



Report of the Director of City Development

Scrutiny Board (City Development)

Date: 17 March 2009

Subject: CYCLING STRATEGY AND PLANS

Electoral Wards Affected: All



Ward members
consulted referred
to in the report

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

This report sets out the detail of the programmes being followed to develop the role of cycling within the city including the development of improved infrastructure and facilities. These programmes are being prepared in line with the strategy set out in the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan. It is forecast that by the end of the five year period to March 2011 £2.5 million will have been spent on the development of the cycling network. Since the Plan was adopted cycling, in West Yorkshire has increased by 12% and journeys into the centre of Leeds have increased by 54% in the morning peak period.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 This report provides information on cycling strategy and programmes.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Policies that support the development and promotion of cycling are set out in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) in terms of the themes for “tackling congestion” and “safer roads”.

2.2 Policy C5 within the plan sets out to ensure that journeys can be made safely and conveniently by cycle and on foot, by:

- Dealing effectively with the barriers to walking and cycling;

- Promoting the associated benefits which include sustainability, health, journey time reliability and affordability; and
- Integrating with public transport

Specific elements of the strategy will include:

- Completion of the strategic cycling network to link schools and train stations
- Completion of the radial cycle route network and other identified schemes in Leeds
- Cycle lanes with Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs) [at traffic signals] where appropriate
- New on and off highway cycle routes
- Signing of quieter alternative routes for cyclists
- Cycle parking facilities
- Encouraging employers to provide shower and changing facilities
- Partnership working with other organisations, in particular PCTs to promote the health benefits of walking and cycling
- Promotion of the use of Rights of Way as a viable alternative for short journeys, such as to work or for shopping and particularly to complement our Safer Routes to Schools programmes

2.3 To complement these core policies the LTP has also included targets for growing cycling as follows:

Mandatory M4, A 10% increase in cycling levels by 2010-11 (currently +12% across West Yorkshire)

Local L2, A 20% increase to Leeds, Wakefield and Halifax centres during the morning peak (currently +54% in Leeds)

2.4 Whilst numbers of cyclists entering the city centre during the two morning peak hours have more than doubled since 2000 to nearly 1000 daily, this remains a very small share of all travel. In the city centre, three times as many people walk to work than cycle but this also remains a relatively minor mode compared with the volume of people travelling by public transport and private car. However, there is significant latent potential in cycling with a number of opportunities to contribute to transport, health and climate policy goals.

2.5 Firstly, it is worth noting that two thirds of all journeys are of a length suitable for either walking or cycling generally up to 6 miles in distance. At present one half of these journeys are currently undertaken by driving a car, so even a modest switch of 5% to cycling to work could be capable of reducing peak traffic levels by 4%.

2.6 Similarly the Leeds Physical Activity Strategy identifies the potentially significant benefits to health to be gained from cycling and walking especially in terms of tackling obesity and heart disease which the strategy estimates costs the Leeds economy around £90 million per year. Cycling cannot alone solve these problems

but as part of a package for promoting active travel within the overall context of the health and transport agendas there are major potential benefits yet to be realised.

- 2.7 Finally, cycling is a low emission, low carbon mode of transport with zero emissions at the point of use. Therefore for a five mile journey in a small car which would typically emit 1.1kg of CO₂, the same journey by cycle would be carbon neutral without the same dependence on fluctuating energy costs. As an example, in terms of commuter journeys if 10% of the shorter car commuting journeys of 6 miles or less were to switch to cycling this would reduce the volume of climate change inducing gases by some 4%.
- 2.8 Clearly the choice of travel mode is a personal matter which is based on a wide range of lifestyle and economic factors. In this regard the policies set out in the present LTP are there to encourage and promote this choice for those who wish to make it. There is much evidence to suggest from the UK and elsewhere in Europe that where good integrated policies towards sustainable transport are pursued cycling can form an important part of a balanced transport strategy.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Section 2 has provided the transport policy context for cycling within Leeds. This section details the range of actions being undertaken.

Cycle facilities

- 3.2 Over the last ten years with LTP funding and other contribution the cycle network has been developed to the point where there are now approximately 50 km of dedicated cycle track and 32 km of cycle lanes in the district. Some of the main cycle facilities are:
- Trans-Pennine Trail passing through the City Centre alongside the river and canal;
 - Wetherby – Thorpe Arch (forming part of the National Cycle Network)
 - Wykebeck Valley (ongoing sections completed in the Aire Valley and Halton Dene)
 - Yeadon to Guisely Route
 - Rothwell railway path
- 3.3 The cycling programme continues to be progressed with a focus that remains on the development of a coherent core network of cycle routes in the city. Moving into the future an integrated scheme for the development of the Leeds Core Cycle Network has been assembled and has been the basis for a Major Local Transport Scheme bid for £8.6 million to the Regional Transport Board. The bid has competed with a wide range of other schemes for this budget and unfortunately it has not been prioritised for regional funding. However, a project team is in place to commence the delivery of the project over several years through the block funding allocation provided each year for minor schemes.
- 3.4 Once completed the Core Cycle Network project will approximately double the length of the Leeds cycle network. Using present funding sources it is estimated that it will take between four and six years to complete, although this will be dependent on the yet to be confirmed funding levels for the third Local Transport Plan, which is due to commence from April 2011.

