

ChainLinks

The newsletter of the Cycling Advocates Network (NZ)

Jan/Feb 02

Unusual Road Signs

Patrick Morgan (CAW) continues to search for NZ's shortest bike lane.

Meanwhile here are his nominations for the most poorly marked bike lanes: on the right is Bunny St, in front of the Railway Station; and below is from the waterfront; both in Wellington.



Maybe we should give the benefit of the doubt to the latter and assume it is a marker of where a cycle sign should be placed.

But the former? No wonder motorists have trouble seeing cyclists, apparently they come from Lilliput! 🚲



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The views expressed in *ChainLinks* are not necessarily those of CAN.

What's Really Going On In Hamilton?

Just as an article by Eion Harwood, the Chair of Cycle Action Waikato (CAW), had me rushing for my pen over considerable inaccuracy, we hear the news that Hamilton's new Council has scrapped its councillor-led Cycling Advisory Group. So now there are two reasons for me to write.

This latter news seemed to render Eion akin to a stunned mullet, while I thought no big deal, just a change in how Council does its business (more about that below).

But first Eion's *ChainLinks* article. He said that no one was sure where to start implementing Hamilton's already-existing plans for a City-Wide Cycle Route Network, until CAW came up with an idea they have called 'The Web'. This 'web' idea, so Eion tells us, "has been accepted in principle by staff and councillors" and we will make a start in building it within the next year.

Not true! Eion's reference to our 'uncertainty' over priorities refers to a process I set going, to get away from an annoying tendency for cycle planning to be dominated by one person or another's 'bright idea'. We've all heard them: the latest miracle scheme to transform the situation, like waving a magic wand, often ill-thought-out yet adhered to rigidly.

I said let's not talk projects for a while, let's talk principles. No sooner than I had said this than CAW came back from one of their monthly meetings and announced a blueprint for six routes radiating out from the city centre.

Thus was born 'the Web'. Another magic wand bright idea. And so from then on CAW kept bringing my 'principles' based discussion back to a single question: "How is this going to help us build 'the Web'?". It took a long slog and many meetings before we agreed on the key role of existing cycling usage numbers, and a balance between localised concentration of investment and equity between different parts of the city. In spite of CAW, not helped by them.

'The Web' has neither been agreed by Council, nor is inspired in the way Eion and CAW seem to think it is. I know – I've been there, done that, ten years ago, when I came up with an idea strikingly similar to 'the Web', for Birmingham in the UK where I was Cycling Officer at the time. Eion also made a statement in a local Hamilton paper recently that although Hamilton has had a cycling policy for 13 years, it is only in the last 3 years that we have started trying to put it into practice. Funny that CAW members Robert Hynson and Paul Ryan credited Hamilton with "Turning The Corner" in a 1996 international conference paper with that title (1). Come on Eion, give those who were on the scene before you some credit for previous achievements!

But Eion's mistakenness on the Cycling Advisory Group (CAG) is good news. His words to me on the phone were "No more cycling; cycling gone

the way of the dodo”. However, to parody Mark Twain, reports of the death of Hamilton’s City’s commitment to cycling have been greatly exaggerated!

What haven’t changed are the City’s Cycling Policy, Cycling Strategy, Cycling Budget, Cycling Programme, or the rest of the consultative processes (i.e. our three topic-based Cycling Working Parties). The scrapping of CAG has more to do with city governance approaches that it has to do with cycling.

So back to ‘The Web’, and my own previous mistake in that area. CAW’s idea was to guess the routes where the greatest cyclist numbers were, and then choose one route out from the City Centre to each part of the City. Like with Hamilton now, Birmingham in 1991 needed to move beyond its single flagship route (the Rea Valley Route, now part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network), and my own ‘magic wand bright idea’ was the Compass Routes, one north, one south, one east and one west from the City Centre. My reasons were exactly the same as CAW’s – to spread the investment around, but also to concentrate it enough to make an impact.

To read about how my own Compass Routes idea broke down under the onslaught of practical implementation difficulties, together with other emerging cycle route development opportunities, read my paper to the first NZ Cycling Symposium in 1997 (2). The reason was that my concept did not meet the practical, real-life needs of cyclists – and neither would CAW’s ‘Web’. A small number of continuous routes may have a great, sexy ‘icon’ appeal, but it doesn’t match cyclists’ actual or desired behaviour, which is far more diffused.

Something Eion didn’t mention was that CAW’s ‘Web’ idea has already started to break down in the same way as my Compass Routes idea did. CAW deferred their first favoured ‘Web’ route, to the south-east (the Lake Link) in favour of one to the west, because it was practically too difficult to get going.

But to conclude: what is really going on in Hamilton?

Council has approved a focus on a ‘western sector’ over the next 2 years. This, and other planned sectors, are indeed based around CAW’s suggested ‘Web’ links, but no routes are identified within them. We are also undertaking a major cycling usage survey which we hope to use as a strong part of the basis for prioritising which routes to develop, and where. All this builds on the approach agreed through our Cycling Working Party.

Perhaps, to keep people in touch, I ought to do something for *ChainLinks* every so often telling everyone how well we’re doing. Then Eion and CAW can judge us on our track record. 🚲

Roger Boulter

- (1) “*Turning the Corner: The History of Cycle Action Waikato*” at the VeloAustralis Conference, Fremantle, Western Australia, 1996
- (2) “*Cycle Route Networks: Their Potential and Limitations*” at the Symposium Planning for and Promoting Cycling in Urban Areas, Hamilton, 1997

CYCLING SUPPORT NZ INC

Executive Director

Cycling Support NZ Inc is the national umbrella cycling advocacy organisation. Its members comprise Bicycle Industry Association of NZ, Cycling Advocates Network, Cycling NZ, NZ Heart Foundation, NZ Mountain Bike Association, NZ BMX Association and Triathlon NZ.

To capitalise on the current cycling initiatives CSNZ wish to appoint an executive director to further raise the profile of cyclists and help facilitate the implementation of cycling facilities.

We are seeking a self-starter with high energy, capable of communicating effectively with people at all levels. You must have a strong interest in cycling issues and be capable of working consistently to achieve planned objectives. Experience in working in planning or implementing cycling initiatives is desirable.

If you feel you have the interest, drive and energy to fulfil this exciting new role please apply in writing before February 16th to:

The Secretary,
Cycling Support NZ Inc
PO Box 105-622
Auckland

Education News

Sustainable Transport Papers At University Of Canterbury

The Department of Geography at the University of Canterbury is offering two new courses on transport at the graduate level. The two papers are: Transport and Development and Sustainable Urban Transport.

The papers can be taken as part of a BA Hons, final year of BSc Hons, the PG Dip Sci or part 1 of MA and MSc degrees.

Transport and Development is a first semester course (running from February to June) that will provide students with a systematic framework for the geographic study of transport. It will focus, in particular, on a critical understanding of the mechanisms by which transport change influences spatial change. Illustrations will be drawn from both the developed and developing worlds.

Sustainable Urban Transport is a second semester course (July to October) that will focus on some of the key sustainable transport issues, such as the relationship between transport and pollution, the impact of transport on social inequality and commuting as a key problem area. It will go on to

look at some of the key policies currently being implemented worldwide to improve the sustainability of transport, and will look at people's perceptions of urban transport and the likely success of sustainable transport policies.

For more details contact Dr Simon Kingham (tel 03 364 2987 ext 7936, email <S.Kingham@geog.canterbury.ac.nz>) or Dr Doug Johnson (tel 03 364 2987 ext 7917, email <D.Johnston@geog.canterbury.ac.nz>) or visit <<http://www.geog.canterbury.ac.nz>>. ☺

EECA

New Masters Degree in Transportation Engineering

A Masters degree in Transportation Engineering is now available through Auckland and Canterbury Universities. The Masters programme had been developed to meet the demand for graduates with advanced skills in transportation engineering. It has been put together in consultation with the land transport industry and the engineering profession, and is financially supported by Transfund NZ, the Road Safety Trust, and the LTSA.

The degree is open to people who have completed a Bachelor in Engineering or Science, and to people from the industry who may not have degrees. It can be completed by students outside of Auckland or Christchurch while they continue to work full-time.

