

# Pop-up bike lanes help with coronavirus physical distancing in Germany

## Road markings redrawn after cyclists demand more space to comply with Covid-19 rules

German cities are redrawing road markings to create “pop-up” cycle lanes for the duration of the Covid-19 lockdown, as cyclists demand more space to physically distance on their commutes to work.

Local authorities in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin trialled a temporary widening of two cycle lanes on 27 March, arguing it would help cyclists keep the required 1.5-metre distance apart while car traffic was down owing to Germany’s coronavirus restrictions.

On Friday, the council declared the pilot scheme a success because it had improved cycling safety while not hindering traffic. An expansion of the scheme on further roads in Kreuzberg, as well as in the Schöneberg and Tempelhof districts, is planned for the coming weeks.

The council said it had used removable tape and mobile signs to mark out the expanded lanes, which can be removed when the current restrictions on movement are lifted.

Residents in 133 other German cities have formally submitted applications for similar pop-up bike lanes to their local authorities on the back of a campaign by Environmental Action [Germany](#) (DUH), an environmental NGO.

The campaign group cites [new research](#) linking air pollution to higher coronavirus death rates as an argument for redrawing infrastructure across the country.

“The coronavirus is showing us that clean air is an indispensable asset,” said DUH’s chair, Jürgen Resch. “It is now especially important to temporarily make it more important for people to move safely on their bikes. This will help improve air quality, enables exercise in fresh air while keeping a safe distance and avoids unnecessary accidents.”

Proponents of the scheme cite the Colombian capital, Bogotá, as the example to emulate, where the mayor, Claudia López, opened up nearly 72 miles (117km) of

new bike routes in mid-March in the hope of reducing congestion and person-to-person contact.

In Berlin, opposition politicians from the pro-business Free Democratic party have described the pop-up cycle lane plans as an “unnecessary provocation” by the bike lobby, saying they will have little practical use.

German states have encouraged the use of bicycles in spite of the current restrictions, under which gatherings of more than two people are banned, with exceptions for families.

“The use of a bicycle allows citizens to meet the requirements for minimising contact,” a spokesperson for the transport ministry in Thuringia told the German news agency dpa.

In Germany, bike repair shops are currently exempt from state-ordered closures because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Three federal states, Berlin, Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, have also allowed bike vendors to stay open.