



www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk

RESPONSE TO RTS STRATEGY CONSULTATION DRAFT

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy. The Cycle Forum would like to make a number of overall comments, followed by comments specific to cycling.

COMMENTS ON THE STRATEGY

1. The Cycle Forum welcomes the emphasis given to improving both rail and bus services in the region, alongside a continuation of travel planning and awareness work. These are basic requirements if modal shift away from the private car is to be encouraged.

2. However, we are disappointed that the RTS does not go far enough in its package of measures. Good practice from other towns and cities is clear that a combination of carrots and sticks is needed to encourage modal shift – indeed, the NTS endorses this view (para 104). See also <http://www.cfit.gov.uk/pn/050331/01.htm> The NTS highlights various measures to accompany improved public transport:

Reallocation of road space away from the car (pgs 34 - 35)

Expansion of car free and car reduced spaces (pgs 34 – 35)

Road user charging (para 113)

3. We believe reallocation of road space to sustainable transport modes is a minimum requirement if modal shift to any extent is to be achieved. The RTS is weak on a commitment to road space reallocation; regarding new bus lanes, for example, (Pg 42) it says that any bus priority should not cause undue penalty to other road users. Yet it is precisely this 'penalty' that is the purpose of road space reallocation, to tip the balance of advantage towards public transport (and this fits with several of the RTS strategic objectives). We would urge a reconsideration of this position.

4. Bus lanes also provide welcome cycle corridors and the Forum would hope for full integration of cycling into bus priority measures.

5. The only 'stick' referred to in the RTS is the Parking Strategy. The RTS acknowledges that free commuter parking is higher in Aberdeen than elsewhere and the Cycle Forum believes that restricting such parking is key to encouraging modal shift. However, we also appreciate that this measure is blunted because RTPs/Councils have no powers to levy workplace car parking charges. This is a significant gap in the powers available at the local/regional level and we would urge Nestrans (in cooperation with other RTPs) to lobby the Executive to review this policy.

6. In terms of the key indicator results (pg 27) the Cycle Forum is not convinced that the package is optimum. It would have been helpful to see the results of other combinations of measures to help in the assessment of the preferred package. However, in the absence of this information, our view is that a 0.2% reduction in car miles compared to the reference case (which we expect would see a significant growth in traffic) over the period is unacceptable. It is not clear if this is a 0.2% reduction compared to a volume of traffic, or a 0.2% reduction in

traffic growth over the period. Either way, this does not match up to the key challenge as outlined in the NTS, to break the link between economic growth, traffic growth and increased emissions. (paras 55, 127).

7. In general, the Forum believes that the RTS does not mark a significant enough shift in approach, either to match the aspirations of the NTS or the increasing concerns over carbon emissions, local air quality and a more liveable urban environment.

RTS and CYCLING

1. The NTS sets out a clear vision of increased levels of cycling especially for short journeys (and it notes that 80% of journeys of 2 miles or under are undertaken by car in Scotland, pg 11). It points to the important role of cycling in reducing emissions, improving air quality and improving health by increasing physical activity (paras 5, 116, 128, 164).

2. Indeed, the NTS indicates that increases in the levels of walking and cycling will be a key measure of progress in achieving the aims of the strategy (para 134). We do not believe that the section on cycling sufficiently reflects these aims of the NTS.

3. The Cycle Forum welcomes the commitment to support 'major enhancements' in the existing cycle network. Indeed, we have welcomed contact with Nestrans on potential commuter cycle corridors and we note the commitment to developing such routes.

4. However, we would have liked the routes to be identified (in the same way that road and bus schemes have been) with some indication of priority. The routes ACF has identified for quality cycle commuter routes include:

- Westhill – Kingswells – Hazlehead – City (A944/B9119)
- City – Dyce (A947 and NCR1)
- Portlethen – Cove – City
- Kintore – Blackburn – Dyce/City
- Balmedie – Bridge of Don

5. As well as 'hard' infrastructure measures, so-called 'soft' measures are acknowledged as important and we would have welcomed this section outlining Nestrans support for the following:

- Adult cycle training
- Cycle promotion and marketing
- Signage (indicating cycle routes, direction and distances).

Indeed, the Cycle Forum believes these measures are crucial in accompanying the development of cycle commuter routes, if the investment in the routes is to be fully realised.

6. Even with infrastructure investment, most cycle journeys will continue to take place on the ordinary road network. It is important that the ordinary road network is as cycle friendly as possible. We welcome the commitment to low speed zones and traffic management. But we believe that all road schemes should have cycling fully integrated into them, aiming to improve cycle opportunities or at the very least not be detrimental to cycling. We believe this is a crucial principle if cycling is to be encouraged and we would welcome acknowledgement of this in the RTS.

7. Cyclists and pedestrians are natural allies in wanting safer streets and traffic reduction, as well being the most sustainable modes of transport. ACF objects to powered two wheelers being 'dumped' in this section – PTWs are a distinct class of vehicle not comparable to bicycles. The rapid acceleration of PTWs can pose a threat to cyclists and ACF would object strongly to any proposal to allow PTWs into bus lanes or advanced stop lines. Indeed there is

evidence from transport statistics that per mile, PTWs can pose a greater danger to cyclists than cars (see http://www.nici.org.uk/campaigning/campaigning_files/ptw_bike_lanes.pdf)

8. In respect of the Shire, we welcome the commitment to developing safe and enjoyable routes between Aberdeenshire's town and villages. One of the fastest growing tourism sectors is activity breaks and holidays and ACF believes that Aberdeenshire especially should position itself to take a share of this growth. Its network of quiet roads is ideal for cycle touring. Along with Fife, which has already put a lot of resources into developing cycle routes and marketing itself as a cycling destination, Aberdeenshire has the potential to be a prime cycle touring destination.

February 2007.

Aberdeen Cycle Forum
Derek Williams