



More Canberrans cycling, more often, for a better community

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Northbourne Avenue Bus Priority, Cycleway Facility and Dickson Bus Station Feasibility Study: Submission by Pedal Power ACT Inc. July 2011

Disclaimer: Due to the expected lengthy consultation process, Pedal Power reserves the right to update this submission as required in response to changed circumstances, or new or previously unknown issues requiring comment.

Introduction and Summary

This submission forms part of Pedal Power's contribution to the success of the Northbourne Avenue Bus Priority, Cycleway Facility and Dickson Bus Station Feasibility Study. It sets out the key points of importance in respect of provision for safe and practical cycling as part of the wider objective of improving sustainable transport options on Northbourne Avenue.

The submission provides background information on the current Northbourne Avenue cycle lanes to give the consultant a good understanding of why they were installed and why they are important today. It also explains how the lanes fit into the overall Canberra Main Routes Cycling Network, before considering the various technical options for cycling on Northbourne Avenue, and explaining why retention of on-road cycling in the form of improved, separated cycle lanes is vital in this corridor to support the ACT Government's sustainable transport policies.

The underlying principle guiding this submission is the need for any solution to comply with the ACT Government's own stated policies, which respect the preferences of and cater adequately for the full spectrum of bicycle riders, ranging from confident high speed training riders all the way through to beginner riders who lack confidence and travel at lower speeds. This means avoiding supposed 'solutions' that seek to place all these kinds of riders onto a single facility type, as these will fail.

In summary, Pedal Power holds the following views on the range of possible facility types that might be recommended:

- The best solution that will maximise cycling safety and amenity on Northbourne Avenue is provision of separated (also known as 'Copenhagen') cycle lanes to the left of the general traffic lanes in both directions of travel. **This is Pedal Power's preferred overall solution** for meeting the needs of the great majority of bicycle riders, and also attracting new riders. Installing separated cycle lanes addresses the concerns of most riders (existing and potential) who value speed and priority but also want physical separation from traffic, without creating any detriment to riders who prefer the current on-road cycle lanes. This proposal provides the best opportunity for the consultant and the ACT Government to provide a solution that satisfies the greatest number of people and user groups while supporting the objectives of the *Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT*. It is also consistent with the ACT Government's commitment to provide separation for bicycle riders on Northbourne Avenue.
- Provision of an off-road path as the **ONLY** means of cycling on Northbourne Avenue is completely unacceptable to Pedal Power and many individual bicycle riders. This would require breaches of the ACT Government's own stated policies, put bicycle riders into dangerous conflict with pedestrians, present insurmountable technical challenges in providing genuinely equivalent cycling amenity to that presently available, and merely duplicate a nearby existing path. Many existing riders would refuse to use it and would continue to ride on the road. Most importantly, it is also an inferior option to installing separated cycle lanes.

- No matter what the outcome of the study, on-road cycle lanes (preferably separated cycle lanes, but at minimum the current arrangement) **MUST** be retained on Northbourne Avenue as part of the Main On-Road Route Network.
- Separate to consideration of Northbourne Avenue, the study should not ignore the current use and future potential of roughly parallel Connector Routes on minor streets and of the ANU to Lyneham Main Community Route path. Opportunities should be taken wherever possible to improve these routes and east-west connections between them.
- We also recommend that the ACT Government document *Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure 13: Pedestrian & cycle facilities* should be formally considered as part of this study, and any proposed solutions should be tested against the document to ensure consistency. This document should also be updated to include standards for separated cycle lanes prior to detailed design of these lanes.

This Study

The Northbourne Avenue cycle lanes are an outstanding success story for the ACT Government and an essential component of the Main On-Road Route Network. It needs to be clearly understood that the present study has arisen primarily due to public transport requirements and the need to examine space allocation across the carriageway, rather than any demonstrated problems arising from the existing cycle lanes.

None the less, the study offers opportunities to greatly improve the safety and amenity of cycling in the Northbourne Avenue corridor, leading to an increase in cycling and doing so in the broader context of encouraging all forms of sustainable transport. Pedal Power is keen to work with the consultant and ACT Government to achieve all three outcomes.

