



On-Road Cycling in the ACT

Pedal Power supports on-road cycle lanes and off-road cycle paths to provide a cycle network that will help achieve the ACT Government's aim of increasing cycling to work trips from 2.3% of trips in 2001 to 5.0% in 2011 – a 117% increase. This target is set out in the Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT

Canberra has an off-road shared path network that is good for recreational cycling, however less suitable for commuting and cycle training (where trip times and speed are important) because:

- Often there aren't any paths where you want to go.
- They are shared paths so common sense means you have to slow down and share with walkers, rollerbladers etc.
- They often have been poorly built for quick trips. They often take the hill rather than the flat and wind rather than go straight.
- You lose priority at every intersection with a road or driveway. It is like travelling from Tuggeranong to Civic via minor streets.
- They are sometimes poorly maintained.
- They are unlit.

Because of the above difficulties with the current path network people cycle on roads or don't cycle at all. Therefore we support on-road cycling lanes as it makes cycling safer than cycling on-road without lanes. Furthermore most of Canberra's cycle lanes are created using existing road space re-allocated by line marking. This is usually done when, as part of regular maintenance, roads are resealed and the lines have to be remarked anyway. This can be up to 20 times cheaper than building additional off-road paths, see Brown Consulting (2004) *Ten Year Masterplan for Trunk Cycling and Walking Path Infrastructure 2004-2014*. Given cost considerations, the choice is usually between a cycle lane and nothing at all, rather than between a cycle lane and an off-road path. For this reason we support cycle lanes where appropriate and cycle paths where appropriate

We believe that people can make their own assessment whether their skills are up to riding on-road and should be allowed to make their own choice about whether they use cycle lanes.

Risks

- It is important to look at the overall risks of any issue. Currently many, many, more people die because of lack of exercise rather than cycle accidents. This is especially the case as obesity continues to rise. Over 50 per cent of adult Australians are overweight and therefore at greater risk of heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer and arthritis. The British Medical Association studied this issue and found that "even in the current hostile environment, the benefits from regular cycling are likely to outweigh the loss of life through cycle accidents". See British Medical Association (1991), *Cycling towards health and safety*. Another UK study found that, while about 140 people are killed each year while cycling, around 20 000 others die prematurely due to a lack of exercise. The study estimated that regular cycling provides a net benefit to personal health that outweighs its

risk of injury by a factor of 20 to 1. See Hillman, M. (1993), Cycling and the promotion of Health, *Policy Studies*,: 14: 49-58.

- Cycle lanes have lead more people to cycle regularly. Studies have found that the more people who cycle, the lower the accident rate. See D Robinson (2005) Safety in Numbers in Australia: more walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling, *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* 16(1), 47-51, and P L Jacobsen (2003), Safety in Numbers: More Walkers and Bicyclists, Safer Walking and Bicycling. *British Medical Journal* 9, p205-9.
- Removing cycle lanes will mean cars and bicycles have to share a lane rather than having separate space. This is likely to increase the accident rate and lead to longer trip times for cars and bicycles.
- Cycle lanes in the ACT are built to the Australian standard, *Austroads Part 14:Bicycles*.
- Since cycle lanes were installed on St Kilda Road, Melbourne, cycling numbers have increased five-fold e from less than 100 riders in morning peak hour in 1994 to over 500 riders in 2003 with little change in injuries on this section of road. See http://www.bv.com.au/file/chart_bike_lanes_encourage_cycling_&_make_safe_St_Kilda_Rd.pdf
- Cycle lanes are also common in other Australian cities and other countries
- There is no data (including ACT Government data) to show that cycle lanes have increased accidents in the ACT
- Cycle lanes provide a road shoulder which increases the life of the road (roads often breakdown from the edges). The road shoulder also serves as a breakdown lane for cars.
- Cycle lanes send a strong, permanent message that cycling on roads is a legitimate activity. Anecdotally we believe road rage against cyclists has decreased with the installation of cycle lanes in recent years.

Green Lanes

- Where cycle lanes cross higher volume intersections, they have been painted green to mark these points out.
- Other Australian cities have cycle lane networks and coloured bicycle lanes. On St Kilda Rd in Melbourne a coloured cycle lane runs for 300 metres through five intersections.
- Where it is suitable, in the ACT at 'green lane' crossings cyclists can generally use the green lanes or choose to cross at the narrowest point of an exit ramp. There are no green lane crossings of entry ramps.
- The main place where accidents occur is at intersections. Whether a cycle route is a cycle path or cycle lane there will still be potential for accidents at intersections.

Summary

- Like any physical activity, cycling has dangers, however there are also dangers in *not* cycling. You are more likely to overweight and therefore at higher risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. You are more likely to have poor mental health as physical activity promotes better mental health. You will have less money in your pocket

after paying for petrol etc. On the other hand, if you cycle regularly, you face the danger of your friends being envious because you are healthier than they are!