

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet

**DATE:** 12 March 2024

**BY:** Executive Director for Place

**SUBJECT:** Reduction of Speed Limits for Active Freeway

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval of the statutory procedures necessary to make and amend Traffic Regulation Orders to introduce new speed limits to reduce the speed limit on the A199 between Dunbar and Musselburgh to 40mph between settlements. This is to enable the construction of the Segregated Active Travel Corridor (now known as the [Active Freeway](#)) to current design standards.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Cabinet supports the initiation of the statutory procedures to initiate, consider any objections and make or amend Traffic Regulation Orders in accordance with the relevant legislation to implement a 40mph speed limit between settlements along the A199 to enable construction of the first phases of the Active Freeway during 2024.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Active Freeway will be a high-quality commuter cycling and walking link connecting Dunbar-East Linton-Haddington-Gladsmuir-Macmerry-Tranent-Musselburgh along the route of A199. It was formerly known as the Segregated Active Travel Corridor and is a transport intervention first proposed in the Local Development Plan 2018: [*“PROP T3: The Council will develop a new segregated active travel corridor within East Lothian and will work in partnership with local communities, public, developers and the private sector to secure funding mechanisms”*]
- 3.2 East Lothian Council receives contributions towards the construction of the route from all developments within 1.2km of the preferred alignment.

- 3.3 As the former A1, this road is currently over-engineered for the local traffic it now carries, and there is sufficient width within the road corridor to allow two 3.65m carriageways, a 1m landscaped buffer to the north of this, and a 2.5m shared-use path for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 3.4 These specifications comply with both the requirements for HGVs and buses using the road, and [Cycling by Design](#) standards (see S3.4) for a path alongside a 40mph carriageway. If the speed limit was higher, then the landscaped buffer strip would have to increase to a minimum of 2.5m, meaning that additional third-party land would be required along much of its length.
- 3.5 The figures in Appendix 1 indicate the areas where a 40mph limit is required. It should be noted that there are four stretches of between 750m-1200m in length where the speed limit could be retained at the national speed limit, but we are proposing a blanket limit of 40mph between the settlements for consistency.
- 3.6 Within the settlements, the current speed limits are 20mph (East Linton and Macmerry) and 30mph (Gladsmuir) with 40mph buffer zones on the approaches, and it is intended that these will be retained, albeit the buffer zones will be subsumed into the wider speed limits. The alignment of the route through Haddington has not yet been proposed, and an options appraisal will be carried out in due course, at which point appropriate speed limits will be presented for consideration.
- 3.8 There is a short window of opportunity to attract significant funding during FY 2024-25 to begin construction of the section of the Active Freeway within East Linton (known as Phase 2A), and the stretch from Haddington to Tranent (Phase 5), but this is dependent on the new speed limits being agreed.
- 3.9 While there will be a statutory consultation associated with the TRO, it was felt important to gauge public opinion prior to beginning the legal process. Therefore, a public consultation on the outline proposals took place over a 4-week period in late 2023. This focused on the active freeway between Dunbar and Tranent and had several elements, including:
- Online survey (paper copies were also available upon request);
  - Drop-in event in Dunbar;
  - Interactive map where comments could be added; and
  - Presentation given to East Lothian Cycle Forum.
- 3.10 A total of 117 responses to the survey were received and of these 112 people responded to the question asking how strongly they do / do not support the proposed speed limit changes between Dunbar and Tranent. 63% of respondents supported the proposed speed limit changes.

Negative comments received are highlighted below with responses developed in collaboration with the design team.

Comment	Response
It is unlikely that drivers would observe the speed limit and any reduced speed limit is unlikely to be policed. It is also important not to alienate drivers. As such, the changes should not be implemented.	Experience with 20mph limits has shown that drivers are quick to adapt their behaviour and that the new habits are reinforced over time.
Reducing the speed limit would increase journey times, including for buses. This in turn may deter people from using the bus	It is worth noting that the national speed limit for buses (i.e. in those areas outwith the local 20/30/40mph limits) is already 50mph, and therefore the reduction in speed is not significant, particularly when frequent stopping is taken into account.  Bus passengers will also benefit from improved shelters, waiting areas and crossing points.
Rather than reducing the speed limit, a wider buffer between the road and proposed path should be implemented, or the path should be located in the field on the other side of the wall / hedge. This would negate the need for reduced speed limits.	This would require third party land which would delay implementation or make it impossible.
The corridor is already safe to travel along for pedestrians and cyclists, and so a reduction in the speed limit is not required.	It may be safe, but it is not particularly attractive due to the speed of vehicles and the fact that the cyclists are often required to be on the carriageway. The footway is also very narrow for significant lengths.  The aims is to attract new cyclists, and conditions must be improved.
Noted that many motorists do not travel at the maximum current speed limit on the A199, particularly given the higher speed A1 runs parallel to the corridor, where people can travel at higher speeds if required. As such, a reduction in the A199 speed limit is not required.	It is required in order to meet Cycling by Design standards within the land currently available.
It is not practical for motorists to reduce their speed to 20 mph on sections where this is proposed.	No new 20mph speed limits are proposed.

