



MEDIA RELEASE

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Northbourne Avenue changes must make cycling better

Canberra cycling group, Pedal Power, has said that changes to Northbourne Avenue must make cycling more attractive. Pedal Power was responding to the ACT Government announcement of funding for a design study to improve public transport options on Northbourne Avenue.

Pedal Power spokesman, Tony Shields, said Northbourne Avenue was a very popular cycle route for people. Removing the cycle lane and simply widening the existing footpath into a shared path for walking and cycling was unlikely to work.

‘On a shared path, you would have to slow down and give way every time you cycled across a driveway. There are lots of driveways on Northbourne Avenue. Mixing high-speed bicycles with pedestrians would not work for walking or cycling. Many people would continue to cycle on the road, which would defeat the purpose of building the shared path’, said Mr Shields.

‘Removing on-road cycle lanes would discourage active transport and undermine road safety. It would increase road congestion by encouraging those who currently cycle to drive instead. Tragically, it may also increase congestion and the chance of crashes – if there is no on-road option for cycling, bikes and cars will once again share a high-speed road.’

Mr Shields said a more attractive and workable alternative was Copenhagen-style separated cycle lanes such as Pedal Power had recommended for its Civic Cycle Loop proposal. ‘Melbourne and Sydney have installed separated cycle lanes because they offer a separation buffer from traffic but ensure cycling still has priority equivalent to the parallel road. Swanston Street in Melbourne is a very successful example of this.’

Pedal Power also welcomed investigation into building a dedicated bus lane down the Northbourne Avenue median that would be southbound in the morning and northbound in the evening. ‘It would a step towards an O-Bahn or perhaps light rail,’ said Mr Shields, ‘The use of indented bus lanes on Northbourne Avenue also warrants investigation. Placed at intersections with priority treatment at traffic lights it would enable buses to move ahead of the traffic.’

Pedal Power’s annual counts of cycling into Civic have found that Northbourne Avenue had become very popular since cycle lanes were installed in 2004. Cycle numbers tripled once the cycle lanes were installed. ‘Even more impressive is that overall cycle numbers have doubled since 2005,’ said Mr Shields.

‘The success of the Northbourne Ave cycle lanes is a credit to the Stanhope Government which installed them,’ said Mr Shields. ‘It would be poor policy to remove a facility that is so well used, decreases road congestion and increases active, sustainable transport.’

Mr Shields said that while Pedal Power welcomed improvements on Northbourne Avenue, the biggest boosts to cycling will come from the construction of the Civic Cycle Loop and completing the ride around Lake Burley Griffin through Kingston Foreshore and Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

Pedal Power represents the 85,000 Canberrans who cycle, has over 3000 members and its mission is ‘More Canberrans cycling, more often, for a better community’.

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