



Aberdeen City Council

Transport Strategy

By email: transportstrategy@aberdeencity.gov.uk

24 October 2020

Dear Sirs

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft of the Active Travel Action Plan

About us

Aberdeen Cycle Forum (ACF) is a campaigning organisation of around 600 members which seeks to promote all types of cycling. It was established in 2003 and our aims are as stated at the foot of page¹

Overview

We have some comments to make on individual sections of the document(s) below. However, as an overview we feel there are several important missing elements of the action plan:

- Detailed actions, with a list of projects against each
- Monitoring indicators
- Who will be responsible for delivery (lead / partners)
- Meaningful timescales

A good example of these elements can be seen in the Glasgow Strategic Plan for Cycling which is specific about actions (e.g. Implement Ph 2 of the Silverburn to A77 Cycle Route) and does include timescales, delivery leads and partners:

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/httphandler.ashx?id=33403&p=0>

Our specific comments on the draft Active Travel Action Plan are:

¹ A) To encourage cycling and to promote the benefits of cycling to the individual and the wider community
B) To advocate for a safer cycling environment and improved cycle facilities in Aberdeen.
C) To campaign for cycling to be an integral part of planning and transport strategies and practice, in order to provide the widest possible access to cycling as a healthy and efficient means of travel for work and leisure

Introduction

We welcome the recognition of the contribution cycling can make and the strong cost: benefit ratio. The graphics are useful to convey these messages.

Policy Context

We welcome the transport hierarchy being re-stated and made explicit.

Table 1

The reference to cycling improvements perhaps overstates the improvements, given the relatively poor feedback given by cyclists and reported under 'Questionnaire response'. The continuous improvement / PDSA approach used by ACC, if employed here, would presumably tell you that what has been done in the past is not working adequately and that a different approach needs to be tried, or efforts scaled up.

Trunk road network We are not convinced that improvements to the trunk road network warrant mention here. The most likely effect of these improvements (AWPR, A96 dualling) is that they lock-in use of private cars as a primary mode of transport, and so are detrimental to active travel. Taking the Haudagain improvements as another example, they will not provide a direct or continuous route for cyclists, and continue to prioritise motorised traffic instead.

Road carriageway maintenance – this continues to be a challenge, with the resources available to maintain the network seemingly inadequate for the volume of traffic. Cyclists are of course especially vulnerable to potholes and poor road surfaces. This further supports the case for off-road or segregated routes so that routes used by cyclists are not subject to damage by heavier motorized vehicles.

Winter maintenance – we continue to receive reports from our members that winter maintenance is inadequate and that the current programme omits a number of key active travel routes. Again, relative priority appears to be given to roads, and less to pavements and cycle paths, contrary to the transport hierarchy shown in the introduction.

Enforcement – our general impression is that enforcement is lacking or absent, and that poor driver behaviour continues to be a major disincentive to greater uptake of cycling. By way of example, when we carried out a survey of compliance by motorists with advance-stop boxes, we found that non-compliance was circa 40%. Some of the current *Spaces for People* measures also illustrate the need for effective enforcement e.g. the 'bus gate' at the east end of Union St appears to be widely abused: contrast that with Broad St where ANPR enforcement clearly works.

Appendix 2 list of projects

We are unclear as to what the list of routes presented (Priority radial / Secondary orbital / Secondary radial) actually means in practice. What 'action' for active travel is proposed and to what timescale?

Of the 'currently underway' projects, we note that all 4 items listed are studies rather than construction of actual improvement projects. We realise of course that studies are a necessary preliminary. However, as an example, one of the projects listed is the Wellington Rd multi-modal study. We participated in earlier iterations of this in 2014, and again in late 2017. It is therefore disappointing to see it listed as an action in a plan for 2021-26.

Infrastructure projects

Most of the projects listed here have no detail or timetable (other than 2021 – 26) being the lifetime of the plan itself.

Conclusion

Overall, we remain disappointed at what we perceive to be a lack of ambition and the slow pace of change. We are not convinced that the document truly warrants the title of an 'action plan', given the lack of detail or firm timescales, and as we have pointed out, some of the projects have already been in development for at least 6 years without any tangible benefit on the ground. The plan also lacks any meaningful metrics: how will you know if it is a success?

The pace or ambition of projects does not appear to match the transport hierarchy or priorities given in the introduction and we are not confident that this document will bring about the transformative change to active travel that Aberdeen so desperately needs.

Yours faithfully,

Gavin Clark

Chair, Aberdeen Cycle Forum