

## SfP Braid Road & Quiet Route Deputation : T&E Committee

Dear Cllrs,

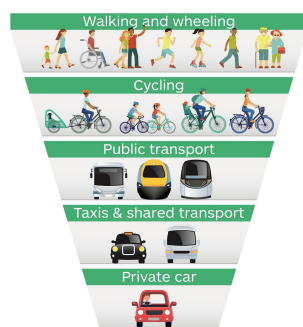
26.01.2021

We are writing to raise our concerns regarding the proposal to partially reopen Braid Road southbound for all motor vehicles. We believe the road should remain open for walking, wheeling, and cycling, and closed to private vehicular traffic.

Opening the road southbound is contrary to the Scottish Government's "*Prioritising Sustainable Transport*" transport hierarchy and would compromise a safe space for people who are using this as a safe route for local commuting, exercising, relaxing, shopping, learning and playing.

As lockdown has been reinforced since December (when the data referenced in the T&E Committee report papers was collected) we have witnessed a resurgence in the use of Braid Rd. Spokes SE recorded nearly 1,500 users of the space from 11:15 to 14:15 last Sunday. These included many hundreds of winter walkers, many runners, several cyclists but also a handful of less confident tricyclists and vulnerable walkers safely using the route to access surrounding greenspaces. It seems perverse that the council is proposing to remove the modal filters that enable these activities. Please see images below of the transport hierarchy diagram, user count & general photos of Braid Rd on 24.01.21.

### Prioritising Sustainable Transport



Mobility Assisted	2
pushchair	30
Running / Jogging	61
Cycling	28
Wheeling	4
Walking	1355

Total: 1480, Average: 246.67



As a minimum Spokes SE believes the road closure should remain in place while the current lockdown continues, and during this time work can be undertaken by Council Officers to look at public transport issues identified by Lothian Buses, so these can be prepared prior to lockdown easing. Thus continuing to enable vulnerable road users to use the area and other connected active travel infrastructure like the A702 segregated bike lanes to Fairmilehead as well as reliable public transport for those without cars.

Given the well documented effects of induced demand, Spokes SE believe that if the proposed blanket southbound reopening of Braid Rd is allowed then modal shift may well happen in the wrong direction, pollution overall will increase, and so will car dependency. Furthermore, we are far from convinced that congestion and bus delays will reduce on Comiston Road, after a possible brief initial honeymoon. Instead, taking advantage of the new route and the possibly initially faster Comiston Road, additional car trips will be generated (for example, further transfer from bus, or people who currently use other routes)

and thus within a few weeks congestion may well be back, but with a significantly higher number of people in total travelling by car into and out of the city.

There are specific matters that Spokes SE believe haven't been fully considered prior to the proposal for reopening to all motor vehicles southbound being proposed;

- **Greenbank to Meadows SfP Quiet Route:** The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) consulted on the Quiet Route proposals in November 2020 which showed Braid Rd at the Hermitage as having “*Existing Modal Filters*”. Therefore Spokes SE considers the proposed removal of these a fundamental change to the Quiet Route. In order to achieve a ‘Quiet Route’ traffic levels have to be lower in key areas. One of the main sources of bike/vehicle conflict, should Braid Road reopen, would be on Hermitage drive between Hermitage Gardens and Braidburn Terrace, particularly at the mini roundabout. There is already significant rat-running along Cluny Drive to avoid the Morningside Station traffic lights. Spokes SE would be unable to promote such a route to new cyclists thereby losing a connected route between Fairmilehead and the town centre.
- **Cause of Public Transport Delays:** Spokes SE believes that if buses are being delayed the specific cause of this needs to be determined, we believe it could be one of several factors;
  - Lack of enforcement of illegal parking/ loading during restricted hours on Comiston Rd
  - No 7/7/7 bus lane operation yet in use on Comiston Rd / A702
  - Traffic light sequencing at the Greenbank Crescent and Greenbank Drive crossroads
  - Right turn filtering at Greenbank Cres without enforcement of yellow hatched box
  - Left & right turning of rat running traffic into and out of the Midmar / Cluny area
- **Alternate Bus Routing:** In line with transport hierarchy, Spokes SE believes that options that allow buses to avoid other motor vehicles should be considered before reopening Braid Rd to private motor traffic. We therefore urge CEC to explore Braid Road as a possible bus priority route, for all or selected services (e.g. 11 & 15), with a bus gate. Thus allowing for reliable bus times, along with enhanced space for pedestrians and cyclists. Lothian Buses have confirmed to Spokes SE that there is no technical reason why buses cannot use Braid Rd south of Braidburn Terrace. Previous roadworks have meant bus diversions southbound along Braid Rd to Braidburn Terrace as recently as 2017. We also think a trial bus only right turn from Comiston Rd into Greenbank Crescent could enhance reliability of westbound services (5 & 16) towards Oxfords.

Spokes SE appreciates that the Spaces for People measures are installed under a “try-then-modify” approach. However, the Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route hasn't even been tried and it is already being modified. Changed for the benefit of private motor traffic (the bottom of the transport hierarchy), rather than for people who walk, wheel, cycle and get the bus (those higher up the transport hierarchy).

We would be grateful for a meeting with Council Officers and other stakeholders to discuss how Braid Rd can be part of an essential, safe and inclusive active travel network in the area.

Sincerely,

Spokes SE