



BEST/ SPOKES Joint Deputation to TEC, Thursday 19th August 2021

Item 7.1. Agenda Paper: Active Travel Measures - Travelling Safely (Formerly Spaces for People)

Spokes, with over 1000 members, has campaigned since the late 1970s for improved cycling conditions, in the context of a city transport system built around public transport, active travel and accessibility for all. BEST – Better Edinburgh for Sustainable Travel – is a recently formed collective of community groups and businesses from across the city seeking an Edinburgh where everyone can travel easily by sustainable means, whoever they are and wherever they need to go.

1. Overall, we welcome the recommendations set out in the report to retain many of the SfP measures, moving them towards TRO and ETRO. This commitment to support and enable higher levels of walking, wheeling and cycling in the city is in line with many other progressive and prosperous cities/places both within the UK and abroad. Together with existing and proposed schemes (CCWEL, forthcoming junctions review etc) this puts Edinburgh on a trajectory towards increased levels of cycling for everyday journeys. We note the new emphasis on travelling safely, and support a vision of safe and inclusive transport for all. We applaud this approach.
2. We note that the overall effect of SfP measures has been to speed up the process of creating a network of cycling infrastructure across the city. This network is fundamental to the continued success of cycling measures in Edinburgh, and the importance of continuity and coherence in that network should not be underestimated.
3. As in previous deputations, we note that the promotion of walking, wheeling and cycling helps the council to achieve multiple policy goals on carbon reduction, air quality, public health, 20 minute neighbourhoods, healthy city, road safety and vision zero. Active travel has a key role to play in the decarbonisation of the city's transport system - now an extremely pressing policy goal in the light of the IPCC's most recent report.
4. We are delighted to see the retention and reinstatement of school street measures around the city's schools. Enabling children to move safely and independently to

school is fundamentally important, and this provides an excellent platform for future consideration of active routes to school in each school catchment. It should be noted that the communities around school buildings also benefit from these measures to limit vehicle movements and prioritise walking, wheeling and cycling.

5. Although we support many of the recommendations in the report, we are concerned about some of the proposals for removal or revision of SfP measures. In our view, the future of SfP measures should be considered in relation to three key issues:
 - a. conformity with the sustainable transport hierarchy as set out in national and local policy
 - b. impact on the integrity of the city's network of cycling infrastructure; and
 - c. equalities issues, particularly the experiences and perceptions of women, ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, adapted cycle users (e.g. handcycles, trikes, wheelchair tandems) and those carrying children (e.g. cargo bikes, trailers and tag-alongs)

With these three issues in mind, we now offer some detailed comments about specific recommendations for Forrest Road, George IV Bridge, Morningside Road, Canonmills and Fillyside.

6. On George IV Bridge and Forrest Road (plus some others) the report recommends the removal of SfP measures on the basis of concerns about traffic flow, loading arrangements and public transport operations. However, this reasoning is not compatible with the transport hierarchy, which prioritises pedestrians then wheelers and cyclists. These modes should take priority over public transport and private vehicles. It is not right to remove successful and very heavily used pedestrian spaces (e.g. George IV Bridge) in order to resolve loading issues for businesses and timetabling issues for bus operators. Given that there are longer term plans for both Forrest Road and George IV Bridge, it would be preferable to find new ways of servicing local businesses rather than go back to kerbside loading bays at this point in time. Alternative solutions might include use of the central meridian as a loading space plus the use of cargo bikes (as in Leith Walk). In Morningside, it is disappointing that the protected cycle lane and pavement widening measures are - in part - being removed for aesthetic reasons. Again, this is not consistent with the transport hierarchy or any extant transport policy at local or national level.
7. Forrest Rd and George IV Bridge are both important parts of the city's cycling network. The *protected* cycleways here are really well used, and provide a critical link in the cycling network between the north and south of the city. Removing or revising them - even in anticipation of new schemes in the future - **would be a very significant step backwards**. We urge that further thought be given to ways of securing the continuity of the network **in time** as well as space. Infrastructure hokey-cokey where measures are put in, taken out and then put back in would be unthinkable for any other transport mode! SfP has begun the process of creating a network of cycling infrastructure in the city - losing key links like these undermines that work, reducing the overall viability of the network. We recognise the legal challenges presented by the regulatory context of TRO/ETROs. We suggest that

efforts are made to find a bridging measure that would maintain the safety profile of the route. Network thinking should also be exercised in relation to the Fillyside/Seafield Road crossing. Although this SfP intervention would be very small and limited, it is a key link in the active travel network in the north of the city, and it is very disappointing that the recommendation is not to progress the scheme at this time.