Information about the course can be found at:

<<http://www.cee.engineering.auckland.ac.nz>> or

<<http://www.civil.canterbury.ac.nz>>

from LTSA Road Safety NZ, November 2001

Who Needs Tinted Windows?

Just when you think a nice summer bike trip is a good idea, something comes out of left field to make you think again. The Cancer Society has advised that:

“a small number of its Cancer Society-branded sunglasses sold in K-Mart and Farmers between mid-August and October 5 wrongly carried the statement ‘Suitable for Driving.’ The glasses concerned only let in six percent of light while the Australian Standard states sunglasses which let through less than eight percent of light should carry the warning ‘Not suitable for driving.’ These models have been withdrawn from sale.

“The Cancer Society regrets these lenses inadvertently did not comply with the Australian Standard AS1067 which the Cancer Society endorses. Steps have been taken to ensure that the error does not occur again.”

And we worried about the LTSA's infamous Glazing Rule... at least you can see which cars have heavily tinted windows! Here's hoping that no-one who has tinted windows also wears the offending glasses. ☺

Jane Dawson

The Birdy Has Landed: Folding Bikes Now Available In NZ

Attendees of the NZ Cycling Conference 2001 may have noticed the CAN secretary arrive on a curious bike with small wheels, fold it up in 15 seconds into a smallish package, and carry it nonchalantly into the conference hall.

Meet the Birdy – a high-tech full-suspension aluminium folding bike from German bicycle innovators Riese & Müller. Until relatively recently, most folding bikes rode like shopping trolleys, but European and other designers have been hard at work coming up with advanced designs that not only fold small and quickly, but ride well too. This has resulted in a range of practical machines, like the Birdy, that can be ridden all day, then folded up and taken discreetly on a bus, train, or plane.

The Birdy has a great frame and suspension system, and is very lightweight (around 10-11kg depending on the model). So far I've taken mine on 6 plane trips and never been charged for it, and ridden it comfortably up to 80 km in a day. Plus I'm never short of conversation wherever I take it!

The good news is, the Birdy is now available in NZ. Currently CYCO (282 Ponsonby Road, Auckland, Phone 09 376 4447, <<http://www.cyco.co.nz>>) are selling them, and more distributors are being sought. Three models are offered (\$1999–\$3199). For more info, check out the Riese & Müller Web Site <<http://www.r-m.de>>, or the Australian Birdy website <<http://www.birdy.com.au>>. 🚲

Adrian Croucher

Cycling Advisory Group Rides OK!

The inaugural meeting of the Cycling Advisory Group (CAG, to distinguish it from all the other groups around beginning with C) was held on 30 November. It is being organised by Transfund and has representatives from Transfund, Transit NZ, Ministry of Transport, local authorities, regional councils, Local Government NZ, Land Transport Safety Authority, Cycling Support NZ and (of course!) CAN. The CAN reps are Axel Wilke and Jane Dawson.

The meeting discussed the terms of reference for the group and agreed the objective “to establish a forum to identify issues and priorities, facilitate discussion and provide advice to address cyclists’ needs.”

CAG will be a place to discuss cycling issues in terms of safety, evaluation, funding, road design and planning, and is intended to encourage sector groups to work together to support cycling as a transport mode. The focus will be on providing advice and sharing information on different approaches, but the responsibility for decision-making will remain with the respective agencies. The group will also help to formulate Transfund’s work programme and co-ordinate with initiatives (like the Cycling Standards Advisory Group set up by Transit NZ) in other agencies.

From CAN's perspective, this first meeting was a big step in the right direction. There was a positive and co-operative approach from participants, and useful debate around the priority areas to be worked on. We would have liked to see the group agree to promote cycling, but since the government agencies represented on it are bound by what the elected Government wants them to achieve, this was not considered appropriate. One of the tasks that CAN has now is to make sure that whichever politicians are in power, they *want* to promote cycling as a means of transport and are prepared to put money towards making it happen. Some decisions may not be politically popular, so we are all going to have to work hard in the coming year (election year!) to get public support and communicate that to the political parties. ☸

Jane Dawson

Snippets



Cycling 2001

The papers from the conference will be available in due course from <<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/Recreation/CyclingConference/cycleconference.asp>>. In the meantime if you'd like to read the paper mentioned during the conference wrap up, "if you missed the presentation, get the paper", you can find it at <<http://www.cosc.canterbury.ac.nz/~nigel/cycling2001>>. ☸

Canoeing By Bike...



This photo by Richard Guy Briggs, from Ottawa in Canada, shows a Greenspeed (Australia) recumbent tandem he modified to carry a canoe. Apparently the (disassembled) trike should fit in the canoe, though it hasn't been tested yet! Richard is associated with *Auto-Free Ottawa*, you can find them on the web at <<http://www.flora.org/afo/>>. He has done a little cycling touring in New Zealand, but the 13 hours of darkness and ice on the tent cut short cycling. He hopes to return one day. ☸

Interesting Stuff From Wellington

[If you are tempted to skip this mixed bag think twice... A lot of this is relevant in some way to cyclists. And the MoT comments on how dirty cars are (and we're not talking 'stock effluent') is very illuminating! Ed.]

I was fortunate enough to head up to the Road Controlling Authorities Forum in Wellington on Tuesday, 20 Nov – this is a gathering of people from Councils, Transit, Transfund, MoT and LTSA to talk about common issues over road control. The following are some of the things the RCA is looking at. Some interesting stuff going:

Stock Effluent Working Group: There is a group working to identify and establish stock effluent discharge points throughout the country. A contract has been let to Beca to identify points in the South Island. It is hoped the SI network will be operating in 18 months.

Once up and running, there are likely to be legislative changes concerning unlawful stock effluent discharges on to roads.

Standards and Guidelines: There is now a national group established to manage a process of review of national roading standards and guidelines. A questionnaire will shortly be distributed to RCA's asking what standards and guidelines we currently use.

Just out of interest, it appears that the first national working party established under the jurisdiction of the *Standards and Guidelines* committee is the one developing cycle infrastructure standards.

Rail Crossings Deed of Grant: After about 3 years, the RCA working group has finally reached agreement with TranzRail about how to administer rail crossings that are not covered by an existing deed. They have developed a draft deed of grant which both parties tentatively agree to – this covers responsibilities and costs in relation to rail crossings. The draft is shortly to be distributed for ratification on an all-or-nothing basis.

Stock Crossings: A draft document has been issued which determines what kind of treatment is appropriate for stock crossings of roads – it includes a chart indicating the type of facility based on stock and vehicle numbers (turns out it is easier to justify a stock underpass than it is a pedestrian crossing).

Stormwater Run Off Working Party: is being put together to look at issues related to stormwater run off from roads, and the extent to which RCAs should be involved. They are looking for a South Island member. No action as yet, but issues workshop planned for New Year.

Utilities Group: A utilities working party is looking to develop effective working relationships (or even codes of practice) with utilities providers so that both parties know what is expected of each other when utilities use road corridors.

LTSA Activities: The *Road User Rule* changes and *Traffic Devices Rule* changes are still in process. LTSA also involved in truck mass-dimension debate. Someone raised concerns that there are oversize loads travelling on roads every day, and that the average road controlling authority seems to have little power to prevent or restrain them. LTSA indicate they have an *Oversize Permit Issuing Authority* that can truly deal to operators damaging the road asset – but they must be informed.

Non-feasance Rule: Currently, NZ legislation says the RCA is not liable for damage/injury from the state of its assets (e.g. if a rotten bridge falls down). However, the Aussie courts have recently declared that this rule no longer applies in Australia. It would seem likely that NZ would follow this course of action in the future. This would mean that the courts would end up deciding what is a reasonable state of the roadway, and not the RCA.

Quantm Technology: A company called Quantm has a software package available that will plan a road's horizontal and vertical alignment between two end points, and optimise that alignment based on ground topography, minimising digging and/or filling, costs of bridging/construction etc. It will also avoid ecologically/environmentally/historically significant areas or whatever the operator tells it to do. Rather clever actually.

Opus tried it on a 15km stretch of new motorway planned for Auckland area. After about a week of data entry, and 3 hours of processing time, the software package produced the same alignment (only cheaper) that Opus had created after two full months of design using normal processes. I have a copy of a demo on a CD here for your viewing.

