



City of Edinburgh Council 'Active Travel Active Plan' consultation

Response from Transform Scotland

Friday 23rd July 2010

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Transform Scotland appreciates the opportunity to respond to The City of Edinburgh Council's consultation on the 'Edinburgh Active Travel Action Plan' (ATAP). We support the broad sweep of the ATAP, and in particular its over-arching objective of "increas[ing] the numbers of people in Edinburgh walking and cycling, both as means of transport and for pleasure." Furthermore, we are pleased that preparation of the document has involved active travel NGOs such as Spokes and Living Streets.
- 1.2 We are in broad agreement with the ongoing development of such initiatives as 'Safe Routes to School', '20 mph Zones and Speed Limits', 'Tackling Missing/ Sub-standard Walking and Cycling Links'. We therefore support the main thrust of the document and our comments are targeted at the most effective ways of achieving these aims based on the success of several European countries in raising levels of commuter cycling to between 25 and 40%.
- 1.3 In this respect, we feel that we are in a good position to comment constructively on the issues because the Transform Scotland Trust has recently completed a study that investigated the factors that led to high levels of walking and cycling in a selection of European cities. The report, *Civilising the Streets*, was published in June this year. Our comments below aim to identify some of the success factors that lead to increased levels of walking and cycling, derived from our experience over the years and from our *Civilising the Streets* study.
- 1.4 We note that one of the Joint Actions is to "set up a coordinating group for Active Travel initiatives". As promotion of more sustainable travel modes is one of our core activities, Transform Scotland would be interested in being a member of this group.
- 1.5 In Appendix 1, we have attached a series of recommendations made to Cllr. Gordon Mackenzie, Convener of Transport, Infrastructure & Environment Committee, in October 2009. While some of the points made in this paper have been superseded by the draft ATAP, we believe that some of the points made in this paper will still be of relevance.

2 Walking Action Plan

- 2.1 The ATAP has correctly identified that improvements to the walking environment at such areas as the Grassmarket, St. Andrew Square and The Royal Mile have been successful in attracting large numbers of people.²
- 2.2 The weak link at the moment is the terrible congestion in Princes Street itself from excessive numbers of buses and taxis. There are few city centres in mainland Europe that now allow the centre of an historic city to

¹ However, we are not persuaded that the proposed marketing plans are particularly inspired. They need to focus on making cycling attractive/aspirational/trendy/sexy: see, for instance, the first four videos on this page: <http://www.copenhagenize.com/2009/07/how-cities-are-promoting-cycling.html>. We are not convinced whether we require another brand ('Active Edinburgh') and would question whether a variant of the established 'Inspiring Capital' brand, or, more appropriately, the 'Transport Edinburgh' brand, that will include buses and trams, could not be used. TfL have increased and promoted cycling in London without introducing another brand, but by making cycling an equal, valid form of transport within the TfL brand. Active transport shouldn't be hived off into a ghetto, but should be part of an overall 'Transport Edinburgh' branding.

² However, while we would agree that parts of The Royal Mile are pretty good, a lot remains to be done. In particular: (i) between George IV Bridge and Council Chambers, it should be pedestrian/cyclist priority over motorised traffic; (ii) from North Bridge to Holyrood, while the paving is of high quality, the pedestrian environment is extremely poor, due to narrow, cluttered pavements (A-boards, tables, tartan tat displays, etc.) and often too high traffic speeds (particularly on the Canongate). We would contend that the large volume of pedestrians is in spite of, not because, the environment provided here.

be engulfed in this way by road traffic and this should be a priority issue that could be addressed once the tram is running along Princes Street.

