

POLICIES TO MAKE CANBERRA INTO AUSTRALIA'S BEST CYCLING AND WALKING CITY

1. An in-principle commitment to give priority to walking and cycling

To encourage walking and cycling, cities around the world are now, as a general rule, giving priority in the traffic system, firstly to emergency vehicles, then walking, cycling, public transport and lastly private motor vehicles. Such a commitment is necessary to make Canberra into Australia's best walking and cycling city.

Obviously, this is only a guiding principle. For instance it would be silly to give little-used traffic lights at pedestrian crossings priority over arterial roads; however it would be an especially useful guiding principle in town centres where space is at a premium and pedestrian and cycling traffic are likely to be greatest.

2. An Office of Cycling and Walking

The ACT Government should establish an Office of Cycling and Walking, reporting to the Legislative Assembly, with a budget of at least \$200,000 per annum. Its activities should include:

- Providing expert advice to government
- Monitoring program results against government targets including those in the Sustainable Transport Plan
- Identifying cross-departmental programs that support Cycling and Walking
- Contributing to the development and implementation of the new *National Cycling Strategy*

3. A four-year \$8 million capital works program to build Australia's best cycling and walking city

Consultants have almost completed a Master Plan to fill in the 'missing links' in Canberra's cycling and walking networks. They have identified projects to be completed on the basis of \$1 million in capital works funding per year. A bigger investment is necessary to make Canberra into Australia's best cycling and walking city. An \$8 million, four-year capital works program would still be only a fraction of the ACT's current road building program totalling some \$90 million.

As an example of the works needed, Pedal Power has identified the Top 13 missing cycle links across Canberra (see Appendix).

Apart from major missing links, across Canberra there are minor missing links, discontinuities and hazards that individually are insignificant, but collectively are a major disincentive to cycling. Examples of the work that could be done to fix these missing links are: providing the last link into town centres from shared paths that stop on the outside of town centres, fitting kerb ramps at strategic locations, building very short paths and cycle lanes to link existing facilities, fitting pedestrian and cyclist refuges on busy roads, connecting cycle lanes to nearby off road shared paths, and widening roads at minor 'pinch points'. Other infrastructure improvements, such as lighting and directional signage, are also required.



Number one on Pedal Power's Top 13 Missing Cycling Links – an underpass is needed under Parkes Way near Russell roundabout.



One of the 'missing links' identified by Pedal Power – the lack of directional signage on shared paths. At Yarralumla Creek just north of the main Woden roundabout, five paths intersect, yet there is no directional signage.



Another missing link. No safe, direct cycling route between Woden and South Canberra. This is the highest point on Hindmarsh Drive. There are no shoulders and there is no alternative off-road path at this point.

4. \$3 million per annum for maintaining shared paths and footpaths

Canberra's network of shared paths is a major cycling and walking asset, but many parts of it need major repairs. There are tree root intrusions and potholes, edges are breaking away, and grass is growing through cracks on many paths. Puddles form in sinkholes, and rain washes dirt and debris onto the paths due to eroded banks. Some paths are at the end of their economic lives and need replacement.

Investment in maintaining shared paths and footpaths will ensure they continue to provide opportunities for cycling and walking well into the future. The payoffs will be the increased health and fitness of Canberrans.

The 2004/05 ACT Budget contains \$3 million for community path maintenance. This commitment is needed into the future to ensure that community paths are improved to acceptable standards or at the very least don't deteriorate further.



This path, alongside Yamba Drive, Mawson, is in very poor repair

5. Continued support for TravelSmart programs

The ACT has committed to \$880,000 funding for TravelSmart programs over the next three years. TravelSmart programs target households that have expressed an interest in transport methods other than private motoring, and provides them with practical information about buses, cycle routes and other useful tools for changing their transportation habits.

A number of Travelsmart programs have been run in local government areas in Perth and they have all increased cycling by around 50%¹. *There are few, if any programs that are this effective in increasing cycling.* This shows how important subjective factors are in transport choices eg factors such as lack of information, misinformation, lack of motivation and force of habit. Follow-up surveys showed this changed behaviour was maintained two years later. TravelSmart programs have been estimated to have a benefit/cost ratio of around 11-13 to 1².

6. Include cycle lanes on all new and refurbished arterial and collector roads, and when resealing, paint cycle lanes on all existing arterial and collector roads (where the road is wide enough)

Cycle lanes separate bicycles and cars. In doing so, they make travel faster and safer for both cycling and driving. They are expensive to install by widening after a road is built, but are cheap to include when a road is built or undergoes a substantial upgrade. They can also double as shoulders or breakdown lanes.

¹ Colin Ashton-Graham, manager of the Travel Demand Management Team (i.e. TravelSmart programs), Department of Planning and Infrastructure, WA at the Connecting Cycling Conference, Canberra, 20-21st November 2003.

