Background
The Desire Lines Cycle Network project seeks to build on existing technologies and platforms to harness data. We are interested in the routes people use to access the official cycle routes across the city. This project explores these questions further via a series of qualitative and quantitative, ‘data sprint’ workshops. Initially the project stemmed from looking at the existing “Guild Wheel” cycle route around Preston. This route encircles the city but there is very little provision for the spokes into the city centre. As is the case in many UK cities bicycle networks are often inconsistent, second thoughts with cycle facilities being added onto already crowded streets.

Method-Design Thinking
Over the course of this project, we have followed an ideation process to look at the problem of a lack of clear cycle routes in and around Preston. The first workshop defined the problem by empathising with users. We found that the desire lines or chosen paths might have been similar routes, but one size doesn’t fit all. There were differences in acceptability ratings of the paths depending on the age, gender, type of journey, time of day, etc. The problem definition was also enlarged to include a lack of communication between users and designers to develop cycle networks and also notify of maintenance issues.

In the second workshop, the focus was on imagining the communication channel. The use of social media and other platforms, as well as the ways participants engaged with civic society, current data sharing, and cycling information needs were explored. A strong desire emerged for a clear, easy to use App that integrates with existing technologies and platforms. A crucial element for buy-in was the ability to see that by sharing their data and contributing there was a tangible improvement or action as a result.

Workshop 1 Empathise and Define problem
- Many different ‘spokes’ created by different users.
- Variance in routes depending upon: gender, age, journey type, and time of day.
- Problem definition enlarged to include communication between designers (Planners) and users (cyclists) as well as need to report maintenance issues.

Next Steps- Prototype and Test
- Field testing of mobile tracker with the ability to geo mark points on route
- Post ride chat-bot to further interrogate stories from user.
- Web based mapping interface to collect routes and the stories around them with potential for co-design of future cycling infrastructure.