

Transport and Environment Committee

10 am, Tuesday, 15 January 2013

Dean of Guild Court Room, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

Comment on Item 7.3 for circulation at Committee

Transport Annual Report (2011–2012)

Summary

Up to 2010, progress against indicators and targets used in the Transport 2030 Vision, Local Transport Strategy 2007–2012, Active Travel Plan and Road Safety Plan has been positive:

- taken together, the mode share for travel to work by Edinburgh residents by public transport, walking and cycling has increased;
- less road traffic; down from 3040 (2008) to 2885 (2010) million vehicle kilometres per annum, against the target of no more than 3,100; and
- fewer road traffic casualties killed, seriously and slightly injured

Dear Councillors

The above report notes a significant reduction in traffic (5% reduction: 2008-2010) and claims fewer road traffic casualties, despite the fact that both accidents and fatalities have significantly increased over the period quoted.

As a planning document these statements are hard to resolve with the appendices, which show a 30% increases in serious injuries from 2010 to 2011, and a 150% increase in fatalities over the same period.

Though none of the graphics actually show a trend line, the “Target Line” implies a downwards trend, and in Paragraph 2.21 a ‘five year rolling average’ is used to argue that the long-term trend is downwards even though this is not base-lined against traffic levels. The large rise in deaths and serious injuries in percentage terms are described as statistical fluctuations and “disappointing” but are not explained.

The reason that we should give more weight to these recent figures is because of major changes that The City of Edinburgh has made since 2008 to traffic flow, displacing traffic from major thoroughfares into residential streets.

The potential impact of this cannot be assessed from the report before the T&E Committee, however the accident statistics just released by Lothian and Borders Police give some insight into the potential problem. These were subject of the article in the Evening News of the 14 January 2013 entitled “**Over 360 car crashes a month reported in Edinburgh**”¹, in which it notes:

“ The New Town had the highest volume of accidents with nearly six a week, with the city centre itself racking up 2256 over three years.”

During the 2008-2011 period, temporary traffic regulation orders have turned residential streets in the New Town into the major thoroughfares for general traffic and heavy vehicles through the city centre.

It is important to know whether the rise in accident frequency against a reducing volume of traffic over the same period might be explained by this displacement of traffic into narrower roads with poorer sightlines and poorer road quality in terms of stopping distances.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- reject this report in its current form
- request a breakdown by street level so that it is possible to determine what impact traffic routing might be having on road safety
- contrasts this with the Lothian & Borders Police report, and
- seeks expert testimony from the relevant Police authority on the contribution of road configuration and surface to the accident statistics

The City of Edinburgh Council is making significant changes to the transport infrastructure of Edinburgh. Councillors need to know why Edinburgh’s roads appear to be getting more dangerous even when traffic levels are falling.

Dr Ashley D. Lloyd
Moray Feu Transport and Environment Subcommittee
14 January 2013.

¹ <http://www.scotsman.com/edinburgh-evening-news/latest-news/over-360-car-crashes-a-month-reported-in-edinburgh-1-2732235>: