



...making cycling better in northern Sydney

Bike North Inc

PO Box 719

Gladesville NSW 1675

www.bikenorth.org.au

info@bikenorth.org.au

Bike Plan 2008 Submission

Introduction

Bike North welcomes the intention to provide a new NSW Bike Plan as an update of Bike Plan 2010¹. This document is our submission regarding the scope and details that need to be included within this proposed new bike plan. While the NSW Bike Plan must cover the whole of NSW, Bike North is only expert on cycling in Sydney, and especially in northern Sydney, and the focus of our submission is on that area.

BikePlan 2010

In its time Bike Plan 2010 was an excellent plan for encouraging cycling in Sydney and the NSW State government is to be congratulated on the extent to which great strides were made in the first five years of its implementation. Of particular benefit were the development of good quality guidelines for bicycle facilities² and the corresponding education in using these guidelines available to traffic engineers throughout the state. It was also very welcome to see the design and build of a number of regional bicycle routes during the first five years of the plan. While these routes were primarily built in Western Sydney and therefore not in our area of interest, they did provide some excellent recreational routes and had potential as commute routes for those living or working further west. There is already evidence³ from census journey to work data, that areas such as Fairfield, Holroyd and Auburn, where a more continuous and richer network of cycleways were built during that period, are experiencing an increase in cycling to work, not evidenced in neighbouring less fortunate areas.

It was therefore extremely disappointing when the budget for regional cycling routes was essentially cancelled in 2005, just when we could expect serious work to commence on northern Sydney's most critical route, the Sydney Harbour Bridge to Chatswood and Macquarie University route. This retrograde step has already put back improvements and consequential usage growth of cycling in northern Sydney by at least 3 years. The imminent opening of the cycleway between Naremburn and North Ryde, built as part of the privately funded Lane Cove Tunnel provides 7.5km of excellent quality shared path. While it is excellent that it does include lots of local connections, its greatest drawback is that it starts and ends with no connecting bicycle route to the expected major destinations. Without these critical connections, its full potential can not be realised. This could have been avoided if only funding had been provided to complete the regional routes to the Sydney Harbour Bridge and to Macquarie Park / Macquarie University.

==> It is essential that the new Bike Plan be adequately funded for its life-time.

It is also essential that it be funded to at least include the design and build of regional routes as promised in Bike Plan 2010. Of particular concern to Bike North are the northern Sydney routes including

- # 12 – Chatswood to Sydney Harbour Bridge (scheduled for 2004)
- # 26 - Macquarie University connections (scheduled for 2004)

- # 13 - Chatswood to Gladesville (scheduled for 2005)
- # 10 - Rail Trail, Eastwood – Concord West (scheduled for 2004)
- # 4 – Hornsby – South Turramurra (scheduled for 2009)
- # 11 – Harbour Bridge – Warringah Mall (scheduled for 2009)
- # 35 – Rail Trail, Chatswood – Turramurra (scheduled for 2010)

These proposed regional routes represent most of the critical routes required to connect major destinations in northern Sydney. The standout missing route in BikePlan 2010 is a route between Eastwood and Hornsby, ideally following the railway line.

==> It is essential that the new Bike Plan include a plan to deliver a network of regional routes connecting major destinations in northern Sydney at least as promised in BikePlan 2010 and also including the missing Eastwood – Hornsby route.

Sydney Harbour Bridge – Northern Bicycle Connections

Cycling is definitely on the increase in the lower North Shore, despite the challenging geography, despite the huge volume of traffic on just a few connecting roads and especially despite the lack of a separated, low stress cycling facility connecting to the northern side Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway.

This is apparent anecdotally and supported both by the RTA's bicycle counts on the Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway and census journey to work data³. This increase is consistent with increases in cycling to work in other inner urban areas of Sydney, within the 10km radius of Central Station and is a clear indication of the strong latent demand for cycling in inner areas where there is a higher potential for shorter journeys between home and work, where there are major residential and employment parking issues and where traffic congestion is at its worse. The census data collected in 2006 would underreport those that could be collected now as this was prior to new cycleways completed recently. Who knows what the potential increase in use would be with a truly connecting cycleway all the way to the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The Lane Cove Tunnel project has provided a good quality, locally but not regionally connected cycleway from Naremburn to North Ryde. It tantalizingly leaves the cyclist well on the way to major Lower North Shore and City destinations but out of reach of even the existing backroad route to the City.

