NZ Cycling Conference 2001

NATIONAL CYCLE TOURING ROUTES

Some Thoughts on Where to Go from Here

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Outline

- Introduction
- Overseas Cycle Networks
- Assessment of Demand
- Identification of Routes
- Improvements Required
- Who will pay for and look after?
- Example: “Coast-to-Coast” Cycle Route
- Other Local Initiatives

Introduction

- Historically, NZ cycle planning focused on
  - Short-duration local trips
  - Largely urban in nature
  - Understandable given the relative lack of cycle facilities even today in our major towns
- Momentum in NZ beginning to address these issues
  - Time to turn our attention more to the longer-distance trips

Role of Long-distance Cycle Routes

- Allow **cycle tourists** to travel around the country from centre to centre
  - Lonely Planet NZ cycle touring guide
- Day-trips by **recreational cyclists**
- Training runs for **sport cyclists**
- Can also provide some utility links

  e.g. **commuters** between neighbouring towns

Development of national touring routes can help to expand these activities

Potential for Cycle Touring Routes

- Danube Cycle Route in Austria
  - Cyclists account for up to 90% of overnight stays
  - Contribute $90 million/yr in economic benefits
- “Sea to Sea” Route in northern England
  - Surge of small-scale job opportunities

Otago Central Rail Trail has already shown the same effects here

European Cycle Networks

- National cycle networks
  - Already in place in several European countries
  - Much development over the last 15 years

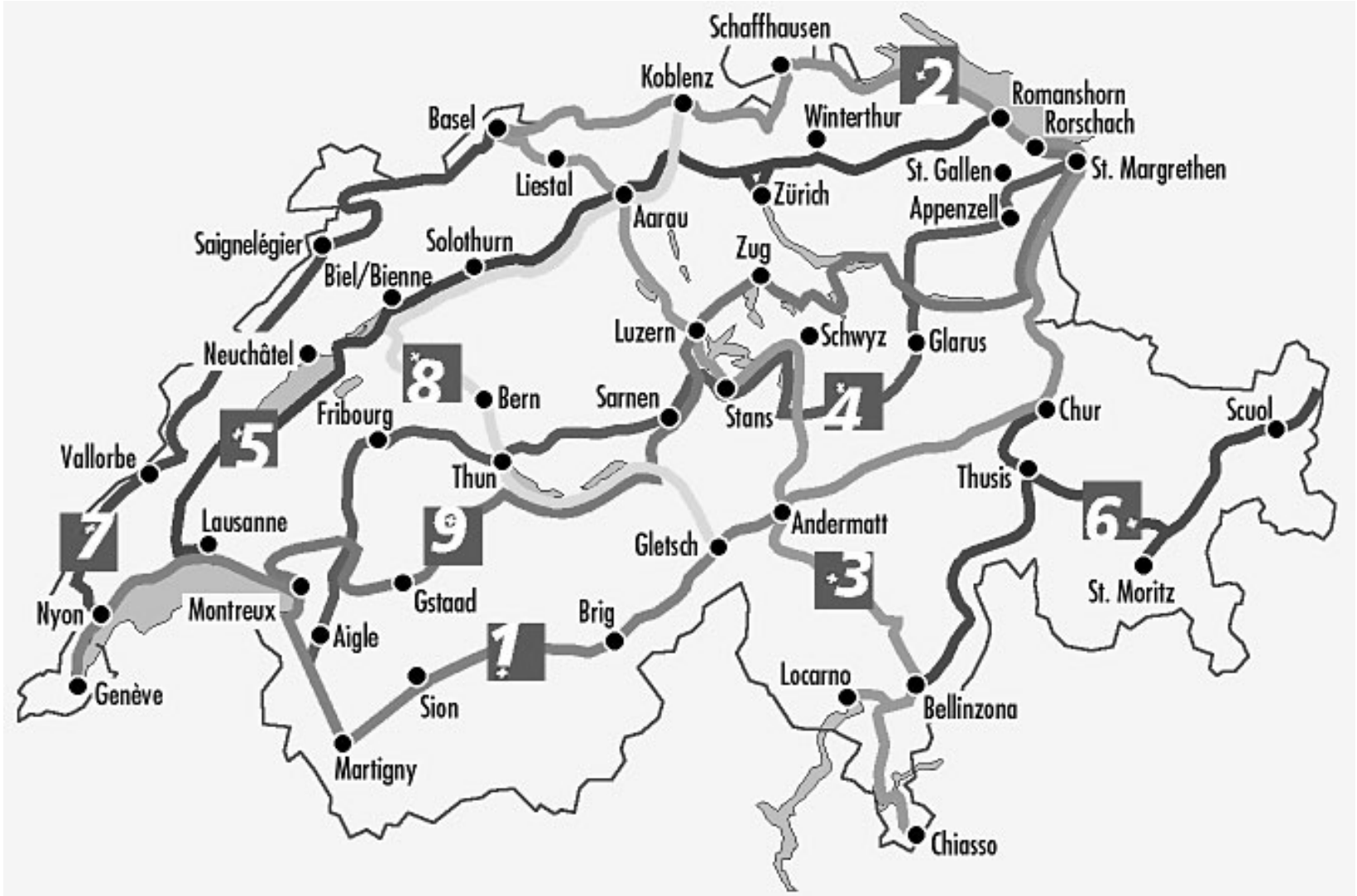
  e.g.
  - Germany
    - 48 main routes plus local networks = 40,000 km
  - Austria
    - 30 routes covering 4,000 km
  - UK National Cycle Network (Sustrans)
    - 8,000 km of continuous routes
  - Some countries still at the drawing board
    - Bicitalia (Italian national cycle) network, 12,000 km

