

"Small Changes can make a Big Difference": Guidance from MACS on promoting accessibility through active travel measures.



1. The Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) supports measures which increase active travel in line with the new National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2). Opportunities for active travel should be available to everyone. Well-designed active travel infrastructure can also significantly enhance disabled people's mobility, especially when 'walking and wheeling'. This note aims to encourage local authorities to consider how they can use active travel funding received directly from Transport Scotland and other sources in a way that also improves accessibility for disabled people.
2. Scottish cities, towns and villages are full of barriers to disabled people - often literally. We want to encourage local authorities to use active travel funding to tackle these barriers and, year-on-year, to make both residential areas and town centres more inclusive places, and also to better connect rural communities. In addition to contributing to the strategic pillar of 'Reducing Inequalities' in the NTS2, this will contribute to delivering both the Active Travel Framework and the 'Clear Pathways' priority of the Accessible Travel Framework.
3. There is substantial evidence that negotiating 'the first and last mile' of journeys presents a huge challenge for many disabled people. Accessible low-floor buses are little use if you cannot reach the bus stop. Neighbourhood shops and services can be close by but are useless if you cannot cross the road to reach them. An accessible local pedestrian environment is therefore fundamental to disabled people's ability to both participate in their local community activities and to link into wider transport networks. Of course, everyone else also benefits from a good, accessible walking, cycling and wheeling environment!
4. In addition, improvements to local high streets or shopping areas (even just in the immediate vicinity of corner shops or local health centres) in larger towns and cities could also be a practical way to begin making the '20 minute neighbourhood' concept, promoted by the Scottish Government and supported by MACS, a reality.

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5. Local access panels and disability groups should be consulted on proposals, who will have ideas on how to make their town, village or city more accessible. Remember too that there is a wide range of disabilities and mobility needs, and that many disabilities are not visible.
6. Improvements to pavements might include:
 - putting in missing dropped kerbs or continuous pavements (with tactile warning where needed) on side roads, alleys and vennels;
 - tightening junction splays at side road junctions;
 - removing unnecessary pavement clutter (signage poles, bins, etcetera);
 - cutting back hedges, trees and overhanging vegetation;
 - keeping pavements clear of temporary obstructions like 'A-boards' and roadwork signs;
 - improving potholed/cracked footway surfaces.
7. Crossing the road should be as easy as possible:
 - adding pedestrian crossing opportunities of all types;
 - reducing the time pedestrians need to wait at signalled crossings;
 - increasing the 'green man' time at signalled crossings.
8. Public transport is more accessible where bus stops (and the route to and from them) are easy to use:
 - there are seats and shelters at the stop;
 - there is a level boarding area from kerb to bus;
 - bus stops are clutter-free;
 - parking close to the bus stop is deterred;
 - timetable and route information (ideally real-time) is clearly displayed.
9. Other measures which will help disabled pedestrians include:
 - making sure that there is seating at regular intervals in busy streets;
 - toilets (as accessible as possible) are available to the public;
 - making sure that routes to parks and green spaces are barrier free;
 - main walking routes are simple to follow, intuitive and well-signed.

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10. While the main opportunity to make active travel accessible lies in walking and wheeling, there are also opportunities to make cycling more inclusive and attractive to disabled people, such as the removal of barriers and chicanes on cycle paths, and avoiding a need for 'cyclists to dismount'. The forthcoming revised editions of 'Cycling by Design' and 'Inclusive Mobility' will contain more detailed guidance on the design of inclusive cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

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