

# Chainlinks

MAGAZINE OF THE CYCLING ADVOCATES NETWORK (NZ)

2015, ISSUE 3, NOVEMBER







CAN Do 2016



CAN'S COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

UPSHIFT  
ENGAGING  
COMMUNICATION



Opinion: A new focus for CAN:  
winning hearts and minds



Spokes welcomes new  
cycleway



Glen Koorey's European Study Tour



Victoria Street Wellington:  
a transformation for  
cycling?



NZTA Safer speed  
programme



Cycling the Pamir Highway

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## Next Issue

**Content by February 12**

Send articles and images to :  
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We will use images that are:

- ◆ 500kb or more and
- ◆ 1024 pixels x 768 pixels or more.



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Children from Holy Cross School receive Pedal Ready training, Kilbirnie, Wellington.  
Photo by Patrick Morgan

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## CAN Do 2016

### Claire Sherrington and Will Andrews

Next year's CAN-Do will be a bit special for two reasons.

Firstly there's the new emphasis of advocacy this year — celebrating the new-found energy of the NZTA in dispensing the Urban Cycleway Programme funding and backing cycling growth generally, instead of our traditional calls for investment. Also it'll be a turning-point of sorts for CAN, featuring the results of a root-and-branch review of how we operate, more new faces on Committee, and a fresh new look for our branding and website.

So if you're passionate about getting more people on bikes more often and you want to ensure that \$333 million of funding is being well spent, make for Hamilton next March 18th to 20th to engage with your colleagues in cycling promotion. Under the theme 'Cycling Renaissance', expert speakers will

bring you up to date with the rapidly-changing scene, a year on from those game-changing UCP announcements.

There's nothing like cementing your connections round the country with face-to-face meetings, and sharing cycling stories with the like-minded. Hamilton, with its river cycleway and Rose Gardens, offers a harmonious setting to recharge you for another year of action. Claire and Peter of Cycle Action Waikato are rolling out a warm welcome and NZ's Cycling Centre the Avantidrome, just down the road, is worth a close-up look.

Keep an eye on [can.org.nz/cando2016](http://can.org.nz/cando2016) for speaker details, travel info and accommodation contacts as the date gets closer. ■

# Opinion: A new focus for CAN: winning hearts and minds

**Patrick Morgan**

Good news: after two decades of advocating for cycling, we are succeeding.

Prime Minister John Key said last year there had been underinvestment in cycling, and that the health and traffic congestion benefits of cycleways were beyond dispute.

On 25 June, Transport Minister Simon Bridges announced a \$333 million cycleways investment that he said will change the face of cycling in New Zealand.

The NZ Transport Agency's Statement of Intent document, published in July, highlights safer, more attractive urban cycling as one of its six key priorities,

In September, Wellington's newspaper the Dominion Post said the case for building cycleways is strong, and we should get on with it.

So does that mean we can throw a party, pack up CAN and spend more time on our bikes?

Not so fast. We still have much to do.

Without taking our communities with us, we risk failure.

Planning and designing new cycling facilities isn't easy, but making sure our communities understand what Councils want to achieve is even harder.

People don't like change. Some dislike cycling, or don't see the benefits. How do we get beyond bikelash, and generate community acceptance?

**Organise**

Team up with others in your area who share the vision of a healthy, prosperous, bike-friendly New Zealand.

**Think big picture**

We're not just about cycling. Our task is to improve quality of life. Emphasise community and individual benefits: less traffic congestion, easier commuting and parking, healthier people, independent kids, safer streets, cheaper transport bills, and cleaner air.

**Tell positive stories about more people cycling, more often**

**Stay positive**

Be confident and avoid distracting arguments with trolls. Tell positive stories about the fun and convenience of cycling. Win hearts and minds.

**Mind your language**

Talk about people on bikes, rather than cyclists. We're not aiming to recruit people to a cycling cult. We want more people to give cycling a go.

**Build relationships**

Endorsements from others strengthens our case. Talk to businesses, parents' groups, health professionals and schools. Encourage them to speak up. We don't have to convince everyone, but we have to win the middle ground.

Working together, I know we can do it.

As Margaret Mead said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." ■





## Stephen Wood

People have told Glen Koorey how much they've enjoyed his recent "[Cycling in Christchurch](#)" [blog-posts](#) about his study tour in Europe and he suggested we have something about it in Chainlinks.