## 4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 East Lothian Council's [Speed Limit Policy](#) was agreed in 2022. Key points within it for consideration are:

*P5: "New speed limits should not be introduced on roads where there is no realistic expectation that drivers will comply with the reduced speed limit."*

In this case the intention is to create a road environment in which it will feel natural to drive at lower speeds, and that the new limits will be generally observed.

P6: The Policy further notes that where there is “*significant vulnerable road user activity then a lower speed limit should be considered*”, and while this section of the Policy was intended to cover buffer zones on approaches to settlements, it can be reasonably extrapolated to cover the A199 corridor which will be promoted as a key walking and cycling link across the county, connecting several key settlements.

It will likely be appropriate at a future date to review the Council’s Speed Limit Policy, and we await further Scottish Government Guidance on setting local speed limits before undertaking this work.

## **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The subject of this report will have a positive impact on the environment and the wellbeing of the community by reducing emissions from vehicles and supporting active travel, and will not have a negative impact on equality, or the economy.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial – all costs associated with the project will be externally funded from grants or by contributions from housing developers in the vicinity of the route.
- 6.2 Personnel – Council Officers will co-ordinate the work alongside existing projects to support sustainable and active travel. No additional resource is required.
- 6.3 Other – None

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<b>DATE</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2024

# APPENDIX 1: Proposed speed limit extents

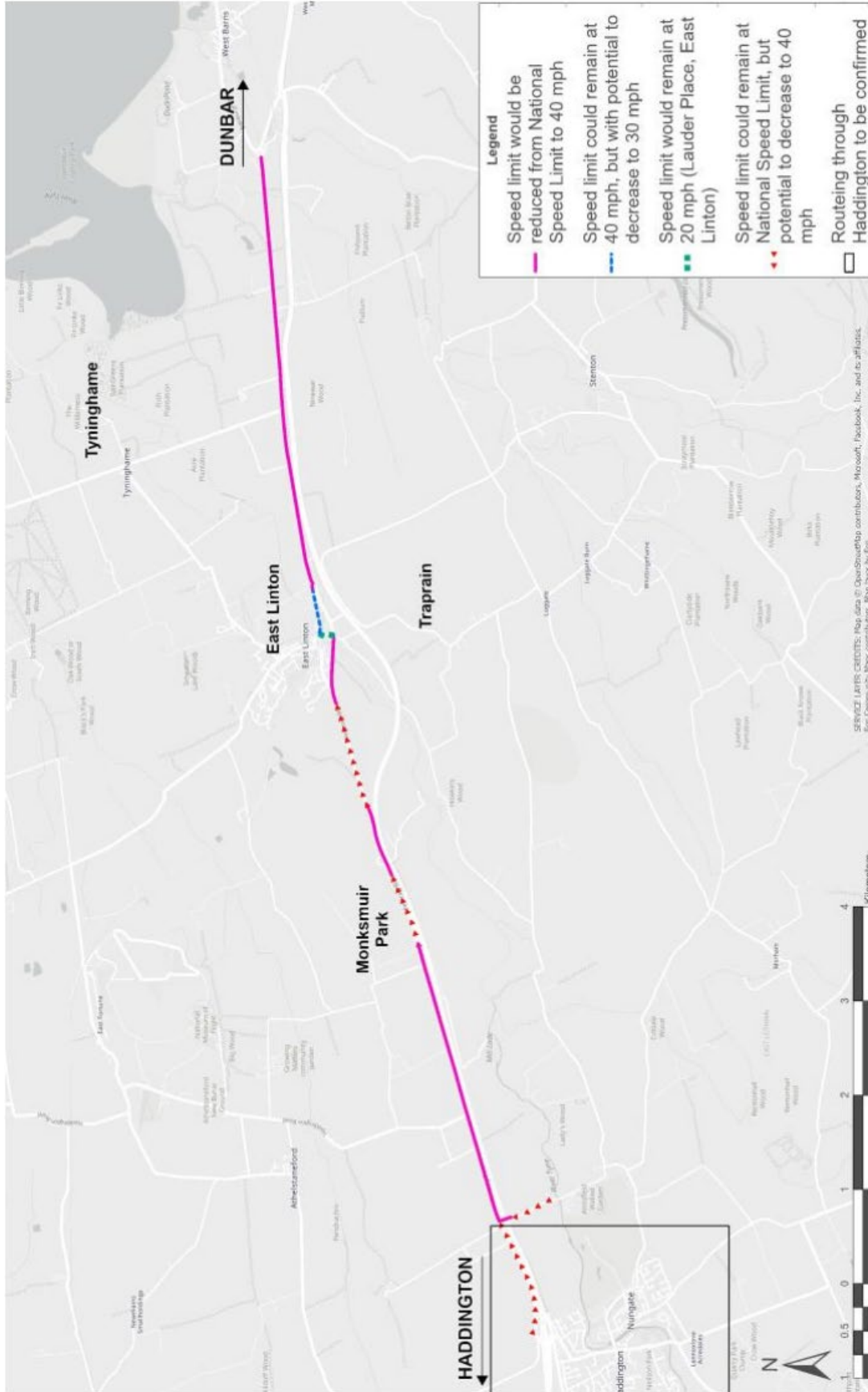


Figure 1: Proposed speed limit changes between Dunbar and Haddington

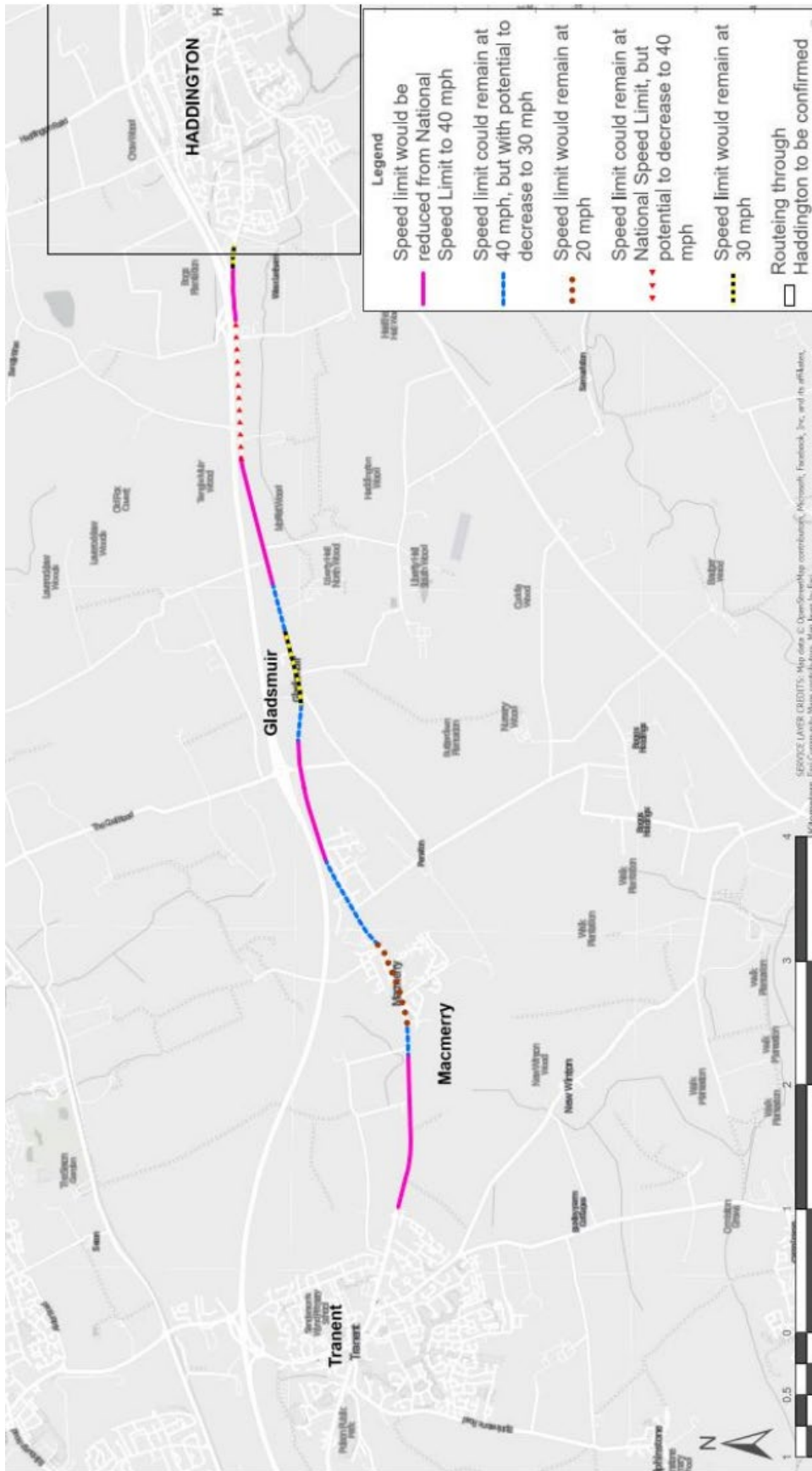


Figure 2: Proposed speed limit changes between Haddington and Tranent