MoT stuff: The Ministry of Transport gave two really cracking presentations. The first was on a noise model which will allow some evaluation of noise disturbance from road or rail. It allows evaluation of the changes in disturbance if you change road surface, vehicle speed, vehicle type, topography or anything else around a transport corridor. Eventually it will allow comparative costs or pricing of noise disturbance effects. They are looking for an RCA to test the model.

The second presentation was about how polluting cars actually are. Apart from all the noxious gases which we all know about, there are significant environmental contaminants generated from brake shoes, tyres, and even vehicle collisions (e.g. – drop a mercury thermometer in a hospital, and men in contamination suits will clean it up, smash a headlight on the road (which also contains mercury) and the fire service will hose or sweep the stuff into a ditch!!). Another example – cars put out so much lead generally (from tyres or brakes) that the change to unleaded fuels has not changed the lead content in roadside grasses alongside some state highways in over 10 years.

The aim of the exercise to find out exactly how polluting cars are, is to both determine who is responsible for environmental clean up, and also generate pollution models to use as planning tools alongside our current traffic flow models etc.

State Highway Review: Transit will shortly be asking RCAs about whether there are any roads they consider should or should not be state highways in their areas. The letter asking this should be with us in about a fortnight, and we have until the end of March to reply with justification. Interesting to note that local Transit offices are not permitted to make any submissions to head office on this subject, without discussing it with the local RCAs.

Bitumen Supply: There are concerns about the national supply of bitumen in the 5 to 10 year bracket. Low sulphur crudes (which the government is legislating for) will affect local ability to manufacture bitumen. Replacements and overhauls at the refineries are looking so staggeringly expensive that they might not happen, and locally developed bitumen variants are not looking too good. How we get bitumen in the medium term is becoming an interesting question.

MOTSAM: Transit regularly updates the *Manual of Traffic Signs and Markings* on its website, but only sends out paper amendments once a year. This means it is possible for two different standards to exist at the same time. Transit is working on a way to inform people about changing standards more regularly. Meanwhile, it will always pay to check out the Transit website when dealing with a standard.

That's about it, something for everyone? ☺

Alix Newman, Christchurch City Council

A View of Critical Mass in San Fransisco

The following was passed to us by Paul Bruce, sourced form the Internet. The stickers mentioned say "mend your fuelish ways" and are produced by the Tian Harter from Irvine California, the author of the article:

Friday Night, being the last Friday of October, was Critical Mass night in San Francisco. It started at Justin Herman Plaza, with small groups of bicyclists trickling in around 5:15 PM. By 6 the plaza was wall to wall cyclists, many in wild costumes befitting the fact that Halloween is a high holy day in San Francisco. I worked the crowd, moving lots of stickers and finding out that it was hard not to like all the people there.

A little after six a chorus of bicycle bells rang out, along with chants of "RIDE! RIDE! RIDE!" It wasn't long before we headed up market street, many bicyclists abreast, completely filling all lanes of traffic over at least three or four city blocks. Buzzing around the edges of the group were young guys with lots of testosterone, riding their bikes like they were bucking broncos. They seemed to look forward to having confrontations with drivers, finding cars that wanted to argue about whose street this was, and surrounding and immobilizing them until the whole ride had gone by.

It was hard to miss the politics of the group. At one point a whole section of the ride started chanting "NO BLOOD FOR OIL! NO BLOOD FOR OIL!"

There were a couple of people doing things like handing out Xerocracy editorials about how we all need to do something to fight the power. One guy wore campaign posters from the public and solar power campaigns, telling people that he was pure clean energy. There was only one politician that I saw in the whole thing, Jim Reid, whose website is www.sfmud.net, as his T shirt reminded me many times.

The ride crossed San Francisco several times, going from the financial district through the mission district, over to Golden Gate Park and then back through Chinatown, whooping and hollering and wheelieing all the way. One thing they seemed to particularly enjoy was going through the tunnels. As the group got into a tunnel the noise level would grow tremendously, and the echoes would amplify the effect. During one of those episodes, I found that the standing waves from the sounds coming out of my mouth were so strong that they were like a physical objects. By the time I peeled off after three and a half hours of riding, my body was exhausted. Writing this, I can't remember anything I've done recently that was as much fun." 🚲

Tian Harter, Internet posting

Cycling Standards Advisory Group

After some initial discussion at the Road Controlling Authorities Forum, a Cycling Standards Advisory Group (CSAG) has been set up. Convened by Transit NZ, the CSAG also contains representatives from local authorities, LTSA, Transfund and CAN.

The purpose of the group is to identify, scope and prioritise outstanding roading standards and guidelines to accommodate cyclists. These would for example include signing/markings and design issues, but not strategic cycling policy/funding issues. Ways to take these forward via the available resources of various agencies would then be determined.

The inaugural CSAG meeting was held in Wellington on Nov 14. Glen Koorey attended for CAN. Four key themes came up:

- 1) Austroads Part 14 (Bicycles): there was general agreement to review this and implement it as a standard here with stated exclusions.
- 2) A NZ supplement to part 14: While its initial role would be to highlight the bits of Part 14 not relevant here, long term it could be expanded to add other items specifically for NZ.
- 3) Cross-referencing to other standards: there is a need to make sure that other documents also make reference to the same things as any cycling-specific documents, i.e. they're not pulling in opposite directions.
- 4) Relationship to legislation/Rules (LTSA): There are a number of cycling facilities that either can't be legally provided in NZ or their status is ambiguous in law. Hence any proposed standards and legislation need to be coordinated.

The CSAG members then identified a long list of areas that could need considering at some stage, e.g. cycle lane marking, touring route signage, shared facilities, etc. Many of these items will fall under the proposed review of Austroads 14, although they may not be resolved immediately.

The next task is to get the Austroads review up and running. The group agreed that this required a dedicated resource rather than trying to do it part-time. So some funds need to be arranged to engage someone to carry out the review, prepare the initial draft, and produce a final NZ supplement. The review would go through each part of Austroads 14 and identify which sections of Part 14 should not be used (and what were the alternatives) and which parts could be used but were subject to further investigation. A project plan has been developed to define the work involved.

All going well, we should see Austroads 14 and its NZ supplement implemented here in mid-late 2002. Further down the track, the supplement could be expanded/revised as new research came to light. ☺

For further information, contact:

Glen Koorey (koorey@paradise.net.nz)

Cycling Research

This is the first of what will hopefully be an ongoing series of articles on cycling-related research around the world. All feedback please to Glen Koorey, email <koorey@paradise.net.nz>.

Is it Safer to Ride on the Footpath?

Many of you will have seen the AA's recent call for allowing children to ride their bikes on the footpath. Ignoring all the related issues about driver behaviour, child freedoms, etc. for now, let's have a look at some of the safety evidence about cycling on roads and footpaths.

The first important thing to remember is that by far most cycle crashes do NOT involve motor vehicles on the road. People fall off or hit objects for various reasons, and they also have many crashes on off-road paths with pedestrians, dogs, and other cyclists. In a recent New Zealand study (Munster *et al* 2001), it was estimated from hospital data that four times as many cyclists are injured from cycle-only crashes on the road or footpath than those involved in a motor vehicle collision (note that this doesn't include off-road mountain-biking track accidents either). When looking specifically at children, Safekids (2001) concurred, with 85% of NZ hospitalisations for bicycle-related injuries to children during 1992-96 not involving a motor vehicle. Similar findings have been found overseas (Moritz 1998, Carlin *et al* 1995).

It is also worth noting that many crashes with motor vehicles will not be reduced by footpath riding. Cyclists would still have to cross side roads and driveways, where many conflicts occur. As Forester (2001) points out,

a key assumption for advocating off-road paths is that same-direction motor traffic is the greatest danger to cyclists (e.g. being hit from behind). For American data, he showed that these types of crashes made up only 1% of all cycle crashes (on & off-road) – hardly a panacea for cycle safety.

Closer to home and concentrating on road-specific crashes, LTSA injury crash data for 1996-2000 shows that 58% of urban cycle crashes are intersection crashes (including driveways). Looking specifically at on-road crash movements that could be avoided on a footpath (e.g. hit car door, rear-ended), less than a quarter of all on-road crashes appear to be likely candidates, based on crash movement codes.