Therefore, Bike North's greatest infrastructure priority from the new Bike Plan is the design and adequate funding of a quality, separated regional cycling route from Merremburn Ave, Naremburn to the Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway. This would complete item #12 from BikePlan 2010 and provide a major boost to the number of people cycling for transport and recreation on the lower North Shore. This is essential to adequately leverage off the excellent facility built by the private sector.

Our priority must be supported by the RTA's own priorities for bicycles, as this very route has reportedly been the sole recipient of the woefully inadequate regional route budget for Sydney for the last three years. For the last three years, the RTA has reportedly been designing parts of the Chatswood to Sydney Harbour Bridge bicycle route. For three years the funding has been so poor that only the design has been

inching along. This project should be ready to go. It would be a huge win for everyone if the funding for this bicycle route were allocated and work commenced immediately.

==>Our third major priority is for the immediate allocation of funds to complete the design and commence building the regional cycling route connecting from Naremburn (Lane Cove Tunnel cycleway) to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This includes pro-active sourcing of federal Infrastructure Funding for high value projects such as HarbourLink.⁴

Looking ahead to a New Bike Plan 2020

A new Bike Plan is about infrastructure works but it must be about much more than this submission looks at the broader picture of programs and strategies that encourage more people cycling and creating a safer and pleasant environment for people who ride their bikes for transport and recreation.

This following submission describes why a new bike plan is so necessary as it identifies the many benefits of cycling to our communities. It identifies the key barriers to increasing levels of cycling use and makes suggestions on ways to improve the environment and encourage more people cycling safely, effectively and enjoyably for transport and recreation.

Why NSW needs a Bike Plan

The benefits of cycling to individuals and the community are enormous. While not all members of the community will ever want to cycle, the whole community benefits if the high latent demand for cycling is made possible.

There are significant benefits to individuals in terms of better health as a result in increased levels of physical activity, which easily fit into busy lifestyles.

Cycling has the potential to be a significant contributor to the transport mix. Even 10% modal share, which is quite feasible if adequately encouraged, would make a serious contribution to reducing Sydney's major traffic congestion woes.

Cycling is low cost transport, convenient, healthy, clean, quiet, easy on the environment. Cycling is the perfect antidote to climate change, increasing obesity and rising petrol prices. It's the ideal transport for many, though not all, once the barriers to cycling are overcome.

Infrastructure to support cycling is relatively low cost compared to other modes and there are large economical benefits to the state from more people cycling.⁵

Major Barrier to Cycling

The Cycling Promotion Fund has an excellent publication⁶, which details the barriers, facilitators and interventions to get more Australians physically active through cycling. This is vital input to the NSW Bike Plan.

As identified in that publication the single most reported deterrent to cycling expressed by those who currently don't cycle is the fear of aggressive motorists. Any

one already cycling can also usually cite instances of a motorist endangering them while cycling, usually due to ignorance and a lack of awareness and lack of appreciation of cyclist speed and needs. More rarer, but even scarier is endangerment due to active aggression. The single most effective enhancement to cycling would be the implementation of a range of program that results in a positive behaviour change by motorists when encountering a person on a bike.

Since most negative behaviour is due to ignorance and lack of awareness, clearly these programs must have a strong educational component. We are aware that the drivers handbook includes references to bicycle use on the road, but clearly this has been inadequate.

A high priority for this new Bike Plan must be the implementation of programs that address all stages of drivers, from the learner driver to the driver of more experienced years.

