

THE WANGANUI CYCLING STRATEGY



well worth the journey
WANGANUI
L I F E S T Y L E

May 2003
For Review by May 2008

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Cycling is a practical, healthy and fun form of transport and recreation. The formation of the Wanganui Cycling Strategy is aimed at recognising the needs of cyclists in Wanganui and at integrating cycle provision into the ongoing development of Wanganui's transport network. Substantive consultation and data collection exercises have been undertaken as a basis for developing the Strategy.

Cycling is one of the cleanest forms of transport, and is cheap, efficient, and healthy, and helps reduce congestion. People who cycle regularly are rewarded with all of these benefits. Promoting the use of cycles instead of other modes of transport can also benefit the community in much the same way.

The Wanganui Cycling Strategy is a plan and a commitment by the District Council and the community to improve the safety and convenience of cycling in the city, and offers solutions that are tailored to Wanganui. This Strategy details the history and current patterns of cycling in Wanganui, including how many people cycle, where they cycle, and why they cycle.

The Strategy also outlines the objectives sought by the community, and the methods to achieve the objectives. These methods broadly relate to matters of engineering, education and encouragement, and together provide the heart of this Strategy.

The actions and solutions contained in this Strategy are to be implemented through the period of the next 12 years, and are expected to provide benefits for the next 25 years and beyond. The period of 12 years has been chosen as the initial implementation period so that the financial resources required to construct the cycle network can be spread over a reasonable time frame. The contribution to be made by the Council from rates dollars each year will also attract Transfund subsidies of an approximately equivalent amount.

By making cycling safer, easier and more convenient, the Council is confident that there will be a resurgence of cycling in Wanganui.

2. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Consultation has been undertaken with a number of individuals, groups and organisations. Formation of the Strategy has involved the direct input of stakeholders through a Working Group established for the particular purpose of this project, as well as extensive discussions with most schools in the city, and the input of the wider community.

The Working Group included representatives of:

- NZ Police
- Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)
- Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA)
- Transit NZ
- Wanganui District Council
- cycle advocates
- cycle shops.

Overall, the group had a strong view that development of a Cycle Strategy was very necessary in Wanganui and, in time, would have the benefit of making a substantial contribution to improved public health and reduced travel and roading costs.

The group also noted that barriers to cycling included the following:

- poor maintenance of road edges and railway crossings
- the adverse attitude of some motorists
- lack of space on the road for cyclists
- poor road design for cyclists
- detritus such as gravel and glass in the riding area
- pinch points where cycle lanes disappear
- a lack of facilities to lock up bikes when cycling destinations are reached
- traffic congestion at the critical school times between 8.00 and 9.00am, and 3.00 and 3.30pm.

From this position, it was accepted that much could be done to improve cycling opportunities and safety in Wanganui. It was the general view of the group that the primary focus of the Strategy should be on safety, from which many other positive outcomes would improve and increase the attraction of cycling in Wanganui.

With regard to the consultation carried out at the schools, interviews undertaken with classes of students found that:

1. Those students who rode their bikes to school did so around four days a week. The main reason for students not riding on other days was wet weather.
2. Around three-quarters of the students interviewed felt safe when riding their bikes to school.
3. There were a number of reasons given why other students did not bike to school. These varied from safety issues on the road, through to the gradual reduction in social acceptability for teenagers to cycle once they reach the age of 14 or 15.
4. There were a number of students who felt unsafe whilst riding their bikes. Their reasons varied from dangerous road surfaces, to the antics of some motorists and problems at intersections or roundabouts.
5. There were many streets and intersections where students felt unsafe. These streets have been considered in selecting the routes of the cycle network.
6. Most students interviewed rode their bikes after school hours and in the weekends for recreation, transport and a number of other reasons.
7. Most students believed that cycling should be promoted, for environmental and health reasons. For those few students who believed that cycling should be discouraged, reasons given mainly related to the potential dangers of cycling.
8. Students gave a number of suggestions about where cycleways could be provided in Wanganui. Again, these routes have been considered in developing the cycle network.

When asked about the one thing that the Council could do to encourage cycling in Wanganui, most students indicated that road safety, and the promotion of cycling as a safe and healthy option should be targeted.

