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Eastern Suburbs Safer Cycling Consultation (KCIF02)
Freepost
Wellington City Council
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Re: WCC Eastern Suburbs Safer Cycling Consultation

This submission is from the Architectural Centre, an incorporated society dating from 1946, which represents both professionals and non-professionals interested in the promotion of good design.

The Architectural Centre has the following comments to make regarding the proposal for the Eastern Suburbs Safer Cycling Consultation.

Decision-making to date

1. The initial questions must be "Is there a need?" and, if yes, "Is this the greatest need?" There is no indication that these basic questions have been asked. We see the greatest need as being to address the lack of cycling routes through the CBD. With respect to the eastern area of Wellington, the greatest need resides between Kilbirnie and the CBD with an estimated 2,200 new cyclists.¹ This is exactly where the proposed cycleways will stop. We don't want another Island Bay - where money is spent needlessly and to no material benefit.
2. This list of factors (namely budget, cyclist numbers, accident rate, potential demand) do not appear to have identified the type of cyclist the cyclepath is intended to support. This decision is important as it will impact on issues pertaining to route (including terrain), and design. They also do not include the socio-economic/demographic profile of areas.
3. A review of census data appears to indicate that cycling, walking and bus mode share is positively affected by lower incomes, flatter terrain, proximity to the CBD, and possibly wider economic context. This would suggest that: (i) increasing housing density on flatter areas of the city closest to the CBD and (ii) increasing the cost of car travel may be more productive strategies for the council to focus on to increase cycling uptake. Certainly detailed analysis of Census data needs to inform this decision-making, and the WCC cycling framework and network priorities regarding cycling infrastructure provision.
4. The consultation regarding the cycleway needs to be explicit regarding the target group (e.g. novice cyclists; commuter cyclists; or recreational cyclists)

¹ Council figures supplied by WCC by email.

because they will have different needs. We encourage the WCC to focus on commuter cyclists for this exercise. This will have ramifications in terms of needs for directness, and minimal stops, suggesting that shared paths (which are interrupted by roads and driveways) will unlikely be ideal. This submission also assumes that the dominant route is to and from the CBD. Certainly the increase of cyclists entering the CBD to over 2,500 suggests that routes between the suburbs and the CBD are important,² but data on residents' place of work is needed to inform commuter routes. The data from monitoring main corridors into the city indicates that Thorndon has the greatest current need and Kilbirnie and Kelburn the lowest³ - though there does appear to be a discrepancy between this observed behaviour and the Koordinates data.⁴ We encourage the council to use this information in their decision-making, including the prioritising of parts of the city to improve cycle infrastructure.

5. Providing the data that the working group used in their decision-making would assist in evaluating the decision-making and identifying areas and issues which may have been missed, as well as helping us understand any rationale for these decisions. We have received some information from the council after asking for it, but consider that automatically including this for consultations would be useful.
6. We also encourage the council to draw on other data, such as the Strava bike to work data. A number of cyclists are using this app to record their journeys, and some of this data is being made available to governments (e.g. London, Glasgow, Oregon, Orlando) to help in their understanding of how cyclists are using their cities.⁵
7. The working group members do not include any expertise regarding urban design or design. We consider this to be a significant omission which needs to be rectified.

General Comments

8. Firstly aim high. As one of our members suggests: "Do something f*ing cool! You won't get people engaged with some white paint on rough and bumpy roads." To date the WCC's efforts in cycling infrastructure have reduced the quality of the built environment. The level of design and creativity apparent in the cycleways in Victoria St, Island Bay and that proposed for the Hutt Rd is pedestrian to say the least.
9. Apparently we are a creative capital - not that you would know this from our transport infrastructure. Auckland's flamboyant pink Nelson Street Cycleway puts us to shame. Here is a striking example of a commitment to treat cycling and walking as a real part of the city's infrastructure. It has Wellingtonians looking at Auckland and thinking "Why don't we do something cool and meaningful?"

² WCC Wellington Cycleways Programme Master Plan (September 2015) p. 3.

³ WCC Wellington Cycleways Programme Master Plan (September 2015) p. 5.

⁴ WCC Wellington Cycleways Programme Master Plan (September 2015) p. 8.

⁵ Benedict, Tyler "New Strava Metro Feature Shows Government How Cyclists are Using City Streets" (8 May 2014) <http://www.bikerumor.com/2014/05/08/new-strava-metro-feature-shows-government-how-cyclists-are-using-city-streets/>