2.3 Issues that should be looked at include:

- *The removal of traffic (excluding trams and cycles) between Waverley Bridge and Lothian Road;*
- *The creation of cycle paths (i.e. segregated) between Princes Street and the cycle routes at The Meadows, Roseburn, Holyrood etc. to allow safe cycling from the outskirts to and through the centre;*
- *The cessation of cross-through traffic from The Mound because this causes severe hold-ups to public transport in Princes Street (at the moment) and George Street (after removal from Princes Street);*
- *In fact, a detailed study as to how traffic flow through the city centre can be optimised is required because at the moment it is very inefficient as a result of the traffic lights at Waverley, The Mound and Charlotte Street South. This results in the formation of queues of traffic at these points leading to long journey times. A delay of 30-40 minutes is not uncommon to get from one end of Princes Street to the other, while the large volume of traffic makes cycling and walking difficult or unpleasant.*

2.4 We support the introduction of 'X' crossings that show pedestrians how long they have to wait. These are common in Copenhagen and reduce the likelihood of people jay-walking, as often observed in Edinburgh, when walkers become impatient with long waits. However, the other way to reduce jay-walking is to make the wait shorter! Some lights are very good, but recently there have been some awful changes: the lights around the Hanover St/George St intersection are now antagonistic to pedestrians, especially compared with the previous arrangement (pre-tram work), and the pedestrian light on the south side of York Place opposite Broughton Street now incurs a long wait (again, this was better before the tram works).

2.5 As mentioned in ATAP, Edinburgh has great potential for walking and there are many attractive routes away from the city centre. It is the city centre itself which suffers from excessive traffic with associated noise and atmospheric pollution as well as a severe loss of visual appeal. We would contend that this also results in a loss of business opportunity: if the environment were more pedestrian-friendly, there would be an increase in pedestrians who are more likely to stop and pop into shops and cafés.

2.6 A traffic-free Princes Street has the potential to become one of the most stunning tourist areas in Europe with the backdrop of the Old Town and the Castle. Sadly, these are marred by the constant stream of traffic with associated noise and danger for walkers and, especially, for cyclists.

3 Cycling Action Plan

3.1 Cycling has one of the greatest potentials for reducing the number of cars in the city, bringing associated benefits from reduced congestion, reduced air pollution and significant health improvements. It is important that the ATAP sell the benefits of fewer cars/more walking and cycling from the point of view of a much more pleasant, attractive, and vibrant public realm, which will appeal to and benefit everyone, not only the active citizens. This improvement to everyone's quality of life should be a key part of the marketing strategy.

3.2 An important factor in creating a cycling culture is for **strong, visionary and consistent leadership** and to persuade politicians of all parties to buy into the vision of a cycle-friendly city, because it cannot be done overnight.

3.3 Our own study, *Civilising the Streets*, of thirteen cycle-friendly European cities (Basel, Bremen, Brighton & Hove, Copenhagen, Freiburg, Ghent, Graz, Groningen, Hannover, Lund, Stockholm, Utrecht, Zurich) indicates the following:

- *The high levels of cycling in European cities have resulted from investment, not due to a difference in culture, topography, or climate. As the former transport minister, Lord Adonis, said in a September 2009 speech, "our continental neighbours don't cycle more because somehow it's in their genes, but because it's safe and supported."*

- *In the majority of cities studied, the population did not have a propensity to cycle before the events which led to an increase in active travel. In these cases, a cycling culture was actually created by the investment and pro-cycling activities of the local government.*
- *It generally did not take many years for the normalisation of cycling to take hold, what was required was a consistent message with changes on the ground to back up that message.*
- *In all cities studied, the investment in active travel has been coordinated and implemented by the local government (equivalent to Scottish city councils). Most funding has come from the local authorities as well. In some cases, there has been central or regional government funding or encouragement.*
- *It is important to remember that investment in active travel is not always initially popular, especially when it involves taking away road space from cars. But experience shows that once people have had a chance to benefit from much more conducive and pleasant environments for walking and cycling, they come to appreciate them and, in fact, demand them. So politicians must be prepared to show strong leadership, not to defer to an often hysterical local press, and to see the plans through the first couple of years.*

