

# Improving the driving test

A joint response from The Association of Bikeability Schemes (TABS), British Cycling, Cycling Scotland, Cycling UK, and the London Cycling Campaign

## 1. Introduction:

Both National and Local government now see cycling as a solution to many current issues including improving the environment by reducing pollution and congestion, as well as improving people's health. In order to encourage more cycling people need to feel able to cycle safely, directly and comfortably for many more journeys. Key to this is the manner car drivers interact with people riding cycles. We see this consultation as a valuable contribution to improving how people in cars and on cycles share roads. We therefore welcome the opportunity to feed into this consultation about improving the driving test.

TABS, British Cycling, Cycling UK, Cycling Scotland and The London Cycling Campaign represent the UK's major national cycling organisations. Between us we have around 250,000 members and supporters, great experience of cycle safety and general road safety, cycling policy and an understanding of training and testing methodologies. This submission involved consultation of experts and/or elected officials within our organisations.

## 2. Increasing the independent driving section of the test from 10 to 20 minutes

*We totally agree with this proposal.*

We understand that there may not always be people cycling in the driving test location so the points below may be guidance and optional. However, driver testers should be encouraged to seek out locations where there are people cycling.

This would give a greater opportunity for tested drivers to be observed interacting with people cycling. We would expect the driver to decide whether or not to overtake the person on a bike, choosing to remain behind them if overtaking would be unnecessary, illegal or risky. Should the driver decide to overtake we would expect them to give the rider at least as much space as they would if overtaking a car, and to pass at a speed only slightly faster than that of the rider only pulling in when well clear of the rider.

Should the driver encounter a person on a bike at a place where there is a chance that they may need to swerve to the right, such as when passing parked cars where a door may open or a pedestrian stepping out between the parked cars, the driver should be observed deciding not to overtake or demonstrate overtaking taking into account the possibility that a rider may swerve

right. Similarly when moving through a location where the road narrows, a driver should be observed remaining behind the person cycling.

An extended independent driving section would also increase opportunities for the driver to be observed driving where there is cycling infrastructure such as advanced stop lines and cycle lanes, where they could be observed giving a rider in a cycle lane the same amount of room while overtaking as they would where the rider is using the same lane as the driver.

Further to the above, a longer period of independent driving would give a driver more opportunities to demonstrate that they look out for cyclists (as well as for other drivers) when pulling out of junctions, (especially when) turning left, and turning right through a queue of stationary traffic.

Where a driver does not encounter a single person on a cycle during their test the tester should check their understanding of some of the points above by asking them questions such as 'Describe when and how you would overtake a person on a cycle'.

### **3. Modify the delivery of the manoeuvres in the test**

*We largely agree with this.*

With a view to updating the test to current traffic conditions we would like to see, as an optional manoeuvre, a driver overtaking someone on a cycle (though recognise that this may also have been observed during the independent driving section).

As described above we would expect to see the driver decide whether or not to overtake a person on a bike, choosing to remain behind them if overtaking would be unnecessary, illegal or risky. Should the driver decide to overtake we would expect them to give the rider at least as much space as they would if overtaking a car, and to pass at a speed only slightly faster than that of the rider and proceed, only pulling in when well clear of the rider.

As mentioned above, should the driver not encounter anyone cycling during the test then a question should be asked where the driver describes when and how they would overtake someone on a bicycle.

### **4. Change the format for the vehicle safety questions**

*We largely agree with this.*

Asking the 'show me' question while the driver is driving in proximity to a person on a cycle, rather than at the start of the test would indicate the extent that the driver takes into consideration the risk to a person cycling when deciding whether or not to adjust, say, the rear

heated screen. As above this would only be possible where people are cycling in the test environment.

## 5. In conclusion

We welcome these proposed changes and expect the DVSA to recognise that cycling is increasing in the UK; drivers are more likely than ever to encounter people on cycles while driving. Including these suggestions in any guidance to driver testers would ensure that many new drivers have been observed interacting with people on cycles, during their test and will have demonstrated appropriate behaviour. We also think that changes to the test that refer to interacting with cyclists would filter through to driving instructors who would be more likely to instruct their learner drivers about sharing the road with cyclists during driving lessons.

We understand the difficulty in monitoring the positive effect of any changes and while the pass percentage is a key indicator, so too must be the ongoing monitoring of KSIs, especially involving people walking and cycling. We would expect these to continue to fall.

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