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## **Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) Consultation<sup>1</sup>**

**Submission from Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign, January 2020**

Contents of submission ...

- 1. Recent policy-related developments**
- 2. Regional Issues**
- 3. Scotland-wide issues**
- 4. Summary of recommendations**

### **Introduction**

Spokes is a non-party-political voluntary organisation with 1200 members, mainly in Edinburgh and Lothian, founded in 1977. We aim to promote cycling for everyday transport, as part of a sustainable transport strategy, and to persuade councils and government to do the same, including through high quality infrastructure.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the discussions on the future of strategic transport projects in Scotland. Spokes representatives have already participated in two workshops for Edinburgh and SE Scotland, and left a number of comments there. Our main comments below fit into the final question of the online survey, 'what transport options would you like considered through the STPR process?'

We need hardly say, as it is so well known, that the bicycle (including e-bike and cargo bike options) represents the solution to many of today's transport, climate and public health issues.

- it is healthy for the user
- it is free of emissions
- it takes up minimal land space, whether moving or stationary
- unlike a vehicle, there are no external costs imposed on society (such as health, congestion, land-take, power imbalance – danger to others)
- its manufacture requires far fewer carbon emissions than any other transport vehicle
- its weight is less than the weight of the passenger it carries
- it is therefore highly energy-efficient
- a cargo bike can carry up to 60kg and is ideal for moving freight in confined spaces

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1 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/strategic-transport-projects-review-2/>

# 1. Recent policy-related developments

1.1 Transport is a major contributor to carbon emissions and also has implications for other important policy areas such as health, air quality, land-take, and the environment.

In particular, STPR2 must fully respect the **Climate Emergency**<sup>2</sup> declared by the Scottish Government in May 2019, including the statement,

*“This Scottish Government will be placing climate change at the heart of everything we do. I can confirm that it will be at the core of our next Programme for Government and Spending Review.”*

1.2 The independent Scottish Parliament SPICe Report<sup>3</sup>, **You Get What You Pay For**, outlines reasons for the failure to meet the 2020 target of 10% of journeys by bike - basically through too much emphasis on road building, and too little emphasis on cycling infrastructure and the re-allocation of road space.

1.3 The **independent expert review of air quality**<sup>4</sup> commissioned and published (Aug 2019) by the Scottish Government, has recommended, inter alia, ...

- reduced trunk road construction
- more cash for cycling, walking and public transport
- measures to cut fossil vehicle use *must be accompanied by* incentives for cycling, cargo bike and public transport – not automatically assuming shift to electric cars and vans.

1.4 Finally, we strongly support the change of policy suggested in the document, such that the **transport hierarchy** applies to transport, no longer solely to planning policy as now. This has been a source of much misunderstanding, and a clear statement of applicability to transport policy will be most welcome.

## 2 Regional issues

There is a wealth of evidence from Europe, and indeed more recently from London, to indicate that cycling would be chosen as a travel mode if better infrastructure were provided.

In Scotland cycling events such as Pedal for Scotland and Etape Caledonia, attract cyclists in huge number, but there is little 'pay-off' in terms of cycling taken up more frequently as a mode of travel. A likely reason for the lack of carry-over is the perception of safety - event participants feel safe because the routes are either on roads closed temporarily to traffic, or with traffic strictly controlled, or on off-road vehicle-free routes.

The power imbalance between motorised and non-motorised road users is possibly the most pernicious external cost of motoring; adults are afraid to cycle; children are prevented from travelling independently; they cannot play in the streets; parents chaffering them from venue to venue just adds to the danger on the roads; the elderly and infirm are affected similarly.

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2 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/global-climate-emergency-scotlands-response-climate-change-secretary-roseanna-cunninghams-statement/>

3 <https://spice-spotlight.scot/2019/12/04/you-get-what-you-pay-for-20-years-of-devolved-transport-policy/>

4 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/publication/2019/08/cleaner-air-scotland-strategy-independent-review/documents/cleaner-air-scotland-strategy-independent-review/cleaner-air-scotland-strategy-independent-review/govscot%3Adocument/cleaner-air-scotland-strategy-independent-review.pdf>

To address this, cyclists need protection through good infrastructure, but this has to be accompanied by traffic reduction and calming.

We therefore call for two major regional transport projects to increase cycling's modal share, 2.1 and 2.2 below.

Both these projects satisfy the criteria outlined in the consultation document, namely...

- use existing assets
- make better use of existing assets
- be sustainable
- make targeted improvements;

And hence, by working at the top of the transport hierarchy (viz. cycling), they

- contribute to Transport Scotland policies and strategies.

