

## East Lothian Council's Active Toun Consultation [musselburghactivetoun.info](http://musselburghactivetoun.info)

### Spokes Response to Route 1 (West), Route 2 and Route 5 Proposals

Spokes welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Council's proposals. We note that these are outline proposals and that the feedback from the consultation is intended to assist in determining detailed designs. For route 1 and parts of route 2 and 5 the feedback will help determine if options for bi directional or uni directional protected cycle lanes will go forward. Our response addresses this issue first and then goes on to highlight specific issues relating to the three proposed routes.

#### Bi directional versus uni directional cycle lanes

Areas like that adjacent to the racecourse/ golf course (ie part of Route 2), which are free from road crossings and car parking, would seem like an ideal location for bi directional cycle lanes. Such arrangements have some key advantages over uni directional cycle lanes -

- because they are continuous and protected, with no side entrances, there is no interaction with motor vehicles once in the cycle lanes
- Affecting only one side of the road, this would mean existing on-street parking would be less impacted and therefore the potential for opposition to the proposals is likely to be less. It is Spokes experience that significant local opposition can add years of delay implementing cycle lane proposals.
- Bi directional lanes offer a wider cycling space which will enable faster riders to overtake slower ones when oncoming cycle traffic permits.

Our main concern about the bi directional cycle lanes is how safe people will feel about using them. Being on a different side of the road than usual will be an issue but we anticipate this will diminish as people get used to the new arrangements. However the issue of cyclist heading for Edinburgh or Portobello needing to ride next to oncoming motor traffic, travelling at 30 or 40 mph on a busy road, with headlights on in winter, separated only by a raised kerb and a 0.5 metre buffer zone does not sound appealing.

This may be more a problem of imagination than reality but unfortunately we cannot identify similar local comparators. The Pleasance in Edinburgh, has a very short bi directional cycle path as does York Place and the A90 near Craigies Farm has massive crash barriers and headlight deflectors between bikes and cars. Perhaps the shared path on Gilmerton Road between Gilmerton Station Road and the City bypass is the nearest comparison as it can be busy and has traffic moving at 30 plus mph. However it is probably much less busy than the Musselburgh routes are intended to be for cyclists. This means the potential of using the bi-directional lane width to ride further away from the oncoming vehicles will be less available in the Musselburgh proposals.

The main advantage of uni directional lanes is that cyclists remain on the left, but with segregation from cars except where there is car parking and traffic junctions. For most cyclists, and particularly potential cyclists, the lanes would have a safer feeling than existing conditions.

On route 2 though, the uni directional option would remove more than 30 existing car parking spaces that are in everyday use. Unless this was replaced in a convenient location we envisage strong opposition to the cycle route proposals would develop.

Consideration of the needs of new or less confident cyclists and knowing what they would find more attractive is perhaps the key issue for determining whether bi or uni directional lanes are taken forward. It is important that the survey analysis recognises that there may be differences of view between some existing very confident cyclists and the much larger pool of less confident and/or potential cyclists. Particularly on routes 1 and 2 where the bi directional routes run alongside busy roads, we are genuinely uncertain whether bidirectional are or are not the best approach. We recognise many significant benefits for cyclists in the bi directional options and would welcome seeing any evidence that travelling close to oncoming traffic would not be off putting to many cyclists, especially those new and inexperienced.

### **Route 1**

The reason why the north side of the road has been chosen over the south side for the bi directional path is not clear from the proposals. The north side has existing on street car parking and two junctions where the south side has no regular on-street car parking and only one junction. It may be that the design is influenced by the proposed Portobello to Musselburgh Cycle link. Spokes has not seen designs but would not be surprised if a bi directional proposal on the north side of the road is favoured. There would be great deal of sense in linking Route 1 with the proposals that go on to Portobello.

With option A, a means for cyclists who wish, to safely access Milton Road East or Eastfield from the cycle lanes should be provided. We feel it is unacceptable to say “New dropped kerb to allow westbound cyclists to dismount and use crossing.” This does not uphold Transport Scotland's transport hierarchy.

