



Aberdeen Cycle Forum response to RTS Main Issues report.

1. ACF has welcomed the investment in cycling via Nestrans in recent years, either directly or indirectly through some core paths improvements. This investment has contributed to an increase in the levels of cycling in Aberdeen. However, as the report acknowledges, there is much more to do to reach the Scottish Government's target of a 10% cycle rate, and for Aberdeen to reap the benefits of being an active, cycling city.

Unfortunately, the proposed 'refresh' of the RTS is not up to this challenge.

2. Various authorities have recommended that significant shares of transport funding should be allocated to active travel, if a step change is to be achieved. The Association of Chief Medical Officers recommends a 10% share. Edinburgh City Council is committed to a 5% share of its transport budget, rising by 1% per year to 10%. The RTS acknowledges the funding constraints facing public authorities but *ACF believes that the councils should allocate a share of their total transport budget equivalent to cycling's modal share (3.5% in Aberdeen) and that 10% of the Strategic Transport Fund should be allocated to cycle specific infrastructure. (Q1).*

3. The Strategic Development Plan projects an increase in population in the NE of around 7% (from 2011) by 2035, yet the MVA projections indicate a 30% rise in vehicle kms and a 15% rise in carbon emissions. This assumes the major transport projects are in place by 2023. This per head rise in both travel by car and vehicle emissions demonstrates, to ACF at least, that the current RTS is failing and that the refreshed RTS has to mark a step change in approach. *The RTS should not be seeking to plan for these predicted outcomes; it should be seeking to change them onto a more sustainable trajectory.*

4. We believe a key element of the RTS should be a commitment to the delivery of quality cycle routes along the key development and commuter corridors. We see this as a vital element in supporting sustainable choices. The corridor from Peterculter has seen significant investment and the Deeside Line is becoming a quality facility, but the corridor is still included to signal the likely need for continuous improvement.

The key routes are:

Westhill – Kingswells – city centre

Balmedie – A90 – King Street – city centre

Inverurie – A96 – Kintore – Blackburn – Auchmill Road – city centre

Stonehaven – A90 – Portlethen – Cove – city centre

A key east-west link along the Parkway.

Peterculter – city centre

We would wish to see an explicit commitment to these routes in the revised RTS with a timescale that reflects the urgency of meeting the Government 10% target. (Q2/Q3).

5. ACF believes there must be some commitment to specific schemes of demand management and road space reallocation, as informed by the Locking in the Benefits study. The RTS needs to start spelling out such schemes so people can start to see what the benefits of the AWPR will be. The RTS seems to be offering not just the major road capacity increase of the AWPR but a long list of road projects within the city as well. It is difficult to see where the advantages to sustainable travel within the city will be coming from (Q2).

6. The quality of cycle provision overseen by the city council is very mixed and poor design standards remain an issue. Poor design is hindering the full value of the investment to be achieved. Excellent provision has been provided by, as examples, the new cycle path along the Skene Rd and the West Cults bridge on the Deeside Way. But too many of the projects suffer from poor design; examples include:

- the Riverside cycle route has almost one quarter covered by ‘cyclist dismount’ signs and involves a unsatisfactory crossing at the QEII bridge
- the Westhill cycle route is poorly designed in the vicinity of the Hazlehead roundabout
- the Kingswells – Bucksburn path is not of sufficient quality to serve as a cycle commuter route

We would welcome Nestrans having much stronger expectations about the quality of cycle facilities provided with its funding. This would support ACF’s continuing efforts to improve design quality (Q2).

7. We would also add that the list of cycling infrastructure projects (para2.23) is misleading, giving the impression that all on the list have been delivered. This is clearly not the case: some projects are incomplete, others have yet to start and some have been poorly designed and executed by the city council. *It is vital to acknowledge the reality of the present situation in order to have a clearer idea of what more needs to be done.*

8. The important point is made about the role of land use planning in ensuring that developments are located where there is the infrastructure to enable cycle access. To date land use planning and cycle integration has been poor. Examples include:

- the significant development of the business parks at Westhill has taken place with little attention to cycle access. The upgrade of the ‘Westhill’ cycle route ended at the city

boundary and does not extend to a safe and direct route into the business park. No cycle facilities have been provided along the B9119, on the southern boundary of the development.

- the proposed Berryhill development to the north of the city will have extremely poor cycle access, from any direction. There is no evidence yet that planners are taking this matter seriously and planning to develop the required infrastructure in phase with the development

- the Prime 4 development has not been required to fund the upgrade of the substandard, narrow section of the Westhill cycle path that borders the development, even though this development will result in increased use of the path which will exacerbate problems of user safety.

We would like to see Nestrans take a much stronger strategic role in relation to the development of cycle infrastructure. This would include ensuring the coordination of the city and shire authorities for cross boundary projects, and working with developers and the local councils to plan for the required cycle infrastructure to support cycle access to new developments. (Q2).

