

ChainLinks

The newsletter of the Cycling Advocates Network (NZ) May-June '06



I have a dream that one day all carpark will look like this one

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The views expressed in *ChainLinks* are not necessarily those of CAN.

EDITORIAL – Quietly Making Noise

I was waiting to turn right at a traffic light a couple of weeks ago. As soon as it was clear from the other direction, a car, also turning right, passed me on my left. As a frequent user of this intersection as both a cyclist and a (yes, I admit it) driver, I could not work out how they could have decided to do this – it was such bizarre behaviour. The car did not hit me because, as an extremely defensive (aka paranoid) cyclist, I assume that everyone is out to kill me and slammed on my brakes.

I got home to find a letter from a CAN member about another incident where the bike was clipped. Again the lack of injury was only due to the skills of a defensive cyclist.

“I was cycling at about 15kmph in a marked cycle lane when a car came alongside on my right. It turned left and crossed the cycle lane in front of me. I took instant evasive action and turned left with the car but hit it at the entrance to the car park. I managed to stay on my bike. The driver did not stop but continued and parked her car. A passerby called out, “you’ve just hit a cyclist”. I completed a report for the police. The officer who dealt with it was concerned. The driver admitted that she had seen me and was fined \$150. Had I been knocked off my bike, I would have pressed for a dangerous driving charge. For an inexperienced cyclist, the impact may have been more serious.

Where appropriate, cyclists must take action as we don’t have to tolerate dangerous and discourteous driving from motorists.”

After reading this, I questioned why I don’t take action whenever I have a near miss. Admittedly I am often too shaken to note the car registration and am focussing on staying upright and uninjured. I do swear a lot and fantasise about keying the side of the car but this is not overly constructive. I couldn’t come up with a good reason other than sheer laziness and so thought it worth an editorial to remind others that we need to make noise.

How to Make Noise with Minimal Effort

If it's a case of bad driving you can report it to the police by going to their website

<http://www.police.govt.nz/service/road/roadwatch.html>

That will take you to a form that you can fill out on line. The police verify the driver details and send the driver a warning letter. If nothing else, it does serve to remind the driver that someone is watching.

Jean Dorrell, ChainLinks Editor

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Still available: CAN 'One Less Car' backpack covers!

Keep your stuff dry, increase your visibility on the road and identify yourself as a CAN member with one of these waterproof, incredibly loud yellow backpack covers. Reflective strip, the CAN web address and 'One Less Car' in big friendly letters on the back-remind those car drivers why they should love you.

One size only: now available to CAN members for \$25, and to non-members for \$35. To order, send your cheque to: CAN, PO Box 6491, Auckland, with your name, address and contact phone or email.



NOTICES AND EVENTS

Need funds to print some fliers, stage an event or host a breakfast presentation?

CAN has established the "Local Group Fund" which has \$700 per annum to assist local cycling advocacy groups affiliated to CAN.

Local groups may apply for up to \$200 for projects where the local group is prepared to contribute a minimum 20% (eg: claim \$200 for a \$250 project) or apply for 100% funding of projects up to \$100 in cost.

For an application form or any questions, please contact Bevan...
bevanw@can.org.nz



Call for Abstracts for Presentations and Papers

3rd Thinking on Two Wheels (TOTW) International Cycling Conference
Adelaide, South Australia 15 - 16 January 2007

Hosted by the University of South Australia, the TOTW Conference will bring together interested people from industry, sport, government and academia to discuss cycling issues in general with a particular focus on health, recreation, community, engineering and sustainable transport. The web site www.unisa.edu.au/thinkingontwowheels contains:

- the template for submission of abstracts;
- details on the choice for presenters and authors for either a presentation only submission or a written paper and presentation.
- further details of the conference and its accompanying social program.

The written paper will be peer-reviewed and published. Deadline for the submission of abstracts is Friday 14 July 2006.

Abstracts can be sent to the Conference Secretariat at:

totw@sapro.com.au For conference queries contact the convenor, Dr Stu Clement (stuart.clement@unisa.edu.au)--TOTW2007 Conference Secretariat

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FUNDAMENTALS OF PLANNING & DESIGN FOR CYCLING - TRAINING COURSES

- Wellington: Tuesday 22 August (half-day intro course)

- Napier: Wednesday 23 August

(Organised by BikeNZ - note: same course used to be arranged by NZIHT)

With the availability now of NZ guidelines for cycle planning/design and the development/implementation of many cycling strategies around the country, NOW is a great time to get up to speed on best practice in New Zealand for providing for cycling.

This one-day course introduces the principles of planning and design for cycling in New Zealand. It is aimed at anybody planning/designing/reviewing roads or other facilities that will be used by cyclists; including general roading engineers, planners, and road safety practitioners. ALL professionals should consider taking this course, from the new graduate to the experienced hand with 20+ years behind them. Community/advocate volunteers may also find this course of great value; a limited number of discounted course places are available for them.

In addition to the full day course, a half-day **"Introduction for Managers and Decision Makers"** course is being introduced in Wellington.

This is designed to introduce participants to the key issues and principles of providing for cycling within the NZ context, without going into the technical details of planning and design processes. It is intended for those who are not directly involved in cycle planning & design but are responsible for those who do, or who oversee transportation issues in general.

The course has been developed in conjunction with Transit NZ and the former Transfund NZ / LTSA to meet the needs of the NZ transportation industry. To date, nearly 300 people have attended one of these courses.

The course was also awarded the 2004/05 CAN "Cycle-friendly" national award for Best Cycling Promotion.

Courses cost \$450 + GST (late fees may also apply); cheaper rates apply for the half-day course. All participants will receive a set of detailed course notes and presentation handouts. Members of IPENZ attending this course will gain CPD qualifying hours and a 10% discount.

If you're interested in registering for this course, contact Geoff Campbell at BikeNZ (geoff@bikenz.org.nz, ph.04-916-1873).

OBESITY – A CAN PERSPECTIVE

A lot of discussions and concerns have been raised about the state and effect of the prevalence of obesity across the globe and in particular New Zealand. Until recently, it was estimated that 25% of kiwis were obese. However, a recent report by the Ministry of Health estimates that 50% of kiwis are now overweight or obese. This is an alarming figure by any standards especially for an OECD country like New Zealand with a small population. We now run the risk of half of kiwis getting type 2 diabetes and other obesity related diseases. Currently, 4% of New Zealanders are diabetics. Even if only 50% of the overweight and obese get diabetes that will make it 25% of New Zealanders.

There is a huge financial cost involved here. According to Dr. Juliet Berkeley and Helen Lunt of Christchurch, diabetes will cost over \$1 billion a year within 15 years – over and above the existing budget. According to the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization has estimated that the cost of obesity is 2 to 7 percent of the annual health budget. This is just the medical cost.

Can this country afford that extra cost and what are the solutions? Well, you can push the patients back to the GP, or transfer them to private care, so insurance takes care of it. You still cannot offset two cost factors – social and loss of productivity. These costs will have long term, irreversible repercussions for a small country and economy like New Zealand.

The question that pops up in everyone's mind is, "how did we manage to get here?" The British Medical Association has done a lot of research on this epidemic, way back in 1992. This and other materials of interest are available at the CAN library. New Zealand has been a bit slow in picking up the tab here. Two factors have been established as the cause of obesity – nutrition and physical activity. While we are not experts in commenting on the nutritional issues, we can definitely address physical activity issues.

There is no need to elaborate on the lower level of physical activity amongst people today. One of the reasons is the cheapness of motoring and society's emphasis on increasing numbers of tasks being carried out with the help of the gadget called "car". A combination of "perceived" lack of time, the ease of driving to most of your destinations and transport policies centred around motoring, means there is less and less incentive for people to adopt active modes of transport (walking and cycling), at least for short distance travel. A prolonged period of inactive transport means people have got used to the luxury and find it difficult to change their travel habits. Add to this, the issues of pollution and land sustainability, car usage starts posing more questions than it answers.

In the midst of this debate, cycling is an option that should be seriously considered and this is an opportunity for cycling advocates to further add

strength to their arguments in favour of cycling. In fact, the BMA's study looked specifically at cycling as a tool to fight obesity and makes serious recommendations in its favour. At CAN, we totally support this concept.

Cycling is an option that gives multiple benefits - transport, environment and health to name a few. Until now, in all its years of advocacy, CAN placed a lot of emphasis on the role of cycling in reversing climate change and being an answer to traffic congestion. A relatively lower emphasis was given to health and fitness benefits. It is time the same emphasis is given to health benefits as well.