However, we are greatly concerned that the study may, under the guise of improving conditions for bicycle riders, actually make cycling conditions much worse. Such a study should look at all the options available, including measures already in place that work well. We are particularly concerned at any suggestion that removal of the existing cycle lanes and/or relocation of bicycle riders to the median is an inevitable outcome of this review before the review has even taken place¹. If such an outcome is already decided, even informally, then the study is already fundamentally flawed and the outcomes will be detrimental to efforts to increase cycling. We strongly urge the consultant not to adopt this outcome as a starting position, and if this is required by the consultant's brief, to approach the ACT Government to have it amended. However, Pedal Power approaches this study with a willingness not only to help ensure that mistakes are avoided, but also to consult in a

¹ See for example 'Northbourne bikes set to go off-road', Canberra Times, 23 April 2010
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/northbourne-bikes-set-to-go-offroad/1811078.aspx>

Pedal Power responded the following day with a media release pointing out that such a decision was premature- see Media Release 'Northbourne changes must make cycling better '
<http://www.pedalpower.org.au/advocacy/docs/mr%20northbourne%20ave%20changes%20must%20make%20cycling%20better.pdf>

positive manner to seize the significant opportunities for improvements that will benefit all stakeholders.

Background

The cycle lanes on Northbourne Avenue were officially opened by former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope in August 2004. These lanes were part of a wider project to provide a continuous on-road cycle route along Northbourne, Commonwealth and Adelaide Avenues and Yarra Glen from Dickson to Woden Town Centre, via Civic and the Parliamentary Triangle. This project rectified a series of missing or inadequate links between these centres, and the lanes connected into many other existing cycle routes along the route and at each end.

The project had its origins in a 2001 proposal by Pedal Power to fix these missing links. Pedal Power considered several alternatives for Northbourne Avenue (and other parts of the route) before proposing on-road cycle lanes. The primary reasons for this were:

- The need to provide a direct, higher speed, practical on-road commuting route including with the same level of priority as motor vehicles, as an alternative to existing slower and less direct options on nearby minor roads and off-road paths, which to varying degrees were already available in the vicinity.
- The importance of demonstrating that a safe, practical and affordable on-road cycling system could be successfully implemented in Canberra, thereby greatly expanding the cycle network which at the time consisted almost solely of off-road paths.
- The need to promote cultural change in Canberra regarding the right of bicycle riders to cycle on roads, at a time when many in the community regarded them as having no such right, regardless of law. Having visible bicycle facilities on Canberra's most prominent and symbolic roads (particularly Northbourne and Commonwealth Avenues) was a practical way to effect this change.
- The lower cost of cycle lanes, particularly after it became evident that they could be retrofitted within national road design standards on existing road space (which eventually occurred). The cost of other options made it unlikely they would be acceptable to any political party at that time.

The proposal was adopted as policy by the then ACT Labor Opposition and implemented after Labor formed government in 2001. The project has been a great credit to the ACT Government. All four above objectives were achieved; the new higher speed direct facility was provided, the retrofitting on existing road space was successful and set an example to be followed on other roads, and, anecdotally, there is now far greater acceptance of cycling and less conflict on Canberra's roads (including on roads not fitted with cycle lanes) despite the increase in both the number and proportion of people cycling on-road over the past decade. It is now ACT Government policy to install cycle lanes on major new roads, as well as existing ones during upgrades or resurfacing where practical to do so².

² ACT Government On-Road Cycling Policy, accessed from <http://www.tams.act.gov.au/move/cycling/onroadcycling>

Since completion of the Northbourne Avenue cycle lanes, the Canberra Main On-Road Routes network has undergone considerable expansion. Northbourne Avenue is now a key component of a network of continuous Main On-Road Routes extending across Canberra. It is particularly strategic in that it is located in a part of Canberra where no other Main On-Road Routes exist (if the cycle lanes were removed, the network would be cut in half). Today, the Northbourne Avenue cycle lanes are extremely popular and among Canberra's busiest cycle routes. Pedal Power's annual cordon count, conducted every year since 2004, recorded 224 bicycle riders (one every 24 seconds) using Northbourne Avenue (counted at the intersection with Barry Drive/Cooyong St) in a 90 minute period on 1 March 2011, making it the 5th busiest out of 30 identified routes into Civic and Acton³. This is mostly additional rather than re-routed cycling traffic, with parallel routes also mostly recording increases in that period. The lanes play an important role in supporting the ACT Government's goal of increasing the percentage of people cycling to work from 2.3% in 2001 to 5% in 2011⁴.