Swiss Cycle Network

- "Cycling in Switzerland" Foundation
  - Founded in 1995, Results by 1998
  - Aim of realising a national cycling network
  - Framework of a "Public/Private Partnership"
  - Government, railways and tourism groups collaborated to plan and construct the routes
  - Nine national cycling routes, totalling 3,300 km

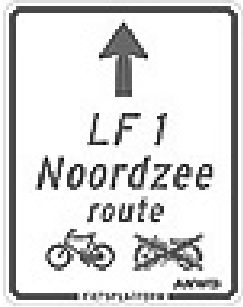
  - Link all the Swiss regions
  - Uniformly sign-posted
  - Supplemented by over 3,000 km of regional routes

Swiss Cycle Network



Dutch Cycle Network

- First sign-posted Dutch national cycle route inaugurated in 1989
  - LF1 Noordzeeroute (“North Sea Route”)
    - 270-km
- Long distance “LF” cycle routes
  - Network designed by Stichting Landelijk Fietsplatform (Dutch cycling organisation)
  - Total length of more than 6,000 km
  - Eleven of these LF-routes already sign-posted



Dutch Cycle Network

“EuroVelo” project

- European Cyclists' Federation (ECF)
- Develop a European Cycle Route Network spanning whole continent within 15 years
- Supporting funders include government transport and tourism agencies, local authorities, and cyclist organisations
- Initial 12 pan-European routes produced
  - Linking all European countries
  - Largely based on existing and planned routes
  - First route opened in 2000

U.S. Cycle Networks

- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
  - Founded in 1986, 100,000 members
  - Creating a nation-wide network of public trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors
  - >18,000 km of multi-use trails in US operating on rail corridors no longer used by trains
  - Also >800 km of trails alongside active railways
- Adventure Cycling Association network
  - Over 39,000 km of on/off-road routes
  - Started in 1976 with TransAmerica Bicycle Trail

Australian Cycle Networks

- Regional Australian Cycling Network
  - Planned by Bicycle Federation Australia (BFA)
  - Combine existing local/regional routes with other potential routes
  - Promote via various media e.g.
    - maps
    - internet
  - Long-term
    - Further infrastructure to fill in gaps
    - Consistent signage of all routes
- Rail Trails also developed in Australia

What's Different about NZ?

- Relatively lower population base/density
  - More difficult to obtain resources to develop our own networks
  - Has also affected the development of our national roading system (e.g. motorways)
    - Less opportunity to separate cycle traffic from high-speed, high-volume traffic
- Not many disused canal towpaths or abandoned railway lines!
  - Investigate routes alongside active railways
- Need better co-ordination of effort

Assessment of Demand

- “Build it and they will come” approach?
- Counting techniques for cyclists have been very limited in the past
  - More RCAs now carrying out intersection/link counts of cyclists (manual observation)
  - Little surveying away from urban areas
- Automated count surveys would provide the most efficient solution
  - Possible to accurately identify cyclists correctly using conventional tube count techniques?

