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Friday 10 April 2009

Draft 2009/2010-2011/2012 Regional Land Transport Programme Submission

Executive Summary

- Cycle Action Auckland (CAA) commends the RLTP proposal to increase walking and cycling spending, but is concerned that this will not be sufficient to achieve the 'step change' sought in this area, and that the increases mask a large-scale withdrawal of local Councils from the funding of such infrastructure.
- CAA requests that greater importance be placed on connecting proposed cycling projects with existing routes to integrate them well into the existing and future cycling networks.
- CAA strongly supports the NZTA cycling projects proposed, and requests that all stakeholders work together to fully realise their potential benefits.
- CAA strongly supports the cycling infrastructure programmes and specific projects of the region's local Councils, and especially commends Manukau City for the levels of investment proposed.
- CAA supports the focus on the efficient operation of arterial roads including provisions for safe and convenient commuter cycling.
- CAA recommends that ARTA selects 'flagship' projects', to give cycling a more public profile. This could be linked to the NZTA cycling projects.
- CAA supports the provision of passenger transport infrastructure and improvements to services as vital to achieving an integrated transport system which can optimise the effectiveness of cycling and walking modes as part of any journey.
- CAA also supports increased spending on cycling-related measures like walking, travel demand management, trip end and mixed-mode facilities, training of young and adult cyclists as well as police enforcement.

Cycle Action Auckland is an incorporated registered charity with the objective of promoting cycling as a non-congesting, non-polluting, energy-efficient and health-promoting form of transport for the Auckland region.

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1 Introduction

We are pleased to be able to submit on the draft 2009/10/11 Auckland RLTP.

Our submission is set out as an introductory overview and a summary of our key points, followed by detailed comments on the key aspects of the plan, the challenges facing the region, the priorities identified in the plan and the detailed cycling projects listed for funding.

We would like to be heard in support of our submission, and request you to contact the undersigned in this regard.

Submitter Background

Cycle Action is a voice for Auckland cyclists, whether commuter, recreational, or sports cyclists. We take into account the needs of all cyclists and potential cyclists, irrespective of their age, fitness or experience.

Our members are not just cycle enthusiasts. Among our over 200 members and 1,000 friends we have professional planners, engineers and managers. This response draws on their professional experience, as well as their practical knowledge acquired from many years of cycling.

We have a long history of working closely with local authorities, and aim to provide informed feedback on design initiatives, transport plans and strategies, and to promote cycling generally.

2 Overview

The delivery of further segments of the regional cycling network and various NZTA State Highway cycling projects will ensure that the 2009 RLTP goes some way to achieving the GPS and NZTS targets to ensure environmental sustainability and improving access and mobility by increasing cycling and other active modes.

The provision of cycling infrastructure fits with ARTA's current priorities to make the best use of the existing transport system, to manage travel demand focusing on activities that encourage a reduction in the use of single occupant vehicles and delivering on the regional cycle network.

With Auckland's population expected to exceed two million people before 2036 and reach around 2.2 million people before 2050 and the number of person trips to increase by two million trips daily, the provision of cycling infrastructure fits with ARTA's objective:

“To plan, fund and develop the Auckland regional land transport system in a way that contributes to an integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable land transport system for the Auckland region.”

and the NZTS to 2040 statement:

There is a strong policy expectation and community demand to achieve a more sustainable lifestyle through increased travel choice, reduced reliance on private cars, and less use of fossil fuel, acknowledging that fossil fuels are finite resources. Meeting this challenge requires transport solutions that better integrate transport and land use planning, improve public transport services and networks, and make greater use of non-motorised modes.

3 Comments and Suggestions

Cycle Action strongly supports the public transport, walking and cycling projects of the RLTP in general. In addition, we offer the following comments and suggestions:

- **Greater Cycling Emphasis:** Cycle Action commends the RLTP aim to encourage and fund improvement for cycling as a form of transport. However, there are several areas where the RLTP process and projects do not sufficiently address cycling funding requirements.

We request that cycling projects be given a higher priority due to their potential to offer ideal sustainable transport choices, their lack of significant drawbacks, and to acknowledge the fact that investment in this area needs to catch up with decades of neglect.

Even if all walking and cycling projects go forward, only 2.2% of the whole RLTP budget will be spent on dedicated walking and cycling measures, which is minimal compared to desirable or even existing mode share percentages. We consider that cycling will require a much greater budget to achieve the GPS and NZTS objectives and targets.

Both increased investment in dedicated cycling facilities as well as improvements to existing facilities (including measures that allow safer sharing of existing roads without dedicated cycling facilities) is crucial to increase cycling uptake. Increased funding / prioritisation along these lines also ties in with the 'Strategic Focus Areas' of the RLTP, such as regional arterials, safety engineering and optimisation of existing infrastructure.

Such improvements will help unlock the large hidden potential for cycling, as has been proven in other cities world-wide which invested aggressively in this mode and saw massive cycling mode share gains.

