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submitted to: transportplanning@wcc.govt.nz



the architectural centre inc.
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Architectural Centre submission on Draft Cycling Policy

This is a submission from the Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington, as well as the functional and inspirational planning of our city.

The Architectural Centre **strongly supports** the council's draft cycling policy. We congratulate the council for the depth of thinking apparent in this draft policy and strongly commend the council to implement it asap to address the current lack in cycling facilities in our transport infrastructure, and to address the current dangers to cyclists in our city. We applaud all moves to lower speeds in inner city areas to ease the relationship between car-speed and cycle-speed, and the council initiatives to encourage school children to cycle to school etc..

We do need however a more explicit statement that the aim of the city is to provide **an integrated transport strategy where pedestrians, public mass-transport and cyclists are prioritised** over other private forms of transport. It is unfortunate that transport policies have been segregated into modes of transport and we support more comprehensive cross-modal thinking about transport issues.

While the Architectural Centre is pleased that at last cycling is being recognised and supported as a valid means of transport, the provision of adequate and appropriate cycle ways is lagging far behind. Cycling has markedly different use attributes in Wellington compared to all other cities in New Zealand, with a vastly lower proportion of children cycling in comparison to adults. While this may simply reflect the difficulty of learning to cycle on our steep hillsides, it also recognises that **cycling is a preferred method of both recreation and commuter transport for a growing proportion of Wellingtonians**, despite the occasionally inclement weather in the capital city.

As such, the major commuter routes at the very least should be recognised with safe, secure, and well-designed cycleways. Adelaide Road is a prime case, as it collects traffic from Island Bays and Newtown, yet cyclists are forced to "share" their safe cycling routes with buses some 200 times greater in mass, and no realistic hope of survival from death or maiming in the event of a collision. Cyclist deaths in Wellington are disturbingly high in number, and are caused solely by collisions with vehicles. The time has come to say enough: **cyclists need their own cycle paths**, separate from other traffic and the risk of death by Bridgestone.

We note the following further points:

The Design of Cycle Paths

Cycle paths ideally need to be **positioned apart from gutters, buses and car parking**. In recent weeks one of our members has seen one poor cyclist trapped between two buses (*a la* the garage scene in the first 1970s Star Wars film), and another member has also been sandwiched on bicycle between a bus and a parked car, resulting in a broken arm.

They were lucky there was a driveway they could escape to the footpath on. Other members have had numerous near misses when car drivers have parked and opened their car-doors blocking the cyclist's path. Possibly all of our bike-riding members have had punctures due to cars pushing us into the gutter with broken glass or other items likely to puncture tyres. Car drivers often behave as if they think a gutter is sufficient for cyclists and this myth needs to be

dispelled. **Well-signaled and well-defined cycle lanes will assist drivers in comprehending the space they need to allow for cyclists to survive in the city.**

Strategies also need to be developed to reflect **the unique characteristics of cycling as a transportation mode**. The dual use of road and footpaths, and the need to develop strategies to enable safe right-turning at intersections, and the implementation of cycle paths on the right side of roads, especially one-way streets (e.g. Kent Terrace) are important. Currently WCC by-laws do not allow cyclists to use footpaths except where marked (e.g. Oriental Bay, through Mt Victoria tunnel (despite the cycle barriers on the footpath leading up to it!), and Evans Bay Parade). It is time this by-law was changed. No pedestrian in Wellington has ever been killed by a collision with a cyclist, whereas all cyclists have been killed by collisions with vehicles.

We also encourage the council to implement pedestrian/cycle prioritised parts of the inner-city - where cars must give-way or are banished. We suggest in addition to the proposals for Lambton Quay that **the entire length of the Golden Mile be car-free and dedicated to pedestrian, cycle and public mass-transport** (i.e. not taxis). Private car access to the Golden Mile is not needed at all. As a minimum, the Golden Mile ought to become, what is known as, **a naked street**, where there is no distinction between footpath and road allowing an intermingling of modes of transport, providing a safer context for non-car traffic.

Continuity of cycle lanes is another critical issue strongly in need of being addressed. The current situation is accurately described as a farce. **Cycle lanes often disappear, and usually at a really dangerous corner or intersection**. The new intersection onto the by-pass off Taranaki Street (and across Webb Street) is a case in point where heavy traffic levels are dominant, and cyclists have cut through the middle of it. Car drivers seem to fail to recognise the right of cyclists to pass through the intersection and it is incredibly dangerous. We note that although cycling levels are far, far higher in the Netherlands, and there is no law forcing helmet use there, rates of accidents and death to Dutch cyclists is lower than in New Zealand. Reasons for this may be surmised based on the following salient points: cycle lanes are separate, cyclists at lights are always given priority to proceed first across the intersection, and lastly: that no matter who may have caused the accident, a car driver will always be held liable and is deemed to be at fault.

In some places in the city, **bus lanes** occupy the space cyclists conventionally use. We are glad that the council will advertise the fact that cyclists are legitimate users of bus lanes, as frequently bus drivers appear unaware of this and a bus-horn from behind is unnerving and sounds very loud. It must be noted though that **cycle/bus lane combinations are often more dangerous for cyclists than cycling with cars**. To that end, the Architectural Centre fully supports the proposed Great Harbour Way of the proposed harbourside cyclepath from Petone to Kaiwharawhara, and ultimately from Eastbourne to Seatoun.