Assessment of Demand

- Carry out moving traffic counts whilst travelling along sections?
  - Count no. of bikes observed in both directions
  - Assess typical speeds of observer / cyclists
  - Calculate estimated flows
  - Carry out while traveller is on other business
- Big problems with seasonal/temporal variations of cycling counts
  - Daily variations up to ±50% of mean flow
  - More research needed

Tourism Industry Data

- Cycle tour operators
  - Identify popular routes/seasons
  - Can then survey to confirm actual numbers
- International Visitors Survey (IVS)
  - Face-to-face interviews at major airports
  - Survey over 5000 departing visitors each year
    - Destinations, transport, activities, accom’dn, etc
  - Most recent quarterly surveys
    - 5-6000 international travellers / year are cycling
    - Numbers extrapolated from a fairly small sample
    - Includes some recreational cycling?
    - Numbers miss out on New Zealanders touring

Tourism Industry Data cont'd

- Tourism New Zealand carries out a number of targeted studies
  e.g. backpackers and skiers/snowboarders
  - Study cycle tourists?
- Look at what routes being recommended
  - Recent Lonely Planet cycle touring guide of New Zealand provides over 30 detailed routes
- Probably "latent" demand for cycle routes if a good consistent level of service provided
  - Cyclist numbers can only be expected to grow with improved facilities

Identification of Routes

- Factors to identify the most optimal route:
  - Link with significant tourist or historic sites
  - Regular links to accommodation/services
  - Avoid high-speed high-volume highways where there is a reasonable alternative
  - Avoid where possible difficult terrain

    e.g. Long up-grades, Unsealed sections
  - Make maximum use of existing facilities to minimise cost and environmental impact, e.g.
    - Existing roads & bridges
    - Railway and river corridors
    - Off-road tracks & paths

Route Selection

- Lack of alternative routes to State Highway
- Suitable parallel routes on local roads or perhaps off-road tracks

  e.g. service tracks by national rail network?
- Make use of unsealed roads and tracks?
  - Well-maintained unsealed surfaces are OK
  - Advance warning & alternative route info
- Clear linkages into/through urban areas
  - Safe, well-signed routes to accommodation, tourist information, transport terminals
  - Co-ordinate public transport

Required Improvements

- Often existing route mostly already in place
  - Need relatively minor improvements that will provide a more consistent route to the cyclist
  - Coherence, Directness, Attractiveness, Safety and Comfort
- Adequate lane/shoulder widths on-road
  - Min. paved shoulder width of 1.2 m, pref. 1.5m
    - Wider for >1000 veh/day & >25 bikes/day (WDoT)
    - Wider shoulders on steep uphill grades (>6%)
  - Otherwise provide warning signage
    - US push-button active warning systems?

Other Improvements

- May need to construct a link between two adjacent route sections
  - River crossing
  - Short track between roads
  - Often most expensive part of developing routes
    - Crucial to providing overall connectivity
- Appropriate spacing of rest areas and water facilities on long sections without intermediate towns
  - Adequately sign-posted on site and in advance
  - Identified on cycle touring maps

Bridges

- Often narrow or non-existent
  - Pre-fabricated structures for small crossings
  - Recycle disused road/rail bridge structures
  - Lightweight utility (pipe/cable) bridge crossing
  - Alter existing footpath so that cyclists can use
  - Re-mark road to provide narrower traffic lanes
  - Warning signage / ban overtaking on bridge
  - Add clip-on lanes to bridge sides
  - Provide alternative routes via sealed fords
  - Widen existing bridge (strengthening projects?)

E.g. Manawatu River, SH1 south of Foxton

Route Signage

- Enhance understanding of cycle networks

  - Sign national routes similar to State Highways
    - Route numbers on all relevant signs/documentation
    - At intersections, distance and direction details

    - Between junctions, confirm correct direction and distances left to destinations

    - Advance warning of change of direction or intersection

  - Orientation panels at terminal points and major crossroads en route (maps, details)
  - Advance info on significant uphill stretches
- Route guides/maps use same conventions

Who will pay for and look after?