## 2.1 High quality cycle routes between the city of Edinburgh and the Lothians

This would largely involve reallocation of road space on existing carriageways, though where possible using adjacent off-road provision of equal standard. Thus, all the main arterial routes into the city would be made cycle-friendly, and the cycle routes would be *continuous* (as they are usually not at present) and would retain the *priorities* which on-road cyclists currently enjoy, e.g. priority at side-road junctions.

There are numerous examples where well-meaning Local Authorities have built cycle paths alongside main arterial roads, but where many cyclists ignore them. This is usually (1) because they are often just short sections, liable to abrupt termination; and/or (2) because the paths are frequently interrupted with cyclist 'Give Way' at side roads, indeed even at the smallest side entrances such as farm gates. Examples are the A985 in Fife and the A199 in East Lothian.

## 2.2 High quality cycle provision within and between towns in the Lothians

This project would make similar provisions for other towns in the region, enabling access by bike to work or school locally, to local shops, to medical centres and community facilities, etc. In addition to the cycle facilities on main roads, the project must incorporate more general traffic reduction and traffic-calming measures within town centres, in order to reduce the fear element as well as for the wider health, climate and congestion reasons.

Whilst provision within urban centres and to/from residential areas is often discussed, wider cycling connectivity receives less attention and we give two examples which need included...

- **Cycling access to stations which are outside town centres is vital.** When Airdrie-Bathgate rail line reopened, Spokes campaigned to have access to the new stations from local towns included in the project. The Scottish Government refused, leaving it up to the Local Authorities, North Lanarkshire and West Lothian, despite the very clear fact that neither had the resources to do so. Thus, towns like Harthill, Whitburn and Blackburn - some of the poorest and least healthy places in the region - were denied the potential health benefits of cycle routes to the new stations because the Government refused to implement a genuinely integrated transport project and went for rail+car only.. Even where cycle connections were eventually provided, such as Armadale, this happened years later when the local authority eventually managed to raise the cash. Currently in East Lothian there is no safe connection to Drem station from communities to the north.

- **Out-of-town motor traffic should be concentrated on major routes, with restrictions on other roads to provide safer, quieter and less congested routes for bus and bike.** An example is the Forth Road Bridge which now provides a safe and quiet crossing for bikes, pedestrians and buses, with private motor traffic restricted to the new bridge [albeit we query whether the cost of the new bridge was justified].
  - This model could be used in East Lothian, to make the A199 (the old A1) a route primarily for bus and bike, with private motor traffic directed to the A1. This would be a great boon for local sustainable and active travel in Musselburgh, Wallyford, Tranent, the proposed Blindwells, Haddington, and possibly East Linton.
  - Similarly in West Lothian, traffic from adjacent towns would be directed to the M8, and the parallel roads - mainly the old Edinburgh-Glasgow routes - would be designated quiet routes with restricted access, for use by buses and cycles. These would include the A89, A7066, A706 (part), and B7066.

Although our local concern is the Lothians the project should be Scotland-wide such that every local authority develops cycle-friendly towns and cities, with traffic-free centres, arterial segregated cycleroles connecting residential areas, and quality cycle connections between towns.

## 3 Wider issues

### 3.1 EVs

The acceptance of the transport hierarchy as a transport issue (as above) is a welcome change, but its implementation, and the parallel de-carbonisation of transport, are quite another, and will require significant re-allocation of priorities for Transport Scotland staff.

A particular problem is that the vehicle industry seems geared up to replacing fossil-fuel vehicles (FVs) with EVs, but otherwise carrying on exactly as now, with widespread and ever-increasing private motor vehicles ownership and use. Transport Scotland seems content with this, keeping the promotion of EVs and of e-bikes or bus in separate silos, and with much greater emphasis on the former.

We emphasise that around half of the carbon emissions of a vehicle's lifetime are created in its production. It would be all too easy to ignore this, especially since production is mainly done in other countries. Furthermore most of the vehicle components, apart from steel, are made from plastics - a growing new global environmental issue. How are all these vehicles, current and proposed, and full of plastic, to be disposed of sustainably? A further issue with FV-->EV is the continuing toxic emissions from tyre wear on the roads.

A clear conclusion is that the total number of vehicles should be drastically reduced; which implies that there should be heavy emphasis on vehicles being hired and shared with others, for example through car clubs, rather than everyone buying their own vehicle.

