

## **Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2): comments by Living Streets Edinburgh Group to the consultation, April 2022**

Living Streets Edinburgh Group is the local voluntary branch of the national campaign for everyday walking and wheeling. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Scottish Government's draft proposals for capital investment in transport over the next 20 years (STPR2). <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/strategic-transport-projects-review-2/>

### **Walking and Wheeling**

The draft STPR2 proposals completely fail to recognise the importance, or scale of the task, of improving pedestrian spaces in Scotland. With 'walking and wheeling' top of the Scottish Government's own sustainable travel hierarchy, the lack of any coherent programme to improve the everyday pedestrian experience is a serious omission which, unless rectified, would greatly undermine the opportunity to achieve the Government's social, economic and environmental objectives.

There is a wealth of evidence on the negative effects of, and inequalities caused by, poor walking environments. Given the emphasis in STPR2 on 'evidence-based' decision-making, it is essential that an ambitious programme to improve the legacy of inaccessible, inadequate and poor quality infrastructure is adopted as a strategic priority.

In particular, we call for:

- the inclusion of local roads in the scope of the STPR2. This is vital for the achievement of many of the recommendations, including 'Connected Neighbourhoods' (#1) and 'Increasing Active Travel to Schools' (#8).
- a specific theme on improving pavements - both widening them and improving the surface quality. The wider pavements introduced by the City of Edinburgh Council in local town centres as part of 'Spaces for People' have almost all been removed. We wrote to Ministers in 2021 (jointly with Spokes Lothian) asking that capital funding is made available to councils to ensure that infrastructure is introduced to replace temporary schemes which is fit for purpose in the long term: [bit.ly/3vJkoJZ](https://bit.ly/3vJkoJZ) The STPR2 is the opportunity to address this.
- investment in walk-friendly junctions. Scotland (like the rest of the UK) has a massive legacy of street design which favours vehicles, not people. Junction splays in many residential areas are wide, favouring 30+ mph speeds even where those limits have been reduced to 20 mph. There is a huge job to redesign junctions with a tighter radius and shorter crossing route for pedestrians.
- investment in traffic signals and pedestrian crossings. Much signalling infrastructure is out of date and cannot easily be adapted to give priority to travel modes which we need to put first - public transport, cycling and especially of course, walking. We have documented pedestrian wait times at dozens of signalled crossings in Edinburgh and found many to be quite unacceptable: [bit.ly/35xMRHp](https://bit.ly/35xMRHp). On a positive note, there is a massive opportunity to improve them at relatively modest investment.

- a national programme of investment in dropped kerbs and continuous footways. In Edinburgh, we have been told that 17,000 out of 22,000 junctions have no, or substandard, kerb arrangements. These make pavements dangerous - or simply unusable - for many pedestrians, especially disabled people.
- a national effort to reduce pavement clutter (and to stop adding to it). This includes management of temporary obstructions such as hedges and bins, and removal of unnecessary fixed structures such as signage poles and guard rails, many of which persist despite changes in legislation (TSRGD 2016) and recognised best practice. New threats to pavements such as telecoms cabinets and EV chargers must be avoided. See our reports and video resources for further information here: [bit.ly/3rMTqPD](https://bit.ly/3rMTqPD).
- an initiative to encourage the provision of seats and toilets, especially in high footfall areas. Both of these simple, modest measures are important to many pedestrians - and especially for older people, children, disabled people and women. A national programme which increased such provision would make many areas more attractive and inclusive at modest cost.

## Cycling

We support investment in cycling infrastructure, especially in routes which will encourage more people to commute into Edinburgh by bike, rather than by car. However, the recommendations under the 'Active Travel' theme do not have the right balance between walking/wheeling on the one hand, and cycling on the other, and this section does not properly reflect the agreed 'sustainable travel hierarchy'.

## Influencing Travel Choices

We strongly support the wider rollout of 20 mph speed limits in residential and shopping areas. However, they need to be accompanied by both engineering and enforcement measures. Many streets are designed for 30mph+ travel and driver compliance is known to be lower in such circumstances. There is enormous scope for imaginative use of new technology to assist with compliance, education and enforcement.

Measures to encourage active travel to school are very important. Our comments under the first active travel theme are relevant here. Official data (TaTiS 2019) shows that 52% of children currently walk to school in Scotland, which is an encouraging basis to build on. Only 2% of children cycle and while there is certainly scope to increase this figure, this data underlines again the need for active travel efforts to focus much more on safe walking environments.

## Public transport

We support investment in the public transport measures with two qualifications. It is vital that good quality public transport is available if car reduction targets are to be achieved. However, we don't support the recommendations on 'DRT and MaaS' (#20) or 'mobility hubs' (#22) as they stand. We consider these initiatives to be over-hyped and lacking an evidence base that they will make a significant contribution to improved public mobility. We suggest instead that investment in DRT focuses on exploring opportunities there may be to develop existing DRT services such as community transport (which is under-funded), taxis

and private hire cars. 'Mobility hubs' should be seen simply as one aspect of better transport interchanges (#21) rather than as a separate recommendation in its own right.

#### Increasing ...resilience

The STPR2 has far too many 'get out clauses' which could be used to justify further significant investment in trunk roads and motorways, especially under the 'Increasing safety and resilience' theme. For example, "Junction improvements, carriageway widening, route realignment and provision of overtaking opportunities" (#30) are not the priorities Scotland needs. These recommendations are not consistent with the ambitious national targets to reduce motor traffic, and would have an enormous opportunity cost in reducing the scope for investment in everyday walking and wheeling.

#### Planning policy

Investment in infrastructure needs to be accompanied by complementary planning policy. The 'Infrastructure First' principle, advocated in the draft NPF4, is essential so that new developments do not proceed until suitable sustainable transport options are in place. This is especially important around Edinburgh; for example the housing developments around West Craigs and Winchburgh where it appears that the essential new railway station may be in doubt despite massive housing expansion.

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