

Roseburn to Canal Cycle Route

Comments from Spokes, July 2019

Spokes strongly supports the proposed Roseburn to Union Canal path link which will make a valuable contribution to the connectedness of the city's off-road cycling network. It will fill a gap between the existing cycle network to the west and north-west of the city and the existing and planned network to the south and south-east. Given all these purposes we are pleased to see the planned width of 4m (except in a couple of locations discussed below).

Title of Project

The name 'Roseburn-to-Canal' is not entirely appropriate, since the route no longer ends at the canal; and there might be objections against bringing more cyclists to the canal, whose capacity is already stretched. Furthermore, the title could reflect the existence of a linked project, Canal-to-Meadows. Suggestions are 'Roseburn-to-Fountainbridge' (which might encourage the long-awaited Fountainbridge/Dundee Street cyclistroute project) or even 'Roseburn-to-Meadows'.

Crossing the Edinburgh-Glasgow Railway

Earlier plans showed a possible bridge over the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway. Such a bridge would eliminate a winding descent and ascent. It would also look spectacular and be a strong tangible indicator of Edinburgh's commitment to cycling. However, we understand the cost is in the order of £7 million and we can think of better ways that such investment could be spent at this time to make cycling more attractive to residents and visitors to the city. On the other hand, if funds were available from some outside source that could not be used for other cycling purposes, it would be a great scheme. In any case the Sauchiebank ramp should be designed to allow for such a bridge being built in the future.

Until then, we will have to do with the existing link from the new path to the Roseburn path under the railway and tram bridges. The following improvements to the plans will be important:-

- * Lighting and the width of the path need to be improved. The present path is dingy and is prone to pedestrian/cycle conflict mainly due to its narrowness.

- * There is a significant drainage problem. Providing a consistent footway camber sloping gently towards the roadway would solve the problem of large puddles. It would also enable the removal of the hazardous central drainage facility [the drain covers have several times broken, resulting in a dangerous cycling surface].

- * There are inappropriately-located "headroom" signs on the pavement that need to be moved.

Sauchiebank Ramp

We are glad to see that the ramp starts at the foot of Sauchiebank, rather than at the top as in earlier plans. This will make a much more obvious and direct route.

We are also pleased that a connection has been made to Duff Street, allowing cycle access to the housing there from the path instead of having to use Dalry Road.

Bridge over Dalry Road

In relation to the proposed barriers between the West Approach Road (WAR) and new path, we see advantages of having the path visible so are not supportive of general screening. However we recognise that headlight glare could be a real problem and so wish to see screening used at particular spots to prevent this as necessary. Maybe there could be a set of vanes like those on the path beside the A90 between Edinburgh and Queensferry.

The existing path from Dalry Road is undermined by tree roots and becomes covered with leaves in the autumn. Hopefully this stretch of path will be resurfaced as part of the scheme, in a way which is more resistant to the tree-root problem. In addition new maintenance arrangements here and for the whole path need to include leaf removal as required. For the benefit of cyclists and other non-motorised wheeled traffic accessing the new route from Dalry Road, there should be a link to the existing path as close to Dalry Road as levels and gradients allow. This point would seem to be between the 5-a-side football pitch and the sand pit. For the benefit of pedestrians using the new path to or from Dalry Road stair access should also be provided on the south side of Dalry Road.

Shared path towards Morrison Circus

This will follow an already existing desire line, and with simple asphaltting could and should be built **immediately**, linking as it does the path through Dalry Park and Morrison Circus. A hedge barrier between path and road would help reduce noise and enhance the sense of separation, though for personal visibility and security this should be no higher than 1 metre. Near Morrison Circus a fence narrows the available width and needs to be removed. Lamp posts and road signs along the length of WAR about 2 metres from the road should be relocated so as not to interfere with the path.

This path will also form part of an off-road route via Melvin Walk and Gilmore Park to the Canal-Meadows link. But the ramps leading up to Melvin Walk and to Dundee Street are not suitable for all types of bicycle, so consideration should be given to creating a new toucan crossing to Drysdale Road. This would enable a straightforward shallow gradient to link up with Fountainbridge and the eastern end of the canal. This could be the crossing of choice for many (though not all) people using the new path heading north and east. Even if installing the toucan is not possible now, lowering the kerbs on the north side of WAR and in the central island would allow the crossing to be made when traffic is stopped at the crossings to the east and west.

Telfer Subway crossing

In broad terms we support these proposals. We understand that there is to be further consultation about..

- 1) arrangements for the Telfer subway, the proposed Toucan crossing of WAR and the ramp up to Dundee Street
- 2) the proposals for the path on Dundee Street, its crossing and the arrangements for the canal link.

Because of this our comments on this are brief. However, for the future, we are concerned that creating un-intimidating facilities to travel on and across Dundee Street may be difficult – and they must involve considerably more than solely paint on the road.

For the time being our comments are..

- the speed limit on the West Approach Road must be 30 MPH or less approaching the crossing;
- the toucan crossing should have minimum waiting times and be as wide as possible to enable maximum flows as we anticipate the route being popular at peak commuting times;
- there must be a convenient connection to the main path from the existing Orwell Terrace entrance to Telfer Subway;
- the drainage ditch where the existing cycle path crosses into the subway passageway on the north side of WAR must be removed or re-designed. We know of at least one crash which has been caused by this.

Assuming satisfactory arrangements for waiting, crossing and links between the new path and Orwell Terrace can be put in place, we would not object to the closure of the subway (an option in the earlier consultation) given that this would allow for better flows of pedestrians and cyclists to and from the crossing on its southern side. However we recognise that should local residents have a strong preference, that should be an important factor in determining this matter.

In addition the toucan crossing will help change the character of WAR from urban motorway to ordinary road. On balance we favour the level toucan crossing. Note that it does not look possible to have a gradient from WAR road level up to Dundee Street that is within normal limits (5 or 6%). This means that some cyclists, pedestrians, pushchair and wheelchair users will find the route less than ideal. The crossing at Drysdale Road, suggested above, might provide a better alternative for people travelling south and east.

Overall comments

In the main we strongly support the proposals. The existing route, despite its many unsatisfactory aspects, is already used by many cyclists and the improvements in safety and convenience are very welcome and will make cycling more attractive as a travel choice. It will also be an excellent leisure path for walkers from the Water of Leith path to the Union Canal. A walk-through green space and over-bridges with views will be a huge improvement over walking along Russell Road. The new path must also link up easily to the proposed CCWEL East/West city route recently consulted on.

The new path needs to be included in a maintenance regime from the outset to include cutting back of any encroaching plant material, removal of leaves and any infrastructure damage or deterioration. Good signage showing the way to other routes such as the canal, Fountainbridge, East/West Link, Quiet Routes to the west, and the Roseburn path will be essential.

Euan Renton, Alec Mann (and others)
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