From the policy makers' point of view, they are given a scope and asked to address only one issue - climate change or traffic or health. It should also be understood that effective solutions to many issues come only when they are combined together. Rather than making three investments to address each issue, a single investment on cycling can address all three in one go.

In terms of dollar figures, CAN believes that the cost of providing simple but effective cycling infrastructure is low compared to the medical costs and productivity loss arising from obesity related diseases.

At CAN we do recognise that bicycles cannot replace cars completely. Society has reached a point where cars have become essential for many purposes. However, we do believe bicycles can replace many local car journeys.

Getting people into cycling is not something that can be done with just a few adverts appearing in some magazines encouraging people to give it a try. The most important factor that comes to anyone's mind is fear. People need to overcome this factor, a factor that can only be addressed by word of mouth and investments by local authorities to mitigate unsafe conditions. There is a complex situation in that policy makers think the current low modal share for cycling does not warrant additional investment in improving facilities for cycling. Potential cyclists on the other hand reckon if facilities and safety were to improve, they would be happy to cycle. What came first - chicken or the egg?

CAN will never give up or reduce its advocacy role. It is important to influence policy makers on the relevance of cycling. CAN will be undertaking some public relations exercises in the next year with key govt departments and officials. However, I feel individual cyclists can also do their bit to get others to bicycle as well. Just spending some time with work mates during tea, explaining the benefits of cycling and what one should be careful about will go a long way to convince some of them. What better outcome than to get some motoring colleagues off cars and into their bikes?

The good news is, finally New Zealand is waking up to the reality of this epidemic and serious efforts are being made by certain quarters to address the problem. Obesity Action Coalition (<http://www.foe.org.nz>) (OAC) is

spearheading the anti-obesity campaign and CAN is a supporting member of this coalition.

Recently, the New Zealand government formed a select committee to enquire into obesity and type two diabetes in New Zealand, led by Green MP, Sue Kedgley.

OAC has led the charge with a comprehensive submission addressing all issues that are leading to obesity and with recommendations to reverse the trend. CAN made an individual submission specifically on the benefits of cycling – see www.can.org.nz and click on the link “CAN submission to Parl. Inquiry into Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes in NZ”. CAN has expressed interest in appearing before the select committee to further make the case in support of cycling. We also intend to meet the health minister, Hon. Pete Hodgson and explain to him the relevance of cycling in fighting this epidemic.

This is an opportunity to promote cycling and CAN is doing its best to make use of the opportunity. We do not intend to take it easy and will not rest till we see something being done here. CAN needs the support of its members as well as its non-members in the campaign and we are confident it will be there.

Sridhar Ekambaram, Executive member, CAN



BEST AND WORST CYCLE RIDE

A few months ago I asked CAN members to describe their commute to see who had the best or worst. Although Jeremy Dunningham was unable to decide if his ride was the best or the worst, he wins a CAN backpack cover.

The Jekyll and Hyde Ride (or Sea, Rivers, Fertiliser and Fatality)

After living and cycling in Auckland all my life, I hoped that a move to Hawkes Bay following the wine trail would be a breath of fresh air, and respite from Auckland’s gridlock and pollution. I was both right and wrong. My ride to work covers a flat 22km and follows the blue Pacific to my destination, a winery/restaurant by the sea near Cape Kidnappers. Sounds idyllic. Should be idyllic...

I leave home near the top of Napier Hill and plunge straight down the tree-lined and overhung drive we share with our eight neighbours. This is a good test of the brakes. I then climb all the way back to the top of the hill in granny-gear and am rewarded by the magnificent panorama of the Pacific stretching away from the Art Deco city coastline out to Cape Kidnappers sharply etched against the horizon. There is little time to admire the view before I again plunge down a tree-lined route which leads me to the back of the intimate little city of Napier and out to the Council/Rotary inspired cycle/walkway along the coast. This skirts the

rolling blue Pacific for the next 5km. The smell of the briny deeps, the cry of the gulls and wash of the surf are my travelling companions. Bliss. Temporarily.

Abruptly the cycleway veers right and becomes a footpath by the main highway. I'm in Awatoto where 20-wheeled pantechnicons thunder by at 110kmph with a wash like an ocean liner. From my left a concrete factory, then a rock-crushing plant blow fine grit, noise and dust into my face. On my right the Ravensdown Fertiliser Co. belches Mordorian fumes and smoke across my path (my friend the chief chemist assures me that it is all good clean smoke!) and as I look ahead I see the footpath end and the highway narrow to two tiny lanes to cross the Tutaekuri river, translated from the Maori as "dog guts".

I don't know if it is as dirty as the name suggests because it is 350 metres of blind heart, pedal and lung pumping terror. A quick glance under the right armpit to assess risk and it's off like a demented time-triallist where the goal is not to win but to preserve your life. People have died on this bridge which was built in the days of Austin A30s and 30mph Bedford trucks. There is no footpath. I have spare energy for a fleeting thought only- "I wonder what the Maori for cyclists' guts" is?" and then I arrive back on the highway with bursting lungs and leaden legs. Relax. But wait - there's more.

After 300 metres of respite, the road again narrows and the Ngaruroro bridge is upon me. Another 300 metres over one of the most beautiful rivers in Hawkes Bay. I only know this because I've driven over it. It is wider by 150mm and has a footpath...built for hobbits on unicycles. The "extra width" seems to encourage the pantechnicons to travel even faster. I arrive at the end blown and with heart arrhythmia. Hang on, I've got to work seven hours on my feet today and I'm not halfway there. But I've run the Awatoto gauntlet.

That's OK. The idyll recommences. A leisurely pedal into the iconic and pretty town of Clive, over the river on a modern, wide bridge often monitored by mufti patrol cars so the speed limit is well-observed. I have time to watch the manic jet-skiers on one side and on the other, the elegant rowing skiffs knifing through the water with scarcely a ripple. On special days the ornate and majestic fully warrior-crewed Kahungunu war canoe may be out on the river. If I dream a little, I might be back in 19th century Aotearoa.

Out of Clive and into grape, orchard and crop-growing country. Flat, wide roads, country smells and noises and the contented whirr of the bike. There is a little traffic and few trucks, and most give me wide berth. Calm returns.

Up over the magnificent Tukituki river on another excellent bridge. I can smell the peaty, earthy breath of the river: on my left it expands into a

broad shining ribbon before joining the sea and on my right I can watch it wind into the hills and skirt dramatic Te Mata peak before losing it in the blue-blurred distance of the Ruahines. In season, there are trout fishermen, whitebaiters and swimmers. In flood, it is simply awesome.

Down through more verdant grape, olive and crop country before turning east to the rising sun and the small coastal settlements of Haumoana and Te Awanga, where the once sought-after coastal property is nearly all for sale as the relentless and rising Pacific nibbles and gnaws at the foreshore and houses' foundations. An easterly storm can turn it into a giant, chewing up great chunks of the beach and sucking homes into the sea.

A final kilometre with the deep blue of the sea contrasting with the emerald green of marching vineyards, and the lovely-lonely gannet-soaring Cape Kidnappers looming up due south.

The deeply gravelled driveway of my workplace is a happy hazard to negotiate. I'm here in one piece along with my trusty treadly, sucking in the many and intoxicating smells of the sea, bush, vineyards, winery and restaurant, while the calls of the tui, bellbird and magpie banish any memory of howling engines and snorting exhausts.

PS: I'm too old and chicken to do this anymore. Besides I've used up my spare lives in Auckland's traffic. I now take my van into Clive and ride from there. I hate doing it but I may live a little longer. There is little comfort in knowing that the money Transit recently spent destroying a stately grove of old oaks just out of Clive to put in a passing line of 500 metres for impatient motorists, may well have been better spent on constructing clipon walk/cycleways over the Awatoto gauntlet.

Jeremy Dunningham



MEET THE EXEC – PART 2

Sridhar Ekambaram

I got hooked on cycling as a kid, inspired by my school principal, Rev. Joseph Lombard. I had a very basic cycle, just one speed with a heavy frame. As kids in India, very often there will be two riders on one bike and no, this was not a tandem. Normally, bikes had a totally horizontal middle bar (unlike bikes these days) and optionally a rear flat carrier. The second rider would sit on one of these. Obviously, if they sit on the middle bar, after a long ride they will end up with a sore butt. But all this was considered fun. Invariably, I had to do the pedalling up a slope, because I was always on the heavier side. I suppose all this made me a stronger cyclist than I would have otherwise been.

However, when we moved to the metropolis of Chennai, I had to temporarily suspend cycling, due to the heavy and erratic traffic.