9. ACF is supportive of the STF principle but is very concerned that cycle infrastructure is excluded from eligible funding. *We believe that 10% of the STF should be allocated to deliver the strategic cycle infrastructure as outlined in para 4.*

It is disappointing that the STF has already identified a long list of road capacity increases but is vague on sustainable modes and excludes cycling altogether. STF seems to embody a 'predict and provide' approach that risks further contributing to the predicted outcomes that the RTS should be seeking to avoid. The challenge is to prevent significant cumulative traffic growth in the first place. This requires an STF heavily weighted towards sustainable modes, including providing good quality strategic cycle links that are and are perceived to be attractive and safe to use.

It is vital that all projects funded by the STF should be able to demonstrate that the primary beneficiaries are sustainable and 'space efficient' modes. Projects that mainly benefit single occupancy commuting should not be funded as these will undermine key objectives of the RTS. (Q1/Q2)

10. ACF does not support the continued inclusion of the 3rd Don Crossing in the RTS. We objected to this crossing in 2004 and believe that it makes even less sense now. It will encourage and induce increased car usage, raising traffic volumes passing through the city. This will make RTS objectives of reducing traffic growth and tackling emissions even more difficult. The city centre needs less traffic flowing through it, not more, if it is to retain its viability and its liveability. Major new infrastructure connecting into the city centre should be for sustainable modes only.

Objectives (Q4-6).

11. Objective 2: To identify this objective as ‘particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society’ risks making it seem marginal. Choice and accessibility and safety are applicable to all, and are key issues if modal shift is to be achieved. ACF favours a rewording that says: To enhance choice, accessibility and safety of transport for all in the NE, including disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society.’

11.1 Objective 2(b) We would prefer ‘traffic related injuries’ (injuries are more likely to be notified than accidents) and the aim should be to reduce traffic related injuries for each mode of transport. Without splitting by mode, this aim could be met by an overall decrease in KSI even though pedestrian and/or cycle KSI may have increased. This is clearly not satisfactory.

12. Objective 4 (c) We would suggest the addition of ‘and active travel’ so the aim would be ‘To enhance PT and active travel opportunities...’.

12.1 Objective 4 (c) seems to repeat (a) so we would favour (b) being split into two, which would become the new objective 4 (a) and (b):

(a) to encourage integration of transport and land use planning, especially to ensure that PT and active travel opportunities are developed in phase with new developments

(b) to improve connections between transport modes and services

13. Action IC2(i) – ACF would wish to see strategic road capacity improvements offer benefits to active travel, especially within the city. Some of the improvements listed have not taken cycling needs into account. Examples include Market Street and College St, and the Wapping St gyratory, where cycle provision has either been poorly designed or absent.

14. ACF objects to new action IC2(vii). Our objection is based on our concerns about the current structure of the STF which is weighted too heavily towards road capacity improvements. Issues of congestion arising from cumulative impact should primarily be tackled by measures that prioritise PT and active travel. Any new capacity should demonstrate clear benefits to sustainable and ‘space efficient’ modes. New capacity should not primarily benefit single occupancy commuters and new schemes should have to demonstrate that this will not be the outcome.

We believe this action should be prefaced by ‘Mitigating the cumulative impact of developments will prioritise measures that benefit PT and active travel. Where new road capacity is to be provided, this will demonstrate clear benefits to sustainable and ‘space

efficient' modes and will demonstrate that the primary beneficiaries are not single occupancy commuters'.

15. ACF supports new action IC3(vi) but believe it should be strengthened by adding in 'Mitigating the cumulative impact of developments will primarily be by measures that benefit PT and active travel'.

16. Action IC5: cycle parking at the rail station is poor. The main cycle parking off College St is remote from the ticket office and concourse (farther away than most of the car parking) and there is too little cycle parking provision where most cyclists will want to go, at the Guild Street entrance or indeed within the body of the station. Cycle access is also problematic. We would add into the proposed amendment 'develop better cycle access and cycle parking to improve rail-cycle integration'. Nestrans should include this issue in its discussions with Rail operators.

17. Action TB2: We would add 'Support an Aberdeen city wide cycle promotion initiative to boost awareness and uptake of cycling'.

18. Action CR1(iii): ACF supports the principle of this action but believes the caveat of 'where it can be demonstrated that this will help the efficient movement of traffic' is too restrictive. This is a recipe for inaction; demand management measures may have a negative impact on some categories of road user but this is part of changing the balance of incentives towards sustainable modes. The intention is that there will be medium and longer term benefits. We would suggest amending the action to 'where it can be demonstrated that this will help the longer term efficient movement of traffic'.

19. Action TB2: We support the intention to produce an active travel action plan. There should be a short deadline (June 2013) and it should be to set out a clear strategy to achieve the step change required to achieve the Government's 10% cycling target.

END.

ACF November 2012.