



General election 2008

A briefing note for cyclists

Vote cycling! Vote for a candidate who supports cycling. Visit www.can.org.nz to find out who to vote for.

Who are we?

CAN (the NZ Cycling Advocates Network) is New Zealand's national network of cycling advocates. We work with government and local authorities on behalf of day-to-day, recreational and leisure cyclists.



Vote Cycling!

Cyclists are a significant voter group. Every voting cyclist also votes for a cyclist too young to vote. And every vote for cycling is also a vote for a better life for all – for better transport, health and neighbourhoods. So when we 'vote cycling', everybody gains.

Talk to your candidates!

Ask your candidates to take a pro-cycling stance. As for voters, every party and candidate that supports cycling is supporting a better life for all – for better transport, health and neighbourhoods. So when they support cycling, everyone gains. It's a politically 'safe' policy platform.

Why should candidates listen to us?

- We are a large voting group. Many will think "there's not many cyclists" so a few facts will help (see below).
- Cycling benefits everyone. Cyclists and non-cyclists, voters and non-voters all gain from the improved roading and community services that result when cycling is supported. We support the same things as many others, such as healthier communities. We want things valued by the mainstream – we're not at all eccentric or marginal.
- We are positive. We are presenting a case for change based on the benefits of cycling. Please avoid complaining (e.g. "we cyclists are really hard-done-by"), lecturing (e.g. "it's about time your party got its act together") or appearing extreme (e.g. "let's give up our cars").
- We are constructive. We want to win candidates over and support them with facts and information, not place their campaign at risk or alienate them.

How to approach candidates

- Candidates like issues of widespread interest. Tell them cycling is popular and about 1/5 of voters are cyclists. Tell them cycling benefits everybody. Tell them cycling is thus a safe policy platform.
- Pick a single cycling-related issue relevant to the candidate or party in the area. Think of the event, the party's stances, and the particular candidate's interests and track record.

- Use questions to bring out a candidate's position, and hopefully a commitment. Or maybe a change of stance, if one is needed.
- Refer to the facts of cycling (below) and CAN's 9-point plan (below) where possible.
- Make sure you finish by asking them to give public support to cycling.

Some questions you could ask

- What proportion of the National Land Transport Fund should be devoted to walking and cycling, bearing in mind that in combination they make up about 18% of all trips?
- Would you agree that more cycling in city centres at night would help deter crime, through more 'eyes on the street'? If so, how would you achieve this?
- Since a fitter workforce reduces sickness and absenteeism, how would you encourage employers and employees to cycle to work more?
- Which is the more cost-effective way to cut traffic congestion: building more roads (which are already expensive and set to rise further as oil and material costs rise), or allowing people to realistically choose to walk, cycle or use public transport? If the latter, how would you widen people's transport choices?
- Since the most health spending goes on tackling problems after they have occurred, would it not make sense to encourage regular exercise as part of day-to-day lifestyles? Since cycling can often be fitted into lifestyles, are there ways you would seek to provide a 'cycle-friendly' environment?
- Since cities thrive (in fact, exist) because people meet face-to-face to do business (whether social or economic), shouldn't we devote more public space to people on foot, and less to moving and parked cars? Bearing in mind that people want to drive to, rather than around, city centres, how would you achieve a more vibrant, 'people-space' urban environment?
- Are they committed to publicly supporting cycling?

Cycling myths and facts

Myth: “There aren’t many cyclists”

Fact: About 1/3 of New Zealanders cycle

- There are 1.274 million cyclists in New Zealand (about 1/3 of the population), and about 1/5 are regular cyclists
- There are about 750,000 cyclists of voting age – about 26% of voters
- More bikes than cars were sold in 2007
- There are about as many cyclists riding to work as people using public transport

Myth: “Cycling’s dangerous”

Fact: Cycling is less dangerous than other modes

- Cyclists are less likely to be involved in on-road injury crashes than other road users (1 in 1,000 cyclists each year, compared to 3 in 1,000 car drivers)
- Cyclists are less likely to cause crashes than other road users (only 40% of on-road cycle crashes are caused directly by the cyclist)
- Cyclist traffic offences total less than 1% of all traffic offences each year.

Myth: “Cycling isn’t practical for most journeys”

Fact: Cycling is ideal for the most common journeys

- Most journeys are less than 6km, ideal for cycling rather than driving (1/3 of vehicle trips are less than 2km, 2/3 less than 6km)
- Most car journeys are one person with no luggage
- Hills, weather and luggage-carrying capacity are not major deterrents to cycling, especially if road design and workplace facilities support cycling
- We used to cycle a lot more in past decades when many facilities were lacking
- In congested conditions cycling can be quicker than driving

Myth: “We don’t need cycling because everyone drives”

Fact: Up to 1/3 of people have no access to a motor vehicle

- 30% of people do not have access to a motor vehicle because of disability, age, income or inclination
- 20% of New Zealanders are below the legal driving age, and 10% of households do not own a car

Myth: “Transport doesn’t fund health and leisure”

Fact: Health and leisure are already a large part of transport

- About 1/3 of cycling trips are for leisure – but so are 1/3 of car trips
- Car crashes are one of the largest injury costs within the health sector
- Over 1/3 of New Zealanders are insufficiently active to benefit their health, and this physical inactivity contributes to 1/9 of all deaths (about 2,600 each year)

Myth: “Cyclists don’t pay their way”

Fact: Cyclists are already paying their way

- Cyclists pay local body rates (whether they drive or not), which fund local transport infrastructure
- Most cyclists are also motorists, and so also pay through petrol taxes
- Even though about 1/3 of New Zealanders cycle, only about 1% of the National Land Transport Fund goes on cycling and walking
- Taxes to pay for roads were set up to pay for damage done by motor traffic – and the damage done by cyclists is insignificant
- Generally cycling facilities are only needed because motor traffic hinders cyclists’ safety and accessibility

A cycle-friendly future

Cycling is increasing in some parts of the world simply because governments have invested and acted over time to build the numbers of cyclists.

Here’s CAN’s 9-point plan to improve cycling in New Zealand:

CAN’s 9-point plan to help cycling:

1. Run a national Share the Road promotional campaign telling motorists and cyclists how to share roads safely.
2. Change transport planning and funding processes to make sure key problem areas or gaps for cyclists (e.g. Ngauranga to Petone cycleway, Auckland Harbour Bridge) get fixed – no more delays or buck-passing.
3. Spend less on road building and more on encouraging alternatives to driving: more motor vehicles on our roads only make things less safe and attractive for cycling.
4. Promote the use of lower speed zones (particularly 30km/h).
5. Change the tolerance for motor vehicle speed limit enforcement from 10km/h to a maximum of ten per cent of the posted speed limit.
6. Increase the walking and cycling budget in the National Land Transport Programme by a factor of five.
7. Change funding and audit processes to ensure that all roading projects improve the environment for cycling.
8. Change the driver licensing system and driver instruction (including bus and truck drivers) so motorists are educated about how to take care around cyclists.
9. Fund and promote nationwide roll-out of cycle skills training for children and adults.



For more information see:

www.can.org.nz