Meanwhile, I completed a masters degree in economics and a diploma in computer programming and systems management. Also, I got married to a bright lawyer, Ruby, who had no idea that I was a keen cyclist.



We moved to New Zealand in 1997 and a year later, I decided I could resume biking because I felt, New Zealand had much safer traffic for cyclists. But within three weeks, I crashed out of my bike and had to undergo a four- hour surgery to fix a couple of fractures and another couple of dislocations. That again put me off cycling for a year and a half, after which I have been cycling for the last six years without any major interruptions.

Initially, when I resumed cycling here, it was mainly for commuting to work, mainly to improve my fitness levels, and also as a solution to traffic jams and environmental issues. Then, sometime in 2000, someone told me about the Taupo cycle challenge and I got interested in recreational biking and became a regular at the challenge as well.

I came to know about CAN in the course of trying to solve bike parking facilities at my work. Robert Ibell then introduced me to Cycle Aware Wellington and asked me if I would like to become an executive member of CAN and give some voluntary time and effort to promote cycling. I was not sure if I could be really effective, but thought I would give it a go and here I am.

These days, my interest is in improving the profile of biking and show that more than just being an alternative to cars, it can also be an instrument to improve the health of the nation.

My thoughts about cycling in New Zealand are: the country is still quite cycle friendly. There needs to be just some minor adjustment in the social acceptance and motorists behaviour.

Ruby and myself now have a son, Vaibhav. He is also interested in cycling and is keen to participate in the Heart Riders category at the Taupo Cycle Challenge.



Liz Mikkelsen, Secretary Kapiti Cycling Inc, CAN Exec.

My involvement with first Cycle Aware in Wellington and later Cycling Advocates Network goes back to 1994. I remember Robert Ibell and myself lobbying and signing up members at fairs in Wellington and counting cyclists at the entrance to Wellington from Lower Hutt. They were good times - lots of enthusiasm. The enthusiasm is still there if somewhat dampened by let-downs from central government and local councils. It helps to know that everyone is struggling and that many more people are trying hard to maintain the conditions in our environment in which we have been lucky enough to grow up. I resigned as membership secretary, but took on the accounting, the Treasurer job having been split into two jobs.

I started Kapiti Cycling in 1999 together with a local teacher. Since then I have been a pain in the neck for local council staff and elected councillors. Our first proposal was a 40 km coastal pathway - some progress here. Our group has grown to 23 dedicated people, amongst them three doctors who are concerned about people not doing enough physical exercise.

My interest is mainly using the bicycle for transport, touring and the occasional recreational group ride and picnic. I alternate my time spent on the computer with organic gardening, a good combination for a cycling advocate - gets rid of all the frustrations and you are ready to battle on.



Ritsuko Ogawa, Membership Secretary

I'm from Japan where everyone grows up riding a bicycle. Most people ride a basic but practical machine called a 'mama chari' (translation: mother chariot). In Japan, bicycles are regularly used for commuting to the train station, carting kids around, shopping and everything else in between.

This is all a sharp contrast to the situation in Auckland where I arrived seven years ago. If it was not for my cycling-mad husband I probably wouldn't be riding at all. I am now starting to use my bike more often for such things as visits to the library or to pick up the kids from school. (Although my six year old asked me not to ride next to her because it was embarrassing - the challenges of cycling in New Zealand!!)

So when I'm not taking care of our two kids, I am sending out welcome letters to new members and posting out 'ChainLinks'.



CYCLING IN ENGLAND

Hitting the tarmac of London's Heathrow Airport on Boxing Day 2005 I was relieved to find no terrorists, tanks or flu-killed birds (not even reindeer or wrapping paper). After screwing on the pedals, realigning the handlebars and peeling the "Press" off the transmission I was off into an English winter en route for a family gathering up north in Yorkshire. For a Pom it was all very familiar - cold, grey and damp.

The roads were as pleasantly quiet as the airport, even the normally terrifying exit tunnel was bearable. The bike path to the cousin's place in Windsor was mostly dry and thankfully ice-free. Typically it was bumpy, discontinuous and cryptically signed. An hour and a half later, mapless and lost in the dark, found me in a private hospital seeking directions. "Speed camera, third hump and next right."

The following day there were blizzards over east in Kent. I spent the day talking, organising food and psyching myself up. It felt very cold after Christmas in Christchurch. In town, swathed in hats, coats and gloves people were cheerfully weaving in and out of fairy lights and warm shops. I scored a mini road atlas (expensive at Christmas and really requiring a magnifying glass) and a local bike route map.



Next morning, excuses all used up I headed off down leafless lanes and across hoar patches already marked by bike tyres. Bouncing down one woodland track I startled a couple of dog-sized Muntjac deer and several groups of weekend walkers. Every fine day that winter I saw people out walking and every day I saw another cyclist.

I finished the day on the Thames footpath, frozen mud in the twilight into Abingdon and another cousin's double glazed haven. Charlie was getting

ready for his 10 km cycle commute to the local nuclear research facility. "About minus 2, I reckon," as he pulled on leotards and a zip-studded pertex-fibre pile jacket against bare skin. "Every day?" I queried, remembering the hour it had taken to warm my hands after lunch. "Yeh, night or day shift."

It rained next day and warmed up to 6C. Charlie put me on the bike path to Oxford". The government got EU money for the paths. Too slow if you're serious about going somewhere." In the University city there were iron hoops in the house walls with wet bikes locked to them. I soon got lost and headed the wrong way along the Oxford to Coventry canal. A friendly member of the local canal barge community put me right. I'd seen the website maps and thought the towpath would make a great traffic-free route to Coventry. It was - until the gravel and maintenance ended, the canal wound off through a paddock of cows and I fell off in the mud. It was still raining. After cursing, wishing for knobbies and making 5kms in an hour I called it quits and went back to the lanes. A bike route took me north along a gated road and lost me near Banbury. The routes are marked by a number but usually no indication of where they're eventually going. I used them if they were going in my direction. The light failed, the rain stopped and I pitched the tent in a wide leafless hedgerow.

A cold wind in the night dried the tent and had me wishing for my duvet jacket (excluded by the need to get bike, camping gear and winter clothes into the 27kg airline baggage allowance). A weak sun came out in the morning and lifted my spirits, if not the temperature. The day was going well, along previously (summer) travelled roads - until the chain broke. I'd rebuilt the wheels but thought the transmission OK. Re-riveted I set off again only to discover intermittent and irritating chainsuck on my smallest chainring.

I finished the last 3km of the day along the canal to Coventry's Hawksbury Junction (just 500m from yet another cousin's place). It was great until the locked gate. A canal dweller saved me with a key but then I had to deal with a very steep footbridge - I struggled up with my fully laden bike and then almost lost it coming down.

I saw the New Year in flat out and fast asleep not waking until a grumpy cousin came home at 10am complaining about some snobby, overpriced "do" in Stratford on Avon. Fried bacon cheered us both up and we trundled off to the canal pub hazy with cigarette smoke and hazardous underfoot with snoozing dogs.



The same cousin introduced me to hot "Fisherman's Friend" lozenges and with my vacuum flask recharged I turned north again along delightful, well signed, Midlands country lanes (generally the further north the poorer the signage). As the last of the fashionable thatched roofs dropped behind, the sun poked through and I stripped off my electric yellow wind shell and cruised in polyprop top and Ground Effect "Frosty Boy". I found ancient Adidas track pants OK (with poly long johns for back up and night). Cheap ski gloves (slow to dry and worn through the palms after 6 weeks) I wore literally all the time, with gore-tex and fleece gauntlets in reserve. Neoprene overboots were universal wear by all cyclists I met. Mine are home made, ugly and very effective.

After missing a sign in the dark and riding more steep hills and through more Christmas-lit villages than intended I eventually found a gateway in a deserted tourist area. I woke to thick mist, frost and a rear puncture - a tiny incredibly sharp shark-tooth of flint. I blew the valves out of two tubes before realising that the bit of plastic I'd just lost from the valve hole of my new Mavic rim was essential wear for presta valves. An extra nut on the valve inside the rim solved the problem on my last spare. In the middle of the saga I was joined by two scots terrier dogs and the ex-owner of a bike shop who on hearing of my plight pointed into the impenetrable fog, "There's a bike hire over there." They gave me a tube, "Oh we chuck out the prestas and use the car type."

The fog gradually cleared that day along the Pennine spine of England and I discovered that 1-in-4 (25%) hills are worse in winter - not going up (as long as you've got granny gears) but going down a wet leaf and /or tractor muddied incline wide enough for one bike or one car, but not both. I

survived and collapsed into a bed of pine needles in the best campsite in the world that night. I was well rested for the last leg over the moors and arrived "home" at dusk, mud-encrusted from the Leeds-Liverpool canal bank and ready to feast.