Objectives of this new Bike Plan

The key objective of this new plan for cycling must be **more people cycling more safely, efficiently and enjoyably** by creating a **safer, effective and enjoyable environment for cycling for transport and recreation**. We at Bike North believe this would be most effectively achieved through the following:

- Raised awareness by general public (including motorists) of the presence of cyclists on the road and appreciation of how they use the road (speed they travel etc) and therefore how to avoid putting them in danger. This also includes raised awareness of the benefits and positive practicality of cycling in Sydney.
- Provision of useful, safe routes that go where people need them with top quality separation from cars prioritised on the major critical links
- Crack down on the minority rogue drivers who deliberately threaten people riding bikes
- Provision of good information on getting around Sydney by bike
- Increasing people's skills and confidence in using a bike on Sydney's roads
- Provision of appropriate and adequate end of trip facilities
- Effective integration of bikes with public transport
- Reconfirmation of the priority of cycling and pedestrian transport by reinstatement of a high level position of responsibility for bicycles and pedestrians within the RTA and other government departments.
- Joint programs with other government departments, local government, business and the community to encourage more use of bikes

Meeting Key Objectives

Raising awareness

We have identified a number of potential strategies for raising awareness of cycling and cycle use by the general public. While they are not necessarily exclusive we believe that they all need to be implemented in order to bring any significant improvement in the awareness and attitudes of the general public, in particular motorists, toward those who cycle in Sydney. A number of these have already been identified in Barriers to Cycling⁶, which was produced by the Cycling Promotion Fund under commission from the Federal Government. Our suggestions are:

- **Mass media promotion to the community of the benefits of cycling** for recreation and transport, in particular the health benefits, contribution to cleaner environment, economical and social benefits. This includes promotion of cycling as a positive transport alternative for the contribution it can make to Sydney's transport issues and of active travel whereby people can do sufficiently health levels of physical activity as part of their everyday activities
- **Mass media promotion to the community of cycling awareness**, including
 - the right of cyclists to be on the road
 - the variations in cyclists needs that can result in some people using a bike path and others the road lane
 - safety issues that result in cyclists taking their right to a full lane or refusing to ride in an inappropriate shoulder
 - understanding of the need for special bicycle rules, such as riding to the front of the queue and usage of bicycle storage boxes
 - specific motoring awareness issues such as potential for dooring by parked cars, dangers in cutting in front of a cyclists after overtaking
- **Mass Media promotion to be evidence based and targeted and funded for highest potential for behavioural change.**
- **Education of learner drivers**
 - Making bicycle awareness and potential conflict issues a more significant component of the drivers test (practical and theory)
 - Initiate programs that encourage and support older children learning to ride a bike on the road before they learn to drive
 - Hours spent with parent practicing skills for riding on the road contribute towards the hours required for learning to drive.
There has been recent extensive tightening in the requirements to learn to drive and one controversial requirement has been the need to log 120 hours of learner driving. We suggest that learning and practicing cycling on the road develops a number of those skills necessary for a learner driver and hence reduces the need for their lengthy practice time in a car. We recommend that the log system be updated to include up to a specified number of hours of learning on-road cycling skills with the parent. This could include experience gained over the four years from age 12 to 16.
- **Education of existing drivers**
 - There is no requirement for drivers to be retested unless they lose their licence or until they turn 85. We recommend there at least a theoretical test every ten years.
 - Another alternative is to require drivers to be retested once they receive a minimum number of infringements. This number would obviously be less than that which automatically results in a loss of licence.
 - Bicycle awareness and potential conflict issues should be an equally more significant component of retesting drivers as we have suggested for testing new drivers.
- **Promotion and use of highly visible Bicycle Infrastructure on the road** – in particular the use of green lanes, bicycle logos, storage boxes and signage to reinforce the presence of people riding bikes on the road.
- **Promotion and provision of secure and visible bicycle storage** at transport nodes and other major destinations serves to reinforce the use of bicycles for short trips within the community

- **Broad distribution of useful cycling maps** as a marketing tool
- **Promotion of and support for basic and commuter cycling skills courses**

