Disabled people and cycling: towards inclusivity

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Disabled people do cycle...

But there is a participation gap

- Census 2011 data shows that 5.1% of cycle commuters in England and Wales are people whose day-to-day activities are limited in some way (vs. 6.8% of all commuters)

- 3% of disabled people, vs. 7% of non-disabled people, cycled for transport during the past month in England (Active People Survey data, 2011-16)

However, the rates of cycling among disabled people vary massively...
Percentages of disabled and all commuters using different modes in London, UK

Percentages of disabled and all commuters using different modes in Cambridge, UK

Closing the gap

• Participation in cycling by disabled people is strongly associated with participation in cycling by all
  • Where cycling conditions are better, disabled people are much more likely to cycle (range of 0.2% to 25.9% by local authority!)

• However, there is an additional gap: even where cycling is higher, disabled people are less likely to participate (e.g. in Cambridge 25.9% vs. 32.5% for all commuters)
  • Need to think about additional barriers for disabled cyclists – plan inclusively
1. Improving conditions for cycling

• Poor quality cycling environments have disproportionate impacts on many currently under-represented groups.

• Lack of protection from motor traffic, detours, obstacles
Obstacles are bad for all cyclists but disproportionately hinder disabled cyclists.

Pictures: Push Bikes (above), Ron Reid (right)
2. Additional barriers

May include e.g.
• Extra cost of adapted and electric cycles
• Extra risks/difficulty associated with parking these cycles

• Disablist assumptions by planners and service providers (e.g. that everyone who can cycle can also walk)
• Failure to plan inclusively for all types of destination

Pictures: Wheels for Wellbeing
Disabled people: invisible cyclists?

Changing how we plan

2.2.4. Space profile and the cycle design vehicle

There are many categories of cycle used on cycle routes. Figure 2.2.4.1 provides information on common cycle length dimensions. The width of a standard cycle is 0.6m and the typical width of a cycle that may be used by people with certain types of disability is 1.2m.

Figure 2.2.4 Example of a Hand-cranked Cycle

The dimension of the cycle design vehicle shall be assumed as 2.8m long and 1.2m wide. Fig 2.2.4.1 shows the length of 2.8m is made up of a standard bicycle at 1.8m plus a child trailer of up to 1.0m in length.

Designing a Blue Badge for disabled cyclists

Local authorities should consider the option of designing and piloting a disabled cyclists’ Blue Badge scheme in their area. The purpose of such a scheme would be to give disabled cyclists a valuable form of identification, which could be used to:

(a) Permit disabled cyclists to cycle considerately in non-cycling areas (such as ‘cyclists dismount’ zones) when using their cycle as a mobility aid

(b) Reserve allocated cycle parking spaces that have been designed for use by non-standard cycles.

Such a scheme could be developed in collaboration with local police forces, CCGs, community and disability groups.


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