I did a couple of trips from home - on the first to family in York I discovered a superb route into the heart of Leeds along the final 20km of the Leeds-Liverpool canal. It was well maintained and gravelled and had cycle-friendly "inverted V" barriers, not like those bloody bars and chains in the Hutt Valley. The road north to Spa Cycles' pint-sized shop in Harrogate was less pleasant.

The new chainset I fitted on the pavement outside, the advice for improving the Avid brakes and a suggested route to Stamford Bridge restored my good mood - in time for the rain later.

The other trip to Northumberland on the Scottish border was remarkable not only for the "rush hour" traffic in Hexham on Hadrian's Wall; (it gets dark in winter just when people are finishing work;) but also for the quietness of the minor roads north of the Roman wall. It could have been NZ except for the hedgerows and the huge constellation of the Plough hanging in the sky dead ahead. Further east, I also discovered the Waskerley Way, an old rail line into Durham converted for cycle, foot and horse use. It was very popular and a great way to cover some distance. Another line down to Stockton on Tees ended abruptly in a fence and a muddy wood. That was another frosty night in a hedgerow.

Outside of "Little Venice" and Bulls Junction it was largely just me and the wildfowl all the way to Slough. All around, but mostly out of sight and mind, was the traffic mayhem of metropolitan London. (Way better for the congestion charge.)

Back in baking Christchurch, a friendly MAF man sprayed disinfectant into the cleat slots of my bike shoes and the joints of my (extended) mudguards. (Thank goodness Charlie's gunk had removed the cement-like accretion of mud, grit and road salt.) Then it was out to real sun, low humidity and elbow tapping drivers - in the hour and half to the Waimakariri I swore at more vehicles than I had in six weeks in England.

Terry Sumner



BOOK REVIEWS

"Asphalt Nation: how the automobile took over America and how we can take it back" by Jane Holtz Kay, 1997.

This is a book that pummels the reader with statistics and examples to get its point across and there is no shortage of facts and figures from the

world's wealthiest nation. It is written in three parts: the current situation, how it came to exist, and what can be done to change it.

The first part, **Car Glut: A Nation in Lifelock**, paints a bleak and depressing picture of the worst of car-bound USA reiterating what any CAN member already knows regarding autophilia's effects on society. Subjects include the inequity caused by cars and car-focused policy, the resulting landscape and environmental degradation, effects on health and the economic cost. The language is emotive at times, such as

"We have done so [funding outward city growth and separating poor from jobs] for so long that those most abused by the chronic injustice of a car culture can no longer pinpoint its pains."

but as any CAN member would also agree, it is an emotive issue!

The second part, **Car Tracks: The Machine that Made the Land** provides a background to the situation and welcome relief from the depressing picture painted in Part I. Many comparisons with European cities are made in which mass transport, policies and resulting urbanity are held up as superlative examples of planning with people's needs paramount rather than cars'.

The final part of the book, **Car-Free: From Dead End to Exit** is ironically but mercifully, half as long as each of the previous two parts for the by now punch-drunk reader, Holz Kay discusses what hope there is for a "car-free" future, although, as we all know the answer is quite simple! It is good to read about the positive changes that are occurring as a result of a growing and undeniable awareness of our obsession with motorised personal mobility. This is not the United States one learns about through easily accessed news media.

I enjoyed and recommend this book but as you can tell found some of the supporting facts and figures a little overwhelming at times. It is also interspersed with some interesting and thought-provoking photographs. If you have a more historical bent then you might be interested to read a book that Holtz Kay refers to more than once titled "**The Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of the United States**" by Kenneth T. Jackson (1985). If you want a more a more broad-brush approach to the problem with more practical solutions to how you can help fix it then, "**Divorce your Car**" by Katie Alvord (2000) might be a better read.

As an afterword, I am disturbed to find as a result of writing this review that the word "carless" does not appear in the spell-check on Microsoft Word ... another symptom of the disease (whoops, there I go now!).

Andrew Couper



“Classic New Zealand Mountain Bike Rides” (Edition 6) by Paul, Simon & Jonathan Kennett, 2005.

Has this book gained “iconic” status yet? I bought my 4th edition from my local bike shop when my interest in cycling and mountain biking was being rekindled and fittingly around the same time I picked up the pamphlet inviting me to join CAN.

Many changes clearly have occurred, with the 4th edition boasting information on 400 tracks including 50 new rides, while “Edition 6” describes over 350 tracks including 70 new tracks. I wondered, what happens to all the old rides or will some get recycled in future editions?

The sixth edition contains all the usual route information including distance, time, level of difficulty and access written in a warm and humorous style by people with an underlying ethos that all cyclists should find appealing. All this and it weighs in at only 290g (courtesy of the Ground Effect website).

There is more information on bike set-up, gear and travelling with your bike than my previous edition (though the endearing flip cartoons are gone) and definitely more inspiring and entertaining photographs (a goody on p.24) for this weekend warrior who doesn’t get out enough. I’ve been inspired. I’m going out to the garage to stare at my clean bike ... I really must get out more!

Andrew Couper

Note: the CAN library holds a copy which is available for members to borrow. Members should contact Robert Ibell 04-972 2552 or dawbell@actrix.co.nz if they want to borrow library stuff.



PRODUCT NEWS

DDWings™ Ergonomic Bike Seat



The DDWings™ bike seat is a seat, not a saddle. It has been designed & made in Italy to provide a quality, comfortable & healthy seat for all bike riders.

In recent years, there has been an increase in bike saddle related health concerns as presented to doctors. Both male & female have issues with pressure being applied to the perineal area while riding a bike. To maintain the health benefits gained with riding bikes on a regular basis, riders need to consider their long term health in respect to the seating ergonomics.

The DDWings™ supports your buttocks without putting any stress on your crotch. This seat allows you to 'sit' on your bike as you would on a stool. It supports you in the right places and leaves your sensitive central area alone.

The riding posture that seems to work the best is a more upright one, though the seat assembly has adjustments [using 8 & 4mm hex keys] in three directions to find your own position:

- A tilt forward from horizontal,
- A slide back/forward, and
- An up/down adjustment within the bike frame

It takes a short time to finely tune the personalised position of your DDWings™.

When you find that special position, it will encourage you to ride more because you will no longer finish your rides with a sore crutch, experience pain while riding, or wear holes in your bike pants.

The DDWings™ seat has only been on the market a couple of years and it took 5 years earlier to refine & develop the patented design.

More information available from www.idealinternational.biz

Geoff Grimes



CYCLING NEWS FROM AROUND NEW ZEALAND

Bikes on footpaths bid to end jams

Cycling could become legal on Tauranga footpaths in a bid to ease the huge impact schools have on traffic congestion.

The fact queues nearly vanish during school holidays at some traditional bottle-necks has prompted Tauranga City Council to try and get parents out of the habit of driving their children to school.

Repealing the bylaw which bans cyclists from most city footpaths is one of a proposed package of solutions being investigated.

The pressure on the city's roading system from students either driving or getting a lift to school was highlighted by Mayor Stuart Crosby at this week's council transportation taskforce meeting.

He remarked how much quicker it was to reach the office during the school holidays. Twice this week between 8am and 8.30am, Mr Crosby had a clear run through to the Welcome Bay roundabout with State Highway 29, whereas normally the queue stretches as far as the shopping centre.

The fact that Tauranga's roading system flowed much better during holidays prompted Councillor Bob Addison to question why cyclists were banned from footpaths along all but a few main roads.

"The majority of parents, particularly those with primary school children, are not letting them ride to school because Tauranga roads are not cycle-friendly."

Cr Addison did not want the standard 1.2m footpath width to dictate whether or not they were open to cyclists.

Rotorua allowed cyclists to use normal-sized footpaths along two of its main roads into town. They were signposted with "Share with Care" signs.

Cr Addison said it was far more dangerous to mix cyclists with motor vehicles than cyclists with pedestrians.

The taskforce, a mayoral brainstorming forum, agreed the idea had merit and ordered a report be prepared on the proposal. The council already allows cyclists on its network of off-road walkways.

As well as council bylaws banning the practice, national legislation also prohibits cycling on footpaths, unless it is to deliver newspapers or mail.

However, council transport planner Mike Calvert said after the meeting that local authorities had discretionary powers about how road corridors were used. Cyclists could be put on to dual-use paths such as happens now on part of Cameron Rd - but opening up all footpaths to cyclists was another matter altogether.