As part of the public consultation process, a community survey on the cycling habits of current cyclists was also undertaken. Residents listed work, recreation and shopping as their main purposes for cycling. More than half of the respondents cycled everyday. More than half also felt unsafe when riding around Wanganui, citing the main reasons as cars travelling too close, too many trucks, and difficulty in negotiating intersections.

The respondents also listed a number of preferences for Council to target in developing the Wanganui cycle network. These included:

- routes that are direct and continuous
- routes that link with and pass by key destinations
- peri-urban routes skirting around the city
- routes along the riverbanks.

This information, together with the significant knowledge gained when interviewing school groups, has significantly moulded the Strategy.



3. CYCLING IN WANGANUI TODAY

Unlike many of New Zealand's cities, where traffic volumes, topography and climate present many challenges, Wanganui's compact urban layout makes the city ideal for cycling. The central location of the main business district and educational facilities means that many trips in Wanganui are less than 5 km long - a good distance to cycle.

It has been identified from the community consultation that the main reasons people cycle in Wanganui are as follows:

- for travelling to school
- for travelling to work
- for health reasons
- for recreational purposes

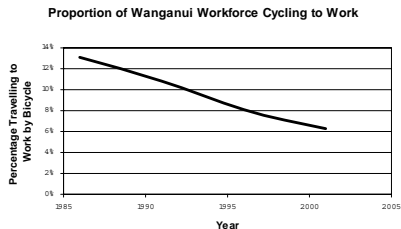
- for touring
- for competitive racing.

Each of these users have quite specific and differing needs, which have been considered to ensure this Strategy best provides for the range of cyclists.

Those people who currently cycle in Wanganui have identified a wide range of benefits they receive from choosing to cycle, such as:

- the enjoyment of cycling
- the health benefits of the exercise
- the economy of cycling as compared to driving a car. Statistics indicate that the costs of running a medium sized car are about \$118 a week. By comparison, a bike costs just \$6 a week to maintain, representing a saving of \$112 a week
- the positive contribution to sustaining the environment, including the impact of fewer cars and lessened traffic congestion
- the convenience of not having to find a carpark.

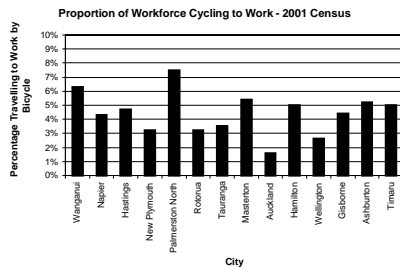
However, despite these benefits, less people in Wanganui cycle now compared with the past. Census statistics for 2001 show that the proportion of people cycling to work has halved in the 15 years since 1986, as can be seen in the following chart.



A number of reasons for the declining number of cyclists have been cited by Wanganui residents. These include:

- **declining safety for cyclists.** Statistics show that, despite the decrease in cycling, the number of accidents reported each year has not decreased
- **a lack of facilities at the end of the ride.** For example, only limited opportunities exist for cyclists to secure a bike at work places and shopping locations around Wanganui. This anomaly was commented on frequently during the public consultation process, and correcting it would be a cost effective means of increasing the attraction of cycling
- **cycling routes are not connected or continuous.** The on road routes and off road paths that already exist do not yet provide a cohesive network that cyclists can use to get from A to B
- **a lack of courtesy from motorists.** Wanganui cyclists cite the attitude or ignorance of drivers as a discouragement to cycling. This point was particularly important to school students, with most having misgivings about the intolerance of some motorists. Many cyclists feel unsafe around motor vehicles.
- **changing trends and the availability of cheaper cars.** Many older school students perceive cycling as socially unacceptable at around the age of 14 or 15. At this age, many students are licensed to drive and have ready access to cars.

Despite these issues, the proportion of people cycling to work in Wanganui still rates highly against other New Zealand cities, as shown by the chart below.



At 6.3%, Wanganui currently has the 7th largest proportion of people cycling to work out of all districts in New Zealand.



4. OBJECTIVES

"Improve cycle safety" has been the clear message voiced by the community as the principal aim of this Strategy.