### 3.2 Health issues

The increase in the use of the private car as door-to-door transport has consequences for public health, which are now increasingly recognised. Public transport at least requires some walking or cycling. Transport policies need to take account of health issues; and a switch to electric propulsion will solve none of the health problems. Cycling and walking, by contrast, have positive outcomes for health.

### 3.3 Land-take and congestion

The private car requires excessive use of land, whether moving (congestion) or stationary (parking). In towns and cities especially, car parking is a major consumer of land, which could be put to better use. Scottish cities are sprawling, thanks to reliance on the car, and this dispersion of facilities makes it difficult for residents to walk or cycle for their daily needs. Again, a mere switch to electric will not solve the land-take problem, and could make it worse (see SUV section, below). Cycles, by contrast, take far less road space than a motor vehicle when moving, and, when static, ten bikes can be parked in the space of a single car.

Note that these comments apply to local businesses as well as to individuals – the opportunities to replace many van trips by e-cargobikes are hugely underappreciated.

### 3.4 Energy use - the rise and rise of SUVs

As fossil fuel becomes ever cheaper relative to public transport costs, thanks to years of duty freezes, cars are getting bigger. Sales of SUVs have risen by 25% in recent years, and are continuing to increase. With a switch to electric propulsion, fuel costs are likely to reduce even further, thus encouraging purchase of larger vehicles, a transition likely to be welcomed and fostered by manufacturers keen to increase their profits.

SUVs are a menace in typical Scottish towns and cities, in terms of use of space and higher casualty rates for those outside the vehicles. Fiscal or other measures to discourage SUVs should be an essential element of any transport policy.

### 3.5 Recommendation based on sections 3.1-3.4 above

In the light of 3.1-3.4 above we propose a project whereby the Scottish Government would inextricably integrate EV promotion with measures on modal shift. **There would be no more advertising of purely FV-->EV transition.** Rather, all promotion and all incentives would cover the full range of options including ebikes, cargo bikes, car club membership, public transport discounts, etc, plus EVs as a final option. Anyone considering FV-->EV would be presented with the alternatives and offered incentives to take the more sustainable options.

The project, to be run Scotland-wide on an ongoing basis, would require significant infrastructure provision in terms of hubs in every city or large town where individuals and businesses could try out, borrow or hire a range of ebikes, cargobikes, small e-vans, etc and where car clubs, local delivery hubs, etc could all be based.

### 3.6 Rail

Rail transport (steel on rail) is around 8 times more energy-efficient than road (rubber on tarmac). For the transport of freight especially, it makes sense to make far more use of rail, and reduce the number of HGVs on the roads. Furthermore, with electrified rail the power comes from overhead lines, thus avoiding the need for each vehicle to carry its own power supply, as it does at present (and would continue to do, if electric power were merely substituted for fossil).

Here, there is potential for STPR2 projects: to re-connect all Scottish towns into the rail network, and to improve existing inter-city rail networks, for example by dualling the Perth-Inverness rail line. This would bring us more into line with our continental neighbours, who luckily never suffered from a Beeching Report and have managed to retain the majority of their traditional rail network.

At present Scotland is going in the opposite direction, with dualling of the A9 whilst the parallel rail line remains largely single track.

Freight could be delivered to a rail-head close to the town, and be taken on from there by cargo bike or small e-vans, as appropriate, to homes and businesses within the town.

More radically, TS could look into the possibility of re-building rail connections by conversion of one carriageway of selected motorways to rail. This would satisfy several TS policies: re-use of existing assets; reduction of car and HGV use; public transport before the private car; reduction of energy consumption; and targeted improvements.

**A top priority near to our own area is the Edinburgh-Perth route, where a new direct line is essential.** The current rail routes offer a very poor service in terms of travel time; indeed the journey takes longer today than it did in 1895!

## 4. Summary of recommendations

As the above SPICe report confirms, cycle infrastructure has for years been severely and unfairly neglected whilst road expansion has prospered. We urge STPR2 to do everything possible to rectify this neglect, and to establish cycling as *the* mode of local urban travel and transport for this Century. In particular, we proposed the following projects for STPR2...

[2.1] High quality cycle routes between the city of Edinburgh and the Lothians

[2.2] Cycle-friendly provision within and between towns in the Lothians – a proposal which could be extended to every Scottish local authority

[3.5] Sustainable-infrastructure hubs in every major urban area as part of a wider project to inextricably integrate modal shift with the move away from fossil fuels

[3.6] High emphasis on rail for long-distance transport, with a new Edinburgh-Perth line as an early priority.

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