In moving cyclists to the footpath however, additional crash problems may be introduced. More conflicts with pedestrians are likely for example and there may be less reaction time for driveway or side-road conflicts. Poor surfaces and geometrics are also likely to contribute to the footpath hazards. In fact, a number of studies have found that the crash rate involvement when cycling on footpaths (or “sidewalks”) is considerably higher than on the road or off-road cycle paths.

Aultman-Hall & Hall (1998) surveyed 1600 respondents around Ottawa, Canada, recording regular routes taken to work/education, amounts of cycle travel, and crash details. From “event” exposures calculated on roads, off-road paths, and sidewalks, they found that the likelihood of fall or injury (per 105 km) was four times higher on sidewalks than roads. These findings caused the authors to dig a little deeper on this issue. When Aultman-Hall & Adams (1998) looked at cycle travel data from >2500 respondents in both Ottawa & Toronto, Canada, the mean fall/collision rates on sidewalks were 2-10 times higher than equivalent incidents on roads or off-road paths. A large proportion of sidewalk incidents involved other cyclists, and surface conditions were also a factor, e.g. cracked or uneven pavements.

Moritz (1997) found similar findings from an internet/mail survey of “regular” commuters in US/Canada (2300 responses). Although “other” facilities (mainly sidewalks) accounted for only 0.8% of distances travelled, they accounted for 4.4% of crashes reported, a ratio of >5 compared with the on-road ratio. Further investigation by Moritz (1998) on the relative crash rate for different facilities showed sidewalks to be extremely dangerous (16 times worse than other facilities).

The above studies generally focused on adult commuter cyclists, whereas the AA’s initial stance focused on children. Not as much research can be found on this, however Carlin *et al* (1995) interviewed ~100 children admitted to hospital for bike injuries in Melbourne, Australia and compared them with 100 children who cycled but had not been injured. They found that 40% of injuries occurred on sidewalks or adjacent nature strips, a higher proportion than actual usage. Although further data was needed, they tentatively concluded that riding more on sidewalks was associated with an increased risk of injuries (~3 times greater for those riding >5km/week on sidewalks).

So is the sidewalk entirely to blame for the noted higher crash problems? An interesting finding by Aultman-Hall & Adams (1998) was that regular sidewalk cyclists also had higher on-road crash rates than non-sidewalk users. This raised the possibility that sidewalk riders are generally less confident and lack the skills and training of regular on-road riders (although they did find that even “regular” commuters had similar crash problems on sidewalks). They suggested that practical training of sidewalk cyclists may be more useful than just trying to get them off the sidewalk. This may be quite a relevant factor when considering where children should be cycling.

Despite the statistics, a big concern however is that a crash with a motor vehicle is more likely to lead to serious injuries, hence the preference to take one’s chances on the footpath. Certainly most bicycle-related deaths involve a collision with a motor vehicle. Over the five-year period 1992-1996, 25 children were killed in bicycle-related incidents in NZ, of which 22 (88%) resulted from a collision between the child and a motor vehicle (Safekids 2001). But, while moving the cyclist off the road may be reducing their injury severities, it may be transferring serious injuries to pedestrians that are hit by them (albeit fairly rarely fatally). And in fact, Aultman-Hall & Hall (1998) found in their survey that the likelihood of “major” injuries was still about 1.7 times greater on sidewalks than roads.

Do these research findings sound the death knell for legal footpath cycling? Maybe not, just for cycling on our existing street-paths designed for pedestrians. Providing specifically designed off-road cycle paths (or even just wider paths) can help to minimise road crash problems without introducing major off-road problems. Residents and visitors to Christchurch might like to check out Tennyson St (Beckenham) for an example of off-road cycle paths running along each roadside adjacent to the pedestrian footpath.



Tennyson St, Christchurch (the path has since had a red seal applied)

If all of these crash statistics make you feel a little vulnerable on your bike, consider the fact that only 1.1% of cyclists injured in reported urban on-road crashes died, compared with 1.5% of vehicle occupants and 4.2% of pedestrians (from recent LTSA crash data). And over the ten years that

the AA article found that 56 children had died in cycle crashes, more than 150 young pedestrians and more than 1100 children in motor vehicles died. Maybe the AA should look at its own backyard?

Still, while statistics can tell you many things, it's people's perceptions that often count. Given that children under 10 are generally considered not to have sufficient cognitive or traffic skills to ride on the road unaccompanied, allowing them at least to ride on the footpath may be a reasonable way for them to be introduced to the fundamentals of cycling. I suspect that a lot of parents will agree, but the old lady down the road might not. Let the debate continue! 🚲

Glen Koorey

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- Munster D. *et al* 2001, "Role of Road Safety Features in Cycle-Only Crashes in New Zealand", *Transfund NZ Research Report No. 211*.
- Safekids 2001, "Fact Sheet: Child Cyclist Injury". Website: <<http://www.safekids.org.nz>>.

Action on Cycle Tourism



Cycle tourists are one of the group of cyclists that CAN represents, but we've not given them much direct attention until recently.

Contact has now been made with the Tourism Industry Association of NZ (TIANZ) and the Tourism Board to find out their current level of interest and involvement in cycle tourism and to check out ways to work together with them.

David Laing and Robert Ibell had a brief meeting with TIANZ which indicated there is significant potential for co-operation between TIANZ, CAN and

people involved in the cycle tourism industry. This could include working with Transit and local authorities to get improvements to the road network (including signage and maps), and establishment of a TIANZ sector group to encourage cycle tour operators to work jointly to promote their industry.

A key area of concern to overseas cycle tourists is the attitudes and behaviours of NZ motorists. CAN would welcome the support of organisations like TIANZ in trying to get the LTSA to tackle this.

A meeting with the NZ Tourism Board is yet to be held, but there's potential for a NZTB marketing network for cycle touring companies, inclusion of cycle touring in their international media programme, and an improved profile for cycle touring in their overseas marketing.

CAN is also keen to see more NZ cycle touring information available on the Web. We handle a lot of queries from overseas visitors but currently do not have the resources to provide adequate advice.

If you have an interest in contributing to the work of CAN's cycle touring working group, please contact Robert Ibell on 04-385 2557 or <dawbell@actrix.gen.nz>. 🚲

Robert Ibell

Designing For Cyclists

This is the first of what will hopefully be an ongoing series of articles on the design of cycling facilities. All feedback please to Glen Koorey , email <koorey@paradise.net.nz>.