Auckland cycle path | Wellington cycle way

10. All this is to say that committees of earnest cyclists, pedestrians and councillors are unlikely to have the skills to design anything worthy of our city. The role of this group is to establish high level principles and a design brief. We need design competitions to inject some passion into the WCC's agenda for cycling infrastructure and give the city something to be proud of with our cycling infrastructure. A competition to design amazing bike racks to replace the Stalinist bike parks, which are starting to encroach on our CBD, would be a fine start. Hold others to find the best designs and generate public interest and support for each of the planned suburban to city cycleways.
11. The Architectural Centre strongly supports better cycleways through the city. As noted previously we consider that cycleways through the CBD are the highest priority, and, after these have been established, the cycle network should be progressively extended outward.
12. In supporting better cycleways, we are not advocating hard infrastructure, or a specific cyclepath design, as a uniform answer. Sometimes soft infrastructure is a better solution - or targetted interventions at points along a path - rather than building a new cycle path.
13. The WCC has stated a transport hierarchy placing pedestrians and then cyclists at the top of the hierarchy, followed by public transport.⁶ Any proposal for cycleways needs to move beyond rhetoric and reflect this hierarchy in a material way.
14. Cycling is a very flexible mode, able to operate on road space and/or on footpath space. An astute cycleway design will respond to the specific nature of its context maximising use of these choices in potential routes.
15. The best cycleway will not necessarily follow the same route eastward as it does westward. In Wellington terrain and dominant wind directions may mean that different routes are optimal for different directions, and/or different days due to weather.
16. The proposal needs to be able to accommodate cyclists overtaking other cyclists and be cognisant that in relative terms, cyclists have the greatest speed differential (i.e. between the slowest and fastest) of all transport modes. The

⁶ WCC Draft Wellington Urban Growth Plan 2014-2043, p. 42 <http://wellington.govt.nz/~media/have-your-say/public-input/files/consultations/2014/09-wellington-uban-growth-plan/draft-wugp-2014-2043.pdf?la=en>

issues pertaining to overtaking, also have ramifications for stopping distances, traffic light phasing, and car driver visibility. The proposal needs to also be clear about whether these routes are to accommodate e-bikes and motorbikes. Both of which often use infrastructure built for push bikes, and introduce a greater range of speeds that any route design will need to accommodate.

17. Commuter cycling routes should have minimal (if any) driveways and carparking. The design of Karo Drive is conscious of this to aid car traffic flow, we request the same for facilitating safe and efficient cycling.



Karo Drive, showing a design which removes carparks and driveways from the road.

18. Roundabouts and no traffic lights are preferable to traffic lights for cyclists, who prefer not to wait at intersections and get wet in the rain.
19. The route must be continuous or near-continuous. The discontinuous nature of the Karo Drive shared path is a case in point. It demonstrates the inconvenience to cyclists of having to stop at every road intersection. This is additional to the path's design being focussed on car traffic (i.e. provision of car parking, being a space for cars to exit properties, and rubble strips aimed to reduce speed, while being an uncomfortable surface for cyclists and pedestrians).



Karo Drive - designed primarily with cars in mind. The rubble strips being an example of this.

KILBIRNIE TO MIRAMAR

Cobham Drive Option

20. Do something bold. Build a cycling bridge over Cobham Drive in the spirit of the Sculpture Trust sculptures that very publicly makes a real statement celebrating cycling in the city. Truly invest in cycling.
21. A surface Cobham Drive route will require redesign of the roundabouts to accommodate cyclists and reprioritise transport modes to accurately reflect the stated WCC transport hierarchy. NZTA has researched roundabout designs for

cyclists.⁷ The Architectural Centre encourages the council to ask the authors of these reports to explain their proposed roundabout designs, and consider conversion of Wellington roundabouts to these C-roundabouts, after an initial trial.

22. Urban design will play an important role in achieving a successful option. The designs should not undermine the character of the physical context and neighbourhood as has occurred with the Island Bay Cycleway and the Victoria St interventions. These are pretty embarrassing aesthetically. On the Cobham Drive routes issues of visibility across the roundabout will likely be important, which may mean that changes to existing vegetation are needed.
23. The proposal for Cobham Drive should include a reduction of the current speed limit, which is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the road. It is the combination of a 70km/hr along Cobham Drive and insufficient sight lines for this speed which is the prime impediment to pedestrians and cyclists accessing the coastal route from Kilbirnie and Miramar.
24. Diverting cyclists from Cobham Drive to Kilbirnie is inefficient and will be so inconvenient to cyclists that they won't use this leg of the proposed route. We support continuance of the route along Cobham Drive to Wellington Rd, especially as this has the potential for a two-way cycle track adjacent to the footpath along the coastline. The advantage of this for cyclists is the lack of driveways, which are prime sites for accidents. Clearly sufficient width will be needed to implement this. In the interim (i.e. while decisions regarding Mt Victoria Tunnel are in abeyance) a route should be constructed from Wellington Rd through Newtown, along Constable Street, perhaps removing one side of carparking for a 2-way cycle-lane. This Constable Street route could link to the Seatoun to Kilbirnie route. Addressing the top of Constable Street is important because this intersection is the most dangerous for cyclists in the eastern suburbs, with 5 crashes, including a serious one, from 2010-2014, and a low number of cyclists (162 commuters).⁸
25. We note the current proposal peters out in Kilbirnie. This is not acceptable. Connections to the CBD are vital.

Hobart option.

26. The proposed "Hobart option" is silly - why would commuter cyclists take a route which requires such a significant deviation? This would never be seriously entertained as a route for car travel. If this is a serious proposition by the working group, then they are ill-equipped to advise on cycling matters. This route should be given no consideration.

