



## **Aberdeen Cycle Forum**

### **Response to Third Don Crossing Proposal**

#### **October 2004**

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Aberdeen Cycle Forum would like to thank Aberdeen City Council for this opportunity to comment on the Third Don Crossing proposal at such an early stage in the planning process.

#### **1. Principles**

Aberdeen Cycle Forum cannot support the general principle of the construction of the Third Don Crossing and its associated road infrastructure.

We note that Aberdeen City Council has set challenging targets to increase cycle usage within the City. We also note that it is now recognised that primary factors that would help these targets to be met include the decrease in volumes and speeds of road traffic. This is well demonstrated in studies of the effects of congestion charging in Central London, where the consequent reduced level of motorised traffic has encouraged a switch from cars to more benign forms of transport. Here the level of cycling take-up has been dramatically raised and there has been a commensurate decrease in cyclist accident rates. This positive feedback has many favourable implications for the improvement of the city environment as well as general public health and should receive great emphasis in any transport development plans.

In our view, schemes such as the Third Don Crossing and the proposed dualling of roads between Denburn and St Machar Drive will have the opposite effect, encouraging and inducing increased car and road-based freight transport within the City. We would view the construction of these routes as contributing to an increase in the perceived dangers of cycling in Aberdeen, possibly resulting in a decrease in cycle usage in direct contradiction of cycle usage targets.

In this context, we would like to make it clear that our comments on the proposed cycle facilities associated with the Third Don Crossing proposal should not be taken as support for its construction.

#### **2. Existing Infrastructure**

The existing Grandholm Bridge could, with some relatively minor improvements to the infrastructure on its north side, provide a good alternative cycle access to and from the Bridge of Don area without a need for the third Don Crossing. The Cycle Forum would be happy to work with the Council on these improvements.

It is noted that the proposed route is constructed in part on top of National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 1. It is particularly important that the continuity of this route is preserved. Consequently, we would like to see that the proposals include measures at the points where the NCN route intersects with the proposed road to give cyclists high priority. This would be particularly important at the Gordon's Mills Road junction.

#### **3. Third Don Crossing Cycle Infrastructure - General**

If the Third Don Crossing proposal does proceed, our preferred options for Cycle infrastructure are:

1. North / East side of new road through to St Machar Drive: segregated cycle lane of at least 2 metres width.
2. South / West side of new road through to St Machar Drive: on-road advisory cycle lane of 1m minimum width. Red tarmacing should continue across every junction so that the

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- cycle lane has priority. This lane should link in with the existing section of on-road cycle lane on the north side of St Machar Drive.
3. Toucan crossings at strategic points with dropped kerbs onto the segregated facility on the north side to facilitate cyclists joining from intermediate points from the south.
  4. Speed limit maximum of 30mph alongside Tillydrone reducing to 20mph when passing St Machar Academy.
  5. The segregated facility should be maintained at road level for the stretch running past the old paper mill site.

For the section of the proposed route through to the St Machar Drive section, a segregated facility on its own is considered inadequate, and the Forum would not support a proposal that did not also include the suggested on-road cycle facility. The primary problems that the segregated facility on its own presents are:

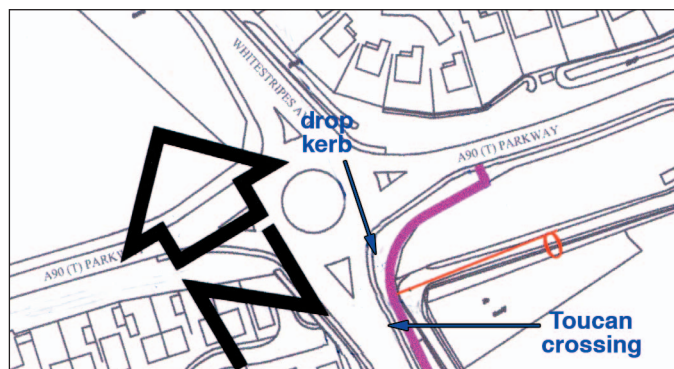
- a. Problems of access at both ends of the route for cyclists travelling in both directions.
- b. Problems accessing housing and routes to the south / west.
- c. Whilst an off-road route is good at attracting new cyclists, usage typically drops off as cyclists become more experienced.
- d. Off-road routes are most suited to leisure cyclists (who will go where the route goes), but do not serve utility cyclists as well (who may only use a part of the route).
- e. Off-road cycle lanes undermine the on-road rights that cyclists have, creating a more antagonistic and dangerous cycling environment. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is already a significant problem on several routes in Aberdeen.

The on-road cycle lane suggested by the Forum addresses several of these issues. It would create options at both ends of the route that would facilitate access on and off it. Similarly access to routes and housing on the south / west side of the road would be improved, with options to use short stretches of the road without having to cross two lanes of traffic twice. In addition, it would reinforce cyclists rights to use the on-road options, providing facilities attractive to and useful for more experienced and utility cyclists.

#### 4. Third Don Crossing Cycle Infrastructure - Specific

##### Junction With Parkway

Toucan crossing is needed just south of the roundabout junction with the Parkway to facilitate cyclists on the off-road facility turning left on the Parkway, and to facilitate on-road cyclists who wish to avoid the roundabout turning right on the Parkway. This could also aid cyclists travelling east to west on the Parkway who wish to avoid the roundabout. A drop curb should be added to aid access to the off-road facility for cyclists coming from the north and west around the roundabout.



