



Caroline Russell AM
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
LONDON SE1 2AA

Sadiq Khan
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

15 October 2020

Dear Sadiq,

Safeguarding the interests of disabled people in Streetspace schemes

We discussed at Mayor's Question Time today the requests I have had from groups representing disabled people that will safeguard their interests in Streetspace schemes. I promised I would follow up with a letter.

London has a long legacy of inaccessible street layouts with features such as pavements with cracked and uneven paving, a lack of dropped kerbs to help cross roads and missing or incorrect tactile paving.

You are right to highlight that disabled people are more likely to depend on walking and bus services to get around London. This is why changes that are made to support physical distancing must be done in an inclusive way.

As I have raised with you before, the pause in regular Healthy Streets investment in London is a concern, because it risks streets falling into disrepair and the stalling of progress to make streets less traffic dominated.

It has been good to see the rapid expansion in facilities for walking and cycling via the Streetspace programme as a response to the pandemic. It is right that these temporary measures are reviewed, and that there is consultation before they are made permanent. With London moving to a high COVID alert level and physical distancing required for the foreseeable future it's even more important that London's streets are inclusive.

I've spoken with Transport for All about Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and look forward to hearing the outcomes of their research on this issue¹. They are right to say we need to hear the voices of disabled people across impairment groups to fully understand all of the impacts both good and bad. Then we will have better understanding of the most inclusive and accessible solutions.

¹ <https://twitter.com/transportforall/status/1313118325455622145>



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I am impressed by the quality of the wider pavements with rubber kerbs and asphalt infill that TfL has implemented in locations like Brixton and Camden to provide more space for people waiting at bus stops. Will you make this approach the default for widening pavements rather than the use of roadwork barriers and temporary ramps? A fully level extended pavement is easy for everyone to use – if they are on foot, using a wheelchair or navigating with a cane.

The changes to Park Lane for the bus stop bypasses serving the temporary cycle lane include proper tactile paving, temporary ramps and good level access. This shows it can be done almost overnight, even on temporary schemes. Will you create a programme across London to bring all streets up to an accessible standard.

When I spoke recently with Guide Dogs for the Blind they were supportive of the overall need to adapt our streets to allow for physical distancing, but were concerned about risks posed to visually impaired people from new outdoor space laid out for restaurants, bars and cafes. Will you ensure that TfL gives clear guidance to boroughs and businesses on accessibility for example; the need to provide tapping rails on barriers surrounding extra seating and to keep a clear 2m width of unobstructed pavement to allow navigation with a cane.²

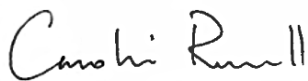
According to Wheels for Wellbeing, cycle lanes should be 2m wide or 1.5m at an absolute minimum to be accessible to adapted bikes and mobility scooters. Will TfL make clear to councils the importance of lane widths for accessibility³.

Finally, concerns have been raised about Equality Impact Assessments. Transport for All say that these should be robust, meaningful and co-produced. The way forward is to recognise impacts and work with disabled Londoners to improve our streets so they can use their local neighbourhood more.

It is worrying that in 2020 London's pavements are not properly accessible. You can make a difference to so many people's lives with comprehensive, but relatively small, changes to streets across London.

As I said this morning, Streetspace should be improved, not removed.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Russell
Green Party Member of the London Assembly

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<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/about%20us/what%20we%20do/research/policy%20and%20guidance%20for%20businesses/street%20design%20guidance%20for%20local%20authorities>

³ <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/letter-to-department-for-transport/>



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