² Ker, I and James, B (1999) "Evaluating Behaviour Change in Transport: Benefit Cost Analysis of Individualised Marketing for the City of South Perth", WA Department of Transport

About two thirds of Canberra's arterial and collector roads are *already* wide enough to fit cycle lanes - this can be done at virtually no cost when the road is routinely resurfaced.

The concept is already proven in Canberra on arterial roads, but not yet widely applied on collector streets. Most collector streets carry significant traffic volumes, and it is difficult to fit off-road paths next to them because of driveways and frequent cross streets. Cycle lanes are a practical and low cost alternative.



Owen Dixon Drive, Evatt, showing new cycle lanes marked during routine resealing

7. 50 km/h speed limits for all neighbourhood and shopping streets

An estimated 35-40% of car trips in Canberra are for less than five kilometres. Many of these are on local streets. A major reason why people don't cycle is fear of traffic. Most neighbourhood streets are already zoned 50 km/h; however the residential collector streets - where there are local shops, schools, parks etc - remain zoned at 60km/h. These are the streets where significant benefits could be obtained from lower speed limits.

A 50km/h speed limit for all neighbourhood and shopping streets will improve safety, increase residential amenity and increase walking and cycling. Because arterial streets will not be affected it will only add an average 10-15 seconds to average travel times.

8. Mandatory end-of-trip cycling facilities in new buildings

The best paths and cycle lanes are useless to commuters if a lack of end-of-trip facilities prevents them from cycling. Cycling employees need secure under-cover bike parking. Bikes parked at the same place for hours each day need greater protection from thieves and the elements than public bike parking rails provide. Employee parking should be secure enough to leave a bike overnight if required.

Longer distance cycling employees need shower, change and locker rooms. These facilities also encourage general employee fitness, by allowing people to walk and run to work and to engage in lunchtime running and sports.

The responsibility for providing end-of-trip facilities should rest with building owners. This effectively allows employees of separate small businesses sharing premises to use shared facilities that would be uneconomic for individual small businesses to provide separately.

The ACT Parking and Vehicle Guidelines require bicycle parking in new office buildings, however only a small number of spaces are required and change facilities are recommended, not mandated. For example, no bike parking facilities are required for offices of less than 500 m² and only one space is required for an area of 500 to 2,000 m². In comparison, the draft Victorian rules require one space for each 200m² of office space, bike parking for visitors, cycling facilities in other buildings (including hospitals, motels and schools), set numbers of showers and change spaces.

Pedal Power calls on the ACT Government to introduce bicycle parking requirements similar to the draft Victorian rules. These facilities should also be required in larger (especially multi-storey) residential developments. Generous incentives should be offered to encourage building owners to provide additional end-of-trip facilities.



This shower room is in Woden's oldest office building, Sirius, built in 1972. It was added during refurbishment of the building in the early 1990s

9. Make pedestrian crossings safer

The current law regarding cycling across pedestrian crossings is little understood. Pedal Power believes:

- “Road ahead, Slow to walking pace” should be stencilled on shared paths where they approach pedestrian crossings; and that
- The ACT Government should seek an exemption to the current Australian Road Rule no. 248 to allow people to cycle *at walking pace* (no more than 5 km/h) across pedestrian crossings.

This would make more sense than the currently little known and even less-obeyed requirement that cyclists dismount at pedestrian crossings. It would be a big improvement on the current situation where there are no reminders to slow before each crossing. It would legitimise the sensible practice of people slowing as they approach a pedestrian crossing and then slowly cycling across when they know that motorists have seen them.

10. Implement “keep left on shared paths” signage on all paths

A trial of ‘keep left on shared paths’ signage is currently taking place on the shared paths around Canberra’s lakes. These signs mirror similar policies already successfully in place in other Australian states.

The feedback Pedal Power has received on the signs has been very supportive with comments saying the signs have added to certainty and decreased the potential for accidents. Pedal Power believes the signage should be made permanent and that signs should be installed on other paths - starting with paths that have high cycling/walking volumes.



11. Funding for a Monaro Rail Trail

The ACT government has the opportunity, in cooperation with Capital Region Councils, to develop a 32 km rail trail alongside the existing railway line between Queanbeyan and Williamsdale. Because the rail trail 'border hops' it needs to be a joint project, initially between Queanbeyan City Council and the ACT Government, and then with the new Eastern Capital Region Council.

Most of the route would be gravel. High wear areas would be better sealed. The cost to the ACT for the first section from Hume to Tuggeranong Pines is estimated to be in the order of \$890 000 for a 10.2 km trail. The cost to the ACT for the section from Tuggeranong Pines to Williamsdale will depend on how much is within NSW and within the ACT.

The rail trail will offer opportunities for walking, relaxation, exercise, nature appreciation or simply walking the dog as well as cycling and horse riding trips.

The rail trail also offers access for land care, bushfire control and bush and grassland conservation work. It would be a pilot section of a Monaro Rail Trail that could go on to Cooma and Bombala.