Improving safety has been identified as the best way to both maintain the present number of cyclists as well as to get more people back on their bikes. It was felt that if the Strategy had this single focus, then other concerns and issues facing cyclists in Wanganui would more readily fall into line to provide an environment that would see more people discovering the benefits of cycling.

The National Road Safety Strategy 2010 also describes a number of initiatives for the direction and expected performance for road safety to the year 2010, including strategies and policies for improving the safety of cyclists. The principal safety focus of this Cycling Strategy matches well with these national initiatives.

The call to encourage people to bike has come from health professionals who wish to see a healthier community, environmentalists who wish to see less vehicle emissions, and transport professionals who wish to see more efficient movement of people. All these groups were represented in the Working Group and their views have been incorporated within the outcomes of this Strategy.

To this end, with the right solutions, there is no reason why 13% of the population should not bike to work like they did in 1986, or why all 2,600 bike stands at the schools should not be fully occupied.

Improved cycle safety comes from solutions that address the engineering elements of a cycle network, that educate the community on aspects of cycling attitudes and that encourage more people to ride. Such solutions are set out next.

5. ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS

The two principal engineering solutions of this Cycling Strategy are:

"To establish a cycling network that is available to the Wanganui Community", and

"To establish a supporting infrastructure of cycling facilities".

One of the most tangible outcomes of this Strategy is the development of the Wanganui Cycling network. In planning such a network, there are four key elements that cyclists require, as follows:

- **a safe space to ride.** Whether it be a shared off-road path, or a dedicated part of the road carriageway, cyclists need a dedicated space to ride in
- **a good surface to ride on.** A smooth clean surface that offers little rolling resistance is favoured by cyclists. Even the shell-rock path along the edge of the river has received high accolades from cyclists
- **continuity.** To be of use to cyclists, routes need to be continuous. This is necessary to ensure use of the route is maximised
- **connectivity.** It is important that components of the network link in a cohesive manner that enables popular trips to be undertaken along a series of connecting routes.

The network of on-road and off-road routes that form the basis of this Strategy are shown by the map accompanying this document. It consists of 50km of cycleways based around the city's key assets of the river and the railway.

The network has been developed with a community preference for reinforcing existing trends rather than pioneering new ones, and provides for cyclists to

make their trip from home to the schools and the main areas of employment. The completion and extension of the off-road riverbank routes and their connection to the four bridge crossings of the river will extend the already popular recreational facilities.

On-road routes will cater for all users and be achieved by redefining the existing road space to dedicate an area of the carriageway to cyclists in the form of marked cycle lanes. Nationally-recognised standards and guidelines will be used in designing the network. All lanes will be marked at a minimum width of 1.5m, as illustrated below.



In situations where they adjoin areas of kerbside parking, the width of the cycle lane will be widened to 1.8m to involve a combined cycle and parking lane width of about 4.0m, as illustrated below.



The same markings and provision of dedicated space for cyclists will also extend across intersections along the defined routes to provide a continuous and well connected network. Cycle lanes at key intersections such as the Dublin/Victoria signals will be coloured green. A typical design to be employed in Wanganui is illustrated below.



Off-road routes will be designed as shared pathways that allow cyclists and pedestrians to safely pass one another. The paths will be surfaced with either shell-rock or asphaltic concrete of at least 1.5m width with rideable shoulders, such that there is always a clear available width of at least 2.5m.

The exact detail and configuration of the routes and intersections will be fully developed during the subsequent design of the network.

Further physical infrastructure will be necessary to support the network of on and off-road cycleways, including the marking of cycle symbols and the erection of information and directional signs. These signs will assist cyclists in choosing a safe route.

The importance of end-of-trip facilities such as changing and shower facilities, secure bike stands, and helmet locking are often overlooked. Council will seek to expand the current supply of cycle stands both by providing more in public spaces and by encouraging businesses and schools to provide secure and dry places to park bikes.

To achieve the engineering aspects of this Strategy, Council will integrate the provision of cycling infrastructure within its established planning processes. The adoption of this Strategy represents its inclusion into the Council roading and works programme.

6. EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

Two primary solutions form the basis of the education components of this Cycling Strategy, as follows:

"To help cyclists choose a safe route", and

"To educate cyclists and motorists on safe use of the road".