On his trip, Glen observed people of all ages and genders on bikes, wearing all kinds of "normal" everyday clothes, and a huge range of bikes to cater for everyone's different needs including electric bikes and cargo-bikes. He saw places with a huge bike parking problem — despite the thousands of parking spaces provided. He also noted fairly casual behaviour by many riders because (like cars in many other countries) they are often the "dominant species", and conversely, fairly good (but not perfect) behaviour by motorists, in terms of speeds, giving way, waiting, etc.

Glen comments that although people focus on separated cycle facilities, there are many other elements important to making cities cycle friendly. He comments on good mixed-use higher-density land use planning to keep travel distances small, separation of cycles on arterial routes, having local streets with lower speeds and volumes, traffic-free central cities, providing a complete, permeable cycle network and integration with public transport. He saw places where cycle facilities didn't work as well first time round and had been reworked to improve them, so believe that is important too. ■

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There is a long list of posts that Glen made but he said the two most popular have been one reflecting on [cycling in The Netherlands](#) and one [looking at Europe overall](#). They're well worth a look.

A two-way cycleway in Amsterdam

# Glen Koorey's European Study Tour





A good mix of land uses together in Amsterdam



A "velo-taxi" waits for business in central Frankfurt



A public bike scheme in Nantes



# NZTA Safer speed programme

## Will Andrews

Along with NZTA's boosting of cycling into its six key priorities, the Agency's aiming to make roads safer for cyclists — and all other users- by re-examining policies around speed limits. The NZTA have drafted a guidance document and toolbox for Road Controlling Authorities (usually local Councils), the Draft Speed Management Guide, which is available here — [www.pikb.co.nz](http://www.pikb.co.nz).

They say this framework —

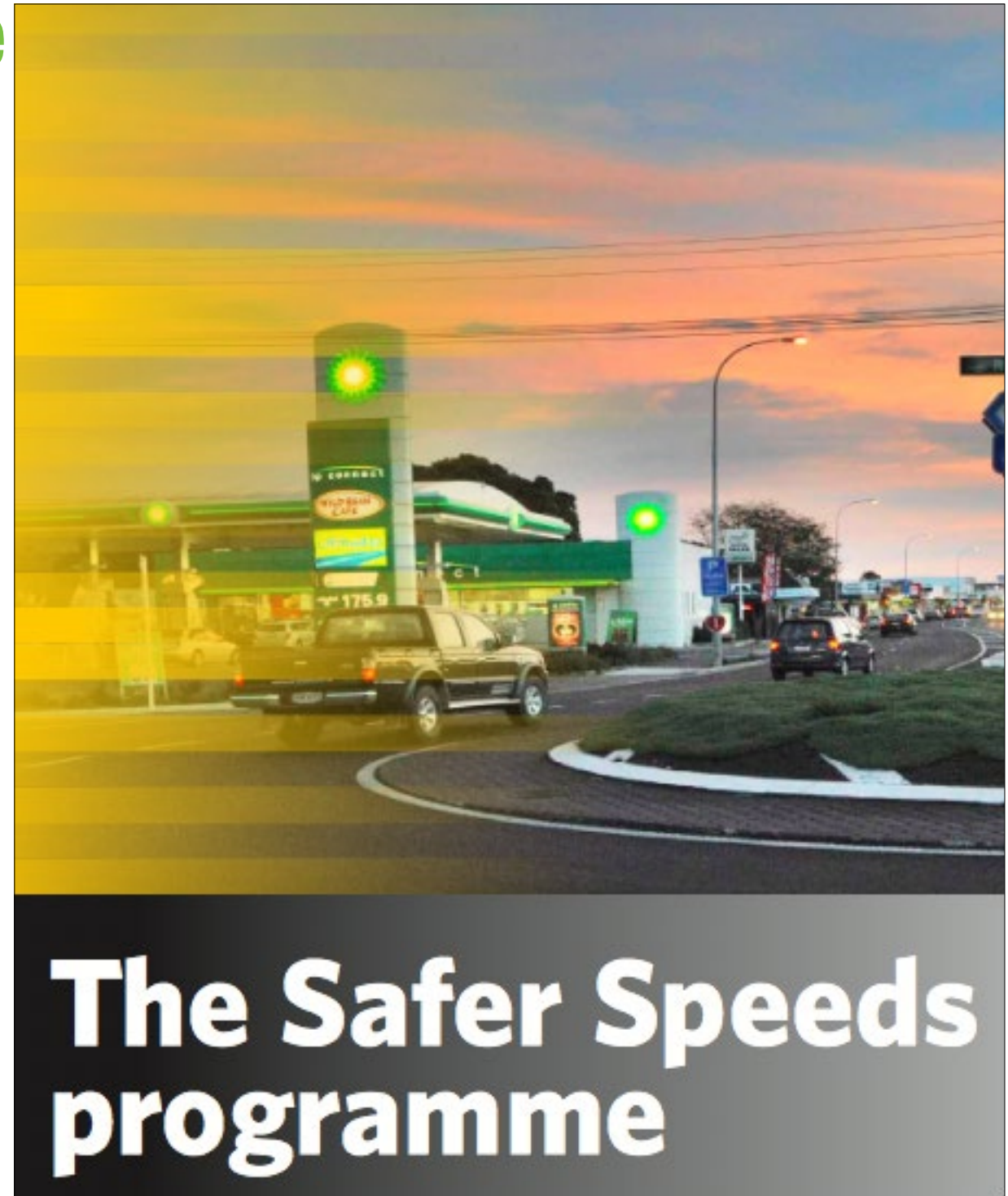
- ◆ outlines a network-wide approach to managing speed, tied in with the One Network Road Classification so that travel speeds are appropriate for road function, design, safety and use;
- ◆ offers guidance for targeting to risk and prioritising investment;
- ◆ outlines a Speed Management Framework that encompasses all elements of the Safe System approach to reduce the risk of death and serious injury, while supporting overall economic productivity;
- ◆ provides RCAs with guidance for where setting different speed limits is the identified solution;
- ◆ identifies best-practice and successful case studies, including demonstrations;
- ◆ develops an evaluation framework to track effectiveness, and measure performance.

