

4. Walking and Cycling

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 The BMTP proposes wide-ranging initiatives to improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists such that walking and cycling can form a more significant element of overall travel in the BMA than at present.
- 4.2 Only around 10% of people walk to work and even this has experienced a steady decline in recent years. Current statistics indicate that the decline has been due to increased use of the car for shorter journeys. More than a quarter of all journeys of less than a mile are presently made by car, either as a driver or a passenger, but this figure increases to 67% for journeys of between one and two miles¹⁵. Similarly, despite one in four adults in NI having access to a bicycle and one third of NI households having at least one adult who owns a bicycle¹⁶, a mere 0.8% cycle to work compared with 3.3% in the UK. Starting from this very low level of cycle use and recognising that some 45% of all journeys presently made are less than two miles, there is considerable potential to increase the number of walk and cycle journeys made.
- 4.3 Walking, and to a degree, cycling also form key components of public transport journeys. Considerable scope also exists to support greater public transport use by improving walk and cycle access to and facilities at bus stops and rail stations.
- 4.4 Current provision for pedestrians and cyclists is poor by the standards of some other UK metropolitan areas – and poorer still when compared to towns and cities in continental Europe. Walking and cycling in the BMA are unattractive because of conflicts with road traffic. The BMTP provides a significant opportunity to redress this by identifying improvements that have considered walking and cycling as integral elements of an overall transport system. This will support the changes made to development control traffic assessment procedures which require measures to encourage greater levels of walking and cycling to be factored in to the planning of new development. At a NI-wide level, DRD has prepared two strategy documents that set out challenging targets for increasing levels of walking and cycling (see panel). The BMTP's proposals are framed by these overarching strategies, as well as by the commitments in the RTS to support improvements to walking and cycling facilities.
- 4.5 The provision of improved facilities for walking and cycling as a means of providing greater travel choice is a key principle of the 2025 strategy. The strategy proposes an extensive cycling network across the main urban areas of the BMA and the provision of high quality walking links along the main arterial routes within the built-up area of the main urban centres. However, the measures within the strategy are focused on areas and travel movements where walking and cycling are already a realistic alternative to other modes of travel.

¹⁵ Travel Survey for Northern Ireland: 1999-2001, January 2003

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The Northern Ireland Walking and Cycling Strategies

“Walking: Northern Ireland: An Action Plan” was published in December 2003 and sets out an integrated list of actions which will assist in the delivery of improved conditions for both pedestrians and recreational walkers. The planned actions have been developed by the Northern Ireland Walking Forum (comprising DRD, District Councils and a number of special interest groups) and complement the substantial commitment to measures aimed at “Making it Easier to Walk” given in the RTS.

The Plan identifies NI-wide targets for increasing the level of walking from a 2002 base, as follows

- ◆ to increase the number of short walking journeys (less than 2 miles) by 20% by 2012; and
- ◆ to increase the average distance walked per person per year by 10% by 2012.

The Northern Ireland Cycle Strategy, published by DRD in 2000, aims to promote increased cycle use by improving conditions for cyclists. Developed by the Northern Ireland Cycling Forum (comprising DRD, District Councils and a number of special interest groups) it establishes a framework that public, private and voluntary sector organisations can follow in order to promote cycling in Northern Ireland. It also identifies NI-wide targets, as follows:

- ◆ to double the number of trips by cycle (on 2000 figures) by the end of 2005; and
- ◆ to quadruple the number of trips by cycle (on 2000 figures) by the end of 2015.

WALKING

- 4.6 The priority for the 2015 Plan is to develop a hierarchy of pedestrian routes based upon the BMA’s overall network of existing footpaths, pavements and road crossings in the main urban areas of the BMA. The Plan proposes the implementation of the following measures:
- ◆ improved facilities for walking within the BMA as a result of traffic management on local roads giving greater priority for pedestrians (described further in Chapter 6); and
 - ◆ Quality Walking Routes focused upon the main urban centres of Belfast, Lisburn, Bangor and Carrickfergus. These are routes of a consistently high standard of provision (see panel) linking key locations in and around the centre of the urban areas. The walking route that already exists between Belfast city centre and Queen’s University Belfast provides an example of the type of standard envisaged within the Quality Walking Route Network (see panel). The proposals for each of the main urban centres are described in more detail in Chapter 8.
- 4.7 The Plan also recognises the potential for improved walk links outside the main urban centres.



