from Great Georges Street as a pedestrian was often very dangerous, with many motorists going through red lights to try to get onto the Westlink. I use that example, because although the proposed improvements will remove a lot of 'strategic' traffic, there will still be many motorists commuting or delivering using the new interchange, motorists under time pressure or just impatient, who will make things difficult and dangerous for pedestrians. I'm not entirely sure of the answer. There are subways under Victoria street, but you'd only use them to look at the graffiti. Elevated crossings have a terrible side effect of needing to be closed in and have vast ramps. The street-level pedestrian crossings are cheap and pedestrians generally prefer the visibility they afford, but they will need to be fenced in.

And I haven't even mentioned cyclists yet! I once rode through Ballymena on my bike. I am an avid rural road cyclist who is generally confident to skirt round towns or nip through a village, but Ballymena centre, even in slow traffic was a scary experience and I resolved not to ride there again. I felt very vulnerable surrounded by cars that could open their doors or pull out and flatten me at any moment. Part of that could be improved by me simply being more aware of the dangers and riding more confidently, but I use that as an example to highlight how cyclists will feel at the new York Street interchange, which will tend to involve dense traffic moving at higher speed than Ballymena town centre. The proposals include narrow cycle lanes with no protection from vehicles and a shared bus/cycle lane. That would be OK, but there will be traffic crossing the cycle lanes at some of the junctions. There are similar cycle lanes on Raceview Road between Ballymena and Broughshane. I don't think I've ever seen a cyclist on those roads (granted I'm never there when Michelin workers change shift), but I for one would be terrified at the thought of a lorry or even a car crossing in front of me to leave for, or join from, the M2. If the proposed York Street Interchange is constructed as currently planned I foresee the cycle lanes being as empty as the ones between Ballymena and Broughshane and people decrying them as 'useless paint'.

There will very soon be a huge influx of people to the North of Belfast because of the new University of Ulster buildings that are now being erected. Many of these new residents will be young, fit and able students who may not have the resources for a car, but will be making many journeys on foot or by bicycle and I can foresee many cyclists simply disregarding the inadequate and unsafe cycling infrastructure and using the footpath instead, to the detriment of pedestrians (and further re-inforcing the people's view that cycling on the footpath is not something the police bother with, in fact I've seen them do it themselves!). And that's a best case scenario. I am often out and about round Ravenhill road, Ormeau Road and the Lagan embankments where the cycle lanes are sometimes embarrassing and sometimes simply ignored by the few cyclists I see, even where it does make sense to cycle in them, probably because they just don't trust the

cycle lanes. And who would, if, like on the proposed York Street Interchange, a bus, lorry or a car that "simply didn't see the cyclist" could knock you off at any moment as they exit for a side road.

In conclusion, I believe it is vitally important to make the new York Street Interchange as safe and appealing as possible for pedestrians and cyclists because encouraging local journeys to be made by foot or by bike will remove cars from the road and further improve the experience for all traffic, not just strategic traffic. It will also hugely improve the quality of life for the many residents and future students in the area. The provision for cyclists and pedestrians must be improved, not simply maintained at the current inadequate levels.

Regards,

John Ferguson

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