CAN hasn't fully reviewed the document yet, but have heard con-

cerns that it'll be difficult to implement the policies because the One Network Road Classification system isn't fully in place yet, and that the methods for determining speeds look quite complex.

A trial of the framework is being run shortly in Waikato. It appears that speed limits on rural roads which would 'traditionally' have been 100 km/h might typically be reduced to 80 km/h, while motorway-style sepaated road speeds might increase to 110 km/h. But where cyclists are more plentiful, in towns and suburbs, CAN feels it's important for councils to be able to reduce the usual 50 km/h to 40 or 30 as easily as possible.

If you've reviewed the document, please let us know your thoughts (to [will@can.org.nz](mailto:will@can.org.nz)): Does it allow councils to pro-actively set low limits, to encourage cycling on suitable roads? Should councils have more leeway to set speeds? How can NZ emulate the success of programmes like the UK's 'Twenty's Plenty'? ■



# Contact the local group nearest you

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## **Cycle Action North Rodney**

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## **Cycle Action Waikato**

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## **North Taranaki Cycling Advocates**

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## **Whanganui Bicycle User Group**

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[radiohadi@hotmail.com](mailto:radiohadi@hotmail.com)

## **Cycle Aware Manawatu**

Christine Cheyne, [cmcheyne@gmail.com](mailto:cmcheyne@gmail.com)  
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## **Kapiti Cycling**

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## **Mana Cycle Group**

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## **Cycle Aware Wellington**

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## **Hutt Cycle Network**

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[can.org.nz/dunedin](http://can.org.nz/dunedin)

## Join CAN

## [can.org.nz/join](http://can.org.nz/join)

Annual membership fees

Unwaged \$20

Waged \$35

Family \$40

Supporting organisations \$85





# Spokes welcomes new cycleway

## Christchurch City Council

Cycling advocacy groups are welcoming the opening of a section of new cycleway that will form part of a network of cycleways in Christchurch.

Paraphrasing astronaut Neil Armstrong, Spokes Canterbury chairman Don Babe described it as “a small step for traffic in Christchurch, a huge step for transport options”.

Part of the Uni-Cycle route, the cycleway runs along Matai Street East and includes new traffic lights to provide a safe crossing over Deans Avenue.

“It starts to fill in the pieces needed to complete a cycle network in Christchurch. The strategic location of Matai Street East provides a link to the central city for users of the Matai Street west separated cycle path and those that use the facility next to the railway line to the north and south of Mona Vale.