Quality Walking Routes – Queen’s University – Great Victoria Street Station

A Quality Walking Route was introduced to Belfast city centre in 2000/2001. This corridor links Queens University Belfast to the city centre. This Quality Walking Route was established to improve pedestrian linkages between the University and the city centre via the main bus and rail station on Great Victoria Street. This was achieved with the introduction of a number of measures to improve the built environment, giving pedestrians enhanced facilities along the route. These improvements included: widening of selected footpaths, priority for selected pedestrians signal crossing points, improved green times at signals, enhanced signage, improved surface treatment and enhanced facilities for those who are visually impaired.

Quality Walking Routes: Key Design Features

The Quality Walking Network would be typified by:

- ◆ enhanced pedestrian priority, in terms of increased footway width and increased crossing provision with reduced wait times;
- ◆ increased accessibility through the network, with construction and surfacing such as dropped kerbs, tactile paving, good quality surfaces, clear widths, streetscape improvements and removal of obstacles that accommodates all age groups and levels of mobility, with focus on the particular needs of older people and people with disabilities;
- ◆ pedestrian facilities that are designed to improve road safety (e.g. pedestrian refuges, more and improved crossings, longer pedestrian phases at traffic signals), increase personal security (e.g. improved lighting) and reduce severance;
- ◆ greater promotion of pedestrian routes with clear on-street information, including street plans and signing;
- ◆ improved walking routes to major public transport stations and stops across the BMA, and key generators of pedestrian movement; and
- ◆ consistency in the approach to pedestrian provision.

Implementation of the Walking Networks

- 4.8 Implementation of each of the Quality Walking Networks will be progressed through a systematic review process. In addition, detailed design and implementation will involve consultation with relevant local interest groups, including the Walking Forum and Disability Organisations.

Implementation Cost

- 4.9 The estimated cost of implementing the walking proposals included in the Plan is £19.4 million.

CYCLING

- 4.10 As a result of varying levels of congestion, topography and land-use, a blanket city-wide approach to providing a cycle network is unlikely to be appropriate in Belfast. The 2015 Plan includes targeted improvements to infrastructure for cyclists.
- 4.11 The Plan proposes the development of the network shown in Figure 4.1. This builds upon the existing network in the BMA which includes part of the NI National Cycle Network (NCN) as shown in the diagram. The routes shown identify a preferred network to deliver continuous cycle routes between key locations in the BMA. The exact routing and level of priority afforded to cyclists on each section of the network will be considered as part of the detailed design and implementation process (see panel). The type of priority provided will be dependent upon specific local circumstances. On heavily trafficked roads cycle routes would be expected to be provided as fully segregated facilities. On less heavily trafficked roads cycle lanes could be expected to be provided as lanes on the main carriageway and, where appropriate, provided in conjunction with bus lanes. In addition the route proposals will consider provision of dedicated cycle route crossings – termed Toucan crossings – a number of which have already been implemented. The Plan also proposes that opportunities are taken to provide cycle route facilities in conjunction with the rapid transport schemes described in Chapter 5.

Cycle Network – Key Design Features

The proposals for the network in Belfast recognise five main criteria for network design.

- ◆ **Coherence** : The cycling infrastructure should form a coherent entity, linking all trip origins and destinations; with a continuous level of provision;
- ◆ **Directness** : Routes should be as direct as possible, based on desire lines, since detours and delays will deter use;
- ◆ **Attractiveness**: Routes must be attractive to cyclists on subjective as well as objective criteria. Lighting, personal safety, aesthetics, noise and integration with the surrounding area are important;
- ◆ **Safety** : Designs should minimise the danger for cyclists and other road users; and
- ◆ **Comfort**: Cycle routes need smooth, well-maintained surfaces, regular sweeping, and gentle gradients. Routes must be convenient to use and avoid complicated manoeuvres and interruptions.

Supporting Measures

- 4.12 To further encourage greater levels of cycling the 2015 Plan includes cycle parking and promotional initiatives.
- 4.13 Cycle parking is a fundamental element of any cycling strategy. There is currently very little in the way of formal cycle parking in the main urban centres. It is proposed that cycle stands are provided to serve the main trip attractors in and around the main urban centres including rail stations and major bus stop locations.



