

## **Wellington Regional Transport Committee feedback on NZTA's Cycle Safety Panel's draft recommendations**

**21 October 2014**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on "Safer Journeys for People Who Cycle" – the NZTA Cycle Safety Panel's draft report and recommendations. The Regional Transport Committee supports the overall focus of the document as part of a wider package of measures to improve cycle safety in New Zealand. It is pleased to see a document such as this with a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues surrounding cycle safety in New Zealand.

The Committee is strongly committed to improving safety outcomes for all users of the transport system, including cyclists.

### **Policy context**

The Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) sets out the strategic policy framework for development of the regional transport network. The RLTS promotes a multi-modal approach in the Wellington region to achieve a broad range of objectives. Amongst other outcomes, the strategy seeks to increase active transport trips and to improve safety for cyclists. It also contains a vision that 'pedestrian and cycling networks will be convenient, safe and pleasant'. The forthcoming Regional Land Transport Plan is expected to provide a similar policy direction for cycling.

The Wellington Regional Road Safety Plan identifies and supports the Safe System approach to road safety. The Safe System approach recognises that road users make mistakes and seeks to eliminate death and serious injury as a likely consequence of such mistakes.

### **Summary of comments**

- The Committee endorses the work of the Panel and is encouraged to see the depth of work undertaken to understand how to tackle the issues around cycle safety.
- The language of the recommendations needs to be stronger, more consistent and directed to particular organisations or groups of organisations.
- A summary of recommendations under high and medium priority categories would assist readers to understand what recommendations the Panel wishes to see implemented immediately and at a later date.

### **Safe system enablers, leadership and roads**

The Committee endorses the requirement for greater visibility and investment priority for active modes being articulated more clearly in the Government Policy Statement (GPS), and the National Land Transport Programme. The Committee also endorses the need for a wider range of costs and benefits to be included in the Economic Evaluation Manual (EEM) in relation to the benefits of active modes.

Under the Safe System Enablers pillar (on page 17) is the following High Priority Action point iii:

“Providing safe and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists, especially to and from work and school, is reprioritised from “medium” to “high” in the Safer Journeys Strategy or the Transport Agency’s investment criteria. High personal risk is reconciled with collective risk when prioritising projects.”

This could be strengthened by directing the recommendation to the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) to change the investment criteria in order for councils to provide safe and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists, especially to and from work and school.

For the following point iv (also on Page 17) some more specific wording and action could be employed:

“Help RCAs access National Land Transport Programme funding by reviewing and monitoring the planning and investment criteria that are currently making it difficult for cycling projects to meet the “high strategic fit” criterion. Cycling must be considered in all Integrated Transport Strategies, plans and projects. This would include adjusting the application of the Network Operating Framework to give effect to cycling.”

NZTA has acknowledged to RCAs that funding set aside for cycling infrastructure in previous National Land Transport Programmes (NLTP) has not been accessed to the full level possible. Unless NZTA fully understands why this has happened, this situation will continue. The profile for cycling projects in the Wellington region don’t reach the priority needed to attract national funding. That is in part because of the way those projects are profiled in the EEM, but it is also because all cycling projects are in “competition” with other regions for access to that for that national fund. For projects in the Wellington region our primary “competition” is likely to be Auckland.

The Committee applauds the Government’s allocation of an additional \$100million for cycling infrastructure. However there is a danger in the same situation (of low rates of accessing cycling funding available) continuing given the current limitations of the Economic Evaluation Manual relating to cycling, the low ratings for walking and cycling projects based on NZTA investment criteria and the lack of visibility within NZTA’s priority areas. Providing a stimulus such as an increase in the Financial Assistance Rate (FAR) for cycling infrastructure could help, but again, that may not be sufficient if the current barriers to accessing available funding remain.

Under the Medium Priority Actions point vi (on page 17), the following point could be strengthened:

Develop consistent national standards and descriptions for cycling infrastructure investment and align relevant legislation where this is necessary.

This recommendation should be directed to the Ministry of Transport and NZTA with input from the cycling sector, to develop national standards. There is a High Priority Action on Page 18 (point ii) with wording to the same effect.

Under the Safe System pillar Roads and Roadsides High Priority Actions (on Page 22), and the Safe System pillar Safe Speeds High Priority Actions (on Page 26), the Committee considers these recommendations could be made stronger by being directed towards a responsible organisation.

The Committee endorses the recommendation to mandate safe passing distances as has recently been enacted in Queensland, Australia. The Committee agrees that such a change in the law could improve cycle safety, however this alone may not be the silver bullet some think it could be.

