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Dear Joanna

Thank you for inviting comments on the core area traffic management proposals.

As you know, we support measures to reduce traffic levels in the city centre as this will encourage more people to walk, cycle and use public transport. Some of the bus, cycle and taxi only measures should help achieve this, and this is to be welcomed.

However, we are concerned that a number of the proposals will impact adversely on cycling. We would have welcomed integration of cycle access and cycle safety measures into the development of these traffic management plans, based particularly on an assessment of which road corridors will see increases in traffic as a consequence of the city centre measures. Given the widespread agreement that increasing cycling levels is desirable – most recently articulated in the National Transport Strategy - the Cycle Forum believes that proposals to improve traffic flows that will have a negative impact on cycling in the core area are difficult to justify.

Comments on plans for the Union Street core

1. We broadly support the plans for bus, cycle and taxi only sections around the Union Street core. These offer the prospect of reduced traffic levels on these streets, and could be a significant stimulus to encouraging more cycle access into the city centre for visits, shopping and so on. We would have more confidence that this will be the outcome if measures to improve cycle access to the city centre from the wider area had been integrated into these proposals.
2. The plans for the Market Street/Guild Street junction are, however, of serious concern. Cyclist would not be able to continue north up Market street to Union Street, and would need to negotiate a bus gate to be able to head south. This is an unjustified barrier to cycle access; indeed, heading north, it is difficult to see what cyclists are supposed to do once they reach Guild Street. The plans fly in the face of attempts to improve cycle access between Torry and the city centre, and negate the current investment in cycle lanes along the lower part of Market Street.
3. The Cycle Forum believes that cycle access along the pedestrianised section of Union Street can be achieved with minimal conflict with other users, providing that good practice in designing the cycle access is followed. A detour along Union Terrace, then along Schoolhill and back down Broad

Street is not only lengthy (3 sets of traffic lights) but will also expose cyclists to potentially high (and congested) traffic levels along Schoolhill as vehicles access the significantly increased parking provision at the Bon Accord Centre. We believe cycle access along the length of Union Street is crucial to encouraging cycle commuting and more general cycle access into the city centre. It is also anticipated that this section will form part of National Cycle Route 1.

4. We are disappointed that the opportunity has not been taken to review how cycle access to the rail station can be improved. Cycle access is currently extremely poor (a consequence of the previous decision to create the gyratory system) and the potential for increased cycle/rail integration is being lost. We would have welcomed officers bringing forward proposals as to how this could be improved, as part of the core area traffic management proposals.

Wider area junction schemes

1. None of the plans have current or proposed cycle provision included on them. We would wish to see all current cycle facilities protected (cycle lanes and ASLs) and new facilities (especially ASLs and where appropriate, feeder lanes) integrated into the schemes. ASLs are welcomed by cyclists and raise the awareness of motorists that cyclists might be present. There are numerous schemes to formalise straight on and right turn arrangements at signalled junctions and the opportunity should be taken to integrate cycle facilities into these.
2. We are concerned at the plans to prohibit right turns to all traffic at the two junctions along Springbank Terrace, at the George Street/Hutcheon street junction and from Berryden into Westburn Road. Without exemption for cyclists, these schemes will force cyclists into lengthy detours and onto potentially busier and more hazardous routes.
3. Specifically, a right turn prohibition at the George Street/Hutcheon Street junction will present real difficulties for cyclists. It is not clear why officers want to improve traffic flows along George St when recent effort has gone into (successfully) reducing and slowing traffic along this corridor – which is well used by cyclists. A right turn ban into Hutcheon St risks turning Fraser Place into a rat run. If action is taken to ban right turns here, then it is not clear where cyclists are expected to go should they wish to connect from George Street up to Rosemount, Cornhill etc...
4. Similarly, a right turn ban from Berryden into Westburn (for example a cyclist wishing to get to Rosemount) would force cyclists into a lengthy detour. We welcome the bus and cycle right turn facility from Hutcheon into Berryden.
5. Cyclists rely on the ordinary road network for the vast majority of their journeys. This has to be made more amenable to cyclists if cycling levels are to be encouraged. Right turn bans make the ordinary road network

more problematic for cyclists, exposing them to lengthy detours, or inconvenient dismounting, or displacement onto more hazardous routes. The Cycle Forum would urge exemptions and facilities for cyclists at all the right turn prohibitions.

6. There are a number of proposals for central hatching with a right turn – on Hutcheon Street, Westburn Road, Alford Place, Rosemount Viaduct and Willowbank Road. Central hatching, in effect, narrows the road thereby creating a potential pinch point for cyclists. However, right turns are one of the more dangerous manoeuvres for cyclists so providing a right turn facility should on balance be helpful. The junction arrangements at Westburn Road/ Rosemount Terrace will require special care if this already difficult junction for cyclists is not to be made worse. We trust the right turn facility at Alford Place does not interfere with the continuity of the cycle lane.
7. The signalisation of the Maberley St/Skene St junction should be beneficial to cyclists. Again we would welcome ASLs as part of the design. However, it is not clear if right turns are to be permitted here. Cyclists wishing to go straight on into Skene St will be required to move into the right hand lane. The road has an uphill incline at this point, with cyclist moving slowly. A lane change like this is undesirable and adds to the hazard facing cyclists.
8. One issue we have raised with you in the past is to improve cycle links between Rosemount and Old Aberdeen (Rosemount having a large student and staff population). Several of the measures in this package make the currently poor cycle choices even worse – the right turn ban from Berryden; the likelihood that Holland Street will become a rat run as motorists turn right here; and the right turn ban from George Street. We would urge officers to review these schemes, considering them in the round.

Overall, taken together, these schemes will serve to make the ordinary road network less usable by cyclists - a consequence of an exclusive focus on vehicle flows. The Cycle Forum is not aware of any recent policy or planning document that places maximising vehicle flows in city centres above the requirement to encourage cycling. We reiterate our view that officers should be preparing proposals to improve cycle access to and through the city centre if the benefits of pedestrianisation are to be maximised.

Yours sincerely,

Aberdeen Cycle Forum
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