

## 10. CYCLING INITIATIVES



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On 14 and 15 July 2000 I attended the New Zealand Cycling Symposium 2000 held at Massey University, Palmerston North. The symposium proved to be of excellent value. A number of the Council staff, together with some of the members of the Council's cycle steering group also attended. Elsewhere in this month's agenda the cycle planning officer, Mr Newman, has submitted a report for the Committee's information and recommending that the Council host a national cycling conference in Christchurch next year.

I was very impressed by and proud of the contributions made to the symposium by members of the Council staff, Council consultants, and members of our cycle steering group. Separately circulated for the information of Committee members, are copies of the papers presented by Council staff at the symposium. There is no doubt that Christchurch is seen as the leading city in New Zealand on cycling matters. We are clearly doing more than other cities to encourage cycling and to make it safer, especially for children.

I also attach for the information of members, a copy of Palmerston North's green bike scheme. This is run by a charitable trust and is partly supported by the Palmerston North City Council. While I doubt that this scheme would be entirely suitable for Christchurch, a variation of might be possible. One possibility would be for the RMF to collect old cycles at the recycling resource centres and to arrange their restoration and distribution via a suitable Christchurch organisation, perhaps on a loan basis. This would be both a good recycling initiative as well as a means of encouraging more use of bicycles in Christchurch. I believe that the options should at least be investigated.

There were several interesting and valuable papers presented at the symposium, which I will not report on in detail (however a full copy of the proceedings of the symposium are available on request). Consistently with my experience at other cycling conferences, I came away from this symposium reinforced once again with an understanding of the potential cycling has in Christchurch to contribute to our goal of a sustainable transport system for the city. Some of the papers presented concentrated on physical infrastructure for cyclists while others concentrated on promotion of cycling both as a means of transport and as a means of promoting public health. These objectives are well understood in Christchurch and are incorporated in our cycling strategy. While we are making good progress it is clear that cycling still requires much greater promotion and better facilities. If we are to encourage more people to adopt alternatives to the private motorcar then we must be prepared to invest more in those alternatives, including cycling. I believe that a greater share of our annual investment in Christchurch streets must be diverted to encourage better cycle facilities and promotion.

I was particularly impressed at the Palmerston North symposium by papers presented in support of cycle tourism. Of particular interest was a live video link-up with speakers in the United Kingdom. One of these was John Grimshaw who described the establishment of a network of national cycleways throughout Britain. 5,000 miles of these have now been established, and it is intended to extend them to 10,000 miles. These are mostly off-road cycleways and are used by huge numbers of people for recreation and tourism. A copy of the video is being obtained and will be played at a future City Services Committee meeting. Other speakers described off-road cycleways in Europe also used for tourism purposes. It is obvious that New Zealand is not making enough use of the potential of cycling for tourism purposes. There is clearly an opportunity here for Christchurch and the South Island. I believe that the city should investigate the establishment of a number of major cycleways, mostly off-road, built to a high standard to attract tourists. These should include a circumferential route around Christchurch together with a number (perhaps three) of other major routes, eg city centre to Sumner, city centre to new Brighton, and a route to the airport.

Of even greater importance is the need for major off-road tourist and recreational cycle routes within the South Island, emulating what has been done in Britain and Europe. I have no doubt that such cycleways would attract a significant number of tourists to the South Island. As a first step, I propose the investigation by a working party of a transalpine cycle way from Christchurch to Greymouth. Such a cycle way would have to be mostly off-road and built to a high standard, and would be routed through major scenic attractions. Accommodation facilities (including homestays and farmstays) and other support services using existing towns would have to be included.

Obviously facilities of the scale suggested would be expensive to establish. The City Council should investigate partnerships to enable the establishment of such projects. Partners could include tourism interests, government agencies, and other local authorities, as well as the usual sources of grants.

- Recommendation:**
1. That Council staff and the cycle steering group investigate the viability of a suitable version of the green bike scheme for Christchurch incorporating an RMF involvement for the provision of bicycles, and Government employment funding to administer the scheme.
  2. That the cycle planning officer investigate the establishment of a number of major recreational and tourist cycle routes for Christchurch, including possible routes, indicative budgets, and sources of funds.

3. That discussions be held with interested parties on the possibility of the establishment of a transalpine cycle way from Christchurch to Greymouth.
4. That a working party including Councillors, steering group members, tourism interests, and other interested parties be established to assist with the recommendations above, and that a recommendation for appointment of members of the working party be made to a future meeting of the Committee.

(Note: Councillor Robin Booth requested that his vote against the above recommendation be recorded.)