

Cycling in Edinburgh, or Why we need to spend more on cycling facilities.

Politicians at local and national level often state the desirability of getting more people cycling. It promotes a healthier lifestyle and reduces pollution and CO₂ emissions. I cycle in Edinburgh and here share some of my experiences to illustrate why more people don't cycle, and perhaps suggest some actions to help improve the situation.

One great idea is the Advanced Stop Line. In theory it allows cyclists to get to the front of the queue at traffic lights, and get away before the other traffic. However, in practice there are some problems.

1. They are often difficult to get to:



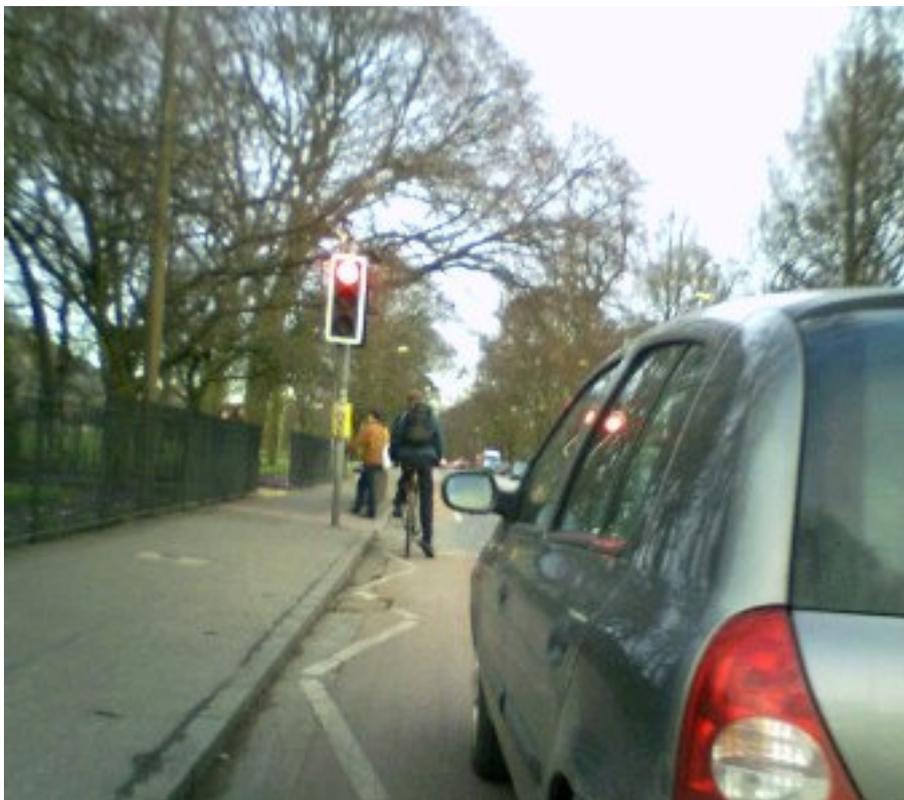
Palmerston Place, evening rush hour. Yes, there is an advanced stop line at the junction, but it is very difficult to get to. See in this picture a cyclist using the pavement because he can't get along the road.

2. Lane discipline is important. The cyclist is a particularly vulnerable road user, and has to be careful to be in the right lane. If you are turning right at the junction ahead, you can't go up the inside (left hand side) as the lights will probably change before you get there and then you can't get across to the right as all the other vehicles are now streaming past you. So you take up position in the right hand lane and probably can't get to the advanced stop line:



This is on Melville Drive, at the east end. A cyclist has managed to get to the front there, but it's not easy.

3. Even when there is a clearly marked cycle lane leading to the Advanced Stop Line, motorists do not always honour it. The photos below were taken a few seconds apart. The car turning out of Marchmont Road swings a long way over into the cyclist's path. Only a brave (or foolish) cyclist continues on past this car. What will he do next?



4. If you do manage to get to the front, you often find it's already full of cars. Sometimes quite legitimately, as they have not been able to progress through the junction in one phase of the lights, and have been left 'stranded'. Often though I suspect drivers just don't bother to stop outside the ASL area.



The ASL markings aren't very clear in this photo, but the red car is in the box, and the car on the left partially so. (West Preston St. going into Causewayside / Lord Russell Place).

Although Edinburgh has a good network of off road cycle paths, the average cyclist going from one place to another in the city still has to use the ordinary road network, sharing it with other users. Making that an easier experience should be top priority in encouraging more cycling. The photos above show that the current road markings leave something to be desired. We need more road surface dedicated to cyclists, and clearly marked as such with red colouring. In particular, lead in lanes to allow access to Advanced Stop Lines, including those for cyclists turning right. We also need better education of motorists, so they pay more respect to the markings on the road, and together with that, more enforcement.