In addition to being well used, the Northbourne Avenue cycle lanes have an outstanding safety record. In common with Canberra's other cycle lanes, they have remained fatality free and serious accidents are extremely rare, especially given the amount of cycling traffic on them. A formal audit conducted in 2008 by ARRB stated:

*"In the opinion of the ARRB project team, the on-road cycling facilities along the investigated arterial routes [this included Northbourne Ave] provided a comfortable riding experience with a high degree of safety. Several treatments offer examples of best practice for on-road cycling facilities" (p. i)*⁵

Despite this success, Pedal Power has never regarded the Northbourne Avenue cycle lanes as the entire solution to north-south cycling requirements in central North Canberra. Rather, they are one part of a suite of options- on-road cycle lanes, off-road paths and quiet connector streets- that together meet the needs and preferences of a range of users. In addition to advocating the creation of and improvements to the cycle lanes, Pedal Power has been proactive in working with the ACT Government in developing and improving cycling amenity on parallel streets and on off-road paths in the vicinity.

Installation of the cycle lanes has not been without criticism. Northbourne Avenue was among the first arterial roads in Canberra to be fitted with cycle lanes, and the project met with considerable resistance from a minority of people and organisations unwilling to give up road space they viewed as the exclusive preserve of motor vehicles. Most of this resistance has faded over time as the concept has been proven and fears of inconvenience to other road users shown to be unfounded; however there remains a vocal minority who today still campaign for the removal of the cycle lanes and the forced relocation of bicycle

³ Pedal Power Cycling Cordon Count, April 2011,

<http://www.pedalpower.org.au/documents/cordon%20count%20report%202011.pdf>

⁴ Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT, pii, ACT Planning and Land Authority, April 2004

http://www.tams.act.gov.au/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_E9B56F431933DB6B45FB9C2B8111CA18F2771800/file_name/Sustainable_Transplan_Plan.pdf

⁵ Unpublished- refer to TAMS for copy of original report

riders to less convenient routes⁶. A very small minority of bicycle riders are also opposed to the cycle lanes, failing to understand that two networks exist (as explained below) and that all the alternative route choices that existed before the cycle lane installation still exist (many of them improved since 2004) and remain available to them. Criticisms from both groups usually focus on alleged safety issues but ignore the actual evidence of seven years of operation. They also disregard the rational choices of the many adult bicycle riders who ride in the cycle lanes and view them as a safe and practical option, and seek to remove that right of choice.

Northbourne Avenue as Part of the ACT Main Routes Network for cycling

The key reference document created and used by the ACT Government when planning cycling facilities is *Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure 13: Pedestrian & cycle facilities* (commonly referred to, including in this submission, as DS:13⁷). This document was created with widespread community consultation and specifies not only technical requirements, but also sets out the underlying rational and planning principles, which have been applied in the ACT Government's intensive investment in both off-road and on-road cycling facilities (including Northbourne Avenue) in recent years. It is essential reading for anyone contemplating changes to a Canberra cycle facility, and we recommend that it should be formally considered as part of this study. In addition, any proposed solutions should be tested against the document to ensure consistency.

At the heart of DS:13 is the recognition by the ACT Government of the diverse needs of Canberra's cycling community and potential new riders, and their requirements for different facility types. The document states:

"A hierarchy of facilities to best suit different user groups has been developed through public consultation and is to be implemented over time through retrofit and wherever new facilities are provided. Providing a choice in facilities to cater for the needs of different user groups will also contribute to reaching the Sustainable Transport Plan's transport mode share targets for walking and cycling journeys to work" [our emphasis]⁸.

The document then explains how:

⁶ It is likely that they see this study as a late and probably final opportunity to achieve this aim. The consultant should for this reason anticipate receiving many negative submissions, and should consider the underlying motives of those making them.

⁷ On-line at

http://www.tams.act.gov.au/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_FA6093DA37C5C9F74B686A510BC535F3F5BE0300/file_name/13_Pedestrian_and_Cycle_Facilities_Edition_1_Revision_1.pdf

⁸ DS:13 at 13.4.2

“The Main Routes Network is made up of two mutually independent networks, namely Main Community Routes and Main On-Road Routes”⁹.

