

A7 Sustainable Transport Study - Spokes response

Spokes welcomes the opportunity to feed into this study. Midlothian, particularly the more urbanised north Midlothian, could be made far more safe and attractive for cyclists. The A7 Urbanisation project could contribute significantly to this transformation, if done correctly.

- Are there any issues or challenges that affect your active travel movements (walk, wheel and cycle) either moving along or across the A7?

The A7 is a busy road carrying a lot of fast, heavy traffic. The stretch of road in question also contains several very busy unsignalised junctions. All of these factors make it an incredibly hostile, dangerous and frightening environment for cycling.

Additional problems which make it a more dangerous and less attractive cycling option include a poor and deteriorating surface, an unlit section (north of Sheriffhall roundabout) and a lack of safe crossings even at the signalised junction.

However, the A7 is also the flattest and most direct route from much of Midlothian into Edinburgh. There is therefore a huge opportunity to enable more people to travel sustainably by making it safer and easier to walk, wheel and cycle along it.

- Can you think of any specific physical measures or changes that can be introduced along or across the A7 which would encourage more individuals to walk, wheel and cycle for their everyday journeys?

Since motor vehicles are the primary danger (both at and away from junctions) the only acceptable solutions involve providing high quality cycling infrastructure which allows cyclists to avoid interacting with motor vehicles. This means physically protected cycleways, and signalised crossings at all junctions.

Unidirectional protected cycleways should be installed along the length of the study area.

All junctions in the study area should be signalised, with crossing times long enough to allow everyone to cross at a comfortable pace. If any crossings need to be two-stage crossings, there must be enough room on the traffic island for people using non-standard cycles (such as a recumbent tricycle) to comfortably manoeuvre.

The speed limit along the length of the study area should be reduced to 30 mph, and the design of the road should reflect this. Average speed cameras should be installed to maximise compliance.

- Are there any other points in relation to the study area or more generally which you consider important for the project team to be aware of?

The A7 further south of the study area is also a hostile environment for cycling, where protected cycleways should also be installed. South of Gorebridge, shared-use pavements would probably be acceptable.

A ramp should be built connecting the A7 to NCN 1, similar to the ramps provided at Gilmerton Road and Old Dalkeith Road to connect to the Shawfair-Roslin path. Further improvements could also be made to the NCN 1 route between the A7 and Eskbank station, as the current route is indirect and includes multiple tight corners and a particularly frustrating unsurfaced section through the industrial estate. Additional cycle parking, including for non-standard cycles, could also be provided at the station.

One of the main routes for avoiding the A7 is to go via the Eskbank Toll/Justinless roundabout, but this is also a hostile and dangerous route for pedestrians and cyclists. Closing off at least two of the six arms of the roundabout would be a good start.

Sheriffhall roundabout is one of the least appealing places for cycling in the Lothians. Walking or cycling around it is an incredibly frightening experience, and it is no surprise that very few people do so. Protected cycling infrastructure should be provided here, regardless of the outcome of Transport Scotland's grade separation proposals.

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