

SEStran commuter challenge



On Thursday morning various commuters converged on St Andrew Square from a range of starting points and got there by various means, and for once the weather was beautiful!

It was part of the Edinburgh Festival of Cycling and participants were trying to find out which mode of transport was fastest and who damages the environment least.

There were commuters on bikes, trams, cars, buses and trains. They began from points outside the city boundaries and aimed to get to St Andrew Square for 8.15am.

One of the organisers, Chris Hill, said

“The purpose of the commuter challenge is to show how fortunate people working in Edinburgh are with their travel options.

“There are already Park and Ride sites around the city, express bus routes, a tram and, coming soon, a new rail line from Midlothian.

“In addition a much improved cycle route alongside the A90 from Queensferry – handy for Fife cycle commuters and a new off-road connection south from Lasswade Road all offer new ways of getting about.

“In the city centre an important segregated link is being constructed between the long established Innocent Path and The Meadows.”

New this year was a starting point in Fife. Experienced (and fast) cyclist Dave Crampton took advantage of the new cyclepath by the A90 and took 41 minutes for the 12 mile trip. This was three minutes faster than the express bus and six minutes quicker than the car driver, who had to find a parking

space before finishing at St. Andrew Square.

Bikes also beat public transport and cars from Ingliston and Straiton. Best time from Newcraighall was by a City Car Club electric car, which was almost twice as fast as the person taking the train to Waverley and walking to the finish. Slightly slower was a leisurely cyclist taking the scenic route along the Innocent Cycle Path.

Organiser Chris Hill said “once again the Challenge showed that confident and experienced cyclists can often beat public transport and private cars at commuting times – not just over very short distances. Since we last held this event, the tram has started running and there have been significant improvements to the cycle infrastructure. By next year there will be a new rail line and some good quality segregated cycle routes in the city.

“Cycling isn’t for everyone, but it’s clear that more people are giving it a go. It doesn’t have to be every day or even all months of the year. If some people who now drive 5 days a week tried public transport, or cycling or carsharing just one day a week, there would be less traffic and less air pollution and things would be better for everyone.”





Irene Gardiner likes the tram: “I use it almost every day from my office at Haymarket. More convenient, comfortable and faster than the bus. To access the tram stop at ‘Haymarket, I don’t even have to cross the road.”

Max Blinkhorn lives in Portobello and works at Heriot Watt’s Riccarton campus – 11 miles away.

He sometimes drives, but usually takes the express bus or goes by train or bike. He said:

“I’ve found there are many quick travel options available to those who want to cross the city. Driving via the bypass can take an hour at busy times.

“Express buses or the train from Brunstane to South Gyle and Edinburgh Park really work for me and save a lot of money. Both have wifi onboard and I can catch up with email and facebook on the move.

“My commuting time is much more valuable now and I have no driving stress. If I want, I can cycle all or just part of the way using the train and off-peak trams, depending on my timetable. I often get off at Waverley and head to Portobello either by the Restalrig Cycleway or through Holyrood Park. And of course, I don’t need to spend money and time on a gym membership!”

Photos courtesy of Chris Hill