These two networks primarily consist, respectively, of wide paths generally meeting the standard for destinational cycling (shared by bicycle riders and pedestrians), and on-road cycle lanes and marked shoulders (used by bicycle riders only). DS:13 also recognises connector routes on minor roads considered suitable for cycling without the need for on-road cycle lanes or shoulders.¹⁰ The practical application of DS:13 is evident ‘on the ground’, as all three facility types exist in a general north-south direction either on or in fairly close proximity to Northbourne Avenue.

Pedal Power strongly agrees with the ACT Government’s approach, as expressed through DS:13, which avoids unrealistic and unworkable attempts to create single cycle facilities that are suitable for all users. We believe that the current policy and its application in the study area accurately reflect the reality that individual bicycle riders will, where a choice exists, use the facility type that most reflects their preferences and abilities. Riders who value directness, priority and speed most, and have a reasonable level of confidence and riding ability, are more likely to use Main On-Road Routes (i.e. usually cycle lanes) while those who value separation from traffic, quietness and scenery are more likely to ride on Main Community Routes (i.e. off-road paths). Others will for various reasons prefer the quieter connector streets.

Cycling Options for Northbourne Avenue

In the 1990’s, the small amount of on-road cycling that occurred in Canberra was primarily done by tough, Lycra clad young men riding racing bikes on training rides or long distance commutes. Since the introduction of on-road cycle lanes, there has been a significant increase not only in the number of people riding on roads, but also in the proportion of women, older people, students, casual shoppers and short distance commuters, often in work or casual clothing and riding ‘city’ or ‘shopping’ bikes. This change is particularly evident on Northbourne Avenue. In other words, the mix of cycling traffic is moving towards (but is still well short of being) a reflection of the community the cycle lanes serve. However we need to reinforce this trend by investing in ‘next generation’ facilities in the form of separated cycle lanes as discussed below. Not until almost any person, regardless of age, gender, riding ability or the reason for their journey, feels comfortable and safe cycling to their destination on facilities they also regard as quick and convenient, will the real potential for cycling on Northbourne Avenue be fully realised.

Much of the discussion in the media and public forums about the best cycling option for Northbourne Avenue is unproductively polarised around the question of whether riders

⁹ DS:13 at 13.4.2

¹⁰ DS 13 does not include technical discussion of separated cycle lanes of the type we propose for Northbourne Avenue. However this is only because they are relatively new compared with other established facility types and do not yet exist in Canberra, rather than for any policy reasons. Given that planning for separated cycle lanes is already under way for the Civic Cycle Loop, we reasonably expect that they will be included in the next review and update of DS:13, well before any detailed design or construction is required on Northbourne Avenue.

should remain in the existing cycle lanes or be moved onto an off-road community path (similar to others already in the vicinity), as if these were the only two options available. This narrow debate disregards the potential for improved, separated 'next generation' cycle lanes, and also fails to consider the function of other roughly parallel routes in the vicinity on connector streets and on the ANU to Lyneham path.

We feel the focus of the debate should not be merely on 'where can we put the bicycle riders?' but rather on '**what will get more people cycling?**'. This will certainly not be achieved by reducing the range of existing options. What is needed is to not only retain these options, but to also invest in higher standard facilities that the great majority of ordinary people feel are both safe and convenient.

The below discussion is a high level summary of Pedal Power's views on possible options, rather than a detailed technical discussion. We expect to be consulted later on the fine detail of any changes to Northbourne Avenue arising from this study.

The Way Forward: Separated Cycle Lanes

This is Pedal Power's preferred cycling option for Northbourne Avenue, as the option that will best support the ACT Government's objective of increasing cycling while also meeting the objective of providing separation from other traffic. We recommend that separated cycle lanes should be installed to replace the existing 'standard' cycle lanes.



Separated Cycle Lane on Swanston Street Melbourne; If Melbourne can do it, then so too can Canberra!

Separated cycle lanes (sometimes referred to as Copenhagen lanes due to their widespread application in that city) can vary slightly in definition and application from place to place. In the context of this submission, the separated cycle lanes Pedal Power is proposing would:

- Be for the exclusive use of bicycles
- Be separated from motor vehicle traffic, except at intersections, by a median or similar barrier
- Run in a single direction (the same direction as adjacent motor vehicle traffic) on the left side of each carriageway, located approximately in the same place as the present 'standard' cycle lanes
- Have, at minimum, the same right of priority as motor vehicles in the adjacent lane, including through intersections, and with no less 'green time' at traffic light intersections, and generally retain all the amenity of the current cycle lanes
- Have green pavement and bicycle logo treatment, high quality lighting, warning signs and other appropriate safety treatments at all intersections (including raised pavement at T intersections) clearly defining the separated cycle lanes and warning drivers of the presence of bicycle riders
- Connect seamlessly with all other cycle facilities they intersect with, particularly the existing cycle lanes at each end of the facility
- Be of sufficient width for faster riders to pass slower ones within the lane
- Be technically and legally an on-road bicycle facility, as distinct from an off-road one

Separated cycle lanes are an evolutionary step upwards from standard cycle lanes, and a natural progression from them, particularly on well used cycle routes. However as they do not yet exist in Canberra (though planned for the Civic Cycle Loop), many people are unaware of this option, including some who presently see off-road paths as the only way to achieve separation between bicycles and motor vehicles.

In 2001, Pedal Power considered promoting separated cycle lanes as its preferred option for Northbourne Avenue. However the concept was untried in Australia at the time, and the additional space required would have required more capital works at greater expense (far less of an issue now if the entire road configuration is to in any case be altered to create bus facilities). Consequently the idea was discarded as too ambitious a proposal to put forward (in a political and financial rather than technical sense) at that time.

Ten years later, separated cycle lanes are far more commonplace throughout the world, and have been successfully implemented in Melbourne and Sydney. Pedal Power is currently working with the ACT Government to install them as part of the Civic Cycle Loop project. Separated cycle lanes are not necessarily justified in all circumstances¹¹; however we believe that as a high profile, well used cycle route on a busy road, Northbourne Avenue is an ideal location for them and that fitting them would greatly increase cycling traffic.

Separated cycle lanes come closer than any other facility type to meeting the needs of both on and off-road bicycle riders as well as meeting the ACT Government's objectives. Specifically, they:

¹¹ Primarily because the higher per kilometre cost may divert finite funds from a greater length of other, cheaper facility types, potentially reducing *overall* cycling safety and amenity.

- Retain all the advantages of speed, directness, exclusive use by bicycles and equivalent priority to motor vehicles valued by higher speed commuter and training riders.
- Offer the physical separation valued by off-road riders. This point acknowledges that it is not sufficient for a bicycle facility to merely *be* statistically very safe (as the record of the current facility shows it is); it must also be *perceived* as safe. Perceived dangerous conditions keep people from cycling and thus are just as damaging to efforts to increase cycling as *actual* dangerous conditions are. The physical barrier and extra distance from motor vehicles offered by separated cycle lanes does much to overcome that perception, as well as further reducing the already low risks of the current cycle lanes.
- Separate bicycles from buses, benefiting both modes of transport.
- Reinforce, even more strongly than standard cycle lanes, the message that bicycle riding is welcome and is to be encouraged.
- In the context of Northbourne Avenue, which carries heavy cycle traffic at varying speeds and often bunched by traffic lights, their extra width offers safe passing options, allowing faster riders to pass slower riders without having to move into the path of motor vehicles as presently occurs (a downside of the success of the existing cycle lanes).
- Politically, would be seen as a logical expansion and improvement of existing policy by a government that initially had the foresight and innovation to re-allocate road space for the existing cycle lanes, and would now be making a proven concept work even better. This contrasts with removal without equivalent replacement of the existing facility, which could only be described as a policy U-turn.
- Would demonstrate that the ACT Government employs innovative strategies to further its sustainable transport objectives
- Most importantly, offer the consultant and the ACT Government their best possible opportunity to address all the conflicting demands that will be made as part of this consultation process and come out with a win-win-win-formula which will meet the ACT Government's objective of 'separation' and be acceptable to:
 - drivers who are concerned about hitting bicycle riders on the current cycle lanes
 - bicycle riders who would like a faster facility but want physical separation
 - bicycle riders who value the current arrangements, but are unlikely to see any detriment to themselves (quite the opposite) in having a wider facility with physical separation while retaining all the amenity that they currently enjoy.
 - ACTION whom we assume would also like to see greater separation between bicycles and cars (several technical options exist to allow safe operation at bus stops)

Separated cycle lanes can run in two directions on one side of the road, or in a single direction (the same as adjacent motor vehicle traffic) on the left side of each carriageway. The latter arrangement is the only one suited to Northbourne Avenue, particularly due to the simplicity of connecting seamlessly into the standard cycle lanes at each end, and also due to the tendency of drivers entering from intersecting roads to check to their right but not left.