- Transfund NZ, Transit NZ, local RCAs
- National tourism assns, local tourist industry
- DoC, Hillary Commission, “active leisure” orgs
- Private company sponsorship
  e.g. Tranz Rail, local businesses in the area
- Local cycle groups and cycle retailers
- Levies on cycle tourists or bicycle purchases
- Employment/work schemes
- Public donations, national/local trusts
- Environmental/conservation org grants
- Accommodation and hospitality associations
  e.g. Youth Hostels, Camping grounds

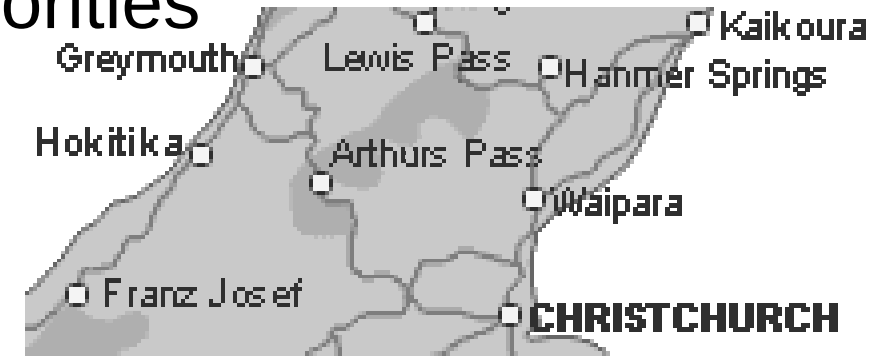
Problems of co-ordination

- No clear champion to lead the development
  - Existing body has to take on responsibility
    e.g. Transit NZ, CAN

  OR New entity created to oversee role of others
    e.g. like Sustrans in the UK
  - Latter is probably preferable to enable the focus and momentum to be maintained
    - Will require the full acceptance of the various other agencies to have any credibility.
- Cycle routes require ongoing maintenance
  - Responsibility for this also agreed upon when negotiating development of routes

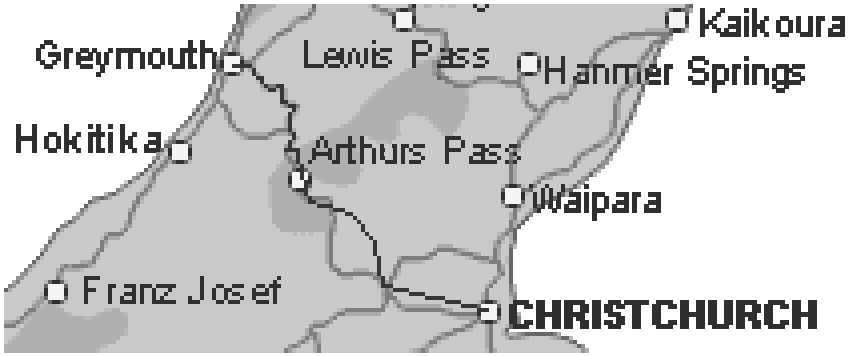
“Coast-to-Coast” Cycle Route

- Possible Canterbury-Westland cycle route
  - Recent initial concept meeting in Christchurch
  - Ideally corridor should be away from SH73
- A number of parties could need to be involved to finalise/develop route
  - Transit NZ, Local authorities
  - DoC
  - Tranz Rail
  - Private landowners
  - Local funding, e.g. Cant’y Community Trust?
- Create a circuit returning via Lewis Pass?



“Coast-to-Coast” Cycle Route cont’d

- Possible route options:
  - Local roads parallel to SH73 on Cant’y Plains
  - Tracks on farmland near Broken River
  - Follow Tranz-Alpine rail line via service tracks near Craigieburn
  - Use of DoC land for paths near Arthurs Pass
  - Follow old zigzag route near Otira viaduct
  - Follow quieter road via Lake Brunner/Moana
  - Widen SH where other options not feasible



Other Local Initiatives

- Otago Central Rail Trail
- Northland Cycle-Walkway Network
- Other potential cycle routes/links:
  - Wellington to Waikanae via Akatarawa Valley
  - Wgtn to Wairarapa via Rimutaka Incline / Coast
  - North-West Nelson National Park
  - Nelson to Pelorus Bridge (Whangamoas)
  - Nelson Lakes to Hanmer Springs
  - South of Kaikoura to Conway R. (Hundalees)
  - Fiordland National Park
  - Cyclist access across Auck Harbour Bridge

Summary

- Links will assist cyclists on their journeys
- Also enhance economic wellbeing of the surrounding districts and NZ overall

Happy Touring!