4 Important Factors Leading to High Levels of Cycle Commuting

- 4.1 It is important to address the distinct needs of commuters and others using cycling as a form of transport, as opposed to purely leisure cycling. We believe that the excellent facilities provided by the current network of former railway lines and the Union Canal will never fulfil their transport potential until links are created between them by means of segregated cycle paths in the city centre. The main factor that persuades commuters to cycle within the busier parts of the city is **the provision of safe segregated cycle paths**.³
- 4.2 At the Scottish Parliament sponsored 'Dreams on Wheels' conference,⁴ the project manager from Odense, Troels Andersen, was asked if he knew of any cities where 30-40% cycling levels had been achieved without the introduction of segregated cycle paths and his answer was **"No"**.
- 4.3 Key points from the day with presentations by Jan Gehl (Architect), Troels Andersen (Transport Consultant) and Lars Bo Andersen (Health Scientist), and based on 40 years of cycling promotion in Denmark were as follows:
 - *100 years ago city centres were about work; 50 years ago for shopping; in our time they should be devoted to leisure and prioritised for walkers, shoppers and cyclists;*
 - *36% of people cycle to work in Copenhagen as a result of the infrastructure improvements introduced;*
 - *Surveys show that 89% of cyclists feel safer using cycle paths;*
 - *50% of the people in Denmark who now cycle used to use cars;*
 - *This shift represents about 12,000 cars/day coming off the road in Odense alone so it can make a significant contribution to reducing congestion and carbon dioxide emissions;*
 - *The Danes aim to increase cycling to 50% by further infrastructure improvements as part of their contribution to reducing their carbon footprint.*
- 4.4 Their conclusions highlight several important selling points that could be used as part of the ATAP promotion, namely:

³ By segregated cycle paths, we refer to routes which can provide uninterrupted cycling and which can be used for commuting and utility cycling. Where this cannot be provided, as CTC put it in their response to the 25/06/10 version of the ATAP, "Where an off-road route involves stop-start cycling with chicanes, gates, "cyclists dismount" and other barriers it may have some recreational benefit, but very little as transport", it is important that high-quality on-road cycle provision instead be made available.

⁴ 'Dreams on Wheels' dealt with the promotion of cycling in Copenhagen and Odense in Denmark and was held in Edinburgh on 10th February 2009.

- *The city centre should be prioritised for walkers and cyclists: almost everyone is a walker, so this is about designing public space for **all** citizens, not just a subset of the populace;*
- *Provision of safe segregated cycle paths lead to huge increases in cycling numbers;*
- *This in turn leads to reduced car congestion, reduced air pollution and reduced carbon dioxide emissions.*

4.5 It is not clear to us what is intended within the ATAP when mention is made of “By April 2014 implement a comprehensive package of on-street improvements for cyclists in the ‘South Central’ area.” However, based on the above discussion, we do not believe that coloured cycle lanes alone will achieve continental levels of cycling. The test should be “Would I be happy for me or for my children to cycle on this route?” The chances are that most would not be happy, which accounts for the low cycling numbers at present.

4.6 However, the introduction of cycle paths need not be very expensive and it is interesting to note that even the French are now seeing the benefits of cycling and are introducing good quality segregated paths in their cities. The two illustrations show a new cycle lane in St Malo, clearly an expensive high-quality enhancement. On the other hand, the other illustration shows a cycle lane in Portsmouth, which only required the cementing of concrete blocks and would not be expensive.



St Malo



Portsmouth

- 4.7 The main problems we feel, in Edinburgh and much of the UK, is a lack of willingness to reclaim road-space from motorised vehicles. Wide roads, and key cycling routes, such as Lothian Road, Princes Street and Corstorphine Road etc. could easily accommodate such enhancements.
- 4.8 The achievement of high cycling rates will therefore depend on selling the concept of reclaiming the city from the car and creating a more citizen friendly city. We realise that the CEC operate in an often hostile environment with local newspapers looking for any excuse to ridicule. It is therefore vitally important that the Council has a **visionary, robust and comprehensive plan** with **benefits that are easy to communicate**. This plan must be carried out so that the benefits are realised. **It is key that political uncertainty, equivocation, reductions in ambition, and seemingly *ad hoc* small scale improvements are avoided.**

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Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance, campaigning for a more sustainable and socially-just transport system. Our membership includes bus, rail and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation groups; consultancies; and local transport campaigns. Transform Scotland Limited is a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).