In order to achieve maximum benefits from the cycle network, it is essential that cyclists both recognise its existence and use it. Progressive construction of the physical network will heighten awareness of its presence for both cyclists and motorists.

A key part of the achievement of this Strategy is the commitment by the Council to providing human resources for the promotion and ultimate achievement of the objectives of the Wanganui Cycling Strategy. The Strategy will only be a living document if a Council officer is assigned to monitor and report to Council on progress, direct the implementation, and leverage the necessary resources from other community agencies. It is proposed that around 250 hours per year should be used in this way, and that the officer time should be funded from existing budgets.

This person will undertake the following tasks:

- plan and programme development of the cycle network in coordination with Council's established roading programme
- monitor the progressive development of the cycle network
- respond to cycling problems away from the defined network
- arrange and support cycling events and programmes
- work with other agencies involved in promoting safe cycling
- maintain a cycling page on the Council website.

In all, the Officer will be responsible for ensuring the objectives of the Strategy are achieved.

The provision of the network map through the community link page of the Wanganui Chronicle, and the use of flyers and the Council website will enable residents to plan their cycle journeys and to identify the safest route from home to work, or school, and for any other frequent trips.

"Safer Routes to Schools" planning days are also important in enabling student cyclists to identify the safest route to and from school with the help of teachers, other colleagues and the Police. Particular safety issues and means of negotiating intersections can also be discussed with each student.

A key component of the education programme is to teach cyclists and motorists of the need to share the road in cooperation with each other. The behaviour and practice of both cyclists and motorists strongly influences the way in which cycle facilities are used.

The education programmes to be advanced by this Strategy will instruct the general public about good motorist and cyclist behaviour. This will include teaching new skills and changing attitudes.

For students, the skills can be taught in specialist programmes at school. For the wider community, there will be a greater reliance on information and advertising campaigns. Simple safety tips and skills will be effectively communicated through various mediums, and safe cycle training programmes will have success in preparing both students and adults with the competence and confidence to ride safely.

A number of organisations will have specialist inputs into the education programmes, including the Police, LTSA, and ACC. Council will work closely with these organisations to create comprehensive and cohesive education programmes.

Overall, the education programmes will be undertaken "before", "during" and "after" the physical network is implemented as an ongoing and live part of the Strategy.



7. ENCOURAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

To achieve the goals of first maintaining the present level of cycling in Wanganui and then encouraging more people to bike, this Strategy seeks:

"To encourage cycling as a safe, convenient, efficient and attractive means of travel".

Many of the adult cyclists interviewed, and a number of the school students consulted, believed that the Council had a significant role to play in actively encouraging the community to cycle.

Changing and developing the current perceptions and attitudes of cycling will involve working in partnership with other organisations. Leading and supporting initiatives such as cycle events, National Bike Week, and Bike to Work Day will raise the profile of cycling for recreation, and as a healthy and enjoyable form of transport.

The encouragement to be provided by the Council will also extend to providing incentives and assistance to work places. The strategies outlined already in this document are an important part of providing the infrastructure and impetus that will make it easier for employers to support staff who choose to cycle to work. As the benefits of the Cycling Strategy begin to make cycling safer and more attractive as a convenient mode of transport, then it will be easier for Council to encourage businesses to properly recognise and support those staff that cycle. The benefits of fitter and healthier staff should also encourage other co-operative actions by employers.

The Council has in the past supported the national "Push Play" fitness campaign. The Wanganui Cycling Strategy is also a natural ally to the Hillary Commission's (now known as SPARC) push to get New Zealanders to become more physically active. There is a natural synergy between the current promotion of "Push Play" and the Cycling Strategy.

As cycling increases, more drivers gain experience of cycling as occasional cyclists themselves, and so drivers become more experienced among cyclists. Other drivers also become more aware of the presence of cyclists on the road. So cycling becomes safer. Therefore, strategies that provide a coordinated network of improved cycleways and that encourage cycling, as intended here, are likely to be the most effective at improving the safety of cycling.



