






BP6: 'Softening' the Highway Infrastructure

Reference: BP6 003	Title of Project:	Shared Space Schemes
Version: 1	Website:	http://www.shared-space.org/
Brief Description of Project:	<p>Shared space is a traffic engineering / street design concept involving the removal of the traditional separation between motor vehicles and pedestrians and other road users, and the removal of traditional road priority management devices such as kerbs, lines, signs and signals. The reasoning behind the idea is that it will result in improved road safety by forcing users to negotiate their way through shared areas at appropriate speeds and with due consideration for the other users of the space.</p> <p>This approach, which was pioneered in the Netherlands is based on the observation that individuals' behaviour in traffic is more positively affected by the built environment of the public space than it is by conventional traffic control devices and regulations.</p> <p><i>Shared Space</i> is also the name of a European project (part of the Interreg IIIB-North Sea programme) which develops new policies and methods for the design of public spaces with streets.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <p>An example of this approach is in Drachten in the Netherlands. Drachten was a 17th century village that has now grown into a town of more than 40,000. A busy intersection in the town which handles more than 20,000 cars, buses and trucks a day has been transformed by removing traffic lights, road markings and some pedestrian crossings – and in their place installing a simple level surface. There are no signs telling drivers what speed to travel at or who has the right of way. There are no lane markers or kerbs separating the street and pavement and it is unclear where the road ends and the footway begins.</p> </div> </div>	

	<p>However, by encouraging human activity close to the junction and relying on eye contact rather than conventional signals and signs, traffic queues appear to have diminished and safety appears to have improved, although the data is inconclusive.</p>  <p>The concept has been criticised by groups representing those with vision problems and non-ambulant road users as not providing sufficient delineation between 'safe' areas for pedestrians and space for moving vehicles.</p>  <p>The Cyclists Union in the Netherlands has suggested that Shared Space Schemes can lead to 'bullying' of cyclists by drivers.</p> <p>For PTWs the main benefits would appear to be the removal of strike hazards, reduced speeds and the improvements to junction visibility resulting in the potential for PTW riders to be seen more easily.</p>
<p>Monitoring Data:</p>	<p>Before and after data for several Shared Space schemes are available. but the results are inconclusive (TRL Report PPR292): http://www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/trl_reports/cat_traffic_engineering/report_a_review_of_simplified_streetscape_schemes.htm</p>
<p>Results:</p>	<p>There is currently insufficient data to conclusively assess the effects of Shared Space on PTW casualties.</p>
<p>Key Effective Conclusions:</p>	<p>Shared Space schemes appear to address the primary urban PTW collision causation factor identified in the MAIDS and DfT in-depth studies. The introduction of 'priority by negotiation' may reduce the risk of junction collisions where the other road user fails to see the PTW rider. However, 'before' and 'after' casualty data appears contradictory with some Shared Space schemes experiencing an increase in injuries.</p> <p>Many of the projects in the Netherlands have been implemented at locations without a significant casualty problem and this makes subsequent monitoring difficult.</p>
<p>Projects for Comparison:</p>	<p>Kensington High Street, London (BP6 002).</p>
<p>Justification:</p>	<p>Although there would appear to be some benefits for PTWs in the Shared Space concept, the statistical evidence is contradictory. There appears to be potential for the approach to support eSUM objectives but further monitoring is required.</p>