There are many examples of good cycle path design internationally and we encourage the council to investigate and adopt these. We support the council's intention to provide cycle lanes of a distinct colour. This will assist car-drivers' understanding of the amount of space cyclists need. In this regard we encourage the WCC to bring back the "don't burst their bubble" campaign. LTSA has a policy document for cycle route planning etc <http://www.ltsa.govt.nz/road-user-safety/walking-and-cycling/cycle-network/index.html> which should be utilised at the very least, but does not provide enough detail. We strongly support a **Design Guide for cycle lane and cycle path design**, and would be happy to work with the council to prepare such a document.

Safety and Health Issues

The proposed **street-sweeping** is an example of where the council thinking comprehensively deals with often missed, but critical, detail, and we applaud the council for such moves. We do however consider this as addressing an issue of safety rather than convenience, and suggest the proposal is moved into a more appropriate section in the policy. One of our members put the safety issue succinctly as follows: "It is hard to concentrate on what cars are

doing if you're also trying to avoid broken glass and understand where your cycle lane has disappeared to."

The council's draft policy rightly acknowledges the negative health impacts of car pollution on cyclists and that an increased number of cyclists will reduce pollution hazards. The Architectural Centre sees the need for a more proactive approach to reducing this aspect of cars killing cyclists. We recommend **measuring of streets for pollution levels** and including pollution information on signage (so cyclists are aware of the degree of health dangers), the **use of vegetation to mitigate pollution** and **site-specific interventions** (e.g. a transparent screen between the pedestrian/cyclist path and cars in Mt. Victoria Tunnel). There are also instances (e.g. Mt. Victoria Tunnel) where **noise pollution** may be causing hearing-damage to cyclists and pedestrians.

Often the draft mentions the need to "reduce the perception of road danger." (e.g. p. 7) While we acknowledge the need for the council to increase the perception of safety in the city with respect to cycling, we strongly support the actuality of safety to also increase, and that the policy stresses that this is the aim. Cyclists' safety needs to be considered at a level greater than perception. A few weeks back one of our members wrote to council to complain about the motorway cycle lane to Hutt & Petone round-about - the answer came back saying it was a grey zone between two city councils and Transit. While this may be true, we suggest that the inability of councils to co-ordinate themselves should not be an excuse to allow the death and injury of cyclists to continue.

Facilities and support for cyclists

We support the initiative to increase the number of cycle parks in the city, and consider that **cycle-parks must be provided in car-parking buildings and in inner-city apartment buildings**. We also support the proposed encouragement of cycle parks in workplaces but also signal the need for the **provision of showers in workplaces** too. The **WCC** buildings and facilities across Wellington **must set an exemplar** in this regard.

We congratulate the Regional Council for the introduction of the free carriage of bikes on trains and strongly support the City Council's aim to provide for the carriage of bikes on buses in the near future. We suggest a specific carriage be provided in the light rail proposed for the city for bicycles.

Cyclists blog

The Architectural Centre believes that a mechanism for the council to receive regular feedback from cyclists on a range of issues is needed. We suggest an electronic forum or blog. Such a blog might enable cyclists to alert the council to a range of long and short term needs, from notifying particularly dangerous intersections, making suggestions for roading improvements and places for cycle paths, and identifying areas of broken glass on the road.

While we are impressed (even surprised) of the depth of understanding of the issues apparent in the draft policy, we are confident that an easily accessible forum where the experience of cyclists can be posted would be an invaluable council resource.

New Developments

We consider as a minimum that all new roading projects require provision of cycle lanes or associated but distinct cycle paths. The **WCC must not contribute funds**, or support of any other kind, **for projects which do not provide safe accommodation for cycle traffic**. We also stress that these (like all other cycle ways) must be maintained (for example, we have had negative comments raised by members about the state of the cycle track beside the motorway to the Hutt in this regard). We also advocate for the target that within five years (2013) 75% of roads in Wellington be cycle safe with a high standard of cycle paths or cycle lanes, separated from car-traffic, and that 100% of routes recognized as major cycling routes should by then have a full separated cycle path.

Items proposed that we Do Not Support

We consider that a journey-planner should be a very low priority, if not recognised as a waste of money. **Cyclists cannot carry their laptops or printouts while cycling.** The current journey-planner for bus/train travel often provides ridiculous and erroneous results. We strongly encourage the council to instead invest more immediately in way-finding signage.

A Pedantic but Important Note

Many of the **graphs in the draft are of a very low resolution** rendering them **difficult to read when printed**. As mentioned in previous submissions about other issues the Architectural Centre strongly pleads (begs, even nags!) the council to address its lack of resolution in this regard as much of the communal discussions of your proposals occur around printed versions rather than off computer screens. We stress the ethical duty that WCC has in making legible information freely available in order to conduct inclusive public consultation – the problems referred to are counter to this.

Conclusion

The Architectural Centre also believes that all of Wellington's citizens (widely defined as those living and working in the city, including those commuters from the wider Wellington region) need full consideration in the provision of cycling facilities. In this regard we note the apparent lack of co-ordination between the region's councils and Transit, causing proverbial "grey areas" of responsibility. The inability for the relevant councils to co-ordinate themselves is inexcusable, and we support any actions the WCC takes to address this. The issue of cycling safety on well-co-ordinated and well-design cycle passages is a critical one for numerous reasons: **global warming, pollution, peak oil, the obesity epidemic etc.**

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft Cycling Policy: we appreciate this aspect of the democratic process and hope our comments, observations and suggestions have been helpful to you.

If you have any questions about any of the points raised please contact me.

Yours sincerely

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The Architectural Centre