8. We are particularly disappointed by lines of thinking in the report which advocate for downgrading protected cycleways to mandatory lanes (Morningside Rd, Forrest Road) or advisory lanes (Canonmills). These approaches fail badly on equalities issues because in short: **paint is not infrastructure**. Research from Australia (2019) shows that painted-only cycle lanes significantly reduce the space motorists give cyclists - which we know affects perceptions of safety for riders. The paper¹, published in *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, argues that the focus of on-road cycling infrastructure must be on providing infrastructure that separates cyclists from motorists with a physical barrier. Other evidence shows that women in particular are much less likely to find unsegregated infrastructure attractive and safe. In addition, we see throughout Edinburgh **that motorists regularly abuse painted cycle lanes - even mandatory lanes - by driving and parking in them**. If a cycle lane is mostly occupied by parked vehicles then it is not cycling infrastructure it is parking infrastructure. Cyclists who are not confident in traffic must be able to rely on safe protected lanes - if they cannot they will use other means of travel - often private cars.

To summarise, overall this is a very welcome report which continues the City's progress as a place that is safe and pleasant for walking, wheeling and cycling. We are pleased that many cycle lanes and school street measures are being retained and moved to TRO/ETRO processes. However, we are concerned that flawed reasoning is being used to justify the removal or modification of some SfP measures, erroneously prioritising aesthetics, loading and public transport operations above walking, wheeling and cycling. We think that more weight should be given to the integrity of the network of cycling infrastructure in the city, and that attention should be given to the road safety and equalities impacts of downgrading protected cycle lanes to mandatory or advisory painted lanes. In particular, we urge the Committee to reconsider the specific locations we have highlighted today. Travelling safely in the city is a laudable goal - but it cannot be achieved with paint. Let's build Edinburgh back better.

¹ *How much space do drivers provide when passing cyclists? Understanding the impact of motor vehicle and infrastructure characteristics on passing distance*. Beck, B, Chong, D et al. (2019) *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 128, 253-260. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2019.03.007>

Detailed Comments

As an appendix to the above, we offer these more detailed comments on a number of individual projects and/ or recommendations for change contained within the report.

(1) Meadows to Greenbank Quiet Route - impact outside James Gillespie's Primary School.

Since the introduction of the Meadows to Greenbank Quiet Route we have seen uptake of walking and cycling to school in far greater numbers than previously. The area outside the school is crucially free of traffic, which means the children are able to cross throughout the day (not just at start at finish times) to go to their PE lessons on the Bruntsfield Links. It also means that social distancing has been possible and children and parents have had spaces to meet on the Links and allow their children - even from P1 - to cross more safely and enter the school by themselves or in groups.

In future, the independence that children have gained by parents feeling that it is safe enough for them to walk to school unaccompanied will greatly benefit not only the children but also the parents who are more free to work and contribute societally.

The most notable impact has been on the P1 year groups, where new parents - not yet accustomed to the serious traffic volume outside the school - chose to walk and cycle up Whitehouse Loan. The previous dangerous traffic volumes have made existing parents wary of attempting to come to school by bike or on foot, contributing to the vicious circle of car dependency.

This safe route forms part of a route for six primary schools (as evidenced in previous video deputations) and four high schools. But the benefits extend well beyond the school's pupils, parents and teachers, and include the wider community of citizens such as students and professionals travelling from the south to the city centre. The route provides a safer environment for people to travel actively. This has multiple benefits environmentally, socially and economically and enables physical activity as a part of everyday journeys. Physical inactivity is a significant public health issue, and this route makes an important contribution to a healthier and more connected place.

(2) Seafield Road/Fillyside

We are bitterly disappointed by the recommendation that the temporary Spaces for People scheme on Seafield Road/Fillyside not be progressed, and instead a permanent crossing added in 2022/23. While we welcome the commitment to a permanent scheme, we are calling on the Committee not to agree to this, and to take the temporary scheme forward until the permanent scheme can be implemented.

The current situation at the entrance to Seafield Promenade is extremely dangerous, with pedestrians and cyclists being put at daily risk by drivers on what should be a traffic-free shared use active travel corridor. This is unsafe both for those using the shared use path on the north side, as well as those crossing Seafield Rd from Craigentenny via Fillyside. No parking should be permitted on the shared use path except for occasional service vehicles. Both the temporary and permanent schemes should physically restrict parking where

possible, and, where not possible, restrictions must be enforceable and enforced, so that the only vehicles accessing the route are essential service vehicles.