### **Cycle skills training, Bikes in Schools and school travel planning**

The Committee endorses the High Priority and Medium Priority actions relating to cycle skills training, Bikes in Schools and school travel planning (on Page 29). It cites the excellent example of our own regional model for cycle skills delivery. Pedal Ready, which is supported by Greater Wellington Regional Council, was set up in 2012 with funding from Sport Wellington and the NZTA's Road Safety Trust to deliver cycle skills training free to 5 – 18 year olds and at a minimal cost to adults. It provides a good working model of regional delivery, professional training of instructors, growing brand recognition (Term 3 was booked out and Term 4 is already booked out) and builds on successful networks that have already been established in the region. In addition, Pedal Ready supplies training to schools which are part of the Bikes in Schools programme (an initiative which is a complete biking package implemented within a school that enables all students to ride a bike on a regular basis) and free training to workplaces where six or more adults wish to be trained.

NZTA makes funding available to councils who can contribute their local share but if this is unavailable (due to council budget priorities) then it is hard to see how cycle skills training in regions can either commence or continue unless funding is secured outside the council system. The funding for Pedal Ready in Wellington region is due to cease in September 2015. The Regional Council is considering providing on-going funding as part of its long term plan deliberations but with considerable pre-committed budgets, on-going funding for delivery in this region is uncertain.

The Committee has some concerns about the statement on page 26 which reads:

“40km/h part-time school speed zones have been implemented in many cities around New Zealand since 2001.”

While the Committee is aware of some school speed zones implemented across the Wellington region, it believes this statement is misleading because it sounds like this issue is taken care of and children have safe speed areas around most schools. Many councils struggle to purchase the \$10,000 signs that they need in order to put in these speed zones.

The Committee would like to see greater clarity around statements and recommendations relating to cycle skills training and school travel planning: NZTA co-funds both of these activities and this indicates it believes in the effectiveness of them, so the Panel might want to adjust its assessment of the effectiveness of both of these interventions.

Under the Medium Priority Actions point ii on page 29, is the following statement:

“Encourage wider delivery and increased funding of ‘Bikes in Schools’ as it provides a very good introduction to cycling for many children who may not otherwise have the opportunity.”

The Committee suggests it would be more helpful to recommend that NZTA develop a funding mechanism for councils to access funding, without the need to provide a local share, for school based cycling projects (such as, but not limited to “Bikes in School”) where a minimum of 50% of the project’s total cost is contributed by the school and the project involves both grade 2 training and curriculum based learning.

Under the Medium Priority Actions point (iii) on page 29 the Panel refers to school travel planning initiatives integrating roading infrastructure improvements with cycling, parking and travel speed. NZTA’s current criteria for accessing funding to provide such infrastructure improvements, make it difficult for councils to overcome the multiple hurdles for installing improvements around some schools. It would be useful for the Panel to recommend to NZTA to review such criteria. This recommendation could result in better outcomes if the panel either suggested the development of KPI’s for RCAs doing school travel plan work or used changes to the SP12 sheets in the Economic Evaluation Manual to help councils appreciate the greater benefits of including infrastructure, curriculum work, community involvement etc in their programmes. The current SP12 gives a better BCR for a poorly-resourced minimalist approach than it gives for an appropriately supported integrated programme.

### **Road user behaviour**

The Panel’s High Priority Action (i) below is about encouraging drivers and cyclists to share the road safely:

“Encouraging drivers and cyclists to share the road safely is reprioritised from medium to high in the Safer Journeys Road Strategy. This will be done by adopting best practice to effectively communicate with the general public about safe road use for people who cycle.”

The above statement appears to relate to this paragraph in the Safer Journeys Strategy:

“We could also encourage more considerate and safe behaviour from all road users. For drivers the key messages are to take extra care around pedestrians and cyclists. This includes giving them sufficient space on the road, driving at speeds that are safe for all users on the road and not parking in dangerous places.”

The Panel’s recommendation would be stronger if it were made clearer exactly which organisation it is directed at and strengthening the need to provide either greater funding or greater emphasis on campaigns for sharing the road. Continuing to segment people who use the transport system into drivers or pedestrians or cyclists does nothing to improve relationships between those different groups of people. It simply reinforces the perception that these groups are competing with one another for space on the roads.

### **Bicycle lights**

The Committee endorses the need for improved bike lights standards. The High Priority Action for a bike lights standard should state that the Government should adopt the new ISO bike light standard currently being developed. It is clearly stated in the heading for Section 13 but not directly in the recommendation’s further detail.

In the absence of a bike lights standard the Regional Council has continued to encourage the use of better bike lights through its annual bike lights test and vouchers for the best in test which it publishes and circulates each year.

**General comments on recommendations**

The Committee supports the work of the Panel and is encouraged to see the depth of analysis undertaken to understand how to tackle the issues around cycle safety.

The language of the recommendations as set out in the document is variable and often reads more like objectives, outcomes and sometimes as policy statements. The Committee suggests the Panel make the recommendations stronger and more specific, by being directed to particular organisations or groups of organisations where appropriate, and where possible, time-bound. Since it is hard to understand whether some of the actions ‘should’ happen or have happened, the Committee recommends that the language should be made bolder and clearer in intent.

The Committee looks forward to viewing the Panel’s final report.

Signed:

Fran Wilde

Chair