

Dublin City Council COVID-19 Mobility Response
Strand Road Trial Rapid Deployment Cycle Route
FAQs

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Background Information

Why implement this scheme?

What is proposed is a rapid deployment six month trial of a two way fully protected continuous cycle route between Merrion Gates and Sean Moore Road. This is different to anything that has been proposed before as it does not involve major civil works, it is reversible and it is being done at a time when normal traffic volumes and behaviours have been completely changed due to Covid-19.

Why is it important to do it now?

It is necessary to ensure that safe protected cycling is provided as a means of transport for work, schools and leisure. This will support more people to start cycling, which is particularly important during Covid-19 as capacity on public transport has been reduced, as well as in the longer term to ensure that we meet our international climate change targets by switching to sustainable transport modes wherever possible. The Government is asking people to walk and cycle where possible and to reserve public transport for essential workers and those with no alternative and in response the City Council and other Local Authorities have been installing rapid deployment cycling facilities and protecting existing cycling facilities.

Design rationale

Why has it been so difficult to come up with a design for a cycle route on Strand Road?

There are a number of reasons why the Strand Road cycle route has been difficult to design, for example:

- The roadway is too narrow to allow for a protected cycle route and two way traffic;
- The footpath is too narrow to allow for it to be reduced to provide a cycle lane on the road or to use as a two way cycle track;
- The section of Strand Rd approaching Merrion Gates is a real pinch point with properties on both sides, narrow carriageways and narrow footpaths.

The beach area along Strand Road and Beach Road is an important natural heritage site.

- Special Area of Conservation (South Dublin Bay SAC ref. 000210) designated under the EU Habitats Directive (1992).
- Special Protection Area (Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary SPA ref. 004024) designated under the EU Birds Directive (1979).
- The entirety of Dublin Bay was designated as a UNESCO Biosphere in 2015.

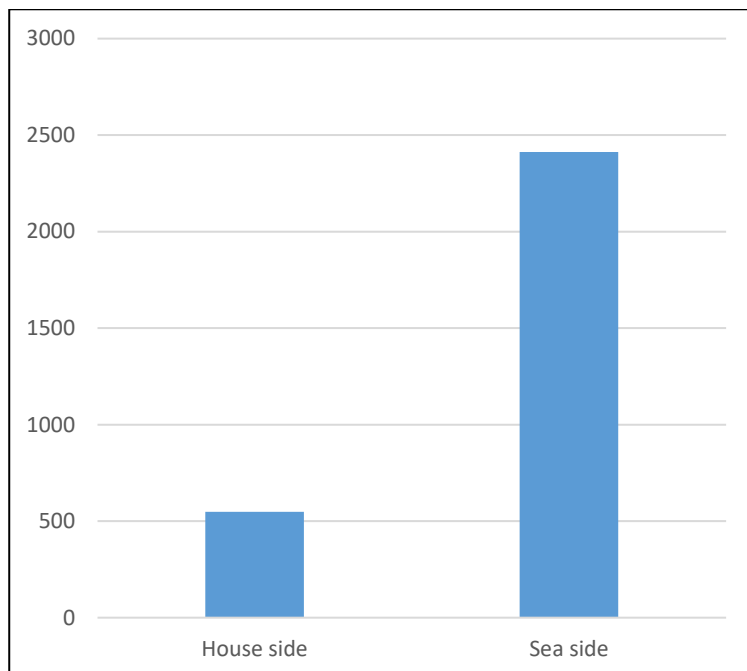
Schemes to provide an alternative bridge over the DART line and to provide a boardwalk around the properties on the sea side have been proposed in 2015. They all present significant environmental and construction difficulties, will struggle to get approval and take many years to implement.

The reduction in traffic due to Covid-19, the alteration of commuting patterns due to working at home and the increased desire to ensure there is safe continuous protected cycle routes means that there is an opportunity now to undertake a 6 month trial of the rapid deployment cycle way.

Why does the cycle track have to be on the road?

a) Why can't you use the footpath?

Converting the footpath to a cycle track would mean a loss of footpath on the sea side. This footpath is five times busier than the house side footpath and would be a loss of amenity, especially during Covid restrictions. We would also need to extend the footpath, reconstruct the footpath, move lighting columns to the back and install new drainage which is a significant piece of work and not a rapid deployment scheme. The carriageway width would need to be reduced, most likely resulting in the loss of informal parking along Strand road. Even if this was implemented there is still 300m on the approach to Merrion Gates where it is not possible to provide any cycle protection without the removal of a traffic lane.



Pedestrians numbers on Strand Road November, 2020

b) Why can't you use the promenade?