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Increasing the modal share of cycling in Edinburgh

Proposals

7th October 2009

1. Data gap

1.1. There is a lack of current data on the modal share for cycling in Edinburgh. The Scottish Household Survey is accepted as robust for Edinburgh but shows just 1% of adults and 1% of children travel to work or school by bicycle. However, Spokes estimates that cycling accounts for 4% of journeys in Edinburgh, having risen from 1% over the past 10-15 years. For school journeys, Sustrans reported in their National Hands Up Survey (2009) that 3.3% of pupils in Edinburgh cycled to school in 2008.

1.2. This lack of data is a gap which needs to be addressed as a basis for future planning of how to achieve a modal shift to cycling. Activity-based analysis looking at key destinations (employment centres, schools, shopping trips, etc) would help identify areas or corridors which would most benefit from cycling investment.

2. Strategy to increase cycling journeys

2.1. The Council could very usefully carry out many smaller measures which would increase the number of people cycling to work. Measures include the following:

- Repainting of existing red paint on the on-road cycle lanes and ASLs (and extension of these lanes into other streets);
- More Sheffield cycle racks in the city centre and at key destinations;
- Better maintenance of cycle paths, such as fast removal of broken glass, regular gritting in winter, etc;
- More promotion of routes as part of travel planning with schools, large employers, residents of nearby paths, etc;
- Enforcement of dangerous driving penalties for motor vehicle drivers.

2.2. However, in order to significantly increase the number of cycle journeys up to 15% by 2020 as the Council has pledged, it is clear that the only way to do this is by creating strategic, high quality, on-road cycle routes. These routes should be segregated from motorised traffic and preferably two-way, with cycle priority at minor junctions. Where such traffic separation has been introduced in The Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia, cycle commuting has increased to around 30-40% as a result of the increased safety offered to cyclists of all ages. This strategy should be put in place by starting with a recognised cycle corridor which could be used as a pilot.

3. Pilot on-road cycle corridor

3.1. The City of Edinburgh Council's Transport, Infrastructure & Environment Committee recently discussed a paper with a number of proposals for measures which could be implemented to increase cycling in Edinburgh. One of these proposals was to create a cycle corridor from George Square to King's Buildings. This accords with discussions we had held. This is a well-used route by many cyclists which links two key trip generators at the University; there are alternative parallel roads for cars and buses to use; Transform Scotland has good links with the University of Edinburgh and EUSA who are likely to be supportive of such a route; and The Bike Station is on the route and could also be expected to help with promotion.

3.2. We suggest that the road space along this corridor is reallocated to allow for a *continuous* two-way cycle lane along the whole route. This lane would almost certainly necessitate the removal of car parking along one side of the road, and the prioritisation for cyclists at minor road junctions. The route should not just consist of on-road red paint, but the boundary should form a real barrier between cars and bikes (such as by having a series of gapped kerb stones which would still enable run-off from the road in wet weather to reach the drains). The bus stops alongside the cycle route would need to be located in such a way as to enable people to get off the bus and across the cycle lane but not by the bus pulling into the lane.

3.3. If this cycle lane is seen as being successful, it would then be possible to extend it from George Square to Princes Street by formalising the existing red cycle lane around Potterrow, Forrest Road, George IV Bridge and The Mound. This would give a key on-road cycle lane into the city centre on a route which is already well used by cyclists but which is not a major through-route for cars.