We understand that Craigentenny and Meadowbank Community Council raised the crossing as an issue several years ago and tried, through the Neighbourhood Partnership, to get a shared crossing linking Craigentenny with the promenade. Sadly it was never built.

(3) Morningside Road / Bruntsfield/ Tollcross

The loss of pedestrian zones to be replaced by parking is a retrograde step, moving away from making Morningside Rd an attractive pedestrian friendly shopping street. This road has a poor pedestrian safety record with two pedestrian fatalities in the last five years. In Morningside (& elsewhere), defenders help to shorten crossing distances and prevent illegal parking around them. The replacement of a much appreciated short stretch of uphill segregated cycle lane is likely to increase tensions between drivers and cyclists. The inevitable obstacles in the 'mandatory' painted lane (e.g. parked cars/vans) will force cyclists into the main carriageway, slowing down the traffic behind.

The same observation could be made further north. The pavement widening scheme in Bruntsfield has provided much needed space for pedestrians, particularly outside businesses that generate queues, and we note that Bruntsfield Place has seen a number of slight and serious traffic incidents over the past five years. Pavements in Tollcross are often well short of minimum pavement width standards, despite resurfacing works taking place within the last three years.

Pedestrian Crossings:

Safe pedestrian crossings are critical pieces of infrastructure if more trips by car are being encouraged by returning road space to parking spaces. At Morningside Community Council on 11.08.21 we were informed that the sections of extended pavements at the pedestrian crossings are not being retained as they are unsuitable aesthetically for use on a historic street. It seems contradictory for them to also be retained opposite the entrance to Waitrose. We would like to seek clarification about this glaring inconsistency.

If no parking is allowed on zig zags then surely defenders can remain (or be replaced with more suitable permanent materials) to prevent illegal parking and narrow the crossing for pedestrians. Pedestrian crossings and narrowing act to calm motor vehicle traffic around cyclists on the road. They also allow less confident cyclists to cross the road in order to cross and connect to the Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route, residential areas and employment hubs such as the hospitals surrounding.

Has a safety audit been undertaken to assess any safety impacts of the removal of protective barriers/ separators from crossings, as is being proposed?

Northbound (Uphill) Cycle Lane:

Further to the extended pavement removals we had previously thought the uphill segregated cycle lane was also to be retained. This has improved safety on a steep and busy uphill section of road. It now seems that this is to be replaced with a "mandatory painted lane" to allow for parking to be reinstated at the Chalmers Church opposite. We are

surprised as after a meeting between Morningside Traders Association and Lloyd Richardson (in an email 07.04.21), it seemed that there was support to retain the uphill cycle lane as a shared space for the benefit of cyclists, as well as spill out for pedestrians, due to the lower speed of cycles uphill.

Experience from before the SfP project is that two buses cannot pass on this section when cars are parked, as seems likely to occur despite the “mandatory” classification. This will delay public transport as well as endanger cyclists (thus, a decision contrary to the title “Traveling Safely”, supporting neither the Scottish Government’s nor the Council’s Sustainable Transport Hierarchy.)

(4) Canonmills

The proposed solution (to the north of the Rodney Street junction) looks highly dangerous. Reinstating the left turn lane and putting cyclists in a narrower unprotected lane and having to cross left-turning traffic in order to travel straight ahead is a recipe for disaster - a near-duplication of the Portobello High Street (King's Road) Junction. The traffic signalling seems to be very badly timed with traffic being released from Brandon Terrace into already-stationary queuing traffic on Canonmills. A potential improvement would be a white line to separate the two lanes at an earlier point with cycle markings in primary position on the straight ahead lane - that is the only position to cycle here in order to avoid being left-hooked. It is not clear what is proposed for the segregation further north.

(5) Drum Brae North

The recommendation to remove part of this downhill, separated lane is not supported by the argument provided in the report. This deals forensically and elegantly with the main objections raised to the presence of this lane and finds none of them to possess merit. Accordingly, the appropriate conclusion would be to retain the lane in its current form, rather than to compromise it’s effectiveness (removal of segregation units will undoubtedly lead to the lane being blocked by parked cars). Indeed, we would urge the Council to extend the segregation here over the length of Drum Brae to create a north-south active travel corridor that increases safety and integrates better with other routes in North-West Edinburgh.