“This facility gives regular riders and those that may consider cycling to be a viable transport choice for some of their trips a taste of what separated cycleways feel like. The access to Hagley Park by means of a controlled crossing of Deans Avenue provides off-road access to the central city at the Armagh Street entry to the park and the hospital.”

Mr Babe says the timing of the opening could not be better with day-

light coming earlier and the worst of the weather behind us.

He encourages those wanting to give cycling a go to ride the route a couple of times during leisure time before committing to a commute to work, study or whatever event you are attending.

“Do not set high expectations from the beginning. Try cycling once or twice a week. If it feels right and fits your day then you will soon find yourself doing it more often.”

The Matai Street East cycleway was opened by Transport Minister Simon Bridges. When finished in 2017, the Uni-Cycle route is expected to attract about 1,800 users a day

Improvements to the intersection of Fendalton Road, Harper and Deans Avenues as are expected to be completed this month.

The Matai Street East project is funded as part of the Urban Cycleways Programme, comprising shared investment from the Urban Cycleways Fund, the National Land Transport Fund and local councils. This enables key, high-value urban cycling projects to get underway around the country over the next three years, improving cycle safety and supporting more connected cycle networks. ■

Reprinted from Future Christchurch update,  
September 2015  
More: [ccc.govt.nz/cycleways](http://ccc.govt.nz/cycleways) | [nzta.govt.nz/UCP](http://nzta.govt.nz/UCP)





# Victoria Street Wellington: a transformation for cycling?

**Alastair Smith**

With the largesse of the Urban Cycling Programme and matching contributions from local councils, you'd think cycling activists would be settling back and resting on their laurels. But this is only the first stage of making Aotearoa's cities more cycle friendly. We still have to get cycling projects implemented. In Wellington it has taken several years and tense confrontations before the Island Bay cycleway started construction. Can cycling projects happen faster?

In September 2014 the [Victoria Street Transformation](#) was announced, aiming to turn a multilane approach to the urban motorway into "a vibrant inner city neighbourhood". The Council was keen to fast track the project in order to make use of the Memorial Park Alliance team, suddenly underemployed due to the halting of the Basin Reserve Flyover. Immediately the lack of provision for cycling raised concerns. The "all powerful cycle lobby" swung into action, and achieved cycle lanes in the final design.

Victoria Street now has two blocks of cars-side cycle lanes (between the traffic and the parked cars), a protected kerbside bicycle lane in another block, and a separate cycle phase in the traffic light sequence at one intersection. The car-side cycle lanes include a hatched "door zone" between the parked cars and the cycle lane to encourage cyclists to keep clear of the door zone — in contrast to many existing car-side cycle lanes that tempt cyclists into the door zone, exactly where they shouldn't be riding.

Cyclists on the Victoria St kerbside cycle lane







Hash marks indicating door zone beside carside cycle lane



Victoria Street bus stop

Will these cycle lanes encourage the “interested but concerned” to take up cycle commuting? Probably not, since the car-side cycle lanes don’t offer protection from traffic, and the kerbside cycle lane is too short. But the lanes make life easier for the growing number of enthused but confident cycle commuters. Making provision for cycling shows that cycling is a legitimate travel mode, and that can’t be bad.

The value of the Victoria St cycle lanes is that we’re learning how to design cycle facilities suitable for Wellington. One of the trickiest parts of the kerbside cycle lane is the bus stop, where the cycle lane runs between the bus stop waiting area and the stopped bus, and cyclists must give way to bus passengers. All the cycle routes in the network proposed in the WCC Cycling Framework will need to get past bus stops — around 20 between Island Bay and the central business district for example. In the Island Bay design, the kerbside cycle lanes will have a bypass so that bus passengers don’t have to cross the cycle lane to board a bus. But there might not be room for this in some cases, so it’s useful to see how the Victoria St bus stop works in practice. So far it seems to work — it’s a relatively low use bus stop, and there don’t seem to have been problems. We also need to think about relative risk. A proportion of bus passengers are going to cross the road after alighting — is the risk of crossing the bike lane really that much more than crossing a busy multi lane road?

Because of concerns about passenger safety, the Victoria Street bus stop also has a lot of signage: give way signs, flashing lights, red surfacing. Maybe as we get used to kerbside bike lanes, this amount of signage won’t be necessary.