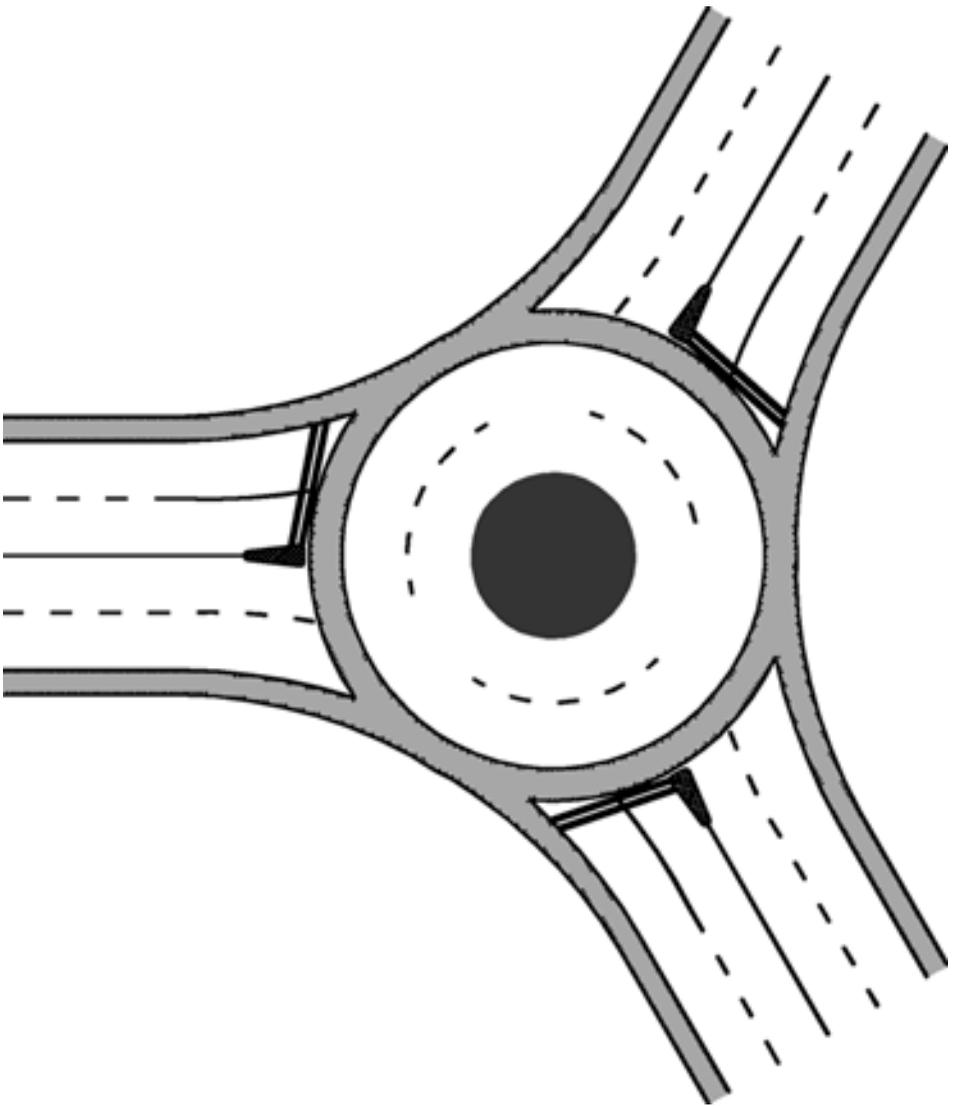
Magic Roundabouts and Magic Carpets

It's a problem that's vexed engineers for many years now: how to build a roundabout that cyclists like. Particularly when the roads in question are multi-lane. We're not going to solve the problem right here, but we'll start to toss around a few ideas that have been looked at.

Irrespective of any special facilities, a roundabout is much better for cyclists if you slow traffic down. Ways to do this include:

- Narrow down the approach lanes (perhaps allow for cyclists to avoid this pinch point?)
- Provide for large deflections through the roundabout, requiring small radius paths (provide a mountable apron if need be for trucks)
- Cut down on large approach sight distances that may cause motorists not to notice cyclists closer to the intersection and speed through.
- Why not provide speed humps on approaches?

A design that's been tried in the past overseas, and is sometimes advocated here, is to provide a concentric cycle lane around the roundabout on the road edge, i.e.



(invariably annotated with lots of little cycle logos as well)

This is designed to provide a clearly defined route for cyclists to travel around to their exit, separate from motorists. By colouring it, the lane stands out for motorists, (in theory) raising their awareness of cyclists around. And ideally, the rule is that vehicles crossing this circulating lane should give way to those travelling on it.

There's just one small snag: motorists have an annoying tendency to not always accept that they should give way, especially when exiting the roundabout. And until LTSA changes the current cycle lane rules in New

Zealand, legally they don't have to here (anything less than 2.5m is not a legal lane). The so-called "magic carpet" effect of a cycle lane may also encourage cyclists to think they were automatically safe on this route and not take due care. You may also need little kerb islands to prevent left-turning motorists from cutting corners.

So while the approach appears promising, the reality is usually not all rosy. Interestingly, when such a layout was first trailed overseas, cyclists felt that their trip was much better, despite the fact that the crash record did not improve. One possible way to reinforce the presence of the cycle lane would be to raise it like a pedestrian threshold. That way, at least traffic would slow down to go over it, hopefully minimising the likelihood or severity of any crashes.

Cycle lanes on the approach legs and in front of the entry lanes can still be a valuable way of assisting cyclists, particularly in conjunction with surface colouring and lots of logos. But marking them across exiting lanes should be avoided and cyclists wishing to carry on around will have to check first for exiting traffic or, better yet, ride with the traffic.

Even in the Netherlands, where cyclists have the legal right of way in a roundabout, the ongoing crash problems with circulating cycle lanes caused them to consider other options. Standard practice for major roundabouts there now is to provide separate off-road cycle tracks. We'll look at these in another article.

Suggested Local Reading

- Austroads, 1999. Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice, Part 14: Bicycles, Section 5.5.2 (Roundabouts)
- Wilke & Koorey, 2001. How safe are roundabouts for cyclists? TranSafe, Issue 5, April 2001.
- Clark & Appleton, 2000. The Ins and Outs of Roundabouts, Transfund New Zealand.

There are also a number of good European guides such as the CROW and Sustrans manuals. 🚲

Glen Koorey

National Bike Wise Week 2002

National Bike Wise Week 2002 will run 16-24 February and promises to be bigger and better than ever before. There will be more than 200 organisations getting involved and running various cycling activities in their areas. Bike to Work Days are planned all over the country for 20 February where people who bike to work can celebrate with a free breakfast. Cycle Skill days, bike rides and family fun days are some other events set to go off during the week.

There is a Business Biking Challenge planned to take place in Wellington. This will be a competition between organisations to see who can get the highest percentage of staff to ride to work during Bike Wise Week. The top organisations in their size categories will win a free morning tea for all those who participated. There will also be a prize for the organisation that bikes the greatest distance, and a special power prize for the organisation that gets senior management/senior partners involved.

For more information go to <<http://www.bikewise.co.nz>>, or contact Thomas Stokell on 04 472 5777, email <felicity@healthsponsorship.co.nz>.

🚲

Thomas Stokell

Bike Wise Report

There has been a slight shift in the focus of the Cycle Steering Committee (CSC) that manages the Bike Wise brand. While safety messages aimed at cyclists (particularly in the target age group of 8-12 years old) are still important, much greater emphasis is now being placed on cycling being a fun, healthy and convenient way to get around. The most recent meeting of the CSC agreed a new, broader, set of key messages.

Other issues discussed at the meeting included Bike Wise Week (see report elsewhere in this issue), clarification of Bike Wise sponsorship criteria, the possibility of establishing a formal qualification for cycle trainers, and a planned Bike Wise population survey (which will include attitudinal questions for cyclists and non-cyclists).

If you have any queries about Bike Wise contact the convenor of the CSC, Felicity Close (04-472 5777 or <felicity@healthsponsorship.co.nz>) or the Cycling Support NZ/CAN rep on the CSC, Robert Ibell (04-385 2557, <dawbell@actrix.gen.nz>). 🚲

Robert Ibell

The Segway™ Human Transporter

The Segway™ Human Transporter (SHT) has been announced with a flurry of hype and media reports. The SHT is an electric powered single person 2-wheeled vehicle. It consists of a stand-on platform 20cm off the ground, the wheels being either side of this, with a stem attached at the front of the platform with handlebars on top.

The SHT is controlled by computers, gyroscopes (5) and tilt sensors (2) to control the two motors, one per wheel, and maintain the drivers balance. The driver controls the vehicle by leaning/shifting weight slightly. It has a maximum speed of 20km/h and a typical range of 17km on a single charge. The weight is 36kg, and its footprint just 48 × 63.5cm. It can carry a passenger up to 110 kg with 34kg load (which presumably equates

to a 143kg person with no load). An “off board cargo module” with a capacity of 135kg is planned. The vehicle will not be available off the shelf until late 2002, and will cost a few thousand (US) dollars.

Overall it appears to be a clever application of technology, but technicalities aside, what is it good for? The manufacturers claim:

“The benefits of widespread usage of the Segway HT are far-reaching, including the creation of more livable communities. We believe that, in time, the Segway HT will lead to a reconfiguration of the way communities are built by significantly extending people’s walking zones, thereby enabling better use of space and the transportation infrastructure. The Segway HT will enable people to: make better use of their time, interact with people more easily and ultimately live better lives.”

It is clear that the SGT is not designed to replace the car, indeed one advertising point is that two SGT’s will fit in car boot. However they are promoting it as a means to travel short distances without a car, as an alternative to walking. On the positive side cyclists, health professionals, and transport planners will welcome any reduction in car use. However on the negative side, moving people from sitting in a car to standing on a platform doesn’t address the problem of lack of activity, though the air they breath will be cleaner and hence better for them (and us!).

