

CEC TEC 11 November 2021

[Paper 7.4, Citywide Mode Share Targets](#)

Deputation by Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign

Spokes is very pleased to see the Council seeking to adopt targets for a hugely significant and very challenging reduction in car km by 2030. In order for Scotland as a whole to reach the government's 20% target, cities and urban areas may need to exceed that figure, and it is great to see Edinburgh proposing a 30% reduction.

This target will also give rise to improvements in the local climate and air quality, supporting both human and planetary health, as well as improving the physical environment.

However we have two major concerns on the report as it stands, first, the background assumptions that underpin the targets, and second the downgrading of targets for getting about by bike.

Spokes suggests to remove modal change targets or revise solely as a response to the car mileage reduction initiative based on the points that we raise. Cycling mode share targets need further things considered such as 20 min neighbourhoods and the pedestrianisation of the city centre, as indicated in the following. We are very concerned that the cycling mode share target is insufficiently ambitious and that such a reduced target might impact planned cycling budgets.

1. Firstly, **The calculations**

We ask councillors not to be over-awed by the detail and complexity of the calculations in the report. Rather, we believe there is a major flaw in the basis of the calculations, as a result of which the decisions on modal share targets are unreliable since these appear to be derived purely on the basis of the calculations.

As we understand it, the calculations are done on the basis that *every km no longer travelled by car should instead be travelled by a sustainable mode.*

This is problematic for two reasons. First, shifting away from car use may cause some discretionary trips to evaporate completely (e.g. a Sunday afternoon drive to pick up donuts from a drive through) and not to be shifted to another mode. Second, where car trips are replaced with a different mode this may often mean a different destination and a different trip length. A person who does a grocery shop by car may well go to an out-of-town store at greater distance; whereas if they change to a bike with panniers, or a cargo bike, they will very likely go to a local shop or in-town supermarket. Similarly, someone who normally goes out for a Sunday drive, but decides on a cycle instead, is likely to travel far fewer km.

Furthermore, the move to shorter journeys is something which the Council very explicitly wishes and intends to promote, with its heavy emphasis on 20-minute neighbourhoods for the future of the city. Again, longer car trips over 8km will be replaced by shorter trips by bike or other sustainable means, for the same purpose or for roughly the same time duration.

In summary, the basic assumption of the report's calculations, that the number of km travelled will remain unchanged, is deeply flawed.

Additionally, the City's Transformation ambitions cover far more than simply a reduction in km travelled by car and an increase in cycling modal share is a fundamental part of this. Supportive projects, such as the introduction of the Low Emission Zone, should also affect travel choices, as will the increasing use of eBikes, capable of transporting more goods and travelling greater distances (picking up some of the reduction in trips over 8km (well within most people's ability without electric assist!)). There is also evidence that people are more likely to initially switch from car use to public transport use and that with the increasing availability of safe and convenient cycle routes, many people are likely to switch from public transport to cycling. The population of Edinburgh and the number of visitors will increase during this period so there will be also impact the kms travelled. All of these factors need to be considered as part of the modal share targets for CMP.

It may be that a different approach is needed, based on trip numbers or purposes; or, at the very least, a new row added to the table to represent “km no longer travelled” and an indication of which modes will be contributing to the “km no longer travelled” - clearly cycling would have a major role here.

2. Our second main concern is over the **Cycling targets**

The report makes no mention of the Council's current targets, in the existing Local Transport Strategy and Active Travel Action Plan. These targets were for 10% of all trips to be by bike, and 15% of commuter trips.

However, the targets presented here (now for 2030) are just 7% for all trips (down from 10%) and 9% for work trips (down from 15%).

This appears to represent a serious downgrading of the Council's ambitions for the future of local travel, and at a time when other capital cities such as London and Paris are aiming much higher, and indeed are already delivering, with many km of segregated routes, and many more to come - and rapidly rising cycle use as a result. Edinburgh, too, is hoping to make permanent roughly 39km of its 40km of its protected main road routes, albeit with some serious reductions in safety on one or two routes such as Comiston Road. Moreover, the historic forthcoming rises in government active travel cash should make it feasible for these and other routes to be upgraded to proper segregated standard and to a continuous and connected high quality network well before 2030.

As such, downgrading the cycle use targets seems misguided and disappointing. Moreover, this downgrade seems to be happening based on flawed assumptions and somewhat abstract calculations, as explained earlier. If accepted here, then these targets will undermine the existing policy goals and targets of the Council's other strategies - already approved by the Council. This is not acceptable. Transport Scotland is not setting any modal shift goals alongside the reduction in car kms goal, although it has analysed the modal shift required to achieve the goal. It is unclear why Edinburgh needs to set these modal trip targets for cycling and public transport targets when there are already policy targets in place for the city.

In our view, such decisions should be based on political intent, guided by technical advice but not dictated by it. We therefore ask the Council to rethink the basis of this paper and to adopt cycle use targets which are more in line not just with existing targets but with its own policy ambitions and with what is happening in other capital cities.

Martin McDonnell