

1. Please provide your name, organisation, position and contact details. Please provide the name of your business/employer/organisation you are responding on behalf of.

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2. What are the current issues and barriers to increasing active travel across Midlothian (please be as specific as possible).

The major barrier to active travel in Midlothian is traffic, and the lack of infrastructure or policy to mitigate this.

Major Roads

Within Midlothian, the A68, A7, A701 and A702 act as significant barriers to walking and cycling as they lack safe crossing points, any cycle infrastructure, and in many places, pavements.

Additionally, the A720 also deters active travel from Midlothian into Edinburgh (and vice versa), or to Danderhall and neighbouring communities.

Roundabouts

There are several major roundabouts which are difficult to avoid on many routes and feature high traffic speeds and volumes, or layouts which are difficult to cross. These include, but are not necessarily limited to Sherrifhall, Gilmerton Rd, Melville Dykes Rd, Eskbank Rd, Hardengreen, Eskbanktoll, Straiton, Main Street Newtongrange, Shawfair P&R.

Town and village centres

Traffic speeds and volumes in many towns and villages are too high for many people to feel safe cycling on the road. Additionally, narrow pavements exacerbated by parked cars make even walking quite unpleasant.

There are also a lack of links between town and village centres, with most only connected by A or B roads with very poor pavement provision making even short journeys challenging. Obvious examples of this would be Newtongrange to Eskbank, Newtongrange to Bonnyrigg, Rosewell to Roslin.

Geographic Features

The Esk valley may deter North-South journeys by cycle. However, this would not be a problem if there were more safe crossings over the Esk.

Path Network

The current network of MUP's is piecemeal, but in many places well used. Unfortunately, this means that there can conflict between different types of users and makes these unsuitable for commuters or people travelling longer distances point to point (e.g the Eskbank to Penicuik path, the Dobbies to Gilmerton path).

The path network also features many barriers which are very challenging to get through even on a standard cycle, and likely impossible on an adapted cycle, mobility scooter etc.

3. What are the opportunities for increasing active travel across Midlothian? (please be as specific as possible, including locations where improvements could be made e.g. for new pedestrian crossings, cycle routes to destinations such as schools, town centres, community facilities etc.)

Road Network

- On-road segregated cycle lanes on all major roads linking town centres, and into Edinburgh. These should include (but not be limited to)-
 - The A7 from Gorebridge to the City of Edinburgh boundary.
 - The A6094 from Dalkeith town centre to Bonnyrigg town centre.
 - The A701 from Penicuik to the City of Edinburgh boundary.
- A reconfiguration of the major roundabouts, and at the very least, the addition of controlled signalled crossings on each arm of roundabouts to facilitate active travel.
- Filtered permeability and/or bus gates to reduce through traffic in town centres. Dalkeith High Street in particular could benefit from this.
- Reduction of urban speed limit to 20 mph as a default. This could be coupled with a program to reduce road widths and junction radii in built up areas through pavement buildouts.

Path Network

- The existing network should be brought up to the standards required by *Cycling by Design*, for example by removing barriers and widening paths to allow people using non-standard bikes such as tandems and cargo bikes to use the path network safely.
- The removal of inappropriate “cyclist dismount” signs from the network, for example on the St David Estate in Dalkeith, or the B6482 in Easthouses - there is no need for cyclists to dismount here. Ideally the path running parallel to the B6482 should be given priority over traffic turning out from side roads, but at a minimum these signs should be replaced with “cyclists give way” signs.
- Where removal or reconfiguration of chicanes and barriers from the path network cannot be agreed with the landowner, alternative paths or on-road provision should be provided.
- The existing path network in Midlothian is based on abandoned railway infrastructure. There are still some scope to further increase the network using the abandoned railway cutting which runs from Eskbank Station to Kings Park, and the abandoned Lasswade viaduct and adjoining tunnel.

General Points

- There is very little AT signage beyond the core NCN network. The previous AT strategy featured a section on Quiet Routes, which as far as we can tell was never progressed. Signage to identify quiet routes which bypass major hazards such as A roads and roundabouts, or to direct people from residential areas to town centres or the path network should be considered.
- The proportion of the total transport budget allocated to active travel should be increased by at least 1% every year from the current level until it is at least 10%, similar to the approach taken in recent years by Edinburgh Council.
- A pot of money should be specifically available for carrying out relatively minor improvements such as adding dropped kerbs and converting steps to ramps.

- All new and upgraded MUPs should have priority over any side roads that they cross, with raised tables and road markings to make this clear. Failure to do so makes the road a safer option than the path for many cyclists, and seriously limits the benefit of the path.

4. The Vision of the current strategy is:

'Our vision is to create a safe and convenient environment for walking and cycling in Midlothian, promoting an active travel culture where there are safe and convenient walking and cycling choices for all Midlothian residents and visitors, with active travel being the normal choice for everyday journeys.'

Do you have any comments on the Vision?

The vision seems appropriate. "Wheeling" should be mentioned also.

5. Please tell us about any existing active travel routes or initiatives in Midlothian that you like, and why?

The Shawfair to Roslin MUP is good, offering a largely uninterrupted path from one conurbation to another with good lighting, a good surface and fairly regular entry and exit points.

6. Please tell us about any existing active travel routes or initiatives in Midlothian do you dislike, and why?

Very poorly maintained unprotected cycle lanes on many A and B roads may present more of a hazard than a help in many places. The A701 near Straiton in particular is very bad.

The GoSESTran e-bike hire scheme is a good idea, though the execution seems somewhat muddled. There are only 2 hubs in Midlothian and are very close to each other, with space for around a dozen bikes each. It would seem more effective to have more hubs, each with fewer e-bikes. Although there are hubs in East Lothian too, it seems to be a missed opportunity to not have a single scheme which covers East Lothian, Midlothian, and the City of Edinburgh.

The MUP running from Dobbies to the City of Edinburgh boundary is too narrow and very rarely cleared.

The path from Hardengreen Lane to Eskbank station features 3 blind corners, steep gradients and is very narrow. Directly routing the path through the wall at the end of Hardengreen Lane would remedy this.

7. What should the new Strategy include to ensure that it is inclusive and inequalities are addressed?

It is our understanding that many of the barriers on the MUP network have never undergone an equalities impact assessment. This must be remedied ASAP.

8. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make?

There should be opportunity for stake-holder groups to interact more regularly with officers to feed into the development and implementation of this strategy, rather than just being consulted once every 3 years.

As well as just outlining routes, the revised strategy should include some commitments regarding the standards which will be used for paths, junctions etc (i.e Cycling by Design).

The contrast between the approach to active travel funding (largely through developer contributions), compared to the multimillion pound road building project being funded through the city deal is stark. The £30 m A701 relief road project not only will not improve active travel, but will likely undermine it, and such a sum could have a truly revolutionary impact on active travel in Midlothian whilst also aiding in the councils other stated goals regarding climate, health, sustainable development etc.