

Document No.	Title	
BWP005	Bike Winnipeg Position Statement – Diamond Lanes	
Revision 0.0	Effective Date January 11, 2017	

Position:

Diamond lanes should only be used by Transit buses, Handi-Transit vehicles and bicycles.

Diamond lanes are restricted-use traffic lanes. Restrictions can apply either during morning and afternoon rush hours, or else at all times. In Winnipeg, these lanes are currently reserved exclusively for buses and bicycles. Other vehicles are allowed transient use of the lane only when turning right within the block. As a result, someone riding a bicycle in a diamond lane should treat a diamond lane in the same way as a right turn lane and position themselves in the middle of the lane (i.e. take the lane) to reduce the potential for right hook collisions.

It has been suggested recently that other vehicles also be allowed to use the diamond lanes, specifically taxicabs and Handi-Transit vehicles.

Bike Winnipeg recommends that:

1. For equity reasons, it makes sense that Handi-Transit vehicles are allowed to use diamond lanes in order to increase the speed and reliability of public transit for Winnipeggers with disabilities.
2. Handi-Transit operators should receive training on how to safely share the diamond lanes with bicyclists.
3. Taxicabs should not be permitted to use diamond lanes as they are private, not public, transit and the increased traffic volume would increase hazards to bicycles while reducing the efficiency of Winnipeg Transit and Handi-Transit.

Background:

Diamond lanes were first introduced in Winnipeg in 1995. They were created as a means of increasing both the speed and reliability of public transit service while providing a safe lane for cyclists to ride. It is important to note that they were not intended as HOV (car pool) lanes that are sometimes found on high-speed corridors in larger cities.

There are currently about 30 km of diamond lanes in Winnipeg that provide cyclists with less congested routes during peak traffic times on major commuter roads.

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Diamond lanes are a type of bus priority lanes and are a commonly used transit priority measure worldwide. However, they are not regularly combined with cycling traffic, as there is inherent danger in combining the largest and smallest vehicles in the same lane space. This risk is potentially somewhat mitigated by the training and skill of Winnipeg Transit drivers who travel preset routes with predictable stopping patterns. Transit drivers are taught to give half a lane of clearance when passing a person on bicycle. Because of the legal requirement for most vehicles in a diamond lane to turn right at the next exit, people biking in a diamond lane should treat it as a right turn lane, riding in the middle of the lane - (i.e., “take the lane”)- to reduce the potential for right hook collisions (as recommended by MPI). Passing a person on a bike in a diamond lane will thus require a driver to change lanes, which may frustrate untrained drivers who see the diamond lane as a high speed through lane.

In addition, increased volume of vehicles both increases the risk to bicyclists and defeats the intended purpose of the diamond lanes. Challenges already exist within diamond lanes when private vehicles ignore the requirement to turn right within the block. Allowing taxicabs to legally use diamond lanes would significantly increase lane traffic.

Handi-Transit is a service of Winnipeg’s public transit system that provides door-to-door transportation for people who are unable to regularly use the City’s fixed route transit system because they are legally blind or have a physical disability that significantly impairs their mobility. Handi-Transit operates within the same geographical service area as Winnipeg’s fixed route transit system.

Handi-Transit delivers the service through contracts with private transportation service providers. Drivers must take a four-day training course. Vehicles used include cars, retrofitted mini-vans and mini-buses. According to the City of Winnipeg website, Handi-Transit has 65 total vehicles year-round with an additional 5 in winter for a total of 70.

The **Taxicab Board** is responsible for oversight of the taxicab industry in Winnipeg. Its mandate is to ensure access to quality, safe and efficient taxicab service. The term “taxicabs” includes all licenced vehicles for hire. In Winnipeg as of December 2016, there are twelve sub-categories of taxicabs, including standard taxicabs, accessible taxicabs, handicab vans and several classes of limousines. In 2015, an estimated total of over 4.1 million trips were taken by taxicabs in Winnipeg.

The Taxicab Board recommended in December 2016 that all standard and accessible taxicabs should have access to driving in diamond lanes. Of the total of

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756 taxicab business licenses currently issued in this city, 566 belong to standard and accessible taxicabs. Therefore, should City Council accept this recommendation, the number of vehicles of varying sizes, speeds and stopping patterns using the diamond lanes would increase significantly.

In summary, diamond lanes are a poor substitute for proper cycling infrastructure as they mix the largest and smallest of road users. However, until the day comes when separated/protected cycling lanes are available on all of our major streets, lower volume diamond lanes restricted to public transit and bicycles are a necessary interim form of bicycling infrastructure.

Related Documents:

1. Taxicab Board, Summary Overview of the Taxicab Industry in Winnipeg, August 2016. Retrieved January 2, 2017, from http://www.gov.mb.ca/ia/taxicab/pubs/summary_overview_of-the-taxicab-industry2016.pdf
2. Taxicab Board, Winnipeg Taxicab Services Review: Final Report, December 20, 2016. Retrieved January 2, 2017, from http://www.gov.mb.ca/ia/taxicab/pubs/wpg_taxicab_review_final_rpt_dec20.pdf
3. Winnipeg Transit: Diamond Lanes. Retrieved December 01, 2016, from <http://winnipegtransit.com/en/attention-motorists/diamondlanes/>
4. Winnipeg Transit: Handi-Transit. Retrieved December 1, 2016, from <http://winnipegtransit.com/en/handi-transit/handi-transit/>
5. Winnipeg’s Handi-Transit service “so frustrating”, says rider, CBC News, January 19, 2016 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-s-handi-transit-service-so-frustrating-says-rider-1.3411211>

Revision History:

Revision	Date	Description of Changes	Revised By	Approved By
0.0	Jan. 11, 2017	Initial Version	L. Donatelli	BW Board