"If we want to provide for everyone on a footpath, we need to make it safe for everyone ... we do not want to introduce new and unacceptable risks."

A report he presented to the council last year said the perception that cycling on footpaths was safer than cycling on the road was not supported by crash data. The head of Western Bay's police strategic traffic unit, Senior Sergeant Ian Campion, has an open mind on council initiatives to reduce traffic congestion.

There were obvious risks of putting bikes on to footpaths, such as drivers failing to see cyclists as they reversed out of driveways, or drivers turning at intersections hitting cyclists coming off footpaths, he said.

Child safety outweighed all other considerations for Gate Pa School principal Richard Inder.

The reality was that the children always cycled along Cameron Rd's footpath to school, together with busy side streets. The school

recommended that only children 10 years and older cycled to school by themselves.

"Cameron Rd is a wickedly busy road."

But the prospect of opening up city footpaths to bikes horrifies Cycle Action Tauranga. Committee member Bruce Trask said it was far more dangerous to cycle on the footpath than the road - unless it was a specially designed dual purpose pedestrian/cycle pathway.

Cyclists were safer on the road travelling in the same direction as traffic and the more cyclists there were, the safer it became, he said.

Cameron Rd's dual footpaths should become obsolete once cycle lanes were built down both sides of the road, from 11th Ave into town. Only the section from 15th Ave to 11th Ave currently had cycle lanes in both directions.

Mr Trask said the main problem with kids on bikes was that many of them took to the road without learning how to ride properly.

Cycle Action chairman and Tauranga Intermediate teacher Mike Bibby said congestion would be eased if Tauranga adopted a unified bus system in which pupils and the public used the same buses - as happened elsewhere. If bus travel was free for students during certain hours, then a future generation would be educated to public transport.

[Bay of Plenty Times, 22 April 2006]



Obese? Take 2 wheels not 4

The fastest way to a slimmer waistline is to ditch the car and walk or cycle to work, research shows.

The Australian Health Promotion Unit study, published in the International Journal of Obesity, surveyed almost 7000 people over the age of 16.

The peer-reviewed work showed that pedal power, not horsepower, is the way to shed the kilos.

Almost half (49 per cent) of those in the study were overweight or obese, 69% drove a car and the rest either took public transport, walked, cycled or worked from home.

Those who drove were less likely to reach the recommended levels of physical activity.

Researchers found no link between weight and fruit or vegetable intake.

Christchurch businessman Roger Sutton has spurned the company car and has been cycling to work for about 10 years.

The chief executive of Orion New Zealand, who works more than 50 hours a week, said the 6km cycle to work was the ideal way to forget the office existed.

"It's a great way to make sure I get exercise at a busy job, and you feel a bit like a student again – free to ride around in shorts and a T-shirt," he said.

The ride takes 20 minutes each way. Sutton keeps a couple of suits and ties at the office, and his cyclewear ensures he is ready for home life the minute he parks the bike.

"It's a nice way to end the day.

"I'm already out of the suit and you can immediately climb the trees with the kids, play Lego and be a father."

A spokeswoman for Fight the Obesity Epidemic, Robyn Toomath, said the research showed town planners had to revise policy to provide decent, regular public transport to motivate people to, at the very least, walk to the bus stop.

"Walking to work is the most marvellous accidental exercise that people can have. If government subsidised public transport more, there would be pressure for people to take that to work – then they end up walking an extra bus stop or two."

Toomath, who walks 30 minutes to and from work each day, said lifestyle changes like going to the gym often failed, whereas walking to work became part of the daily routine.

Chamber of Commerce chief executive Peter Townsend said the chamber supported any initiative that got workers back on their bikes.

"We support anything that raises the profile of the importance of fitness and cycling. Of course, it's easier to say than it is to do, but we certainly aspire to work with people in regard to healthy initiatives."

[The Press, 28 April 2006]



Stand out at night. Be bright on your bike.

Cyclists out on the roads this winter need to be bright. A new Greater Wellington campaign focuses on simple ways for cyclists to be visible to other road users.

Regional cycling co-ordinator Ian Kirkman says many cyclists ride in urban environments where they feel that they can see well enough to navigate, so they don't use lights.

"This can be very dangerous, because cyclists without lights are often not seen by motorists, even under street lights. Reflectors can provide good

visibility for overtaking traffic, but most dangers of car-bike collisions come from the front or side of the cyclist so visible front lights are especially important,” he says.

Terry McDavitt, chairman of the Regional Land Transport Committee, says cycling needs to be a viable transport mode choice.

“This campaign follows our “Don’t burst their bubble” message to help make cycling safe, accessible and pleasant.”

A Greater Wellington survey last year revealed that 75% of cyclists had front lights and 82% had rear lights. But outside of Wellington city, far fewer people use lights (in some places less than 60%). Overall, only 40% of cyclists used reflective gear and 29% wore high visibility (bright coloured) clothing.

Greater Wellington’s campaign using community and daily newspapers will complement local council activities throughout the region.

Sue Johnson, Kapiti Coast District Council road safety access and design co-ordinator says she has arranged for the police to hand out lights to cyclists who aren’t visible at night.

“It’s more useful for them to be given something rather than a ticket,” she says.

Sue also encourages the use of high-visibility vests. “You don’t need expensive gear, you can get \$10 vests from Placemakers. They’re not beautiful but they might save your life.”

Lights are essential for visibility when cycling at night. However, reflective clothing may help approaching drivers estimate cyclists size and distance more easily and accurately than can just a single lamp or reflector. Ankle or pedal reflectors move and attract attention. Cyclists must remember that reflective clothing supplements, but never replaces, good lights and bike-mounted reflectors.

All cyclists who ride at night should regularly check their lights to make sure they are visible and fit fresh batteries on a regular basis.

[Press Release: Wellington Regional Council, 30 May 2006]



Safety fears curb cycling in Hamilton

Cyclists are getting off their bikes in Hamilton - because roads are clogged with cars.

Hamilton City Council figures show the number of cyclists in the city has nearly halved in the past decade -- despite local authority efforts to sell cycling as a transport alternative and to cut down on congestion.

And the trend is further illustrated in a Hamilton City Council-produced graph which shows a steady fall in the number of people cycling between 7.45am and 8.45am Monday to Friday.

The decline has been steady since a peak in the mid-1980s.

A major contributor to the downward trend is a fall in students riding to school.

School cyclists made up half the city's total last year.

Fraser High School principal Martin Elliott said it was chaos outside his school gates at morning peak times as more parents drove their children to school at the same time as commuter traffic increased.

Hamilton cyclists spoken to by the Times said drivers tended not to notice them and they were squeezed off the road at choke points, including Anglesea St outside the city council's headquarters.

But one cyclist who rides from Melville to Te Rapa and had done so for the last 15 years said congestion was just an excuse and it was relatively easy to find alternative routes.

Council records show a drop in the number of people cycling on a daily basis in the central city from just over 500 in 1996 to 300 in March this year.

In the suburbs almost 1400 cyclists were counted at six survey points in 1996 -- but just 850 this year.

The council's sustainable environment manager Tegan McIntyre said despite the overall decline, there had been a slight increase in suburban cyclists since 2004 when the survey recorded 725 people.

Ms McIntyre said an increase in cheap imported vehicles and a negative social attitude towards cycling in high schools had contributed to the decline in school cyclists.

"It's not seen socially as cool to cycle. Having your own car represents independence, so we're really battling against some really ingrained attitudes."

Safety fears were a factor but only for new cyclists, she said.

The decrease in cycle uptake was echoed in other cities, apart from Christchurch.

Hamilton City Councillor and cyclist Peter Bos backed her view that teenagers were put off cycling because it was considered uncool. He had two children at high school who refused to cycle.

But he had banned his younger children aged 7, 10 and 12 from biking to school without parental supervision from their Melville home. He said the absence of off-road cycle lanes made it too dangerous.

Drivers parked by the side of the road opened car doors without checking what was behind them.

Mr Elliott warned there would be an accident outside his school unless congestion was brought under control. Just 60 students biked to school compared to 300 a decade ago. The trend did not help the fight against child obesity.

"I'm really concerned about it because it adds to a growing lethargy and ill health of a generation," he said.

The school did not actively promote cycling because of safety concerns. "We always give advice on bike routes but we're not encouraging people at this stage to bike in."

[Waikato Times, 31 May 2006]



Crash Charges Likely for Cyclist - Jogger Collision

A cyclist involved in a collision with a jogger in a Hamilton underpass in February will be charged with careless use of a vehicle causing death.