8. THE WAY AHEAD

The delivery of this Strategy involves a commitment of funds and human resources by Council to implement the physical network and coordinate the other facets of the Strategy. As described, around 250 hours of officer time are to be set aside each year for the work required to promote and monitor the progress of the Strategy in the community.

Construction of the network, or the physical work required to see the Strategy succeed, is estimated to require funding of around \$100,000 each year for the next 12 years. This cost will be shared between Wanganui District Council and the national road funding agency, Transfund.

The range of data collected and people consulted in the process of developing the Strategy has been used to identify progressive priorities for staging implementation of the cycle network. The priorities have been selected with the objective of first providing for cyclists on the routes the community has identified as being of most value and importance, and were chosen because:

- the public consultation process pointed to these routes as high demand areas and places where cyclists consistently experience challenges
- they were main routes in Wanganui that are frequently used by cyclists, and will become more heavily used as cycling numbers increase
- from a traffic engineering perspective, they present physical assets that provide sufficient

road or off-road space that make positive changes possible

- given that resources will always be limited, they offer a cost effective way to create a strategic network for Wanganui's cyclists into the future.

The higher priority routes of the planned network that are to be constructed within the first five years are:

- the Dublin Street route from Anzac Parade to Victoria Avenue
- the pathways on either side of the river. The riverbanks are already key assets to cyclists, and will become more valuable as the Council completes the pathway between the city centre and Castlecliff
- the Aramoho Rail Bridge
- the route from the Cobham Bridge following Liffiton Street, Carlton Avenue, Fitzherbert Avenue, Mosston Road, Cross Street, Bryce Street to Cornfoot Street
- the central routes of Victoria Avenue, Ingestre Street and Purnell Street.

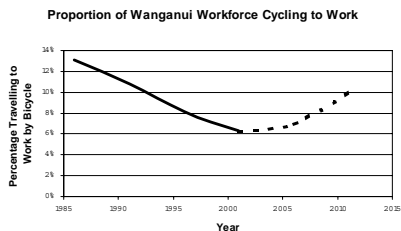
These key routes will provide a basic strategic network that will have immediate benefits to cyclists, relieving areas that have poor crash records and improving intersections which are often challenging to cyclists. Some, such as the riverbank pathways, the bridges, Carlton Avenue and Fitzherbert Avenue are already mostly complete.

The programme of implementation that follows the completion of the priorities set for the first five years includes the exciting opportunities available using land within the railway corridors around Wanganui. This "unused" resource has provided a significant opportunity for the development of cycleways and walkways elsewhere in New Zealand and internationally. The corridor available in Wanganui has sufficient width to accommodate a good off-road route. When combined with the similar off-road opportunities of the riverbanks, they will present a significantly expanded network of interesting, safe and direct routes to cycle.

The increase in cycling envisaged in this Strategy is part of a nationwide resurgence in cycle planning. The aim is to increase the number of people cycling

without increasing cycling accidents. The proportion of students cycling to school, and proportion of the workforce cycling have been chosen as the two key performance measures that will monitor the progress of the Strategy and measure its future success.

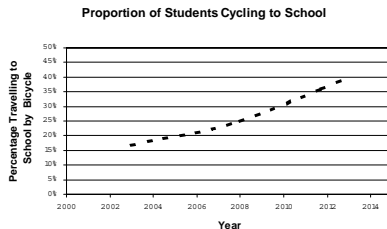
By the next census result (2006), the aim is to reverse the present downward trend in the number of cyclists and have the proportion of the workforce cycling to work in Wanganui stabilising at around 7%, as shown in the chart below.



From 2006, as the cycling network is expanded, the goal is to have 10% of the workforce cycling to work by the 2011 census.

When the Strategy is reviewed, in five years time, it is targeted for the proportion of intermediate and secondary students cycling to school to have risen from the current levels of about 17% to 25%. In ten years time, the target is 40%, as illustrated in the next chart.

WANGANUI
LIFESTYLE



Throughout this growth, the Strategy will achieve its principal aim of improving cycle safety by maintaining the number of cycle crashes to below ten each year. The result will be a steadily reducing crash rate.

The objectives and solutions of this Strategy, which are tailored to Wanganui, make these goals achievable. In all, the future for cycling in Wanganui is bright, and there's never been a better time to get on your bike.