- 3.5 Figure 1 appended shows the current cycle provision in the city and Figure 2 shows the proposals contained within the Core Cycle Network project. Larger plans will also be displayed at the meeting.
- 3.6 In addition to creating the core network, the secondary focus is on ensuring that at the local roads are cycleable for a range of riders. This work includes the development complementary measures for travel plans and links with regeneration projects.
- 3.7 Good design and integration with other highway measures is essential to the delivery of effective schemes that work for both cyclists and other users. Significant work has taken place at the national level so that modern design standards, guidance and practices lead to more cycle-friendly designs than hitherto with the result that improvements to the general highway network provide more benefits and attractiveness for cycling and greater clarity. This also helps to avoid some of the anomalies in design that were the result of the older generation of technical guidance.

Cycle parking

- 3.8 Provision for cycle parking is being made throughout the city on a continuing basis. Currently facilities are available as follows:
- City centre – 171 spaces in 56 locations
 - Elsewhere – 308 spaces in 153 locations
 - Secure parking – 50 lockers in 8 places
- 3.9 The provision of well sited and secure cycle parking is an important incentive for people to cycle. It is also important because it reduces the incidence of “fly parked” cycles in inappropriate places secured to other pieces of street furniture.
- 3.10 Cycle parking is also provide as part of new developments guided by the policies in the Unitary Development Plan. This provision will be reviewed during the development of the Local Development Framework to ensure the continued provision of the right number and type of spaces capable of meeting present and likely future demand.

Promoting cycling

- 3.11 Each year a programme of TravelWise activities including Bike Week are supported by the Council. This is part of a programme of events over the year which also typically includes Bike to School Week and European Mobility Week. In addition a variety of maps have been developed to promote the use of some of the cycle routes in the city which also includes the popular Leeds Cycling Map which provides valuable advice about cycling throughout the city.

Partnerships and stakeholders

- 3.12 Travel planning forms an important part of the planning process and the promotion of sustainable travel. As part of the Local Development Framework a Draft Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared which provides draft planning guidance for the use of travel plans. In addition, the Council is working together with Leeds schools and Education Leeds to support the preparation of school travel plans for every school in the district by 2010. In both these processes

detailed consideration is given to the potential role of cycling and the provision that is needed at development and school sites to facilitate cycle use.

- 3.13 In terms of delivery the Transport Policy Service works closely with Sustrans on the development and delivery of off-road routes. Successes arising from this relationship include the completion of the Wetherby to Thorp Arch railway path phase 2 and the Yeadon to Guiseley route.
- 3.14 The road safety promotions unit provide year round support for the training of young cyclists with formal programmes being available to around 100 schools covering around 5,000 children each year. Support is also available to would be commuters through a bike buddying scheme for new cyclists. Similarly advice is available for other cyclists including families.
- 3.15 The Council is also a partner in the Leeds universities UTravel Active project which is funded in conjunction with Sustrans through the Big Lottery Wellbeing Fund. This project is seeking to increase the level of walking and cycling amongst the university community. A key project is the Velocampus cycle loan scheme which has made available 200 cycles for loan to students during the year. This has been highly successful and extension of the scheme with a further 300 cycles over the next three years is planned. The project also includes a range of other initiatives to support and improve the confidence of cyclists. Sustrans are interested in further work with university of towns and cities to development the possibilities for sustainable travel which is something that Leeds may also wish to explore further in partnership with them.
- 3.16 Consultation and dialogue with local cyclists takes place at the three monthly Cycle Consultation Forum. This meeting is currently chaired by the Lead Member for Transport.

Other issues and initiatives

- 3.17 Cycle hire schemes are more common elsewhere in Europe. Typically such schemes enable casual user or city centre visitor to hire a cycle from a stand on street for their journey with the opportunity to return it to a stand at their destinations. Such use is usually short term for periods of 30 minutes or less. An example of such a scheme is Velib in Paris which is known to be very successful. Whilst some initial discussions with potential operators have taken place in Leeds more detailed investigations are yet to take place. It is clear, however, that such a scheme requires significant costs to set up and operate unless high levels of sponsorship are available, for example through advertising income.
- 3.18 Within the Council the Corporate Travel Plan encourages the use of cycles and a gradual increase in cycle parking is being made at Council bases. The Council has supported the tax efficient purchase of cycles by staff through the Government's Bike to Work scheme. Last year some 200 cycles were purchased by staff under this scheme which is a doubling on 2007 which was the first year of operation.

4 Legal And Resource Implications

- 4.1 This report raises no specific legal and resource implications.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 This report has updated Members on the work to support cycling in the city within the overall context of the Local Transport Plan and the development of more sustainable travel choices. Significant ongoing investment in the cycling infrastructure is taking place in Leeds which is due to receive a fresh impetus this year with a focus on the accelerated delivery of the Leeds Core Cycle Network project.
- 5.2 Since the beginning of the LTP period in April 2006 cycling in Leeds and in West Yorkshire has grown significantly although it remains a small proportion of overall travel. It is forecast that completion of the full Leeds Core Cycle Network will lead to a further increase in cycling of around 80% when the project is completed.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are requested to note and comment on the contents of this report.

7 Background information

- 7.1 Background documents relating to this report are as follows:
 - i) West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11