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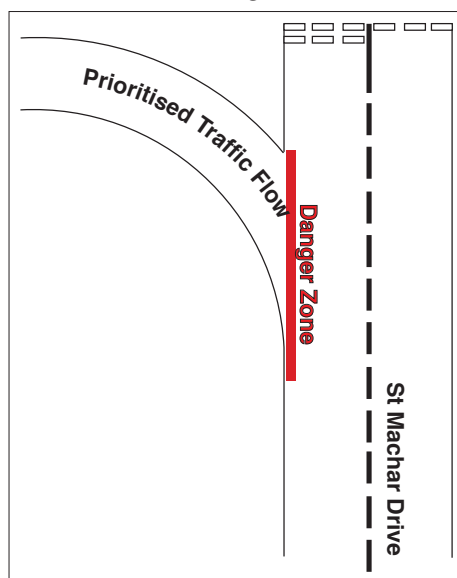
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#### Junction With St Machar Drive

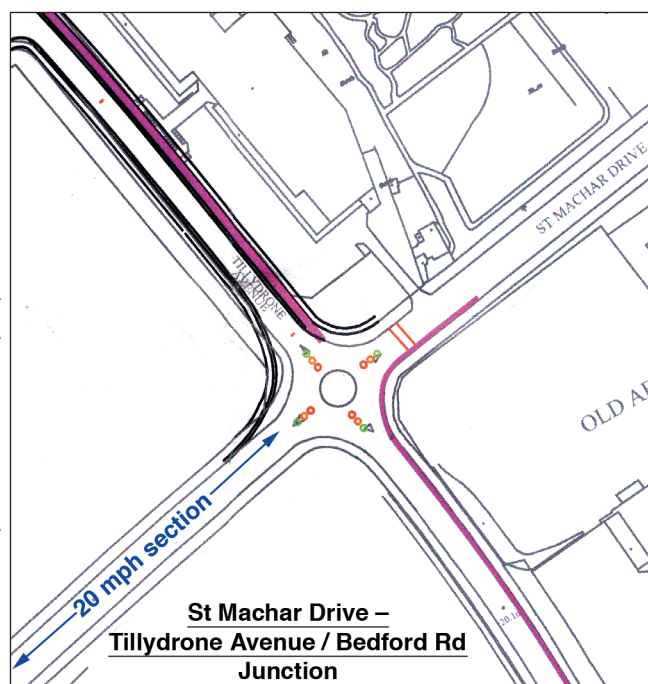
This is considered by the forum to be the critical part of the cycle infrastructure associated with the Third Don Crossing proposal, presenting a point of real danger for cyclists.

It is our understanding that the intention is to prioritise traffic flow along the Tillydrone Avenue – St Machar Drive (south) corridor, with a triangular island being used to separate traffic travelling north along this corridor from traffic wishing to continue across the junction or turn right onto Bedford Road.

From the perspective of a cyclist travelling northwards on St Machar Drive, this junction design is only safe when staying with the flow of prioritised traffic, turning left on to the on-road cycle lane we have suggested on Tillydrone Avenue. Using this lane the cyclist can continue on-road, or use the first Toucan crossing to obtain safe access to the off-road facility. Cyclists wishing to go straight on, or turn right at this junction (routes feeding the University and adjacent residential areas) are presented with the prospect of crossing the prioritised flow of traffic (see diagram left).



We cannot at this time devise a safe and cycle-friendly solution for this junction. The Forum feels that there is a need to consult further with the design team to see if this can be achieved. Making this section of St Machar Drive a 20 mph zone, and extending the zone past St Machar Academy, is seen as an essential measure to mitigate the dangers that this junction presents. We also feel this measure is essential for a road that passes the main exit from a large School, and would be needed to enable a 'Safe Route to School' to be instigated.



One aspect of the design of this junction that presents particular concern is the positioning of the triangular island. This is considered most dangerous if it protrudes out in to the straight-on edge of St Machar Drive, as this would force cyclists going straight on to move out whilst simultaneously negotiating the crossing of the prioritised traffic flow. The preferred position for this island is shown in the diagram above.



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### **Bedford Road**

It is essential that this have the bus gate as shown in the proposal. Assuming this is in place we believe the best option is to have advisory cycle lane markings on both sides of the road of at least 1m width. There is too much pedestrian traffic for an off-road facility to be practical; in addition the amount of traffic entering and exiting the University campus on the eastern side of the northern end of Bedford Road is too high for an off-road facility to be safe. On-road parking must be removed at the northern end of Bedford Road to facilitate the on-road cycle lane; this should not be an issue as this does not affect residential parking and car parking is only a problem during the student term time. The addition of the cycle facilities will encourage cycling to the University. The advisory cycle lane should continue on the west side all the way to Powis Terrace to facilitate cyclists turning onto Bedford Road from the west. Red tarmacing should continue across all junctions so that the cycle lane has priority.

The advisory lane on the east side should continue to just past the bus gate as indicated in the plan. Beyond this, red tarmacing should be used at the pedestrian island pinch points and across junctions.

### **Possible Contraflow Lanes on Bedford Place / Erskine Street**

We have no objections to this plan. We would point out that there are alternative routes to access George Street that could also be prioritised / facilitated for cyclists. One of these is the route as currently marked on the Aberdeen Cycle Route, as shown at right. Once again, the Forum would be willing to consult further on these options.

