

PLANNING & DESIGN FOR CYCLING

The Nelson Express

In tribute to our impending visit to Nelson for the CAN Workshop, we thought we'd highlight a unique little piece of cycle facility found there...

A long time ago, Nelson planned for a railway to connect it to the rest of the South Island. Ultimately that never quite happened, but rail's loss was cycling's gain. The corridor left by the railway reserve has been transformed into a very popular off-road pathway for cyclists, pedestrians and the like.

While the pathway itself is a very pleasant facility, it is the crossings with local streets that warrant closer attention. Effectively this is an "arterial" cycleway, so logic would dictate that it should have priority over minor local streets. And as you can see below, that's exactly what's been done.



*View from the
approaching roadway
as cyclists cross the
pathway.*

*Note the islands to
deflect and slow down
traffic.*

Traffic on the intersecting roads has to give way to crossing path users (they've even prosecuted someone for failing to give way). To help emphasise this, and minimise conflicts, the paths are carried over on raised platforms so that crossing traffic can't help but slow down.

*View from the
approaching
cycleway, with
"ROAD AHEAD –
SLOW DOWN" signs.
Note the narrowing
bollards and pathway
markings.*



If I had a couple of minor gripes with the design, it's that the bollard posts either side of the crossings are a bit constrictive (maybe one central one would have been better?), and often the path/road approaches have limited inter-visibility of each other because of the surrounding vegetation. But in practice, it's a pretty neat solution nonetheless.



The pathway crosses over the road.

Note the raised hump, coloured surfacing, and holdrails.

Also note the adjacent vegetation.

So how does this work legally? Well, um, not sure. You see, GIVE WAY signs can only generally be used at “intersections”, which are defined as “*Two or more intersecting or meeting roadways*”. A “roadway” is defined as “*that portion of the road used or reasonably usable for the time being for vehicular traffic in general*”, which is normally taken as the kerb-to-kerb bit. So a cycle path intersecting a road like this isn’t technically an intersection (of course the LTSA could have fixed up this ambiguity in the recent Road User Rules but...).

There is a way around this, as the 1974 Local Government Act allows councils to “*...form a public cycle track, and may make bylaws regulating and controlling the use of that cycle track*” (s332). Those bylaws would appear to allow for you to control how other traffic interacts with such a cycle track, like giving way for example. But has any such bylaw been enacted anywhere in New Zealand?

Of course, back in the real world, the solution shown works just fine; people know what a GIVE WAY sign is for, and the raised path and kerbing reinforce this and minimise any major conflict. We must have MANY major cycle paths around the country just crying out for treatments like this.

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Useful References

- Nelson City Council cycleway map is available for download from:
www.ncc.govt.nz/sports/cycleways/WOW-airport-cycleway-link.htm

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