It will be interesting to see whether it gains acceptance. An earlier attempt to provide personal electric transport, the Sinclair C5, failed abysmally. However the C5 was sit-in, low and slow, and people felt very unsafe in traffic. With the SGT the driver stands up and uses the pavement, walkway, corridor, etc. This would appear to give the SGT a better chance at success.

Some people clearly think it may succeed and are scared – the car-centric travel industry. Within days (probably hours) of its announcement the car lobby had swung its most potent weapon into action – helmets! At least one of the leading helmetist propaganda sources is carrying recommendations that no one should get on a SGT without wearing a helmet. After all the SGT must be dangerous as its top speed is slower than a fast runner! The SGT, like the bicycle, is clearly seen as a threat. For that reason alone maybe we should support it. ☺



Cycling Makes The Planet Cool

Well, maybe not, but transferring unnecessary car journeys onto bikes can help to counter global warming. CAN is putting in a submission on the NZ Climate Change Programme's consultation paper. At the time of writing, this has yet to be finalised, but the essence of the submission is that NZ should ratify the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible but should begin working towards reducing greenhouse gas production immediately. The government should take responsibility for managing greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector, and should take the approach of reducing emissions rather than buying our way out using "carbon sinks" (e.g. forests). The response should direct all of government policy, with the aim of fundamentally changing behaviours and expectations.

Let us know if you want a copy of the full submission. ☺

Jane Dawson

AA Meeting

On Tuesday 11 December Axel Wilke, Glen Koorey and Clare Ryan, representing CAN met with Tom McBrearty and several other members of the Canterbury AA council. With 800 000 members the Automobile Association is a powerful motoring group, on Tuesday we learned that they have made an effort to streamline and beef-up their advocacy role in the last couple of years. Augmenting the work they have been doing with government bureaucracy the AA has started more direct lobbying to politicians.

The AA now has a team of four full time policy analysts working in Wellington. There is also an arrangement for the minutes of each regional council monthly meeting to be circulated around the country so there is full information sharing. This is interesting because they often have speakers, and the details of the speeches are recorded in the minutes. There is an opportunity here for CAN people to get the cycling message in at ground level in this very large organisation. As Tom McBrearty said "We know that something like 80% of our members own bikes, but we are a conservative organisation and many of our members think we should only be looking after motorists".

Tom is a competitive cyclist from way back, and attended the National Cycling Conference in September, he is very keen for the AA to be far more inclusive in its advocacy role. Tom would like to see the focus switch from Automobile to Mobility, which he envisions would include all forms of motorised transport, bikes, and even pedestrians. This is the role played by similar organisations in Europe.

On Dec 14 there was an AA National Council meeting in Wellington and

Tom was given 30mins to address the council on cycling matters. At our Dec 11 meeting he told us this was unprecedented. Tom was going to report on the National Cycling Conference, on the opportunities for mutual interest between the AA and cycling advocacy groups such as our own, and the need for an AA Cycle Policy.

One last point to be covered was the Notorious *Directions* article. Tom said the editor and the writer had been made fully aware by numerous letters, that there was little support for the proposal for footpath hoons. However *Directions* Magazine does not necessarily represent the policy of the AA and has Editorial discretion. Articles are usually commissioned from writers.

Clare Ryan

The New CAN Executive: Short Autobiographies

Adrian Croucher (secretary@can.org.nz)

I've been CAN secretary for the past year and a bit, having joined CAN in 1999. I'm also currently chairperson of Cycle Action Auckland, so cycle advocacy takes up a pretty large chunk of my life these days. I work as a researcher in Engineering Science at Auckland University, and also perform with the experimental music/ performance group From Scratch. I've done a fair bit of cycle touring in NZ and overseas, including Hungary, Romania and Turkey. My partner Sally and I live car-free in Auckland, with the aid of 4 mountain bikes, 1 Birdy folding bike, and a BOB trailer, which gets used to carry all sorts of unlikely objects (most recently a worm farm). ☺

Jane Dawson (dawbell@actrix.gen.nz)

Having discovered how practical it is to commute around the city by bike while living in London, I was shocked to find how much cyclists had been left out of the system when I returned to NZ, so I helped to set up Cycle Aware Wellington in 1994 and have been involved with cycling advocacy ever since. I have been chairperson of CAN since last year, and have enjoyed seeing CAN develop into a strong, knowledgeable and democratic organisation. I ride a commuting/touring bike, mostly for commuting, shopping and going to meetings but occasionally for touring as well. ☺

Steve van Dorsser (steve@groundeffect.co.nz)

Role at CAN – Treasurer (when I get back in Christchurch in Feb)

Favourite colour – Agent Orange

Occupation in previous life – Engineer

Occupation in present life – Manufacturer of fabulous cycle clothing!

Cyclist – Yes! ever since I could

Favourite bikes – Rocky Mtn MTB (can't remember the model but its woody!), Windcheetah trike, and the old black Saracen cruiser that some kind person nicked.

Pet hates – bureaucrats that say “we can never have dutch style cycle facilities in NZ because... it rains too much, the Dutch were born with a bike seat up their bums, or any one of a dozen or so other idiotic reasons. When the real reason is that its a big job that’s pretty tricky and they’re not up to it.

Love pets! oops – riding the Heaphy (in my dreams!), touring in rural France, Dutch cycle facilities, fiddling with bikes. ☸

Robert Ibell (dawbell@actrix.gen.nz)

I’ve used the bicycle as my main means of transport for most of my 40 years, recently to cart my ‘cello around Wellington (with the help of a trailer!). There’s a decent sprinkling of cyclists amongst my workmates at the NZSO and the touring that goes with the job has given me opportunities to meet CANners in many parts of NZ. I first got drawn into advocacy via the London Cycling Campaign and have since been part of getting Cycle Aware Wellington and CAN up and riding. ☸

Glen Koorey (koorey@paradise.net.nz)

I’ve been a CAN member since 1999 and CAN’s treasurer for the past year and a half. My background is in traffic engineering & road safety and I’ve worked as a researcher for Opus International Consultants for the past four years. This year I’ve moved to Christchurch to start a PhD at Canterbury University on rural highway safety, while still doing a bit of Opus work on the side. When I’m not filling my days studying, working or CANning, I’m trying to find time with my wife Dianna and our four preschoolers. Suffice to say, they don’t all fit on my bike... ☸

Solveig Elizabeth (Liz) Mikkelsen (liz.ocean@xtra.co.nz)

[Liz is currently enjoying a trip around Denmark, with the wind in her hair. This bio is reproduced from last year. Ed.]

I came to New Zealand in 1975 “with my husbands job” after spending seven years working in Melbourne. I have two sons with whom I have done many cycle tours around New Zealand and in Denmark, the country of my birth. I have had no car for the last 11 years, but I have three bicycles – one for every purpose.

In 1994 I joined Cycle Aware Wellington. I became membership secretary & newsletter editor and later shared the secretary role for two years with Robert Ibell, now secretary of Cycling Advocates Network. For three consecutive years I organized the Bike the Bays Ride in Wellington.

In December 1998 I moved to Otaki. Together with Vicky Shuker in July 1999 I started Otaki Cycling Environment & Access Network, which covers the entire Kapiti Coast. In August OCEAN proposed to the Kapiti Coast District Council an off-road scenic cycle way from Otaki to Paekakariki. ☸

Nigel Perry (ChainLinks@can.org.nz)

When I first heard well meaning, but misinformed, people calling for cycle helmet legislation I ignored them assuming common sense would prevail. That was my fatal mistake...

When the shocking announcement came of the plans to introduce cycle helmet legislation, despite the evidence against it, my involvement with cycle advocacy began. I applied the “day job” skills as a research scientist to the issue, and then started to communicate the facts to the Government. However they simply were not interested and remain so today despite the growing evidence of failure, seemingly because they are caught in a web of lies and hypocrisy. I look forward to the day the law is abolished and can only wonder how many people would be alive, uninjured, healthier, or better educated today if I hadn't made that fatal mistake.

I joined CAN early on, became the newsletter editor, helped set up Cycle Aware Palmerston North and was its first secretary. This year I've moved to Christchurch and am looking forward to seeing the South Island from a cycle. I am married to Janet (who hasn't cycled since the helmet law came in) and we have a son Sam (14). ☺

Clare Ryan (clarewryan@inet.net.nz)

In May this year I was fortunate enough to finally land the job of my dreams. Unfortunately after only 4 months I realised I HATED it, and quit. This left me carless for the first time in 10 years. There I was back on my bike, cursing trucks, poorly parked cars, four lane intersections and roundabouts and I saw the National Cycling Conference advertised. Trying to be helpful and get some discussion going I accidentally found myself on the National Exec of CAN. I don't have a career at the moment but life is interesting, I am in the Hornby Search and Rescue Team, I'm studying journalism and I cycle about 250km a week to work (the adventurous thing about that is we start work at 6.00am). I've lived in Christchurch since 1991 but I'm a Southland girl born and bred. ☺

Axel Wilke (axel.wilke@can.org.nz)

Axel Wilke started his career in cycle advocacy in 1989 when he joined a club that promotes sustainable forms of transport in Hannover, Germany. Looking for a career change, he started studying towards a degree in Civil Engineering to become a traffic engineer. After graduating from Canterbury University, Axel started working for City Design Christchurch. He is now back at Canterbury to obtain a Masters in Transportation Planning.

Axel enjoys the outdoors – tramping, rock climbing and mountain biking. Socialising is high on the agenda, too. Christchurch is choice for lifestyle reasons. And he's still enjoying his cycle advocacy work. ☺



Welcome To 2002

At the start/end of a year it is common for the media to undertake retrospective analysis of the past year, and a hopeful look forward to the next. Not wishing to be out of step with the mainstream we now present a glimpse into the near future. The following is abbreviated from a forthcoming issue of Antecedent Adults' (A.A) Directives magazine, passed to us by a young child wearing a T-shirt sporting the logo "Drivers Do Not Have The Right To Kill" – clearly a confused child! We are sure the following will encourage you, though the child apparently felt otherwise, we'll let you decide:

“Go Play In The Traffic

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO THEY USED TO SEND KIDS up chimneys and down mines. Now we just send them out on the road.

And we send them out in the most vulnerable way possible, on their feet.

The results are not surprising. Although pedestrian helmets have reduced injuries since mandatory wearing was introduced, in the past ten years tens of children have died in pedestrian accidents and thousands have been injured, hundreds of them seriously.

What is surprising is that 10-year olds are expected to cope on the roads. As adult pedestrians know, walking requires more sophisticated and more constant defensive skills than car driving.

A spokesperson for Antecedent Adults stated “It starts from the basics of a child being able to work out if the driver has even seen them. Even that is a big ask for a child. A child, head down, chatting away, has a lot to keep track of. A car has mirrors, but when walking a child must swivel around or twist his or her head, which makes it difficult to keep in a straight line.

“We think we’ve done our job with kids once they can walk and answer a few road code questions, but a child’s concentration can be all over the place.”

The subjugation advisor for Land Transport Solely by Automobile (LTSA) points to historical and social acceptance of child walking that continues, despite valid safety concerns.

Although the LTSA recommends that no children under ten years of age walk by themselves, it’s only a recommendation.

As a result, many schools oppose walking altogether. The Principal of one of Wellington’s leading schools says: “We discourage parents from sending their children to school on foot, but we can’t stop them because its legal.”

Fortunately eighty-five percent of students studied don’t walk to and from school because the roads are unsafe.

Pedestrian Safety

- All pedestrians must wear helmets
- Child pedestrians should wear brightly coloured clothing and helmets.
- Road rules apply to pedestrians too. Children should learn the rules and know how to indicate clearly.
- Child pedestrians should be taught to treat driveways as intersections.
- Encourage children to keep their heads up, searching for hazards.
- Remind children that even if a pedestrian can see a vehicle, the driver might not see the pedestrian.

The Safe Walking Book, produced by the LTSA, is especially written for unfortunate children with abusive parents who refuse to drive them everywhere. Available at bookstores for \$259.95. 🚲

blame Nigel Perry

Share The Road



“Share the road” was a message we saw right across the USA. Directed at motorists. The standard diamond yellow sign with a bicycle above the message, or in Amish country a horse and carriage!

In our 22 week, 10,500 km trip we had our road space contested only once – by a school bus returning home empty at the end of the day. We got off the road quickly onto the gravel shoulder. All the other 1,000s of vehicles gave us enough room or waited until safe to pass. We did our bit too. We got good at balancing on the white line! If there was a truck or a queue of cars waiting for a place to pass we anticipated or got off the road as soon as we could, e.g. into a driveway.

We think “Share the road” is a very powerful message.

In the US and Canada the 4 way stop signs require motorists to take turns in order of arrival at the stop line. Incredibly (to us) we came across the same system at a large roundabout (“rotary”) in Canada. I.e. vehicles on the roundabout take turns with vehicles entering the roundabout. They used a flashing green traffic light to indicate this. So “sharing the road” is part of everyday driving in the US and Canada. 🚲

John & Briar Gregory

Letters

Dear *ChainLinks*,

David Wigley takes issue with the statistics reported in *ChainLinks* showing that the helmet law has failed and cites a couple of cases to support that view. Hospital staff, the police and the press invariably attribute miracles to the use of a helmet and unfortunate cyclists will often be persuaded that they do indeed owe their lives to a centimetre or two of polystyrene. The fact is, that if a cyclist is hit hard enough by a heavy, fast moving object then not even a suit of armour would mitigate the consequences.

The *Ontario Coalition for Better Cycling* observe: “The “helmet-saved-my-life” stories are mostly hyperbole. A helmet on the head of a cyclist who falls from a bicycle on to a hard surface is almost certain to come into contact with the surface and be damaged. It’s all too easy then to assume a serious head injury would have been incurred without the helmet. Physicians are often the source of these stories, but they have no particular competence in the mechanics of a bicycle accident. When a helmet gets trashed it may well have prevented a nasty bump or even saved a few stitches, but the odds it saved a life are about the same as winning the jackpot in a lottery.”

I was given my first bike in 1936 at age four and have been pedalling on and off ever since and have never felt the need for a helmet. I bought my first helmet in March 2001 only because I became tired of arguing with LTSA and because I wanted to go on biking — the threat of a fine was also something of an incentive. But I do not feel that I need a helmet and I regard the damned thing as an imposition.

David says that it would be madness for politicians to revoke the helmet law without substantial evidence of the situation in this country. Maybe, but it was equally mad to introduce the regulation without substantial evidence of need and efficacy. Further, it was done precipitately, without consultation and on the advice of the bureaucrats at LTSA. David suggests that any such evidence would need the backing of the police and medical professionals. Forget the police, they are mainly interested in appearances and medical professionals are beginning to see the light.

In June 1999, the Board of Education and Science of the British Medical Association unequivocally opposed the introduction of compulsory helmet laws in the UK. The BMA take a balanced view rather than a kneejerk reaction (as happened here) and say, *inter alia*, that the chances of serious injury or death whilst riding a bike are small when set against the chances of death through obesity and heart disease resulting from want of exercise. And one of the principal effects of compulsory helmets, has been a significant decline in the number of people cycling. The BMA adds; Research by the European Cycling Federation found that non-cyclists tended to be most in favour of helmets. In fact, a much greater number of lives would be saved if pedestrians and car occupants were encouraged to wear helmets. Helmet use in the UK is about one in five cyclists.

The BMA further comments: In countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark pedestrians and cyclists form a much smaller proportion of those injured or killed on the road, though helmets are little used. Instead, these countries have concentrated on safety programmes to reduce motor traffic speeds to 30 km/h in urban areas and separate cyclists from fast moving traffic.

See also the reasoned comment by Dr. Thomas J. Demarco in “Don’t Kill the Goose That Lays The Golden Egg”, which can also be found on the Ontario website (There is also a link on CRAG). This takes very much the same line as the BMA.

The European Cyclists’ Federation also has trenchant comment on the question of helmets and an interesting policy document may be found on their website.

In a letter last year, the Minister of Transport told me that the helmet law was the will of parliament. Of course it’s nothing of the kind, as a regulation, it was imposed by Order in Council on the advice of departmental officials. Consequently there was no bill, no select committee and no debate, just a *fait accompli*. There was certainly no evidence, just a fancy on the part of a couple of officials that helmets might help. In fact, the regulation to compel the use of helmets was simply a an emotional response to a campaign by a lady in Palmerston North, and the need for the government to not only do something, but be seen to do something — at the least possible cost — except to cyclists.

Clause 38a(3) of the Traffic Regulations 1976 says, among other things that a helmet shall be of an approved type and that is securely fastened. Casual observation reveals people using industrial and equestrian helmets, and suggests that the regular helmet stock is ageing, often damaged, ill-fitting, and frequently not fastened, properly or otherwise. Bike helmets have become a jest to be tolerated rather than taken seriously. But, so long as a helmet is in evidence, often perched atop a baseball cap, the constabulary seem to pay little attention. As a case in point (Sunday afternoon), I just observed a gentlemen cycle past my gate, escorting his small son (properly helmeted), and wearing a canoeist’s helmet!

The final word should go to Mr Bell from a pamphlet I found attached to the helmet I bought;

“WARNING!

LIMITED IMPACT PROTECTION. Helmets reduce or prevent many injuries. But, impact forces, even a common low speed accident, can result in serious injury or death. Energy absorbing materials used in helmet crush on impact. Sometimes, the blow can crush the material completely. When this happens some of the force is transferred to the head. If forced is great enough it can cause injury or death. Because every accident is different, it impossible to predict when this might happen.

HELMETS CAN'T PREVENT ALL HEAD INJURIES. Some head injuries are not caused by impact at all. They are caused by other forces like scrambling an egg just by shaking it. You don't have to break the shell to destroy the contents. Helmets cannot prevent this type of injury."

Quite, but don't worry Mr Bell, I'm not about to sue you! ☺

G J (Bill) Wright, Pleasant Point

Dear *ChainLinks*,

Our Hastings City and surrounds are now peppered with roundabouts. These have created a new pattern of behaviour; most of it favourable.

The one remaining major worry has been the place & importance that cyclists have in these traffic flows.

Our death rate due to roundabouts is not a happy read. One young student was recently clipped & killed on an inner-city roundabout by an articulated truck that proceeded on without even realising the tragedy behind him.

Early next year the Hastings District Council's roading division is calling for workshops on this problem. Not a great deal of help has been on offer by the National bodies, and we are looking for innovative and practicable practices that could be adopted.

- suggestions include the special provision along with the pedestrian walkways at each exit (not always possible when so many circles are "tight" – a common fact in town)
- specific signs on all roundabouts – that could state, for example, "Let Cyclists Go Ahead."

Any suggestions would be most welcome! Hastings District Council and its community arm, Landmarks Trust, have embedded a proposed cycleway network into their strategic plan and this has already started with both designated separate tracks and specified cycle lanes being incorporated into all new roading. Council officers have attended recent cycling conferences and their enthusiasm and forward thinking has been a highlight in civic and public communications in all transport matters.

Please forward any ideas to email below – or to *ChainLinks* – we simply need to stop our sad death rate. ☺

with thanks, Joyce Barry, Landmarks Trust
<dmjb@ramhb.co.nz>



Editorial: Did The AA Expect The “Backlash”?

With the publication of “Go Play in the Traffic” in the Summer 2001 issue of *Directions* the AA certainly managed to generate a reaction. We must point out that views expressed in *Directions* are not necessarily AA policy, just as views in *ChainLinks* are not necessarily CAN policy (see disclaimer on the front cover), but the AA’s policy history on non-car road users wouldn’t lead you to believe this article was not in line with policy.

The “AA Meeting” report in this issue reports that the AA have stated the editor and writer have heard the reaction. However what we should ask is was the reaction expected? Surely the AA must have known that the suggestion to put the cyclists on the pavement would not go down well? Even their argument suggested an obvious problem, “cyclists should treat driveways as intersections” and “let the cyclists ride on the pavement”, and hence closer to those driveways, doesn’t quite add up! So given that the reaction, at least in New Zealand, was predictable, what was the purpose of the suggestion in the first place?

Note, the “at least in New Zealand” is important, in Europe and the UK cyclists and pedestrians do apparently mix without major problems – it is in the car-centric countries such as the USA and NZ that most concerns are raised, as the article “Is it Safer to Ride on the Footpath?” explains.

So why did the AA suggest it? Take a look at the figures reported in “Is it Safer to Ride on the Footpath?”: Over the last 10 years 56 children have died in cycle crashes, while more than 150 young pedestrians and more than 1100 children in motor vehicles died. Now remind yourself of the “Theory of Bicycle Helmet Legislation”, which asserts that requiring bicyclists to wear helmets reduces injuries and deaths **and** requiring seat-belted motor vehicle occupants to wear the same helmets would save **seventeen** times as many lives (the fact that it is a *theory* doesn’t make it wrong, or right, that is not the issue here). From 56, 150 and 1100 the AA emphasise the 56; while for helmets they 100% support the theory for bicyclists, and 100% reject it for motorists – despite it being the same theory!

Spot a pattern? 🚲

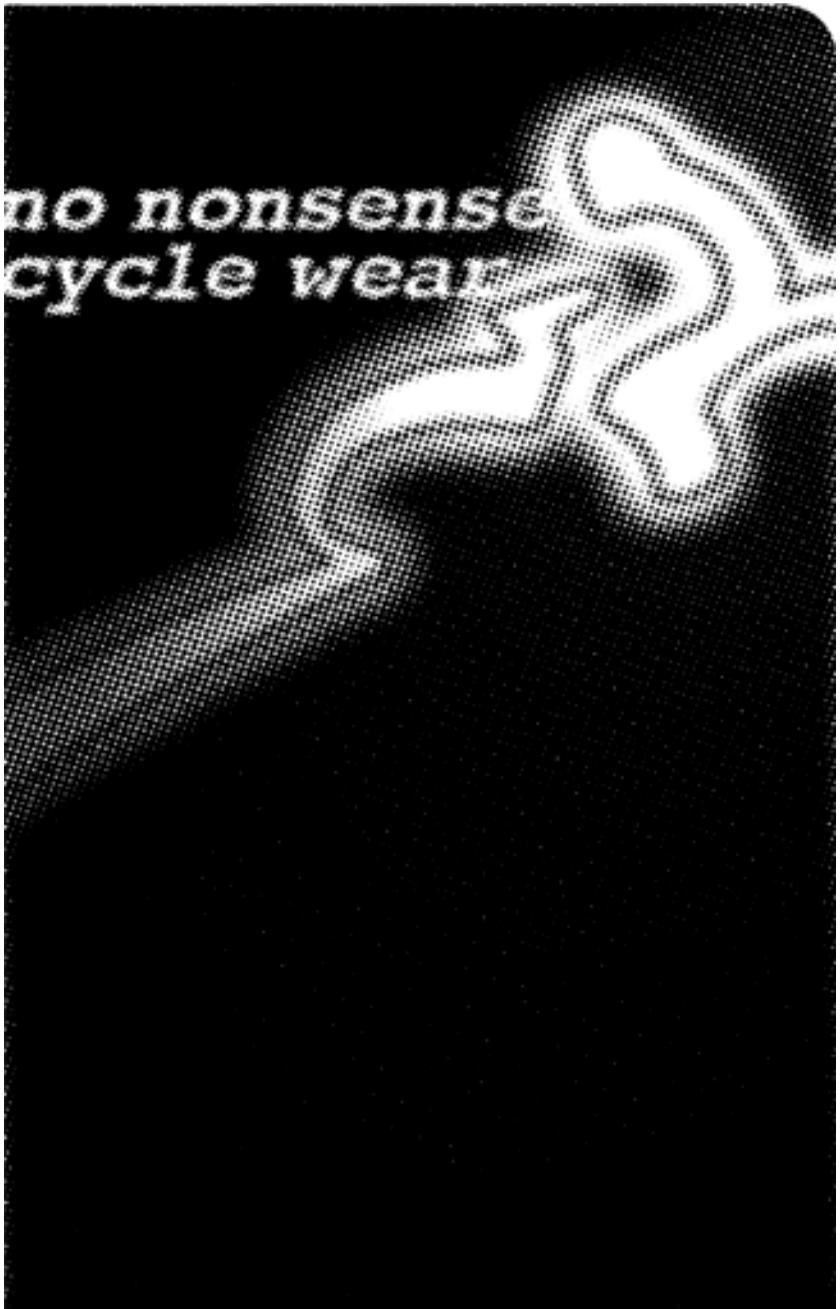
Editor

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