Shared paths, cycle lanes and separated cycle lanes

For every complex problem, there is a perfectly simple solution and it is generally wrong

This document sets out Pedal Power's policy in relation to shared paths (cycle paths), cycle lanes and separated cycle lanes (eg Copenhagen-style lanes).

Background

Pedal Power's mission is 'More Canberrans cycling, more often, for a better community'. Given this, we advocate what will be the most cost effective cycling facilities to get more Canberrans cycling, more often.

Cycle trips can be generalised based on the intensity of the trips (high/low) and the purpose of the trip (commuting/recreational). This leads to four generalised categories

A. High intensity/recreational eg road racing and training
B. High intensity/commuting eg longer distance trips often to locations where a change of clothes occurs
C. Low intensity/recreational eg leisurely weekend rides
D. Low intensity/commuting eg trips in everyday clothes to nearby destinations

Many people make all four types of trips, often in a day. Some only do one type of trip. Some trips don't fit easily into this generalisation.

The ACT standards for cycle facilities set out design principles [1] of Coherence, Directness, Safety, Attractiveness and Comfort. The importance of these principles varies depending on the type of trip eg people doing Type B trips value directness, maintaining momentum and reduced travel time more than people doing Type C trips.

Shared paths, cycle lanes and separated cycle lanes vary in terms of their ability to meet the design principles listed above and hence vary in terms of their attractiveness for the four types of trips above. For example, shared paths rate highly in terms of comfort and safety but can be indirect and people riding must give way to people walking and generally lose right of way at road crossings.

Shared paths, cycle lanes and separated cycle lanes also vary in terms of their cost and the space they require. Cycle lanes when installed as part of regular line marking can be very cost-effective especially if a cycle lane can be installed within the existing pavement through reallocation of road space. Shared paths need a new continuous corridor and construction of pavement from scratch.

The ACT standards for cycle facilities recognise the above factors and proscribe two networks for cycling, Main Community Routes and Main On-Road Routes. The Main Community Routes (MCR) network consists of main shared paths and Connector routes which are less

[1] ACT Government (2007) *Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure: Part 13 Pedestrian and Cycle Facilities* 13.6.1

trafficked streets. The Main On-Road Routes network is made up of cycle lanes generally on arterial roads with higher traffic volumes and higher speeds but providing more direct routes and the same right of way as vehicles for quick cycle trips to a destination. The two networks are mutually exclusive but interconnected to allow interoperability without forcing people uncomfortable cycling on busier roads to have to do that.

Policy

We advocate the facilities that will be most cost effective at getting more Canberrans cycling, more often. This requires thoughtful consideration of likely demand, cost and applicability. There is no 'one solution fits all'. There is sometimes no easy answer and it is better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong. Though some rules of thumb can be used:

- Shared paths that are direct, relatively uninterrupted by intersections and driveways and have low pedestrian volumes are attractive to the greatest number of cycle trips particularly trips B, C and D. Separated cycle lanes have similar appeal. However these two facilities require space and are often the most costly.

- In urban areas, shared paths often suffer from the loss of priority at road crossings and intersections and thus separated cycle lanes can become more attractive to keep momentum.

- Installation of cycle facilities is more cost effective as part of the development process rather than being retrofitted later. This is especially so with shared paths and separated cycle lanes where provision of the appropriate space within the road corridor is required from the outset. Hence the opportunity should be taken to plan and install these as an integrated part of land and infrastructure development.

- Cycle lanes are attractive because they can be very cheap to install, especially when implemented as part of regular linemarking. Lanes created in this manner improve safety by separating cars and bicycles. Lack of funding often means this is the only alternative to no cycle facility at all.

As you would expect from the above discussion, Pedal Power continues to advocate for different facilities at different locations depending on the perceived demand and any available opportunities. Examples are: separated cycle lanes/cycle only path (Civic Cycle Loop); shared paths (Airport path and Jerrabomberra Wetlands path); and cycle lanes (Dickson-Woden cycle lanes and Cotter Road cycle lanes).