A cycle track on the existing promenade would require Part 8 planning permission and a full environmental assessment. It would be a loss of some of the green space amenity and provides a solution for just 35% of the route. Using the promenade does not address what happens either side of the promenade or how to bring cyclists through the stretch on the approach to Merrion Gates. There is no guarantee that planning permission would be granted and it would take a number of years to go through the process. Even if approved, the time required to go through the planning process would mean the amenity would likely not be constructed until at least 2026 as it will need to be integrated into the flood defence scheme which is in design at present.

c) Why can't you construct a boardwalk?

The construction of a boardwalk is not a short term solution. Due to the environmental sensitivities, a screening is likely to show it would require a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and need to go to An Bord Pleanála. This would take many years to carry out the necessary studies and to prepare an application with no guarantee that approval would be granted. Any works in the bay would also need to be designed in collaboration with flood design works and the projects would need to be developed together as one project. This would cause a significant delay in the provision of safe cycling infrastructure in the area.

How will the cycle lane be protected?

Initially a combination of bollards and orcas will be used, buff coloured surfacing will be put on the cycle track to highlight its presence and some other minor changes will take place. All of the measures are reversible and do not interfere with the structure of the road or the existing kerbs except at Sean Moore Park. If the cycle track is to remain for longer than 6 months then a more permanent design will be put in place.

Why is the outbound traffic chosen to be kept rather than the inbound traffic?

Outbound traffic has a higher volume than inbound traffic. Also, the inbound traffic that currently uses the Merrion Gates has multiple options to reach its destinations, depending on its origin some will divert via the M50, others via the Stillorgan Road and Merrion Road. If we made Strand Road one way inbound, then the outbound traffic could not use Strand Road and would have no alternative but to use Sandymount Village or Irishtown in order to reach its destination.

Why is the cycle track on the sea side?

To minimize the impact on driveways and the informal parking that exists at the moment.

Why a 6 Month Trial?

Six months will allow time for the scheme to settle in, for new patterns of movement to be established and for movement data to be gathered.

Traffic displacement

Where will the Northbound traffic currently using Strand Road be displaced to?

The current volume of northbound traffic on Strand Road is approximately 5,000 per day. No additional right turns from the Merrion Road towards Sandymount will be introduced as part of the trial and therefore we do not anticipate this traffic to be displaced through Sandymount Village. Vehicles will adapt to other routes and there will be some shift to other modes. Strand Road is not a main route for traffic on route to the airport or the M50.

The [traffic modelling data](#) shows a maximum increase in the Sandymount Village Area of 16%. The modelling is based on pre-Covid volumes. The capacity of the roads in the area are sufficient to cater for these increases. Currently (Jan 2021) traffic volumes are down 40 to 45 % on pre-Covid volumes.

Will there be a 322% increase of traffic in Sandymount?

We are aware that this figure was circulated in the Sandymount area and has appeared online including online petitions. This is erroneous information from the latest modelling data and refers specifically to one road, Marine Drive which showed an increase from 7 to 29 vehicles.

Will there be 800 vehicles an hour diverting through Sandymount?

No. The traffic count from November 2020 (Level 5 restrictions) show an average of 370 vehicles an hour travelling northbound between the hours of 7am and 7pm. These will not all be seeking to travel through Sandymount and as the modelling shows vehicles will disperse over a number of routes including the Merrion Road, the Stillorgan road and the M50.

Will there be thousands of trucks seeking an alternative route through Sandymount?

No. Pre-Covid there was approximately 300 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) per day travelling northbound on Strand road. This includes anything with a rigid 2 axle (such as an ambulance) or higher. There are no changes to the right turn bans on Merrion Road towards Sandymount village proposed, the ban at Ailesbury road and Sandymount Avenue will remain in place at the start of the trial. The whole of the Sandymount is covered by the 5 axle HGV ban. In addition most of the roads are also covered by 3.5 tonne limits.

It should be further pointed out that the HGV strategy, which was introduced in 2007, removed 433 5+ axle vehicles a day from Strand Road who diverted to the M50 and to the Tunnel without adverse consequences. DCC will look to extend the current 5+ axle ban in the Sandymount area to 24 hours during the cycle trial.

Strand Road is a bypass/main HGV route to the Port/arterial route

Strand Road is not a designated HGV route to the port or the waste to energy plant and has not been since 2007. As can be seen in the [Transport Infrastructure Ireland plan](#) for Brexit related issues at the Port, Strand Road is not mentioned as it is not the route for hauliers. As the maps show, the M50 is the route for northbound traffic to Dublin Port. Strand Road is not a bypass or main arterial route for the city.

Has traffic modelling been done on the proposed scheme?

The scheme has been modelled by the NTA, the latest versions is available [here](#). It is likely that with the provision of safe cycling infrastructure some people would cycle instead of drive for some of the journeys.

