



8th Feb. 2007

### **Aberdeen Cycle Forum - Objection to the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route**

Please find below a submission from the Aberdeen Cycle Forum (ACF) in objection to the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR).

The ACF is a collective of cycle-interested individuals and organisations formed in 2003. Our main aims are:

- To promote cycling as part of a sustainable transport strategy for Aberdeen and to encourage the city council and other relevant agencies do the same.
- To campaign for a safer cycling environment and improved cycle facilities in Aberdeen
- To promote the benefits of cycling as an enjoyable, healthy, cheap, efficient and non-polluting way of getting around the city.

We also note that both the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils have declared objectives of increasing Cycle use in both the short term and long term.

#### **General Statements**

We believe that the AWPR is likely to be detrimental to all types of cyclist: commuter, utility and leisure. The detriments are in the form of increased levels of traffic in and around Aberdeen, an increased (actual and perception of) on-road danger for cyclists, the creation of cycle-unfriendly road infrastructures, a likely (long term) increase in vehicle-related air pollution (NO<sub>x</sub>, particulates, un-combusted hydrocarbons, low level ozone), the potential peripheral displacement of shopping facilities and workplaces, and the severance of existing cycled routes (either actual physical severance or a perceived severance through the presence of the afore-mentioned cycle-unfriendly infrastructures). The favoured routes will damage a large number of woodland areas currently used for recreation.

It seems illogical that, at a time when our society is increasingly recognising the negative aspects of increased car use and dependancy, including problems from air pollution (e.g. suppressed lung development in children<sup>1</sup>, increased heart problems in adults<sup>2</sup>, to name but two recent studies), greenhouse gas emissions, social exclusion and obesity, that infrastructure such as the AWPR should be proposed to the detriment of active and sustainable travel options.

#### **Increased Car Use, Increased On-Road Danger**

Many studies have shown that building new road infrastructure increases car use (as occurred with the Newbury bypass<sup>3</sup>) unless active measures associated with the scheme are taken to reduce traffic levels. We see no details in the proposal for the AWPR that lead us to expect that the road will do anything other than result in increased car use both in and around Aberdeen. We also note that in the publicly available documentation there is no proper assessment of induced traffic from the AWPR, which is an incredible omission and extremely pertinent for cyclists.

It is a startling fact that although the AWPR has been 'sold' to the population as a mechanism to reduce congestion within Aberdeen, along with the lack of any mechanisms to 'lock in' potential traffic reductions resulting from the AWPR, Aberdeen City Council currently has several other road-building proposals (Third Don Bridge, measures associated with Union St Pedestrianisation proposals) that will also increase traffic levels within the City. A combination of these schemes with the AWPR will lead to Aberdeen being extremely unpleasant for its cyclists.

Increased car use is a big problem for cyclists; it makes the on-road environment more threatening and dangerous for existing cyclists, and more off-putting for potential new cyclists. The resulting reduction in cycle use runs counter to the Councils' objectives noted above. In fact, experience with London's congestion charging shows that reducing traffic levels is one of the most effective ways of making travel safer for cyclists, and in encouraging new cyclists on to the roads.

The AWPR offers nothing of benefit to cyclists, and is likely to contribute to making things much worse for them and runs counter to the Councils' own stated aims.

### **Cycle-Unfriendly Infrastructure**

The AWPR is itself only available to Class I and II vehicles, i.e. it is not usable by cyclists. The AWPR uses large roundabouts at the major road intersections. It is well established in road safety studies that roundabouts provide a major hazard for cyclists, being the location of the majority on-road cycle accidents. Roundabouts are also a major deterrent to novice cyclists. Most cyclists will have no desire to become involved in these road junctions, which will require them to cross busy feeder lanes. Consequently, for many cyclists the AWPR will effectively become a barrier to progress, cutting off their leisure, utility and commuting routes. We are not persuaded that simply installing cycle lanes around the outside of these large gyratories will mitigate the level of hazard and inconvenience that these junctions present to cyclists.

### **Peripheral Displacement**

It is common for peripheral roads and bypasses to encourage associated peripheral developments, such as the so-called 'out-of-town shopping centres' and industrial estates. This peripheral displacement tends to increase both car use and dependancy, as the shopping facilities and workplaces may become too far out to be easily cyclable, or may now be situated on the other side of cycle-unfriendly infrastructure. Some may also only be accessed from the AWPR, which is only available to Class I and II vehicles.

### **Efficient Use of Funds**

The intended spend on the AWPR would be better used developing alternative transport strategies to provide a more desirable transport environment in Aberdeen and its surroundings. This would be more in line with regional and national objectives. Measures that displace transport towards walking and cycling, and that increase use of mass transport, generally have the additional benefits of creating a less polluted environment and increasing the health and effectiveness of the population.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Jeremy Rushton

on behalf of Aberdeen Cycle Forum

## References

1. Vehicle fumes stunt lung function:

***"Effect of exposure to traffic on lung development from 10 to 18 years of age: a cohort study."***

Dr W James Gauderman PhD, Hita Vora MS, Prof Rob McConnell MD, Kiros Berhane PhD, Prof Frank Gilliland MD, Prof Duncan Thomas PhD, Fred Lurmann MS, Edward Avol MS, Nino Kunzli MD, Michael Jerrett PhD and Prof John Peters MD.

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BBC article - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6297701.stm>

Abstract can be downloaded from this website -

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/healthnews.php?newsid=61712>

2. New England Journal of Medicine, Feb 1st, 2007, **Long-Term Exposure to Air Pollution and Incidence of Cardiovascular Events in Women**

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Original article here: - <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/356/5/447>

Also BBC article on pollution and heart risk

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6317913.stm>

3. A report, "**Movement Framework for Newbury**", published April 2005 by West Berkshire Council

See also this web site:

[http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press\\_releases/10\\_years\\_on\\_newbury\\_bypass\\_09012006.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/press_releases/10_years_on_newbury_bypass_09012006.html)