

Friends of the Earth Scotland Consultation Response on the Leith to Roseburn cycle path



We welcome the opportunity to feed into this consultation. In principle we are fully in favour of the cycle scheme. The idea to reallocate road space to cycling in a way which enables people to cross the city using a safe and direct route is a bold and strong example of an active policy intervention which sets a standard across local authorities.

The scheme has the potential to encourage modal shift, reduce car dependency, cut greenhouse gas emissions, reduce air pollution, and benefit local businesses. These long lasting benefits will make Edinburgh a more attractive and pleasant city to live in, visit, and to spend money in.

However, we await further information on traffic modelling and expected air quality impacts that arise from the scheme, particularly in the Roseburn area. We understand that initial traffic modelling has been conducted and suggests there may be additional traffic queues in Roseburn. However, the model has not taken into account the number of people who will switch from other modes of transport to bike due to the scheme, and this potential impact must not be underestimated. Just as studies have shown that building new roads tends to generate new traffic, equally, others have shown that reducing road capacity can cause motorised traffic to “disappear” as people opt for different and more sustainable modes of transport.¹

We understand that there will be a future round of consultation on the scheme. As the project potentially undergoes a redesign, where possible, two modes of sustainable transport should not be pitted against each other, that is to say, the bus lanes should be retained as far as possible. However, to be a success and result in maximum modal shift the scheme must retain its core features of being a segregated path with the most direct route across the city and of prioritising its users’ safety and convenience, so that it invites people from all ages and spheres of life to use it. Therefore, we cannot support the alternative route along Haymarket Yards which has been proposed by opponents of the scheme.

We believe that opposition to the scheme based on the potential dangers to local businesses is misplaced. While it is understandable that local shop owners may fear that losing parking and loading space may result in loss of revenue, numerous studies have shown that replacing car parking spaces with cycle spaces has had little or no adverse impacts on local businesses. In some cases, such changes have even helped businesses to thrive, as people on bikes can stop more easily and tend to make more frequent visits than if they were driving.²

¹ S Cairns et al, “Disappearing traffic? The story so far” (2002)

² E Jaffe, “The Complete Business Case for Converting Street Parking Into Bike Lanes” (March 2015)

If air quality modelling, when conducted, indicates that there may be adverse impacts on air quality, the Council must include mitigation measures against this, including using the cleanest possible Lothian buses on affected streets.

The scheme has the potential to work towards the Council's ambition of having a transport system that is one of the most environmentally friendly, healthiest and most accessible in northern Europe. Once design issues have been finalised following this and subsequent consultations, we are confident that it will help deliver this vision and we look forward to engaging with the next stages of the project's development.