Kerbside bike lanes need to have a buffer zone between the parked cars and the cycle lane, so that passengers don’t exit parked cars into the cycle lane. In the Victoria St kerbside lane, the buffer zone is very minimal, about 0.5m. And the buffer zone doesn’t continue through the bus stop, where it would be useful for passengers alighting from the bus.



We're also learning that getting bikes past left turning traffic is tricky.

The car-side bike lanes continue right up to the intersection advance stop boxes, which is good. Many bike lanes stop before intersections, which is crazy since intersections are where collisions happen. The downside of the Victoria Street car-side lanes is that left turning motor vehicles are prone to block the cycle lane, either because they turn into the left turning lane when there isn't enough room to complete the manoeuvre, or because drivers swing wide to make the left turn. Providing longer left turn lanes by removing parking, and widening the left turn lane, along with education of motorists, could solve this problem.

At Abel Smith Street, there's a separate phase for bikes in the traffic light sequence. This means bikes can get a head start on the general traffic, particularly useful for cyclists who have change lanes. However at this intersection left turning cars cross the cycle lane at an oblique angle and need to be alert to cyclists going straight through. While taking photos for this article, I saw a (fortunately low speed) collision between a left turning taxi and a straight ahead cyclist. Ideally the cycle lane would turn in to Abel Smith Street a bit, so that the left turning traffic would cross at right angles, with better visibility ([see this Dutch example](#)). In any case, this could be less of a problem if more protected bike lanes are built, and drivers become used to crossing them.

The big lesson from Victoria Street is the value of agile bike facility design — the Memorial Park team listened to cyclists, and went ahead with innovative solutions. OK, the solutions may not be perfect, and other projects will do it differently. But that's the point — by going ahead and doing it, we've learnt lessons that can be applied to other projects, rather than getting bogged down in "paralysis by analysis" and not achieving anything. ■

Note: this article is based on a blog post on the [Cycle Aware Wellington website](#)



Left turning car getting ready to swing wide and blocking cycle lane



Car changing lanes too late and blocking cycle lane



# Contact CAN

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## MORE

For the full list of CAN roles go to:  
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For full contact details go to:  
**can.org.nz/contact**



# CAN Committee report

## David Hawke

Our last update to members came after the CAN-Do in March, when we noted the change in emphasis for advocates from central and local government as targets to partners.

Since then, we have seen the opening of the first of the Urban Cycleway Programme projects and a gearing up of activity to encourage more people to get on bikes.

Following the AGM, Cycle Action Auckland hosted the annual CAN Committee get-together. A key outcome was to initiate a review of CAN's organisational structure to better meet the new advocacy environment we work in. This follows on from a Communications Review and rebranding exercise carried out for us by Upshift in Richmond.

As I write this, the Terms of Reference have been finalised and we have appointed a reviewer. And our new branding has just got its first airing on the CAN facebook page. A re-branded CAN website is being developed, on an upgraded Drupal 7 platform.

A key part of our re-branding has been a name change. This is currently only a change of brand name rather than a change of our incorporated society name (which remains Cycling Advocates Network). We will seek a mandate at the next AGM for a full name change.

Will Andrews and Graeme Lindup are now co-Chairs of CAN, following the non-election of a Chair at the last AGM. The Committee is grateful to both Will and Graeme for agreeing to this arrangement. Some of you will have met Will in his capacity as stand-in for Patrick Morgan while Patrick was on leave May-August. Since the AGM, we have welcomed two new Committee members — Jo Mackay (Wellington) and Christine Rigby (Auckland).

Policy-wise, our e-Bike Policy has now been formally adopted. NZTA has provided a considerable amount of feedback on the draft Road and Cycleway User policy, especially around increasing the measurability of targets and more fully defined aims and objectives. We see this policy as a fundamental guide to our work on behaviour change, and we are pleased that NZTA also sees behaviour change as a key to the success of the Urban Cycleway Programme.

Elsewhere in this issue you will see a promo for CAN-Do 2016 in Hamilton. We hope to see you there — there will be lots to talk about! ■



**Buy from CAN**

## Lyneke Onderwater

Support CAN and cycling by buying gear from our website, [www.can.org.nz/shop](http://www.can.org.nz/shop) If you don't have internet access, contact us by phone or mail.