Facilities of this type are potentially vulnerable to a gradual 'watering down' of amenity as engineering, financial or space pressures arise during the detailed design phase, and design compromises are made which detract from the original intent and potentially leave bicycle riders with the irrecoverable loss of the previous facility but without equivalent amenity in the new one. For this reason detailed specifications would need to be consulted with the cycling community early in the planning and locked in place.

It is also very important that the facility be constructed on the outsides of the carriageway (i.e. approximately where the existing cycle lanes are) rather than on the median. The reasons for this are the same as many of the reasons for not relocating riders onto an off-road shared path, but in summary are:

- Loss of 'green time' at traffic signals to cater for right-turning motor vehicle traffic, and further loss of priority at other locations
- Likely poor connections to the facility, particularly at each end
- Because a median facility might *appear* to many people to be an off-road path or paths, even if it consists, technically and legally, of separated cycle lanes, this would send almost the same negative cultural and political message regarding on-road cycling (especially if the design compromises mentioned above are also incorporated) as if an off-road path option were adopted.

These issues overlap with, and are discussed in greater detail, in the context of off-road paths below, and for brevity are not mentioned further in this section; however the consultant should be aware of this overlap when reading the below section.

A Backward Step: Removal of Existing Cycle Lanes, and Forcing Riders onto an Off-Road Community Path

Information on the TAMS website states that:

[This] study will look at options for improving overall safety and amenity for cyclists in the corridor, without diminishing travel speeds or "directness".¹²

The retention of on-road cycle lanes as part of the Main On-Road Network is regarded by Pedal Power as being so essential to achieving the above outcome that we would consider any decision to remove them (other than to replace them with separated cycle lanes as discussed above) as not only a failure of the consultation process, but also as a serious retrograde step in meeting the ACT Government's sustainable transport objectives.

In particular we do NOT agree with the simplistic suggestion, frequently made but only superficially attractive, that an off-road path usually proposed for the median (thereby duplicating the existing ANU to Lyneham off-road Main Community Route path) is the solution to all cycling requirements on Northbourne Avenue, eliminating the need for the current cycle lanes (or any future separated cycle lanes). Below are the reasons why:

¹² At http://www.transport.act.gov.au/studies_projects/northbourne_study_fags.html

(Note that as discussed further above, many of these points are also obviously relevant in the context of median-located separated cycle lanes as a poor alternative to separated cycle lanes on the outsides of the carriageway)

Technical and Planning Considerations

- The path would most likely be shared with a large number of pedestrians, especially closer to Civic. This is not particularly dangerous on a correctly designed facility if cycling speeds and user volumes are low. However it is dangerous practice, warned against in the ACT Government's own policy documents¹³ to force high speed commuting and training riders (people who currently tend to prefer cycle lanes in busy areas) onto the same path as pedestrians. This would not only be dangerous for both user types but would place an unfair duty of care on bicycle riders who previously, riding in the cycle lanes, did not need to worry about hitting pedestrians. We also do not believe that prohibiting pedestrians from using it (i.e. creating an exclusive cycle path) would rectify the situation- apart from any issues of fairness, it would be impossible to police. It would also be an unfair loss of cycling amenity, and a discouragement to cycling, for riders who for the past seven years have had their own exclusive facility. The above concerns could possibly be addressed to some extent by providing side-by-side exclusive cycling and walking paths (the median would be the only place where they would both fit). However this measure is likely to be expensive and space consuming.
- The study area contains 12 sets of traffic lights. For a median path, the need to provide for right turns for motor vehicle traffic would mean less 'green time' for bicycle riders than for drivers in the adjacent traffic lane. Many bicycle riders would switch to riding on the road rather than suffer excessive 'red time'. However if the path were on an outside verge, a different issue would arise. Many of these traffic lights have left turn slip lanes with pedestrian crossings at which bicycle riders would be legally compelled to dismount. Again, higher speed riders will stay on the road to avoid this requirement. In addition to the traffic lights, the study area also contains 5 intersections controlled by stop or give way signs, at which priority will be further lost.
- Accessing the path would present special problems, especially for riders coming from or continuing to the cycle lanes further north or south. If provided on one side of the road only, an irritating and time consuming double crossing of Northbourne Avenue would be required for one direction of travel- many would not bother and would remain on the road. If the path were on the median, a time consuming two-stage crossing at the traffic lights would be required unless special provisions were made in the traffic light sequencing for riders to access the median directly. This would result in less 'green time' for motor vehicles and create further congestion and delay buses.
- Construction of an off-road path would essentially duplicate a facility (see below) that already exists to the west just a few hundred metres away south of Moaut St, and in the corridor itself north of Mouat St. Most existing potential new riders are well aware of the existence of this path but they still choose not to cycle; few are likely to be persuaded by duplicating the same type of facility already available to them. Thus much of the supposedly 'new' cycling traffic on a new Northbourne