Police have been investigating the accident for the past three months and won't yet confirm charges will be laid, though the Waikato Times understands it will happen.

Momoe Sugiyama, 52, was jogging out of the eastern side of a tunnel at the corner of Wairere Dr and River Rd on February 9 when she was knocked down by a man on a bicycle.

Mrs Sugiyama, the wife of a senior Japanese diplomat who was living in Hamilton while her daughter attended Waikato University, suffered severe head injuries and died a week later in Auckland Hospital.

Hamilton City Council has opted to carry out safety improvements at the site following complaints from Mrs Sugiyama's friends that cyclists were speeding through the tunnel. Cycle Action Waikato warned a mirror installed at the accident site was inadequate.

Council cycling sub-committee chairperson Daphne Bell said there would be chicanes, a dividing line separating pedestrians and cyclists, and a redesign of the path to improve sight lines. The work was imminent, she said.

The council was warned against painting a white line through the three-metre wide tunnel to separate cyclists and pedestrians by transport consultant Roger Boulter -- who said the confined space would steer people towards the middle in both directions, which could result in a collision. He said neither walkers nor cyclists tended to obey white line markings.

But Mrs Bell said there was a desire at council "to do all we can" and the safety improvements at the site would be followed with a city-wide education campaign to remind pedestrians and cyclists to be more aware of each other.

[Waikato Times, 20 May 2006]



Auckland's Laziest Neighbourhoods to be Named

Auckland's least active neighbourhoods are being mapped so more can be done to get people off couches in the fight against obesity-related illness.

To use official language, the Auckland Regional Physical Activity and Sport Strategy (ARPASS) and the Auckland Regional Public Health Service are conducting "health data mapping" to identify "areas of high need".

Information from the Census, NZ Health Survey and Sport and Recreation NZ is being used to identify "communities of interest", says strategy director Kelvyn Eglinton.

Once areas of concentrated low activity are identified at the end of this month, more resources will be targeted for those neighbourhoods.

The information will also be used to help the Health Ministry, councils, the regional council and Auckland's four regional sports trusts to make "better investment decisions".

Mr Eglinton says many agencies use physical activity to aid planning.

"For example, ARTA (the regional transport authority) uses walking and cycling as a traffic decongestion and public transport tool, while the health sector uses activity to prevent and assist health conditions such as diabetes and obesity.

"If we can link the work of all these agencies at one time into communities of need we will have greater effect."

The ARPASS strategy was formed after a 2001 Government report on sport and recreation found Auckland's services fragmented and duplicated.

Partially funded by Sport and Recreation NZ, ARPASS aims to improve collaboration between its other stakeholders: the ARC, the Ministry of Health, and Auckland's four regional sports trusts (Counties Manukau Sport, Sport Auckland, Sport Waitakere and Harbour Sport).

Other work to be undertaken when health data mapping is completed includes:

- Environmental audits of barriers to activity - such as traffic congestion, access to facilities and parks, safety of physical activity equipment.

- Determining the amount, scale and appropriateness of physical activity programmes in those areas.
- Development of programmes to better meet the needs of these communities.

[The Aucklander, June 15 2006]



New cycle racks for North Shore City

More than 50 new cycle racks have been installed around North Shore City to make cycling more convenient and safe.

North Shore City Council aims to provide 50 new cycle racks each year, for the next eight years, as part of the Strategic Cycle Plan adopted in 2003. The plan seeks to encourage cycling by providing facilities for recreation and commuter travel as well as cycling education and promotion.

The cycle racks are the new, higher standard for North Shore City, featuring a 'wave' design and manufactured locally in Devonport.

In addition to the cycle racks, secure bike lockers were recently installed at both the city's new Albany and Constellation Busway stations. The lockers allow cyclists to safely store their bike, and belongings such as their helmet and cycling gear.

North Shore City's transport development manager, Kit O'Halloran, says it's important to provide the facilities to encourage people to ride.

"It's one thing to promote cycling and put in place cycle lanes but we can't forget people need somewhere to park their bikes.

"In addition to providing cycle parking we're currently consulting on a recreational cycleway linking parks throughout North Shore City, and continue to investigate cycle lanes where feasible," he says.

Current cycling projects include the new recreational cycleway linking Devonport to Takapuna, and the recently completed Browns Bay cycle lane.

[Media Release, North Shore City Council, June 13, 2006]



OVERSEAS NEWS

Why Scots are Getting on their Bikes

Cycling is enjoying a renaissance in Scotland, its growing popularity driven by soaring fuel prices, increasing congestion and health concerns.

Figures reveal the number of cyclists using one of Edinburgh's main cycle paths has risen by more than half in just one year.

And the UK-wide survey released yesterday also found that nearly half those questioned used their bikes more than they did five years ago, and one-third cycled more than ten years ago.

Sustrans, which is developing the national cycle network, said 348,500 cyclists used a route junction in Leith last year, up from 226,000 in 2004.

Although the count was the only one taken in Scotland as part of a national survey of network usage, the group believes the increase was typical of usage across Edinburgh.

Sustrans said that although the capital was currently Scotland's leading city for cycling, Glasgow had the potential to eclipse it.

John Lauder, the national director for Scotland for Sustrans, predicted there had been similar increases in cycling across Edinburgh to that found at the survey point at Stedfastgate, near Gosforth Place, on the route between Leith and the city centre.

He said: "The survey figure proves all the anecdotal evidence that there are more people on bikes as they change their travel behaviour - they are voting with their feet.

"More and more people are cycling and walking because they want to take more exercise to improve their health.

"There are also increasing concerns over congestion and the rising cost of petrol and oil."

Mr Lauder said Edinburgh's success was down to years of spending by the city council on measures such as developing off-road routes using disused railway lines, and advanced stop lines for cyclists at junctions.

However, he said Glasgow had many cycle routes that could be developed, which could make it Scotland's cycling capital.

Scottish Executive figures show little change in cycling over the past few years, but Mr Lauder said these did not cover traffic-free paths, which many cyclists preferred to roads.

The survey, by insurance firm Churchill, questioned nearly 1,900 people. It found that just over one-third of respondents used their bike to keep fit, while 22 per cent said they cycled for pleasure.

Some 17 per cent said they preferred using their bicycle to a car or public transport as it was more convenient, and 6 per cent claimed they cycled because it was better for the environment.

[The Scotsman, 16 June 2006]



Londoners Surge to Their Bikes to Save Money and Keep Fit

Come rain or shine, a growing number of people in London are jumping on their bike to enjoy the dual benefits of saving money on public transport and keeping fit.

In a city where buses and trains are expensive and often faulty and where it can cost STG8 (\$NZ23.95) a day to drive a car, there are plenty of arguments in favour of cycling.

"If you have less than 15km to travel, the quickest way to get to where you are going is by bike," said Angus, a Londoner who has used his trusty two-wheeled friend for several years.

The number of daily trips by bike in London has jumped by 50 per cent in the last four years, from 300,000 in 2001 to 450,000 in 2005.

In the centre of the capital the growth rate is even higher, up 100 percent on the major roads, with 119,000 journeys being made every week last year compared with 59,000 in 2001, according to Transport for London (TfL).

The July 7 London bombings on three subway trains and a bus prompted a 20 percent jump in people, wary of public transport, using bikes over the weeks immediately afterwards.

This fear factor, however, has since subsided, a TfL spokeswoman said.

With sunny, hot weather in London at the moment, cyclists -- many looking like professionals with hats and luminous riding gear -- are everywhere.

Frederic Laforge, a 41-year-old Frenchman living in the city, happily pedals 20 km every day to go to work.

"Cars take care, there are far fewer motorbikes and scooters than in Paris and, except in the centre, the traffic is lighter. In addition, when cycling through the parks it is brilliant," Laforge said.

The introduction of a congestion charge, which drivers have to pay to enter central London, means there are less car fumes for cyclists to inhale, he added.

Despite the rise in bike users, London still has a long way to go. Just two percent of all trips are done by bike compared with 28 percent in Amsterdam, 20 percent in Copenhagen, 12 percent in Munich and five percent in Berlin, Transport for London said.

The number of people using the London Underground or the city's trademark, red double-decker buses dwarfs those hopping on their bike, with some 2.6 million subway journeys a day and five million bus trips.

But the subway, the oldest in the world, is unreliable and buses are often packed full of people.

London is making a big effort to encourage people to cycle.

There are already 500km of bicycle routes, typically marked out by a painted line in the road, in London and the goal is to have more than 900 km by 2009-2010.

Money pumped into cycling has surged from STG5.5 million in 2000 to STG20 million last year and STG24 million is earmarked for 2006.