Provision of useful safe facilities

- Plan, design, fund, build and signpost regional routes that strategically connect destinations all over Sydney.
- In northern Sydney we would expect a network of regional routes that connect the major employment centres, educational centres and residential areas.
- Employment centres for priority consideration include North Sydney, St Leonards, Chatswood, Macquarie Park, Artarmon and Lane Cove Industrial Areas but all employment centres need to be planned for good cycling access.
- Priority given to urgently creating a continuous signposted network in each regional area of Sydney, using the existing road system where appropriate or as an interim route. This network should be direct and link the major destinations that people need to travel to. It should wherever possible avoid unnecessarily hilly terrain, taking advantage of short cuts not available to motorised vehicles wherever possible.
- Major infrastructure investment should be prioritised to the critical links, which are the major deterrents to cycling, and where the potential for increased cycling use is greatest.
- Critical links to be high quality with total separation from motor vehicles and, where possible, separation from pedestrian use
- Need for a network of regional routes has become so urgent that the plan needs to be designed and funded for completion of a continuous, at least interim, network over Sydney within at least ten years
- Initial priority, for completion with five years, should be so as to provide the potential for cycling shorter journeys such as journey to work within the inner Sydney areas such as North Sydney, Willoughby and Lane Cove and for shorter journeys to other employment centres, such as Macquarie Park and to major transport nodes.
- Enhancement of the existing dollar for dollar funding program for implementing local government bicycle plans by
 - Increasing total pool of funds available for this program
 - Increasing the proportion from the state government, up to 100%, for major local infrastructure which implements a high value but critical link
- Reversal of RTA policy of prioritising traffic capacity over all road users. Priority now needs to be directed towards providing for pedestrians and cyclists rather than increasing traffic capacity. Impact on traffic capacity should never be an argument for refusing good bicycle facilities where there is no useful alternative.
- Continuation of existing policy to provide for bicycle use in all new road works.
- Councils should be able to install lower speed limits (40kph) on local roads without the need for huge expenditure on traffic calming devices and approvals by the RTA
- Program of providing good shoulders on all regional roads. This has maintenance and safety benefits as well as providing a separated space for people to ride their bike.
- Maintain use during upgrades – it is vital that disruption to existing cycling infrastructure is minimised during road or pathway works. When upgrading

major works where existing cycling infrastructure will be removed in order to complete new works, such as in order to widen the M2, a high quality alternative route must be completed prior to any work commencing.

- Maintenance – all cycling infrastructure whether on road or pathways requires a regular maintenance program with clear responsibilities.

Crackdown on rogue drivers

There is wide spread perception among the cycling community that cyclist reports of motorist's harassment to the police are not taken seriously. While some cyclists report a good response from police, others perceive that it is not worth reporting. Action does need to be taken so at the very least, cyclist have a better perception of police response and are therefore motivated to make reports. Some suggestion are listed below:

- Enforcement – with better overall police response to cyclist reports regarding motorist conflict. This should include the creation of a training course for all Police Officers on cycling, its relevance and need in today's society and the issues cyclists face on the road. The training of personnel for the NSW Bicycle Commands is considered world's best practice and should provide an excellent source for advice and sourcing champions for the education of other police officers.
- Police information line to cyclists who are threatened by motorists– know who to call if concerned your report would not be taken seriously
- Well publicised open reporting facility for cyclists who feel threatened – shame the rogue drivers
- As in some European countries, laws and judicial decisions based on the premise that the driver is at fault regardless – onus on the driver to avoid more vulnerable road users.

Good information on useful cycling routes

- Current RTA maps are inadequate as they only focus on marked cycleways and therefore do not provide continuous routes
- Due to this poor quality of RTA cycling maps other organisations such as councils and health services have produced much more useful cycling maps which are not restricted to marked bicycle routes but also include routes local cyclist consider useful. These maps provide a good model for content for a series of maps covering all of Sydney.
- Examples of useful regional cycling maps include:
 - Commuting to Chatswood by Bicycle (Willoughby Council)
 - Get to Sydney Olympic Park by bicycle (Sydney South West Area Health Service - SSWAHS)
 - Get to Work in Westmead & Parramatta by bicycle
 - Discover Fairfield and Liverpool by bike
- The base used for RTA maps as not ideal as it does not display all streets. There are examples of much better standard for production of maps in use. For example the following maps use the Sydway map base and are of the highest standard of presentation showing all roads but clearly defining the bike routes:
 - Commuting to Chatswood by Bicycle
 - Cycling in Ryde