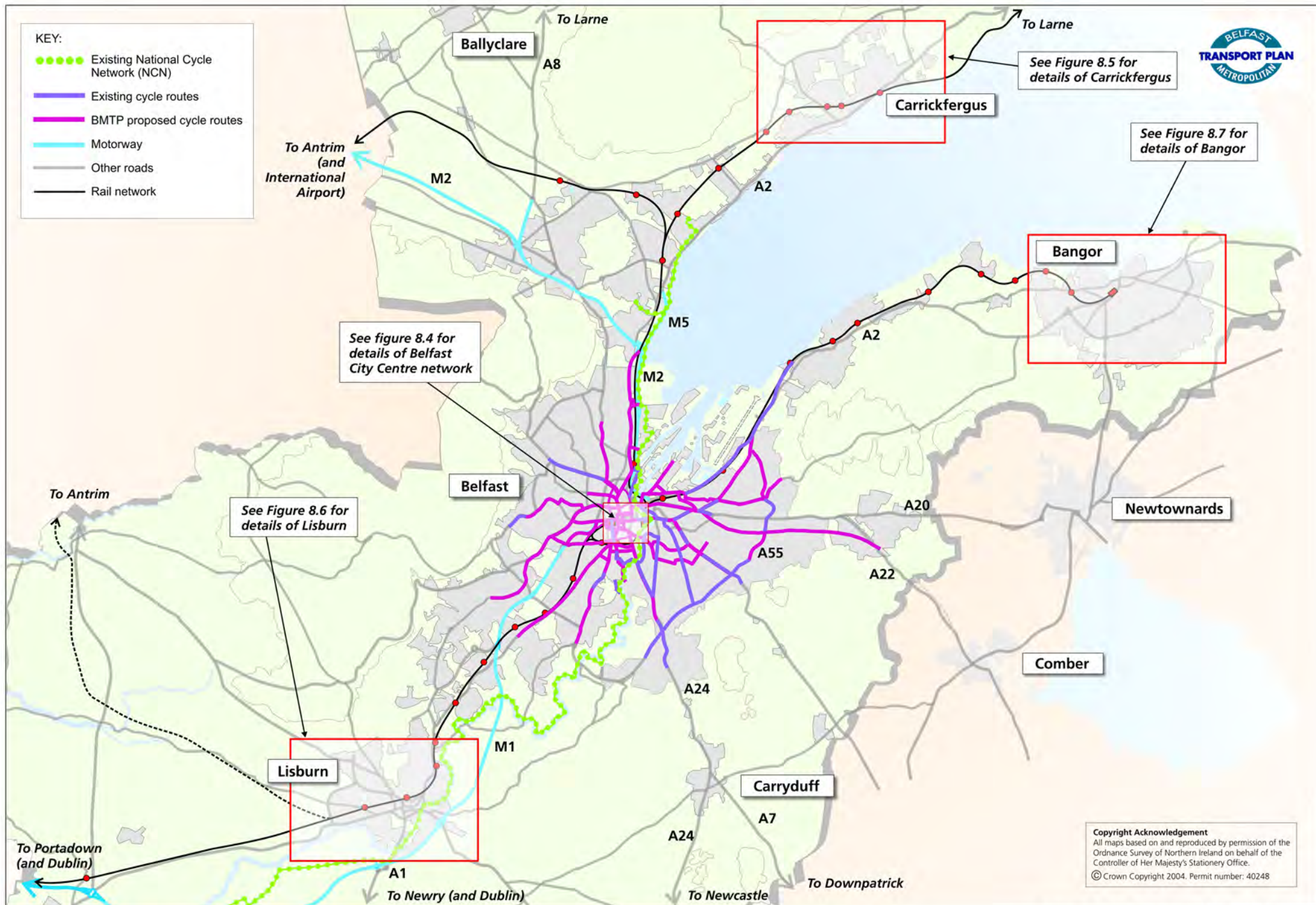


Figure 4.1 - Proposed Cycle Routes

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- 4.14 A comprehensive marketing strategy will be required to promote cycling in the BMA. This could incorporate elements such as individualised marketing techniques, the production of a widely available cycle route map and effective advertising using media to promote the time and cost benefits of cycling for utility journeys. Such initiatives are discussed further in Chapter 7.

Implementation Cost

- 4.15 The estimated cost of implementing the Plan's proposals would be £16.3 million. As with all major expenditure proposed by the Plan, investment in cycle facilities will be subject to detailed economic appraisal and the level of expenditure reviewed during the Plan period should schemes not be successful in increasing the level of cycle use.