"We invest a lot," said Silka Kennedy-Todd, a spokeswoman for TfL.

The objective of London Mayor Ken Livingstone is to increase the number of cyclists by 200 percent by 2020, she said.

"It is a quick, healthy, affordable and non-polluting form of travel,"

the spokeswoman said. Adding to the attraction of bikes, people drive more slowly through the centre of the capital today than a century ago, with the average car speed falling to 15kph compared with 18kph in 1906.

At the same time, there is still a danger of cycling alongside cars, said Kennedy-Todd, while adding: "It is much better than it used to be."

Some 268 cyclists were killed or seriously injured in London in the first nine months of last year, but the transport spokeswoman said the toll was 40 percent lower than in 2000 in spite of the rise in the number of bike users.

[Yahoo News, June 11 2006]



China Backs Bikes to Kick Car Habit

Having spent the past decade pursuing a transport policy of four wheels rich, two wheels poor, the Chinese government has suddenly rediscovered the environmental and health benefits of the bicycle.

The construction ministry announced on Thursday that any bike lanes that have been narrowed or destroyed to make way for cars in recent years must be returned to their original glory. This followed orders on Tuesday that all civil servants should cycle to work or take public transport to reduce the smog that chokes most city streets and urban lungs.

Qiu Baoxing, a vice-minister with the Ministry of Construction, said it was important for China to retain its title as the "kingdom of bicycles," according to a report by the official Xinhua news agency.

The reputation was well deserved 25 years ago, when Beijing was famous for its swarms of cyclists. But a quarter-century of breakneck industrial development has utterly transformed the streets of almost every city.

China has become infatuated with the car, which is seen as a symbol of success and modernity.

Qiu was quoted as saying that the number of vehicles on China's roads has increased more than twenty-fold since 1978 to 27m. Within 15 years, he predicted, it could rise to more than 130m - which still represents only one car for every 10 people.

In Beijing alone, it is estimated that 1,000 new cars every day are added to an already appalling traffic snarl-up. Until now, urban planners have tried to make room for these economic engines by building thousands of miles of multi-lane roads, often at the expense of bike lanes.

Estimates of the number of bicycles in the city range from 4m to 10m.

But transport analysts say the average Beijinger travels 60% less by bike than 10 years ago and those journeys are becoming dirtier and more dangerous.

The apparent shift of focus comes at the start of a new five-year economic plan in which the government says its priority is to improve the environment and conserve energy. Earlier this month, the World Bank issued a new report calling on China to invest more in public transport rather than focusing on the construction of new highways for cars.

But, as other countries have found out, having become addicted to the economy to cars, it will not be easy for China to kick the motoring habit.

[The Guardian, 15 June 2006]



Pedal power the way to go (in CapeTown)

Rising petrol prices and the need to reduce congestion in the city's streets could lead many to wheel out their bicycles and cycle to work.

Forget the bus, taxi, car, the train ... start pedalling, it will be the new way to go if the City of Cape Town has its way.

Over a million people use public transport to get to and from home every day, according to figures from the city council, and this causes major congestion on the roads. Yet only 190 cycle to work in the CBD every day.

Minister of Transport Jeff Radebe, referring to congestion in inner cities, told Velomondial, the world's biggest bicycle advocacy conference, held in Cape Town in February, that "a solution to this problem, we have resolved in South Africa, includes the use of non-motorised transport - the acceptance and promotion of walking as a form of public transport, and bicycles".

Daniel Japhta is in charge of Universal Access and Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) for the City of Cape Town, and aims to revive and create a culture of cycling and walking in the Mother City.

The major challenges he faces are crime and traffic which deter many from using their bicycles although it would result in healthier lifestyles, easier access and lower transport expenditures.

The city has already completed a footway and cycle facility in Khayelitsha and along Kommetjie Main Road between Masiphumelele and Ocean View.

For these, as well as the NY1 Non-Motorised Transport Improvement Project, the city forged partnerships with the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to use local community labour.

After having completed the upgrade of the NY1 Eyona Taxi Rank, work is under way to promote non-motorised transport and put "people first".

Part of the project that was launched in February was to create 5m-wide pedestrian sidewalks and 2m-wide bicycle lanes, integrate NMT with public transport services and modify road intersections in such a way that pedestrian and cyclists could safely be given priority.

As Japhta says, the advantages of these infrastructural changes are that pedestrians won't walk in the road any longer, the sidewalks won't be as muddy as the roads, and in Dignified Urban Spaces (DUS), social interaction, especially on weekends has increased.

DUS projects are directly related to NMT projects, as they constitute the nodal improvements that are located on the bicycle and pedestrian routes. Once work on the Church Square DUS is completed, cyclists will be able to lock up their bicycles at special parking facilities.

Japhta has acquired four bicycles for the city and has made them available for staff to use either during their lunch break or to attend meetings in the CBD.

He wants to get more and secure special bicycle parking space in the Civic Centre.

He is counting on companies that have publicly declared they are environment-friendly to follow suit and get bicycles for their staff and arranging parking for employees who use pedal power.

NMT offers huge opportunities in changing the image of the city and improving the quality of life for those who live and work in it.

To achieve this, NMT elements are incorporated into new projects to upgrade urban city spaces. The City of Cape Town was awarded Gold Status in the category of Planning and Integration of Transport Policy at this year's Velomondial conference for having embraced NMT.

Managing director of Bicycle Empowerment Network (BEN) Andrew Wheeldon is happy that "a bicycling city is emerging".

BEN had noticed that more bicycles are being used on Cape Town's roads, for a greater variety of reasons and purposes. Some of the trendsetters are schoolchildren, who were provided with bikes to cycle to school in townships, suburbs and rural areas, he said.

While Japhta believes that focusing on children is the best way to shape the future of the city and foster a bicycle culture, Wheeldon urges for a change in human behaviour.

"We are faced with a time when we will reach the peak of our oil reserves, when large population groups will begin to fully understand why the oil that drives our cars is referred to as non-renewable.

"It is finite. We need to look for alternatives. We also need to begin to seek out programmes that create jobs, bring access to education while preserving the natural balance of our precious planet. It is the only one we have."

It was highlighted during the Velomondial that the innovative use of bicycles in various forms of service provision - policing, delivery services and health care - is a global trend.

Japhta and Wheeldon both agree that, especially in the informal sector, traders would benefit from being mobile, using the type of bikes postal services and liquor stores use for delivery. Mini-bus taxi and bus operators could have trailers for bikes, Japhta argues, and bicycle retailers and workshops would benefit from increased bicycle use as well.

One of the biggest challenges in promoting a solution to traffic and pollution in Cape Town that Japhta is facing is the perception people have towards cycling. Besides safety concerns, the city's topography and climate are seen as factors that make it unsuitable for biking.

The argument Japhta holds against these "excuses" is that "in Holland and Scandinavia I saw people cycle in the snow! Cape Town is not only the CBD, most of the southern suburbs, areas such as Sea Point, Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha are flat and perfect not only for walking but for cycling".

In order to encourage more people to cycle, Japhta and his team are working on designing a route that will link the central district with the V&A Waterfront. It will go past the CTICC and up St George's Mall and Government Avenue.

Cape Town's Mobility Plan is linked to preparations for the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Plans include pedestrian pathways as well as bicycle lanes and parking facilities.

Wheeldon is concerned about the issue of implementation. He hopes that plans will not gather dust, either "due to a lack of funding or due to shifting political agendas, which is often the case in Cape Town".

But how to inform and educate the public? Well-known people can serve as role-models to promote cycling. In countries where cycling is very common, such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany, nobody is surprised to see a company director or even a government minister cycling to work.

[Cape Argus Online, 19 May 2006]



Bicycle is King of the Road as Gas Costs Rise

Look no further than to the leader of the free world to find a serious promoter of the bicycle. Referring to his newfound passion, President George W. Bush has praised cycling as a way to "chase that fountain of youth" and called himself "Bike Guy." This spring he spent 35 minutes in the Oval Office with half a dozen U.S. cycling advocates, more time than he gives to some government leaders.

But even though Bush is scrambling to find ways to cut U.S. oil consumption, it is not clear whether he sees the bicycle as much more than a virtuous hobby.

He would not be alone. Although an engineer designing from scratch could hardly concoct a better device to unclog modern roads - cheap, non-polluting, small and silent - the bicycle after nearly a century of mass ownership is still more apt to raise quizzical eyebrows than budget allotments.

