

Doughiska Road “cyclepaths” — the reality

The Galway Cycling Campaign has argued for years that the “cyclepath” design proposed by Ryan Hanley - WSP is **unsafe and inconvenient** for cyclists.

The photographs below, all taken in the space of an hour on Saturday September 8th last, show some of inherent problems of these “cyclepaths”, and also illustrate some problems that will inevitably arise **if the same faulty design is used in the proposed Doughiska Road Upgrade** or indeed anywhere else in the City.

A cyclist on the public roadway at Doughiska.

There is nothing remarkable about this. A bicycle is legally a vehicle under Irish law, and vehicles should be on the road.

Cycle facilities are supposed to facilitate cycling and make it easier. So why would a cyclist ignore a cycle facility and travel on the road?

The answer is that regular (“utility”) cyclists know from experience that constructions such as the off-road “cyclepath” in this picture are in fact very inconvenient, making cycling harder and leading to risky situations at junctions.



Another cyclist on the public roadway at Doughiska.

This cyclist is making a pragmatic, common-sense decision to travel on the road. The vehicle parked straddling the off-road “cyclepath” and the footway would only impede his progress.

A cyclist going downhill, as this one is, can easily achieve a speed of 30 kph or more. Why would a cyclist in these conditions be expected to travel on the off-road “cyclepath”?



Another cyclist on the Doughiska Road, this time at the Roscam end. Note the car parked on the off-road "cyclepath".

What possible advantage does such a design provide for a cyclist?

In what way is this cyclist, or any other road user for that matter, disadvantaged by simply letting cyclists travel on the road?



A typically confusing layout involving an off-road "cyclepath".

Where is the footway?

When people at the bus-stop are about to board a bus, what route is a cyclist expected to take to safely navigate this stretch?



Parking on the path, a very common sight outside of the City Centre and one that doesn't seem to attract the attention of either Traffic Wardens or Gardaí.

Note the high pillars and hedge which, together with the illegally parked vehicle, greatly obscure the view of the road. Any vehicle exiting the driveway on the right would have to move all the way out onto the "cyclepath" to get a clear view of the road.

The driver would not see approaching cyclists on the "cyclepath" and approaching cyclists will not see the car until they are quite close. A cyclist on the road could manoeuvre safely.



A car exiting from the shopping area on the Doughiska Road.

Note the high boundary wall and the distance the driver has to pull out in order to have a clear view of approaching traffic. Note also that the driver is, quite properly, looking for traffic approaching from the right — the implications of this are referred to below.

The “cyclepath” design proposed for the Upgrade will place cyclists in direct conflict with motorised vehicles in this sort of situation.

There are several more examples of this along the route. Which contains 43 driveways/car park entrances



Another car exiting from the same shopping area. Again the driver is looking out for traffic approaching from the right.

Note the distance the car has to pull out in order to have a clear view of approaching traffic

It should be noted also that Ryan Hanley - WSPs proposed “cyclepath” design invites cyclists to travel on the right, ie against the normal flow of traffic.

This has safety implications for cyclists coming down the hill (at up to 30 kph or so) from the driver’s left. As the cyclist approaches the intersection, exiting drivers will naturally be scanning to their right.



Parking on the “cyclepath” is endemic in Doughiska.

There is no apparent enforcement of the law in this respect.

In the absence of enforcement, illegal parking will occur no matter what kind of road layout is used.

Such obstructions on a “cyclepath” force cyclists to travel on the footway, which is illegal and which puts pedestrians at risk.

If a cyclist could use the main roadway rather than the footpath to overtake this obstacle, cyclists and pedestrians would be less inconvenienced.



Clear evidence of widespread illegal parking in Doughiska towards the Roscam end.

Lack of enforcement does not justify inaction on dealing with the inherent problems of “cyclepaths” in terms of cycle safety and convenience.

The solution is better cycle facilities and better enforcement.



Pedestrians walking on footway and “cyclepath”.

Since Ryan Hanley - WSPs “cyclepath” design explicitly invites cyclists to travel on the right, ie against the normal flow of traffic, cyclists on this downhill stretch could be approaching these pedestrians at speeds up to 30 kph or more. Such “wrongway” cycling is known to greatly increase cyclists’ risk of collision.

Layouts of this sort routinely place cyclists in conflict with pedestrians, and are now regarded internationally as poor practice.

For example, the US Federal Highway Administration says that such arrangements should be avoided. They further state that “bicyclists are safer when they are allowed to function as roadway vehicle operators rather than as pedestrians”.



Clear evidence that “cyclepaths” are poor practice and unsafe.

The Ryan Hanley - WSP “cyclepath” design explicitly invites cyclists to travel against the normal flow of traffic. Cyclists can be seen doing so routinely where “cyclepaths” occur throughout Galway City.

The Yield markings on the “cyclepath” clearly indicate that the engineers involved expect cyclists to be travelling on the right towards the red vehicle in the picture.

Points to note:

1. The driver will naturally be looking for traffic approaching from the right.
2. The large kerb radius facilitates the car to round the corner at speed.
2. Cyclists are travelling downhill, possibly at speed.
3. Cyclists are expected to obey a standard road marking while operating their vehicle in a non-standard manner.



Yet more illegal parking on a Doughiska “cyclepath”.

Note the obstacle on the footway. In this sort of situation, cyclists will go onto the footway to avoid the parked car, while pedestrians will veer closer to the “cyclepath” to avoid the obstacle.

Putting cyclists off the road and onto such constructions trains them to routinely use the footway, an illegal practice which they may believe they can legitimately continue elsewhere in the City. In fact, footpath cycling is common in Galway, and pedestrians often complain about cyclists on the Prom for example. Why would cyclists avoid the footpath in one area when other practice appears to legitimise it elsewhere?

Because of such conflicts, off-road “cyclepaths” adjoining footways are now regarded internationally as “poor practice” and “should be avoided” (US Federal Highway Administration).



For further information, visit www.galwaycycling.org or send an email to info@galwaycycling.org