If the bi directional option A was to be developed, some improvements would be beneficial at the junction of New St and Edinburgh Road to help cyclists heading towards Portobello/ Edinburgh. Currently it is not clear how such riders are to get onto the cycle path. The possibility of queueing in the middle of the road presents dangers and will be an off putting prospect for many people, particularly the less confident. Could the entry to the path for such riders start on New Street 5 or more metres back from the Edinburgh Road junction. This could allow an easier filtering of cyclists crossing over the oncoming traffic lane, potentially over a greater distance as they approach the junction.

In addition, we'd like to see clear road markings, such as a strip of red coloured surfacing over the Edinburgh Road – New Street junction, to make it clear to drivers that cyclists may be continuing on Edinburgh Road towards the centre of Musselburgh. In general we wish to see clear marking of the cycle lanes across any junctions with minor roads.

Near to the western extremity of the route there is a minor junction with another road which is unhelpfully called Edinburgh Road (the same as the main road). In the diagram, it is not clear how vehicles negotiate the crossing of the cycle lane. The design needs to avoid cars blocking the cycle lane whilst waiting to join the main road.

## Route 2

The proposals for the New Street to Loretto Corner section of the route seem the same for both options and involve useful but modest improvements to current conditions. One issue though, is an adequate bridge over the river. The current use of the Electric bridge is a huge improvement for cyclists and pedestrians compared to sharing the narrow bridge next to it. Use of the Electric Bridge should remain for this route until the new improved bridge mentioned in the consultation documents is provided.

Between Musselburgh harbour and the river, riders would be required to ride unsegregated along with motor vehicles and parked cars. Some existing cyclists may be comfortable enough with this but if the objective is to attract new regular cyclists, this could be off putting to many and the alternative off road route running alongside the seashore and then running up the side of the river should ideally be developed alongside the current proposals. One scary stretch, even if fairly short, can put less confident cyclists off from using an entire route.

At Loretto Corner both options seem to offer new crossing facilities. These will be very useful but the type of crossing intended is not clear. Given how busy the road can be, we think a light controlled crossing for both pedestrians and cyclists will be essential.

At Levenhall roundabout the parallel crossing associated with option A is simpler than Option B and its use will be more familiar to cyclists and motorists.

On the other hand Dutch style roundabouts have a good record in Europe though almost unknown in the UK, and have the advantage of helping cyclists travelling in directions other than both approaching and leaving on one particular route. There is therefore a good case for this experiment here. We could support this option if accompanied by careful monitoring over a significant period, so that lessons can be learned for other potential installations.

A significant additional drawback of the bi directional option A, is the narrow sections planned between Levenhall and Wallyford Toll roundabouts. Width is down to 2 metres for 10 to 15 metres and is only 2.5 metres over several hundred metres. We appreciate that the ability to extend the road width is very limited at this narrowest 2 metre width point but for the other stretches at 2.5 metres, the path is adjacent to unused agricultural land where several attempts have been made to get planning permission for housing. Should future proposals come forward the Council must make it a condition that a small section of land is acquired to extend the path width.

Regardless of whether option A or B is developed, when a path is implemented we are of the view that the 40mph speed limit on Haddington Road would not be appropriate and should be reduced to 30mph.

We are surprised that the proposals do not include provision for cyclists from existing or new housing in Wallyford to access the bi directional path at Wallyford Toll. In addition to the new crossing planned in Option A at Wallyford Toll a similar crossing of Salters Road is also needed.

## **Route 5**

Option B looks a much more attractive prospect for new and inexperienced cyclists as a result of dedicated lanes as opposed to cycling amongst general traffic on Whitehill Farm Road and Stoneybank Terrace. Priority crossing of side streets should be with cyclists rather than cars if option B is progressed.

In general the rest of the route looks good though we have the following comments -

- the precise route layout from Old Craighall to QMU is indirect and doesn't make sense from a transport perspective. Might a direct route be formed by a new cyclists / pedestrian level crossing at the old Whitehill Road crossing from Old Craighall Road, allowing a path at the side of the railway line all the way until it joins the planned path. This would be more attractive to any cycle traffic going to or from the Millerhill direction.
- Improved links for cyclists between route 5 and the Tesco store would be beneficial. Could Tesco be persuaded to fund the cost and develop their commitment to active travel?

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Spokes Planning Group, July 2021