

18. CYCLE PATHS ON BERMS

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Corporate Plan Output: Page 9.5.6	

The purpose of this report is to report back on the sealing berms for use as cycle paths.

SEALING BERMS FOR CYCLE PATHS

At the April Council meeting, Cr. Baker asked for a report on sealing grass berms for use as cycle paths - thereby allowing cyclists (children in particular) to travel away from the main vehicle carriageway.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

The most likely requirement for cyclists to be separated from vehicles is on Christchurch's busier roads - major and minor arterials, and some collectors. Typically these roads have a 14m wide road, and a 3m berm and footpath on both sides. The berm and footpath are typically 1.5m wide each.

If the berms were to be sealed, there would be a 3m wide sealed area for use of cyclists and pedestrians. It would be possible to separate the two users by either a painted line, change in surface colouring, or by a narrow physical separator (such as textured brick).

Advantages

The primary advantage of sealing the berm would be to create a space where cyclists are off the main road surface, and would therefore be less at risk from vehicles on the road. As well as the practical safety considerations from this, cyclists (particularly younger cyclists) will feel more secure and less at risk in this environment.

Disadvantages

There are, however, disadvantages in developing the "berm pathway" in an unrestricted manner.

- The second highest collision type resulting in cyclist injury and death is where the cyclist is struck by vehicles entering and exiting driveways - and this is when cyclists are on the road. With cyclists on the berm area, where they are closer to vehicles leaving driveways, and where they may be hidden behind parked cars when vehicles enter driveways, the risk of collision increases.
- At the moment, when a cyclist is on the roadway, they have normal rights of way when crossing side street intersections. If a cyclist is on the berm path, they will not, and will be required to give way at all side street crossings. This may create confusion at crossing points as to who has right of way.

- If berms were sealed, cyclists would experience a very uneven ride as the path rises and falls to cater for driveways. This action will encourage faster, more competent cyclists to remain on the carriageway.

PREFERRED COURSE OF ACTION

Due to disadvantages indicated above, it is not favoured to develop grass berms as sealed pathways as a general rule. In some cases it is being done, but under specific circumstances. These are as follows:

- Grass berms can be sealed and used as widened pedestrian and cycle paths where there are only a few residential properties - ie the frequency of vehicles required to cross the path is low. An example is the mid-section of North Parade.
- Widened, combined use pathways are also used in front of light industrial type properties, where the property frontage is quite open, and visibility for entering and exiting vehicles is good. Examples are Waterloo Road and Annex Road.
- In other locations, particularly denser residential properties, the whole path and berm area is widened significantly to create separated cycle and pedestrian paths, with berm areas. The widening moves the cycle path section further away from property entrances, increasing the visibility of cyclists for exiting drivers. Examples are Tennyson Street and the northern section of North Parade

In all of the above situations, particular design attention is paid to intersections with side streets so that the required actions of cyclists and vehicle drivers are clear.

The City Streets Unit has also started an investigation into a range of measures that will allow the occupiers of all properties with driveways crossing cycle paths to be more aware of the cycle path and the presence of cyclists on it.

SUMMARY

In general, it is not a simple matter to seal berm areas and consider them safe for cycling. Attention has to be paid to getting entering and exiting the berm path, including side street intersections, and the issues associated with vehicles crossing them. There are examples of berm paths, and there will be more in the city, however they are all specifically designed in relation to the surrounding environment. They will continue to be developed in this manner.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the information be received.