On-street parking

Will I lose the parking outside my house?

At present there is no pay and display or permit parking along Strand Road, however there is some informal parking. Mostly this will be retained as we are only removing one lane of traffic.

Schools

How will the trial affect schools in the area?

The City Council will, as part of this consultation make contact with all schools in the area to ensure that we are aware of any concerns or issues that may arise due to the trial.

School Zones, which aims to increase safety at the school gate by encouraging cars to reduce their speed and preventing illegal parking, have been installed at two schools in Sandymount – Start of the Sea Boys National School, Leahy Terrace and Shellybanks Educate Together National School, Newgrove Avenue, Seafort Avenue. DCC are in contact with Scoil Mhuire Girls National School on Gilford Road and St. Mathews National School, Cranfield Place to determine if they wish to proceed with their School Zone applications.

To support the increase in students cycling to school, DCC is providing free cycle parking to interested schools. School wishing to apply for cycle parking stands should register their interest by email: covidmobility@dublincity.ie

DCC works with schools on an individual basis to support active travel initiatives wherever possible, for example, cycle and walking buses and park & stride. If your school is interested in supporting more students to walk or cycle to school, please see our [School Mobility webpage](#) for further resources, or email covidmobility@dublincity.ie with your specific queries.

Funding

How will this trial be funded?

Funding of €450,000 is being made available for the trial via the Governments Stimulus package and will be allocated to the City Council by the NTA.

Additional Measures

Will other traffic calming or public realm measure be considered in the area by DCC?

As part of the consultation process we invited people to submit suggestions for complementary measures, which people feel should be implemented along with the trial. These measures will continue to be discussed at the Community Forum.

Will additional pedestrian crossings be installed as part of the trial?

Construction has commenced on the installation of three pedestrian crossings in Sandymount Green - two controlled pedestrian crossings (one near Borzas Takeaway on northern arm of Sandymount Green and one near Bennetts Auctioneers on the southern arm of Sandymount Green), as well as one uncontrolled crossing at the junction of Claremont Road and Sandymount Green. A ramp on the eastern arm of Sandymount Green is also included in the works. These works will be completed by early February 2021.

An additional pedestrian crossing on Serpentine Avenue is currently being explored.

Is the Village cycle route being implemented at the same time as the trial?

The cycle measures for the village were prepared due to numerous submission about making the village safer for cycling as a mitigation measures, including from various members of the Community Forum. These are just potential measures that could be further progressed if there is an appetite amongst the community to further develop a design. These were presented at the second Community Forum in January 2021, however no comments were received on them. They will be presented to the next Forum again for feedback. Any progression of these measures would involve a full consultation. These measures are not something the City Council is currently progressing and is awaiting feedback from the Forum.

How will the trial be monitored?

The trial will be monitored and evaluated by the following methods:

1. Pedestrian, Cycle and Vehicle Counts

DCC have a network of live traffic cameras and traffic signals in the Sandymount area which allows us to view traffic well as collect traffic data in real time. Full monthly classified, car, truck, cycle, pedestrian counts at multiple locations have been ongoing since October and will continue throughout the trial, these are at shown below.



2. Air Quality

DCC air quality section have installed an air quality monitor in Sandymount village, the location of the air quality monitor complies with the relevant EU and EPA requirements. The readings are available on the [Dublin City Council website](#).

Emergency services

DCC have been liaising with Emergency services who are satisfied with the proposed trial arrangements. The cycle lane will be available for their use should it be required.

How will the trial be determined a success or failure?

The success of the trial will be determined by:

- Has a safe protected cycle route along Strand Road been provided?
- Data collection - Increase/Decrease of all modes in the area (Traffic counts)
- Consultation - Public Consultation will be held 5 months into the trial
- Has the safe protected cycle route along Strand Road increased or decreased safety along Strand Road, adjoining roads and within the village.

Beach Road Consultation

The report for the consultation on the Beach road section of the trial was accurately produced. This consultation was specifically on the section of Beach road between Sean Moore Road and Marine Drive to see what the views of the public were and whether, as part of the Strand Road trial, this section had the cycle lane on the carriageway or on the footpath. The consultation related to this section and these options only as was clearly described in the consultation documentation. It was not a consultation on the Strand Road trial as that consultation had been carried out previously.

687 people did not answer the question on whether they wanted to see this section of the cycle route on the carriageway (with vehicular traffic reduced to one lane) or the footpath repurposed in this section with two way vehicular traffic. As these respondents did not state which option they preferred for the cycle lane they could not be included in the breakdown of where they would prefer the cycle lane to be on Beach road. The comments these same respondents submitted as part of the other questions were considered for those questions.