### Hi-vis backpack cover

Keep your stuff dry and increase your visibility with our best-selling waterproof, incredibly loud yellow hi-vis backpack cover. One size fits all moderate-sized day-packs and panniers and holds tight with two rugged elastic straps and an elasticised hem.

NZ-made with a reflective strip and rear light loop, this cover carries CAN's web address and either 'One Less Car' or 'Think Globally, Cycle Locally' in big friendly letters. Remind those car drivers why they love you! \$30 if you're a member, \$40 if not.

### Freedom t-shirts

Our 'Freedom' tee shirt features a 'Freedom' road sign, a coastal image and the CAN logo on the sleeve. It comes in bright orange, blue or red in sizes S, M, L and XL. Female sizes range from 8 to 16; and youth sizes are Youth L (YL) and Youth XL (YXL).

Be quick, because some size/ colour options have already sold out. Reduced to \$15 for members and \$25 for non-members.

### High-visibility safety vest

CAN's orange high-visibility safety vest is lightweight and wind-proof with a mesh back and rear reflective stripe. It has a full length zip for rapid on-road deployment, plus three rear pockets, and carries the slogan 'Think Globally, cycle locally'.

It's made in NZ in sizes XS, S, M, L. The website has a sizing chart.

This vest was tested in extreme protest conditions on the great Auckland Harbour Bridge crossing, and passed with flying colours. Members \$90; non-members \$110.

### Spacemaker flag

Need more space? Claim it with the Spacemaker flag, which will set your boundaries and discourage other road users from getting too close.

Its bright orange plastic arm juts out 30 cm from your bike with big round reflectors (front white, rear red) and folds when parked. Brackets for mounting to seat-stay or rear rack. \$20 if you're a member, \$25 if not. ■



[can.org.nz/shop](http://can.org.nz/shop)  
[shop@can.org.nz](mailto:shop@can.org.nz)

# Supporting Organisations

- Abley Transportation Consultants
- Addington Coffee Co-Op
- Adventure South Ltd
- Auckland Cycle Touring Association
- Bicycle Junction
- Bike Taupo
- Blend (Urban Bike Ltd)
- Christchurch City Council
- Cycletech NZ
- Cycle Tour Operators NZ
- Engineering Outcomes
- Gisborne District Council
- Greater Wellington Regional Council
- Green Jersey Cycle Tour Company
- Ground Effect
- Kapiti Coast District Council
- Lincoln University
- Marlborough District Council
- MWH NZ Ltd
- Rotorua District Council
- Rotorua MTB Club
- Timaru District Council
- ViaStrada
- Waimakariri District Council







### WELCOME ABOARD

CAN is dedicated to ensuring that all cyclists in New Zealand have access to:

- Connected cycleways in cities, and shoulders on key rural roads.
- On-road cycle training in schools and for adults who want to cycle for transport.
- A new, fresh public education programme for safe road use.

By working hard to support our partner organisations across New Zealand, encourage our members to get involved in positive action, and directly lobbying local and central government CAN is focused on getting more people on bikes, more often. Be part of the journey with us.

### LATEST NEWS

**MEETING MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

Minister Simon Upton welcomes addressing the...  
transporting freight from...  
addressing safety.

**URBAN CYCLING PROGRAMMES WELCOMED**

Minister Simon Upton will...  
transporting freight from...  
addressing safety.

**SOFT & CHEAP ON YOUR SHOULDERS**

Minister Simon Upton will...  
transporting freight from...  
addressing safety.



### EVENTS



READY TO RIDE

#### CAN-DO 2016

16 - 20 March 2016  
Hawke's Bay

#### Hawke's Bay Will Host Can's National Cycling Summit in March

An exciting summer ahead means more events, more often? Want to ensure that 2016 is filled with exciting cycling events? It's time to get ready for the summer!

A year on from the initial funding announcement, we will be looking at our 2016 investment for cycling from the Government, the ambulance from Councils, getting involved in...  
and a great cycling infrastructure and our funding the future. Work on the way we...  
are going!

The facts:

- 15 June 2016
- Government the health of cycling industry
- Our members 'Cycling Resilience' - sustainable program where we are focusing...  
meeting up the health of program.

CAN can deliver to your community organisations and its...  
transporting freight from...  
addressing safety.