¹³ See DS:13 .4.3 which states that "Pedestrians have right of way on these [trunk path] routes and with higher pedestrian volumes these paths may become unsuitable for faster moving cyclists".

Avenue path would actually be relocated traffic from the existing path and possibly nearby connector streets. The purpose of building cycling infrastructure should always be to get *additional* people onto bicycles, not merely relocate *existing* riders. Providing genuinely new and better options and a genuine choice of facility types is the best way to achieve this.

Policy and Political Considerations

- Despite the criticisms of standard on-road cycle lanes discussed above, no logical, sound, factually based argument has been made for the removal of a highly successful and valued facility; ie to ‘fix something that isn’t broken’. It would be exceptionally poor policy to remove a facility based on mere perception or unsubstantiated claims of dangerous conditions, not supported by statistically sound facts. We acknowledge that standard cycle lanes are *perceived* by many potential riders as being particularly unsafe despite there being little evidence to support that perception. This is understandable given that rare accidents tend to receive considerable media coverage. This gives the impression that there is a high statistical probability of serious accident or death in a cycle lane when in fact it is extremely low. Critics of cycle lanes also tend to treat very rare serious accidents as ‘proof’ that cycle lanes are dangerous and should be removed, while avoiding the real issue of overall statistical risk. We encourage the consultant, if in doubt about safety, to directly research the facts and come to an independent conclusion, rather than merely accept submissions made on this point at face value without supporting evidence.
- Removal of this part of the Main On-Road Route network would require the ACT Government to contravene its own detailed policies, as explicitly stated in DS13 as explained above. It would also directly contradict the *Sustainable Transport Plan*, which seeks to encourage rather than discourage cycling.
- Removal for the sole purpose of creating a bus facility cannot be justified as this rational goes against the internationally accepted order of primacy among users endorsed by the *Sustainable Transport Plan*¹⁴; i.e. walkers, bicycle riders, public transport and then private motoring. Again, removal on this basis would require the ACT Government to contravene its own stated policies.
- A significant number of riders would consider themselves to be much worse off if the cycle lanes were replaced by off-road options only. This would disproportionately discourage the users that, on Northbourne Avenue, the ACT Government needs to encourage the most; regular commuters who by cycling instead of driving are relieving pressure on the general traffic lanes. Widespread community refusal to use a new facility, constructed at great expense, would be a major embarrassment to the ACT Government.
- Many of the above riders will instead continue to ride on-road in the traffic lanes (as they are legally entitled to do), including in the centre lane if banned from a potential left side exclusive bus lane. This will almost certainly lead to road rage, injuries and possibly deaths, particularly if drivers can see an alternative facility nearby but don’t understand the bicycle rider’s reasons for not using it. Given that by this stage any removal of the cycle lanes would likely be irreversibly ‘locked in’,

¹⁴ On Page 29

we can only see endless conflict and recriminations ahead if they are removed, damaging the ACT Government's efforts to increase cycling.

- As the primary gateway into Canberra for both interstate and northern suburbs traffic, Northbourne Avenue is among Canberra's most symbolic and important roads. Installing cycle lanes sent a powerful positive message to the community regarding the equality of bicycle riders on our major roads. Removing them and effectively pushing bicycle riders off the road would send an equally powerful negative message from a Government that is supposedly committed to sustainability and reducing motor vehicle use.
- Removal of the cycle lanes would effectively be a breaking of the present Government's 2001 pre-election promise to install cycle lanes on Northbourne Avenue¹⁵ and would create massive resentment among cycling Canberrans, especially in the Molonglo Electorate. Many in the community would also see it as a purely political decision made to appease opponents of on-road cycling, at the expense of informed and considered policy making. The ACT Government would also have to explain why its own decision to install the lanes was no longer the correct one less than a decade later.