- **Greater (Cycle-) Network Focus:** Special prioritisation should be given to projects which close network gaps. While the various cycling projects listed in the RLTP are useful, there is a general lack of inter-connectedness in the existing network.

There also appears to be a focus on providing 'new facilities at new locations' rather than fixing known issues and gaps on existing routes. This appears to be a systemic issue, due to retrofits being much harder to gain funding approval for than for inclusion of such facilities as part of new schemes. As retrofits are generally much more costly - but no less crucial - the extra cost of such measures should be accepted and funded.

It is crucial that at least a basic network be completed and progressively improved. Connectedness of cycle routes will help to attract more cyclists, especially via greater safety and comfort safety for new riders.

- **Focus on Regional Arterials:** Cycle Action is keenly interested in this priority as the region's arterials have the potential to provide a convenient and efficient route for commuting purposes. These routes also facilitate public transport connections, so allowing cyclists to combine modes enabling longer and more flexible trip choices.
- **Flagship Projects:** The summary statement of the RLTP notes cycling as a very effective way of achieving transport outcomes like reduced congestion. However, in our experience, at many authority levels, this claim is often considered sceptically.

We consider that it is crucial for cycling investments within the region to not only be connected (in both the planning and physical terms) - but also for successful improvements and increases in cycling to be documented and well-promoted publicly, particularly to current non-cyclists.

Cycling currently has few to no 'big ticket' projects in Auckland, and needs more success stories which offer direct measurable impact and publicity opportunities via 'flagship projects', as the Northern Busway and Britomart impacted on the uptake of public transport.

The RLTP includes several larger-scale NZTA cycling projects along state highways. Some of these, especially if connected into the larger network, or extended and promoted as connecting key destinations, could work well as such flagship projects.

- **Travel Demand Management:** Cycle Action agrees that one of the most promising TDM measures is the introduction and further expansion of school travel plans. These offer a valuable way of reducing existing congestion (with school trips known to be a major factor in Auckland's peak hour traffic) and of boosting cycling rates in the long term, with a proportion of children going on to continue cycling as adults.

We commend the intention to produce school travel plans for all schools in the region by 2014. More funding budgets should be made available to be spent in cooperation with each school to identify and remove local danger spots and barriers to cycling. This could also be tied into prioritisation of community and safety-related projects / programmes in the RLTP.

- **Trip End Facilities / Mixed-Mode:** Further prioritisation should be given to the provision of more trip end and mixed-mode facilities such as: provision of more secure public cycle storage, and support for initiatives that allow bicycle transport with other modes, such as bikes racks on buses and a much greater capacity for cyclists on trains.

As any private provision of trip end facilities is likely to lag behind actual cycling levels, even where minimum provision is included in District Plan requirements for resource consents, funding authorities are asked to assist in providing more such facilities. This is especially crucial in view of the local authority cutbacks in this area.

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- **Cyclist Training:** Cycle Action is concerned that the long-term decline in cycling has left a sizeable proportion of New Zealand's adults without cycling skills, and especially without confidence of cycling in city traffic.

Funding should be provided for proposed training programmes for adults wishing to learn or relearn such skills. This could be prioritised as part of existing or proposed safety programmes / projects.

- **Road Policing:** With cyclists being very vulnerable to speeding and drunk driving, Cycle Action supports increased police enforcement, with increased funding and staffing levels in line with or above Auckland's population growth rate.

4 Funding Overview

- **Local Council Budget Cuts:** There is great concern that some TLA's, along with serious cutbacks in areas like public transport investment, are intending to reduce their cycling project budgets to effectively zero for the forthcoming decade. In light of this issue, which Cycle Action will take up during the LTCCP submissions process, it is crucial that cycling projects be retained and prioritised.

We also consider that Councils that reduce their cycling budgets significantly (or, in some instances, effectively cease investment in these areas) may be in breach of the RLTS and the RLTP, especially if cutbacks in the historically underfunded cycling area significantly exceed those in other areas, i.e. road construction and maintenance.

Where this is found to be the case, RLTP funding could be withdrawn, or offered only conditional on more cycling investment. If this is not possible, cycling projects of other local authorities could be prioritised above the non-cycling projects of the under-performing local authorities.

Cycle Action considers that some of the noted local Council reductions in cycling expenditure could be balanced by more proactive inclusion of cycle facilities as part of road reconstruction programmes. We consider that ARTA should play a role in ensuring that funding for such projects is contingent on integration of cycling concerns.

GPS Funding Bands: (Table 5.2 of the RLTP): Cycle Action has concerns that exceeding the upper band of GPS funding for walking and cycling may lead to reductions in these proposed projects.

The fact that such reductions would save only very small amounts in total transport spending would make such cuts even more problematic. However, we commend that the RLTP proposes to cover the GPS funding shortfalls by transferring R and C funds.

5 Specific Cycling Related Projects

Projects proposed by NZTA

The New Zealand Transport Agency has proposed substantial funding for the investigation, design and construction of a number of state highway-cycling routes and cycling route improvements.

These cycleways and walkways would cover significant distances, and open up key transport routes for cycling and walking. Being safe, segregated and direct travel routes for cyclists and walkers, they offer a unique opportunity to improve the cycling network across the Auckland Region.

Cycle Action strongly supports the NZTA state highway-related cycling projects. To be fully utilised however, these routes require a considerable number of connections on council lands and investment in these connections must be high priority for the councils concerned. There is great concern that local authority cutbacks may prevent even modest connection projects from going ahead.

There must be active involvement of local authorities and of ARTA to ensure that these NZTA projects are successfully tied into local networks. Works on Council land must be required to fully utilise the new NZTA routes.

Cycle Action is also concerned that the NZTA projects which are only investigations at this stage, remain high priority and proceed through to construction.

Projects specifically supported by Cycle Action include:

- **SH1 Northern Cycleway stage 1 Northcote Road to Constellation** - We support this study and would like to see quick implementation / assignment of construction funding.
- **SH1 Southern Cycleway stage 2** - We support this study and would like to see quick implementation / assignment of construction funding. Cycling south of Newmarket currently depends strongly on use of major, high-volume roads like Remuera Road or Great South Road, which, even with improvements to cycling safety, will retain issues.

We especially support eventual extension southwards to Otahuhu.

- **SH1 to SH16 Central Auckland Connection** - We strongly support this project, especially as it will extend the Northwestern Cycleway providing a route through the Central Motorway Junction and down Grafton Gully and construction funding is requested in this RLTP.

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We ask for this project to receive especial prioritisation, as it will substantially enhance the attractiveness of a well-used existing route (Northwestern Cycleway) which will then also provide access to the eastern Auckland CBD, the Auckland Domain / Auckland Hospital areas and to Parnell / the Ports of Auckland areas. For these benefits to be fully realised, it is imperative that Auckland City provide local connections, at least to enable safe connections to quieter back streets.

- **SH16 Kingsland Cycleway** - We strongly support this project, which we understand to be an improvement to the Northwestern Cycleway. We commend that construction funding is already being requested.
- **SH Northwestern Cycle Improvements** - We strongly support improvements to this well-used, but in parts still sub-standard, facility. As one of the few (but not well-known) long-distance facilities of this kind already existing in the Auckland Region, there is substantial scope for improvement, especially of pinch points and road crossings.

With the proposed "SH1 to SH16 Central Auckland Connection" extension and the "SH16 Kingsland Cycleway" improvements proposed for this facility (both discussed above), it is expected that the attractiveness of this route will continue to grow.

- **SH16 Rodney District Council areas (various projects)** - We strongly support these projects to make cycling on or along state highways in Rodney safer. In a rural region, alternative routes for cyclists are often even less available than in urban areas.

In Rodney, a new separate walkway/ cycleway facility is to provide a safe route past a roading pinch point and provide a safe route from Silverdale through to Orewa. In Warkworth, junction improvements are to take place in a very heavily trafficked area, and walkway and cycleway provisions will ensure greater connectedness for the community.

- **SH22B Puhinui Road** - We support the works on this crucial cycle link to and from the airport, a major employment centre of the area, which is to link in with Manukau City works for the same route.
- **Northern Busway Access to Stations** - We support improved access to stations, to provide better multi-modal cycling access.

Westgate Cycling / Walking Crossing - We note that while this important project is not included in the RLTP, a pedestrian / cyclist bridge is proposed near the current end of the motorway at Westgate, where a fatality has recently occurred. A bridge for cyclists and pedestrians will benefit the community by saving time and improving the safety and quality of journeys.

Projects proposed by TLA's

- **Strategic Cycleway Network Routes 2009/10-2011/12** (Manukau City Council) - We applaud and support Manukau's intention to continue to progressively improve its cycling network.
- **Cycleway Strategy Works 2009/10-2011/12** (Waitakere City Council) - We support Waitakere's intention to improve its cycling network.
- **Walking and cycling implementation** (Papakura District Council) - we support the construction funding proposed.
- **2009-2012 Cycle and Walking Programme** (Auckland City Council) - We support investment by Auckland City into more cycling infrastructure, as this Council has proposed substantial cutbacks to cycling funding.
- **Walking and Cycling (various projects)** (Rodney District Council) - We support Rodney's intention to construct various new facilities.
- **Flat Bush Active Modes Package** (Manukau City Council) - We support the proactive implementation of active modes. The inclusion of such provisions will prevent later retrofit difficulties and allow new residents of the area to become used to active modes from the very start.
- **Orewa West Walkway/Cycleway** (Rodney District Council) - We support the project to provide cycling facilities in this growing region.
- **School Travel Plans (Physical Works)** (Waitakere City Council) - We support backing of school travel plans with financing to remove barriers to cycling identified during the study phases.
- **2009/12 Cycle Programme** (North Shore City Council) - We support investment by North Shore into more cycling infrastructure, as this Council has proposed substantial cutbacks to cycling funding.

We thank you again for the opportunity to be able to submit on the RLTP consent application. We would like to be heard in support of our submission



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