CAN can deliver to your community organisations and its...  
transporting freight from...  
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# CAN's COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

Cycling-mad communications consultancy Upshift, based in Richmond, are helping CAN re-assess our communications and branding.

You may have seen or filled out our survey in late last summer, asking how you think we're doing with communicating to local groups, individuals and the public at large. Upshift were the guys responsible, and are now pulling together all the lessons learnt. They have reported back to CAN and we'll be working to implement their recommendation to communicate more effectively. Part of the proposed change is a rebranding and a proposed name change to Cycling Action Network which is seen as fresher and more positive than Cycling Advocates' Network. ■

More: [can-communications-review](#)







Puffy white clouds and blue skies. A good day to be on the Pamir highway.

# Cycling the Pamir Highway

## Patrick Morgan

The Pamir Highway has been on my wish list for 8 years.

Located in Central Asia, it crosses the 3500m high Pamir plateau in Tajikistan.

It combines superb mountain scenery, empty roads, punishing heights, extreme weather and hospitable people. The Pamirs attract adventurous cycle tourists from all over, testing themselves on rough roads and altitudes that leave you breathless. Think of riding up a steep hill, but breathing only through a drinking straw.





Inside a Pamiri house

Riding the flat bits is fine. But on the climbs, you pedal for 50 metres then stop to catch your breath in the thin air. You see a glint of colour by the road and swing your head just in time to see a marmot take cover behind a rock. You look up at the coming storm and push on for the 4600m summit.

Mid summer is the preferred time to ride. It usually delivers stable weather with warm days, cool nights, puffy white clouds and maybe tailwinds. But climate change means unpredictability. This year I had hotter days, more snowmelt, floods, landslides, a major bridge at Murghab washed away, and, sadly, lives lost.

After a couple of months of travel by bike and bus in Turkey, Iran and Uzbekistan, I made it to the start line. For me that was Khorog, a town in southern Tajikistan, just across the river from Afghanistan.

With a massive landslide blocking the main M41 Pamir Highway, I took the alternative route along the Wakhan Corridor.

This is a finger of land designed to separate the Russian and British empires 140 years ago, to reduce border tensions. The Wakhan is a narrow valley by the Panj river, dotted with villages, irrigated fields and not much else.

The first night I was looking for a camp spot when a girl leading a goat beckoned me to her family home. In Pamiri style, the house had an octagonal skylight, and five pillars, representing religious figures. The family are Muslims from the Ismaili sect. The Aga Khan is their spiritual leader.

We didn't have much language in common. I was travelling with a small album of family photos, so at least I could share that.

Pamiri children



Milking time





Meeting adventurers is a highlight of cycling in the Pamirs. Here's Graham Frith, cycling from Hamner Springs on a 900-day mission. More at [www.grumgoesglobal.com](http://www.grumgoesglobal.com)

But the farmers who helped Reuben had moved on. I gathered what details I could — their names and new village. It was miles out of my way. My mission ended there. So if you are heading up to the Pamirs and want to do Reuben a favour, get in touch with me.

And if you want to train for the high passes, take a drinking straw on your next ride. ■

There's more tall stories from Central Asia at [www.crazyguyonabike.com/doc/eatbikesleep](http://www.crazyguyonabike.com/doc/eatbikesleep)  
My thanks CAN for the extended leave.



Dinner was a thick vegetable soup, homemade bread, tea and cookies. The meal is cleared away and warm duvets are put out for bedding. In the morning there's tea and eggs, and a round loaf of bread for my lunch. Guests are expected to contribute around \$15.

Daily riding distances were between 50–100km, with accommodation in farm houses, yurts, guesthouses, simple hotels or wild camping. Shops stocked dusty packets of noodles, candy, biscuits, soft drinks and a fine range of vodka. Guesthouses serve dinner and breakfast, so you won't starve.

Apart from the riding, I was on a mission. Four years ago my buddy Reuben rode the Pamir, and had a bad patch. Weak from altitude and a rum tummy, he crawled into a desolate farm house, where the farmers nursed him back to health. Short on cash, he left what he had as a thank you. He asked me to find the farmers and top up the gift. For me this meant a 50km detour over another pass.

Finding the house wasn't hard, as they were few and far between. It was a whitewashed place, made of mud bricks, with a dung-fueled stove for cooking and heat. Cows grazed the summer pasture during the day, and were brought into the barn at night.



Crossing Kyzyl Art, the last big pass from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan