

## Designing For Cyclists

### PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

Off-road (segregated) paths are favoured by many people wanting stress-free (and traffic-free) cycling. But the stress level can rise again if cyclists encounter walkers, joggers, skaters/bladders, dogs, horses, and also other cyclists behaving erratically or taking over the pathway. It's largely a given in New Zealand that most cycle paths will in fact be "shared paths" - so how do we ensure that all parties are happy with the sharing arrangement?



The first priority is to make sure that the path in question is up to the demand imposed upon it. Many path conflict issues would evaporate for example if the path was just made wider, allowing people to pass with relative ease. Adequate path curvatures, sight distances and clearances either side can also minimise nasty surprises.

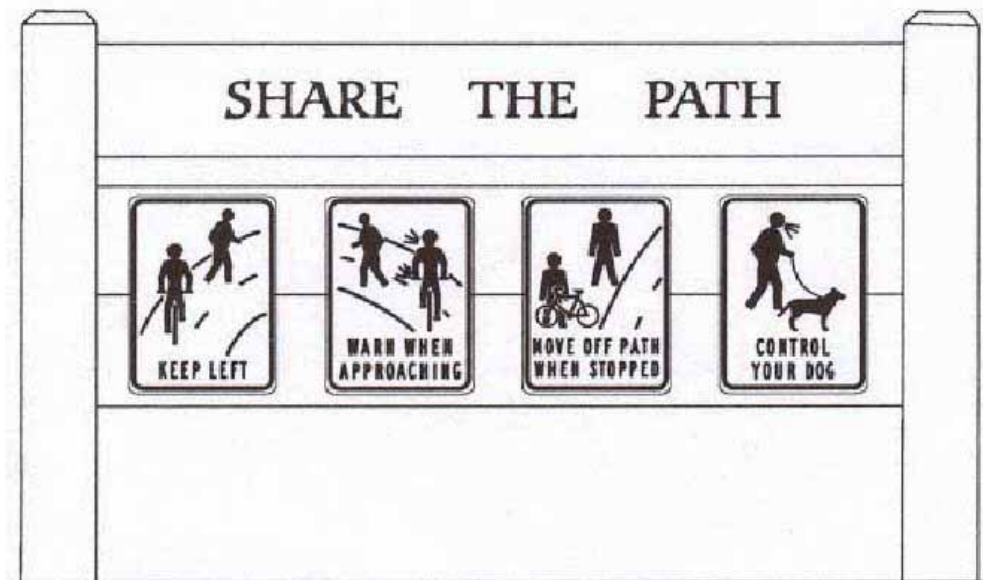
Despite this, pavement markings and signage are sometimes useful on high-use paths to encourage consistent path behaviour. For example, use of a dividing line to separate pedestrians from cyclists is common (with cyclist/pedestrian pavement symbols and signage to indicate this). If two-way usage is expected however, there must be adequate width in each section for safe unimpeded passing. Generally it is **not** desirable to require cyclists to "give way to pedestrians"; cyclists are less likely to use such a facility if they feel they don't have equal rights. A street mall may be a reasonable exception.

In many cases, separation of path users by *direction* rather than by type is more preferable. Passing behaviour is then consistent with that on roads, i.e. approaching path users know what side of the path to take, while faster path users can overtake slower ones by crossing over to the other side when safe to do so.

To ensure respect between the various user groups using paths (particularly when paths are of inadequate width) clear rules of behaviour should be promoted. Many Australian states for example, encourage the following simple system (which is also incorporated in the Australian Road Rules):

- **Keep left** (often reinforced by a solid/dashed centreline and symbols/arrows)
- **Warn when approaching** (e.g. sound bell, "excuse me", etc)
- **Move off path when stopped** (so as not to block other users)
- **Control your dog** (we're not afraid of your dog biting us, we're afraid of running it over!)

These instructions can be provided symbolically at the main path entrances, as shown below. For less well-used paths, it may be appropriate to just inform users of fewer key messages, e.g. "keep left" and "warn when approaching" (or just mark some lines/arrows/symbols on the path).



Specific instructions like this are usually more helpful to all parties than generic "Share The Path"-style messages on their own. And that means that everyone gets along just a little better!

#### **Some Relevant Reading**

- Austroads 1999, *Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice, Part 14: Bicycles*, Section 6.6.1 (Shared Paths).
- (UK) Dept for Transport 1993, *Cycling in Pedestrian Areas* (Traffic Advisory Leaflet 09/93), presents some research findings and design guidance on allowing cyclists in pedestrian areas.  
Web: <[http://www.roads.dft.gov.uk/roadnetwork/ditm/tal/cycle/09\\_93/index.htm](http://www.roads.dft.gov.uk/roadnetwork/ditm/tal/cycle/09_93/index.htm)>
- VicRoads 2001, *Shared Path Behavioural Signs* (Cycle Note No. 10), provides more detail on using the signs described above. Web: <<http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/vrpdf/trum/tr2001121.pdf>> (435kB)

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