"There is a warm and fuzzy feel for cyclists, but it's a different thing when you talk about practical policy," said Tim Blumenthal, director of Bikes Belong, an industry association based in Boulder, Colorado.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development says that only five of the countries that it follows have comprehensive national cycle campaigns at the moment - Britain, Germany, Finland, the Czech Republic and Latvia. Poland and Spain were singled out as particular laggards.

And, most ominously for a warming globe, China and India seem to be using their new wealth to pave the way for the automobile rather than to preserve long traditions of mass cycling. So it may seem odd that many cycling advocates are getting optimistic of late.

They acknowledge that progress may be slow at the national level, but many see a wave of action swelling up from below - at the city level, where exasperated mayors are connecting the dots.

London, Paris, Chicago, Bogotá and Seoul have embarked on major campaigns to incorporate the bicycle into traffic grids. The results have led to substantial shifts in fuel consumption, commuting times and even real estate values.

"A mayor or a deputy mayor can make things happen the fastest," said Andy Clarke, executive director of the League of American Bicyclists in Washington. "They are in a unique position and have all the levers to get results quickly."

Consider the case of Enrique Peñalosa, the mayor of Bogotá from 1998 to 2000. In that city of seven million, he set in motion a transformation of the transport grid with measures like peak-hour restrictions on cars and about 300 kilometres, or 185 miles, of bicycle paths. He said that cycling has become a primary mode of transport for 5 percent of the population, up from 0.1 percent when he started. The share using the car as primary mode, by contrast, has fallen to 13 percent of the population from 17 percent.

"It was a war to get car owners off the sidewalks where they used to park and I was almost impeached," he said. "But in the end people loved the new city and the new way of life, and we have saved many hundreds of millions of dollars on road building and maintenance."

Peñalosa, who was prevented by law from running for another term, has been teaching, writing and serving as a consultant to Mexico City, Jakarta, Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and the South Bronx in New York City on cycling grids and other transport innovations.

He sees the issue as one of democracy - economic as well as political.

"If all citizens are equal, urban policy should be democratic and not everyone has access to a motor car," he said. "In Bogotá, even bus use can take from 13 percent to 26 percent of a minimum wage earner's income and bicycle use over 20 years generates enough savings to buy a house."

London may be the greatest success story in the new wave. When Mayor Ken Livingstone introduced a congestion charge in 2003 on vehicles entering the city centre, a surprising side effect was a 28 percent surge in cycling in the first year. The city says overall cycling mileage has doubled in the last five years and it aims to achieve another doubling.

In some cases, merchants who were initially nervous actually saw sales rising as the population of more fluid bus and cycle lanes fed them more customers.

What has also been discovered worldwide is that accident rates have dropped wherever cycling has gained momentum, as cars are forced to slow down and as they become more accustomed to sharing the road.

"We're seeing a lot of people willing to try this and now it's getting safer as we get critical mass," said Silka Kennedy-Todd, an official in London's transport office. "The number of accidents has roughly fallen in half as the number of cyclists has doubled."

In Chicago, Richard Daley, another charismatic mayor who is an avid cyclist, has given that city the most active cycling program among major U.S. cities. Daley, who has been mayor for five terms, started a "Bike 2015 Plan" and wants emergency medical services and the police to put more of their forces on two wheels.

In Seoul, Mayor Myung Bak Lee defied local lobbies and replaced a six-kilometre elevated highway that once covered the Cheonggyecheon River in the city centre with parks, walkways and cycle routes.

What planners generally have discovered is that a little money spent on cycling infrastructure can go a long way, even though it may take time to produce results and they are not often easy to track statistically.

Roelof Wittink, director of Interface for Cycling Expertise, a research organization in Utrecht, the Netherlands, said that Bogotá's investments in cycling infrastructure eventually produced savings roughly seven times greater. Largely, this resulted from better utilization of urban space and from savings stemming from a slowdown in traffic flow.

Viewed from another perspective, his organization cited studies showing that about 6 percent of funds spent in the Netherlands on road infrastructure were devoted to the bicycle, although it accounted for more than 25 percent of all journeys.

In Kenya and Tanzania, it is estimated that 60 percent of spending is devoted to the car, which accounts for only about 5 percent of journeys.

Such ratios make it clear why many mayors are recasting their budgets.

"We have to start from scratch and retrain city engineers and administrators," Wittink said. "Most still have a mind-set that makes the car the priority and it's a major shift to go to any mixed solution."

One of the easiest and quickest investments is the simple bicycle rack, either randomly scattered in small units, as in Paris, or centralized in large parking lots, as in many Dutch, German and Chinese cities. The standard formula is that one automobile parking space can hold 10 bicycles.

When such facilities are coordinated with rail systems, the volumes become impressive. Nearly 30 percent of Dutch rail passengers cycle to the station, and 12 percent then get on cycles again to reach their final destinations.

Cycle paths are so much cheaper to build and maintain that some cities have gone to extremes to encourage them. Copenhagen finally resorted to providing a fleet of free bicycles.

Of course, the global effect of all this ingenuity and experimentation in the rich West pales compared with the opportunity at risk of being squandered in the developing world.

Poverty long has consigned the bulk of humanity to foot or to human-powered transport, and it means that China, India and Indonesia are far ahead of wealthy nations on this environmental score, even if it is not by choice.

Whether they will improve on the pattern of richer countries is uncertain: Eight years ago roughly 60 percent of Beijing's work force cycled to work but that percentage has dropped below 20 percent.

"A monoculture is dangerous and that is almost what we've created in the United States with the automobile," said Clarke, of the League of American Bicyclists. "We need to own up to that as an example to others."

America, of course, does not have a unique predilection for the comfort and status of the automobile.

"Even in the Netherlands, there were politicians in the 1960s who complained about the nuisance of cyclists," Wittink said. Total kilometers cycled in the Netherlands fell roughly 70 percent as car ownership rose between 1960 and 1980.

Similarly, Copenhagen has seen cycling increase steadily for 30 years, but it still is below the levels of the 1950s, said Thomas Krag, a consultant in Copenhagen who has advised the city and the Danish government.

But the Netherlands and Denmark, the undisputed champions of cycle use, have come closest to restoring the bicycle to its pre-auto role. Perhaps it is no coincidence that they share one concept: Dutch and Danish cyclists are protected by an extensive legal framework and are fully recognized users of the road.

"It surprised us that neither country has a national bicycle program as such any more," said Mary Crass, a transport policy analyst at the OECD in Paris. "It just wasn't necessary."

[International Herald Tribune, 5 May 2006]



Commuter cycling to become official mode of transport in Dubai

The use of bicycles for commuting in Dubai is set to become a formally recognized mode of transport in the Emirate, a top official at the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) has revealed.

According to a report in the "Emirates Evening Post", the city's planning is also set to be modified to provide separate routes, bike lanes, parking, shelters and other facilities to simplify the use of bicycles, also known as Utility Cycling.

The move which aims at making bicycle transport part of Dubai's Integrated Transport System will place the Emirate at par with famous bicycle friendly cities such as Chicago and Copenhagen that have advanced bicycle transport networks.

"RTA will soon start installing parking facilities in CBD areas of Deira and Bur Dubai which have a high concentration of bicycles to ensure safe parking for the bicycles," said Eng. Salem Ali Al Shafei, Director of Strategic Transportation Planning Department at RTA.

In two months, low cost bicycle racks will be fitted along sections of footpaths and on some pockets of land in CBDs with clear parking signs.

As an initial step, this will stop cyclists from parking haphazardly in a manner that blocks pedestrian footpaths, car parking spaces, and access to public facilities.

Al Shafei noted that a wide-ranging modification of the whole city would follow at a later stage after a comprehensive master plan on the project has been finalized.

The master plan which will be the first of its kind in the Gulf region will focus on the design of routes, parking facilities and also generate a set of legislation to govern the use of bicycles in the city.

Work on the master plan will start in two months time and the whole process of studying and reviewing is expected to last for seven months before the implementation of a pilot project.

A recent study commissioned by RTA's Department of Strategic Transportation Planning recognised the potential of bicycles in solving problems such as traffic congestion, air pollution by vehicles, health complications like obesity and increasing physical fitness.

The study also found out that walking and cycling to work in Dubai was a common mode of transport among low income earners and for recreation among high income earners.

There are no official statistics on the exact number of bicycles in Dubai since there is no requirement to register them, but officials estimate a figure of 100,000 bicycles, 80 per cent of which are used for transport by the low income earners.

Al Hashimi noted that all major stations for buses, marine and metro will have parking facilities for bicycles for easy changeover.

Places of worship and property developers of major centres such as shopping malls and business centres will all be required to provide one bicycle parking facility in every area of 25 car parking spaces.

[Dubai City Guide]



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