

My name is Henry Whaley and I've been asked to speak to on why the cycle route is a good idea for all of us as there are some misconceptions about what it will achieve. We set up the RoseburnCycleRoute website to give an evidence based look at the pros & cons for the scheme.

We've collectively spent hundreds of hours gathering the facts and pulling together the evidence for people to make an informed decision.

I want to take you through some of the reasons why Edinburgh needs to have more people on bikes and walking.

Let's start with Pollution. The Government's Health Protection Scotland have estimated that over 2,000 people in Scotland will die prematurely from Air Pollution annually. To put that into local context that means over 200 people in Edinburgh will die prematurely this year, next year and the every year after that. Now a third of CO2 emissions come from transport so you can see why getting people out of cars, especially sole occupancy cars is so important.

And to make things worse the levels of pollution are worse nearest the ground so children are disproportionately impacted.

We also have a growing problem of inactivity leading to health issues in our society, manifesting itself in increasing levels heart disease, diabetes & ..., which not only affect the quality of life, but estimated to cause 2,500 death annually in Scotland.

Over a quarter of people in Scotland are obese costing the NHS £600m per year.

Riding a bike or walking can be an easy way to incorporate some exercise into your daily routine, which would help tackle these issues so we should be doing what we can to encourage it. It's forecast that the propose route in Edinburgh would deliver £13m of economic health benefits over 10 years.

There is a common complaint about the congestion in Edinburgh but that is of little surprise when we have such limited alternatives to the car. Cars have a place in our society, I have one and I'm sure most of you do, they are useful, but that doesn't mean that we can all use them at rush hour.

The 2014 Scottish Household Survey tells us that 43% Edinburgh Households don't have access to a car – what would the congestion be like if all the population tried to drive?

Currently cars on our roads at rush hour only carry on around 1.2 people but take up a lot of space both on the road when moving and when parked.

Here's a picture of the space taken up by 69 people travelling by foot, bike & car, so next time you see a queue just think how many people are stuck in it. And let's not forget that the expected population growth is only going to make things more crowded in our city. Can we really afford to assume that cars are the only answer?

So where are all these people that that will start cycling. The 2011 census tells us that 50% of Edinburgh residents live within a 15 minute cycle or 3 miles of their place of work or study.

We also have 23% of people in Edinburgh responded to a Sustrans' survey by saying they don't ride a bike but would like to, so what's stopping them get out of their cars and taking a healthier and less polluting means of transport?

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Earlier this year I guided a friend on a trial run to her work in Waterloo Place from Corstophine almost the exact route of the new route. This is a working mother of 2 small children who would like to get fitter but struggles to find time amongst a hectic lifestyle.

Her experience as a novice cyclist using the existing infrastructure was that it didn't feel safe to her, so she's not been back.

I also spent my lunchtime today speaking to colleagues thinking of cycling to work. It is always the same questions that come up. How do I get a locker, what's a safe route and how long will it take?

There are some safe routes around Edinburgh, such as the old railway lines, but they either add many miles to someone's route or don't go where they want to.

This is why the proposals had over 1,700 support the scheme in the consultation and why one over 4,000 people Pedalled on Parliament this April, including many from Roseburn, to call on all political parties to invest more in cycle infrastructure. The net result is we have all political parties pledging in their Holyrood manifestos to do more to support safer cycling.

What the proposed cycle route would give us is a safe, direct & compelling route from the West of our city, through the heart of it and out to the East. Linking where people live to where they work.

We can't and wouldn't want to force people out of their cars, so we have to build a cycle route that will encourage them to make that change.

If you look at the success of the London segregated cycling routes, which are already reaching capacity at peak times, they are safe & direct, and it's working. They have seen a massive uptick in numbers cycling and some routes operating at 1,200 people an hour on them, many more than the lane they displaced.

The question to ask yourself is what made those people make their first journey by bike. A common reaction when a friend or loved one announces they are going to cycle to work is 'you're brave!'

Cycling is safe, it only becomes less safe when you mix with larger and faster vehicles. As can be seen in London and other cities, protected cycle routes, like that proposed in Roseburn & West Coates give that protection and encourage people onto bikes. Once people try it and feel safe, they will tell their friends and numbers will grow.

And here's the thing, just before the summer holidays, a lady who lives on this street was on her bike in the bus lane in Roseburn, stopped at the pedestrian crossing. A large lorry in the lane next to her sets off and swerves into her lane knocking her off. Fortunately the lollipop lady stops him before any serious injury, so on that count she was lucky. By mixing up 2 very different vehicles these types of incidents are likely to occur with potentially catastrophic results for the person on a bike, but the wider problem is that they will further put people off from getting on their bike, which is why it is vitally important that the new route is safe.

The proposed route incorporates the designs seen in London and Europe and will give a route suitable for anyone from 8 to 80. The official report on the scheme predicts an 88% increase in cycling with 18,000 new journeys each week. That's a lot of cars off our roads.

Before we have a look at the impact on Roseburn let's look at what the Murrayfield Community Council wrote about it in their Roseburn Action Plan in 2014.

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“The vast increase in traffic has resulted in a noisy and congested area which is not a pleasant place for people [...] The shopping area is hardly fit for purpose. The pavements are too narrow and the road too wide.”

I think anyone who has walked along Roseburn and had to dodge the street furniture whilst lorry wing mirrors come flying past you will agree with that.

The proposal will widen the pavement on the South side, and introduce a new pedestrian crossing across the A8 at Roseburn Bar allowing people safely do a circuit on foot. It will replace noisy, polluting motor vehicles with people on bikes who have the ability to stop and engage with the environment they pass through, whether that be see what’s on offer in the window or stop for a chat with a friend they spot.

We know there have been some concerns on the impact to the shops in Roseburn, with the “Save our Shops” campaign and highlighted in the consultation feedback, but these concerns are being overstated. Yes, there will be changes but the evidence for other schemes have shown cycle lanes to be positive for businesses.

We have put links to a number of studies onto our website, showing that shopkeepers overestimate the number of customers who come by car and that people on bikes shop more often and spend more than car based one. We invited anyone to show us studies that installing cycle lanes harms the local businesses but we haven’t received any. What we have received is link to further studies showing the benefit to shops from around the world.

In response to the consultation feedback the council have retained the loading on the North side, which will alleviate the concern over deliveries and loading. Overall 11 out of the current 16 spaces have been retained, however it is important to maximise the utilisation of them for genuine loading and not for parking.

I should also stress that the whole scheme will also benefit pedestrians. There have been concerns about pedestrians and bikes sharing the same space, which becomes more problematic with increasing numbers. So let’s have our own spaces rather than trying to share the narrow paths on the current Balbirnie route.

The Copenhagen style junctions will make it easier for pedestrians to cross side roads as they will have priority. Blocking the rat run Roseburn Gardens will make it safer for our children getting to school rather than needing a lollop lady to help them cross a minor road.

Option A

Option B

Wrap up.

Why should we have the layout of our streets to favour those in the most polluting and space inefficient mode of transport? Let’s prioritise what will make us healthier, what will make our street more pleasant and what will support our businesses.

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