KILBIRNIE TO SEATOUN

27. The initial question is whether any intervention along these routes is needed.
28. Rather than building significant infrastructure along the whole of the route, the Architectural Centre considers that there are three areas which warrant addressing:
 - (i) the Seatoun tunnel.
 - (ii) using Kemp St for the westward (to CBD) trip, rather than Rongotai Rd, along the edge of Kilbirnie Park and onto Cobham Drive, with Rongotai Rd

⁷ for example: Research Report 287 (Multi-lane roundabout designs for cyclists (2006): <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/research/reports/287/>)

⁸ Map of cycle crashes (2010-2014) supplied by WCC by email.

used for the eastward direction to avoid the intersection by Pack 'n' Save. An advantage of a westward cycleway on Kemp St is that there are no driveways on the Kemp St-side of Kilbirne Park, but anticipation of additional pedestrians on sport days would be needed.

- (iii) how to cross Rongotai Rd
- (iv) modifying traffic islands on Broadway (see below)

- 29. We recommend a re-design of the intersection of Onepu and Rongotai Roads to better support cycling, and strongly suggest a roundabout design
- 30. We consider that a strategy which provides multiple permeability (e.g. as indicated by the dashed line), is a useful one through lower traffic residential streets, where softer infrastructure, or none at all, is appropriate.
- 31. An airport to town route would supplement a Cobham Drive route.

Broadway option

- 32. The Architectural Centre prefers this more direct route to the Strathavon option, but remodelling of the traffic islands (or replacement of these by continuing the painted median strip) is needed to eliminate the existing pinch points.

Strathavon option

- 33. This option does not appear to provide additional benefit, instead it makes several diversions, creating inconvenience for cyclists.

Next steps

- 34. There should be a route from Lyall Bay along Onepu Road to Kilbirnie which links to a route to the CBD.
- 35. A design which priorities the express bus and cyclists over cars along express bus routes would be worth investigating.



- 36. Raised footpaths across roads (which are used, for example, in Island Bay and Whakatāne) are a technique which could enable continuity of shared cycle and pedestrian paths if appropriately located, with priority given to these modes over car traffic, making a shared path strategy viable for cyclists.

Post Island Bay

- 37. We reiterate comments regarding the Island Bay cycleway, which we noted in the Hutt Rd consultation, with the aim that these be avoided in any future cycleway projects. The errors made include:
 - (a) investing in low priority areas (i.e. regarding opportunity for improving cycling safety and cycling uptake)

- (b) implementing hard infrastructure in places where this is not the most appropriate mechanism for increasing cycling
- (c) implementing a design meant for urban and peri-urban contexts (i.e. with few or no driveways) into a suburban context
- (d) failing to ensure visibility between cyclists (including children) and cars is maintained and not blocked (e.g. by parked cars)
- (e) causing cars to block the cycleway in order to see road traffic before entering the car carriageway
- (f) providing insufficient infrastructure (e.g. kerbs) to assist drivers to park cars in allocated places (i.e. to prevent cars parking partly on cycleways)
- (g) inconsistent and narrow cycleway widths
- (h) insufficient room for cyclists to overtake other cyclists (i.e. lack of consideration of the different speeds different cyclists travel, including e-cyclists)
- (i) removing median strips which provide safety for cyclists and pedestrians crossing the road
- (j) removing flexibility for right-turning cyclists
- (k) requiring cyclists to be diverted around the paths of all other transport users (i.e. cars, buses and pedestrians) visibly identifying cyclists at the bottom of the transport hierarchy.
- (l) placing the cycleway where broken glass and service grates are located
- (m) reducing footpath widths in some places

38. Experience from Island Bay demonstrates that generally NZ drivers do not excel in parking, and need guidance. Traditionally the kerb has been the mechanism to prevent cars from driving onto the footpath. The Island Bay cycleway has demonstrated that lack of a physical barrier between the designated area for car parking and the car door allowance (CDA) zone has rendered the CDA zone largely useless, because many cars are not confined to the parking space. This suggests that another mechanism is needed, such as the CDA being provided at the shared footpath/cycleway level.
39. The Island Bay experience has also shown the importance of the passenger door side of the car footpath as a key social space for farewelling family and friends using cars in a neighbourhood context. This has meant that intuitively some residents find themselves unconsciously occupying the cyclepath as they farewell people. This is an issue that is important in existing suburban and residential neighbourhood contexts.

Other matters

40. The website needs to include a single pdf of the consultation information. While we appreciate for some people a website may increase engagement, it can be difficult to know if you have found all of the relevant information when you need to click through many places, and it is not efficient nor sustainable to print of all the webpages. Basically, we have found that only having such webpages (i.e. without the option of a single document with all relevant material) hinders, rather than facilitates, our ability to point various committee members to relevant information in order to develop a joint response.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Eastern cycleway route proposal. While we consider the CBD and CBD connections are of greater importance than provision of eastern cycleways, we hope that any interventions to facilitate cycling in the eastern suburbs are well informed, site-specific and site-appropriate. We reiterate the need for more creative ideas for cycling infrastructure. Public design competitions could be the way to shift the current debate into a more productive arena, and give

Wellington and type of innovative built environment we deserve as a city. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



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