In summary, a shared cycling and pedestrian off-road path is not an appropriate solution for Northbourne Avenue- not because Pedal Power is opposed to off-road paths, but because in this particular situation a much better option- that of the separated cycle lanes proposed above- exists.

We are however aware that existing walking paths on Northbourne Avenue are inadequate for pedestrian needs. Consistent with our support for all forms of sustainable transport, we support improvement of these paths primarily for walkers. Bicycle riders should be able to use them (as they do now for short distance purposes such as accessing destinations on Northbourne Avenue itself from the nearest curb ramp or driveway); however we do not see them as serving long or medium distance commuting functions.

The Status Quo- Retaining the Existing Cycle Lanes

We have explained above why separated cycle lanes should be installed on Northbourne Avenue as the best and Pedal Power's preferred option, and why an off-road path is not a viable alternative to providing on-road cycling. However it needs to be clearly stated that **at minimum** the existing on-road cycle lanes **MUST** be retained in order that their contribution to the ACT Government's sustainable transport objectives should not be lost. This is Pedal Power's second most preferred option; although we stress this would be a relatively disappointing outcome for sustainable transport compared to our preferred option.

¹⁵ The cycle lanes were installed as promised, however implicit in any political promise is the understanding that it will not be implemented and then reversed; effectively almost the same as never keeping it in the first place.

Additional Considerations: Parallel Routes

Although beyond the geographic scope of the consultant's brief, some other routes (some recognised as Connector Streets) function to some extent as alternatives to Northbourne Avenue. They also supplement Northbourne Avenue as the final links to or from origins or destinations, because many workplaces or homes are on these streets, which mainly contain offices, shops or high density residences. Consideration of them is relevant to the study.

Several minor roads run parallel to Northbourne Avenue for various lengths. As with other cycle facilities, these have both advantages and disadvantages, depending on the preferences of individual riders, and especially their origins and destinations. Advantages are:

- Quieter routes with less traffic
- Absence of traffic lights

Disadvantages are:

- No one road parallels Northbourne Avenue for its entire length. All of them end at some point in each direction. At this point riders have to either switch to Northbourne Avenue or take longer and more complicated routes. Even with signage provided on some Connector streets, navigation is more difficult for unfamiliar users.
- Difficult road crossings at some locations.
- Driving and parking in space used for cycling has significantly increased in recent years as high density apartments replace single dwelling blocks. 'Rat running' by drivers seeking to avoid congestion on Northbourne Avenue is also an issue.
- They are especially difficult routes to reach Commonwealth Avenue Bridge over Lake Burley Griffin by (many commuters live north of the lake but work on the south side and vice versa). The only options are to transfer to Northbourne Avenue or to take difficult and complicated routes through East or West Civic to reach the footbridges over Parkes Way.

A main community route path also runs roughly North-South alongside Northbourne Avenue to Lyneham, and then an increasing distance to the west from Lyneham to the ANU and Civic, with branches east to Dickson and west to Belconnen. It carries significant traffic to the ANU (Canberra's largest cycling destination by number of riders), with many users combining this path and Northbourne Avenue to create their most efficient route.

Pedal Power would welcome steps to further improve these parallel routes. Practical measures could include:

- Review of on-street parking
- Marking of cycle lanes, particularly on Mort and Lonsdale Streets
- Closure points on connector streets, with bicycle access maintained, combined with measures to improve priority along the cycle routes
- Installation of lighting on main community route path between ANU and Dickson¹⁶
- Improvement of the north-south paths through Haig Park including lighting.
- Strengthening of east-west connections to allow easy mixing and matching of routes to suit individual journeys.

¹⁶ As already recommended as a high priority in the Eppel Olson Report

However we again emphasise that improved parallel routes would supplement rather than replace on-road cycle lanes on Northbourne Avenue.

Future-Proofing Northbourne Avenue

Pedal Power does not claim to have expertise regarding light rail. However we note that there appears to be growing opinion that there is at very least a strong possibility that it will be fitted in the corridor in the future. Our primary concern is that if space is not identified for future light rail (including stations) as part of this study, then at some point in the future the cycle facilities in the corridor could be threatened by the space requirements of light rail in much the same way as they have been by the present requirement for improved bus facilities. It is clearly desirable to avoid this situation, and for this reason we believe that the space allocated to all future users should be specified in this study.

End of Submission