- Map distribution – there is currently no problem in distributing bike maps. They are extremely popular and are snapped up quickly. BUT they obviously don't reach all the people who could use them. Suggest that the availability of these maps are promoted more widely through the RTA network such as via vehicle registration and drivers licence renewal.

Improving people's skills and confidence

- Back on Your Bike courses promoted and run for those who can ride and want to return to cycling
- Advanced 'cycling on the road' courses to enhance skills
- Learn to Ride courses for adults who have never learnt to ride a bike – there is a huge demand for these courses which is difficult to meet. Funding and resources are needed.
- Expansive learn to ride course for children to equip them with the skills for life – mandatory training from Kindergarten up
- Low cost and easy access

Provision of adequate and appropriate end of trip facilities

- Installation of a Cycling Service Centre with bike parking, showers, lockers, daily bike maintenance facility and refreshments at all regional centres, including Chatswood, Hornsby, Macquarie Park, Hornsby and the Hills.
- All new developments of any type require provision of a mix of compounds (with racks included), lockers and bike rail, with preference to the compound for secured bikes.
- Retrofit of bike parking in all major trip generators over the next five years, progressively increasing the capacity requirement each year. This includes transport nodes, educational institutions, hospitals and other health services, managed car parks and shopping centres. The form of parking should be a mix of compound of racks, lockers and racks, with preference to the compound system.
- All bicycle car parking to be free or no more than minimal cost .

Effective Integration of Bike and Public Transport

- Secure bike parking (rack, compound or locker) at every railway station
- Secure supervised bike parking compound installed at all major railway stations
 - North Shore Line – for example North Sydney, St Leonards, Chatswood, Gordon, Turramurra and Hornsby
 - Main Northern Line – for example Epping, Eastwood, Pennant Hills
- Removal of requirement to purchase concession fare ticket for bike when travelling in peak hours. This requirement is iniquitous as it is not required for people with prams, strollers, in wheel chairs and carrying large bags and parcels and should not specifically target people with bicycles (including folded up bicycles). While it is obviously an attempt to deter bicycles on heavily crowded carriages, high usage is its own deterrent. It also fails to take into account the many near empty carriages at the official peak time such as
 - trains travelling in peak against the main direction of travel

- that congestion from am peak time commences much later and pm peak time discontinues much earlier for stations in close proximity to the City.
- Variations in carriage usage based on destination
- Simple retrofitting of existing carriage for the easier carriage of bicycle. For example, installation of hooks or replacement of some seating with flip up seats sufficient for storage of bike
- Signage on door of carriages where such retrofitting has been done
- Plans for future generations of train carriages to include provision for carrying many bicycles easily
- Racks for the carriage of bikes on all buses, with first priority to those buses that are used to replace trains during periods of 'track maintenance'
- Ease on restriction on Country Rail train in the carriage of bicycles which is currently only two bikes or surfboards

Reconfirmation of the priority of cycling and pedestrian transport within RTA and other government departments

At priority the position of General Manager Pedestrians and Cyclists, or equivalent level of authority, which was terminated in 2005, to be reinstated. Without such a position cycling for transport will continue to be considered expendable within the RTA.

A review of all government departments with the view to instigate high level positions that will ensure the successful implementation of the new NSW Bike Plan.

Joint programs across government departments, local government, business and the community

Plan, fund and implement joint programs across government departments and in partnership with local government, business and the community which encourage and enable cycling in a range of settings including

- Cycling to work
- Cycling to school
- Cycling in the community

References

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2. NSW Bicycle Guidelines, RTA 2003
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4. <http://www.sydneyharbourlink.com/>
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Carolyn New
Advocacy Officer

Bike North Inc