3.4. The Council should also be looking at other key journeys and trip generators to identify additional potential cycle corridors. In the main these will be journeys into the city centre, but school trips, trips to larger employers and local trips are also important; for example Portobello could be seen as a useful district centre to use as a pilot. In time the Council should create at least two north-south routes across the city centre, and one east-west route. Another key route could lead from Victoria Quay to the city centre via Bonnington Road, and again Transform Scotland has links with the government and business leaders who will need to lend support to such a corridor.

3.5. A medium term objective should be the provision of on-road cycle lanes to link the off-road network that already exists within the city and terminates at Roseburn, Hamilton Quay and Holyrood Park. This would allow cyclists to access the city centre safely and connect to other cycle routes in a seamless way.

4. Costs and justification

4.1. In order to increase the number of trips by bicycle, we expect that the Council would need to spend at least £5-10 per person per year. This is more than double current spending levels but we believe it will be needed to achieve a significant modal shift to cycling, and we understand that cycling cities in England spend up to £10 per person. This will have huge benefits in terms of improved health and productivity levels, reduced congestion, better air quality, etc.

4.2. As justification for this increase in spending, the Benefit-Cost Ratio for cycling infrastructure has been shown to be high and well worth the investment. For example, in England, Sustrans showed a benefit to cost ratio of 20:1 for walking and cycling schemes using the Department for Transport's appraisal tools⁵. The 2006 Eddington Transport Study⁶ also recognised that walking and cycling schemes showed high benefit to cost ratios, sometimes greater than 10:1. Increasing cycle share for commuters to around the 30% level typically experienced in parts of Europe will also deliver significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, increased health benefits and an improved city-centre environment.

5. Public involvement

5.1. Public events around the opening of a route with publicity in the area would help to inform residents of the route and increase take up. If the Council would like to trial a route, an event could involve the use of cones to create a temporary corridor and cyclists could be surveyed on their attitudes towards such an on-road route.

6. Other ideas

⁵ <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/general/Economic%20appraisal%20of%20local%20walking%20and%20cycling%20routes%20-%20summary.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/transportstrategy/eddingtonstudy/>

6.1. Financial incentivisation – it is known that many people own bikes but don't use them, often because they need servicing and repairs. The Council could help boost business to bike shops and return people to cycling by offering a voucher for, e.g., £5 off a bike repair at your local bike shop.

6.2. Pavement cycling – key routes to schools could be made much more attractive for cycling by enabling children to cycle on pavements in certain parts of the city, where appropriate. There are many pavements where pedestrian traffic is low but the space is wide enough to enable multi-use. This policy could also be useful for all cyclists along more heavily-trafficked roads where pedestrian use is low, e.g., A902 Maybury Road, to help build up a network of segregated cycle routes around the city.

6.3. Training for Council officials – there is a body of experience being built up on how to increase cycling levels, especially in English Cycling Demonstration Towns. It would be useful for Council officials to visit these towns on field trips, and to arrange for these towns to send speakers to Edinburgh. Policies and procedures need to be set up within CEC to enable cycle provision to be created more easily.

6.4. Implementation of the core paths plan – this plan was adopted by the Council in 2008 and was a requirement of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The plan identifies key routes for walkers, cyclists and horseriders, and many of the routes could contribute towards on-road cycle facilities if the plan is fully implemented.

7. Areas where Transform can help the Council to achieve higher cycling levels

7.1. Data gathering – Transform Scotland can work in partnership with other organisations to carry out surveys and activity-based analysis to provide data which will lead to identification of key routes to be used for cycle corridors.

7.2. Engagement with partners – Transform Scotland has built up a large network of members and other contacts in the sustainable transport field. In the case of the proposed George Square-King's Buildings cycle corridor, Transform has good relationships with the university, local Councillors, The Bike Station and other partners in the area.

7.3. Promotion and publicity – Transform Scotland has a track record in hosting events and providing leaflets and other information, and has good contacts with the media. We could assist the Council in working with other partners to hold cycling events to promote new routes, etc.

7.4. Information - We could also assist by providing awareness briefings for Councillors and officials based on continental practice and experience.

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