

19. RICCARTON ROAD CYCLE ROUTE PROJECT

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The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the proposed approach to developing cycle route plans for Riccarton Road, and seek approval to proceed.

BACKGROUND TO RICCARTON ROAD CYCLE ROUTE ISSUES

Riccarton Road has always been a very popular cycle route for commuters, university students and school children. The frequency of school children's use has waned in recent years as the road has become busier, however there are still good volumes of cyclists on the road. Cycle counts at intersections over the last couple of years have shown consistent numbers of cyclists of between 160 and 220 per day (minimum - peak hours only).

In 1996 and 1997, the Council commissioned a consultancy to develop a traffic management plan for Riccarton Road. The planning process involved public and council consultation, option developments and selection of a recommended option.

The consultation process identified a wide raft of issues, including the safety and access needs of cyclists. The City Services Committee, in its liaison with the consultants, established safety as the primary concern for the whole length of Riccarton Road, then prioritised cycle accessibility issues at the same importance as high-occupancy vehicle matters, and dealing with congestion (all were ranked as more important than parking).

In the final discussion and recommendations however, the consultants made no efforts whatsoever to consider or accommodate cyclists on Riccarton Road. The consultant's recommended traffic management strategy indicated that "cycle convenience and safety is largely addressed through completion of designated cycle routes (meaning Riccarton Bush-Kilmarnock Street or Suva-Peverel). In other words, cyclist concerns are best met through cyclists not using Riccarton Road - they should be "encouraged off main arterial routes".

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE CONSULTANTS' REPORT

It was pointed out to the consultants during the consultation phase, and in response to the draft final report, that encouraging cyclists away from, or preventing them from using, main arterial roads was a very archaic and impractical approach to cycle route management. When applied locally, nationally and internationally, cycle encouragement away from main arterials has never worked effectively.

No overseas planning information supports the concept of developing cycle routes away from arterial roads, unless the routes provided are more direct than the arterials they are replacing. In fact there is ample evidence to indicate cycle networks planned specifically in this fashion have not worked. Where off-arterial routes do work, they are planned and designed to follow cycling desire lines. The alternatives to Riccarton Road are essentially three sides of a square around the desire line.

In the case of Riccarton Road, cyclists using the road as a main through route will not deviate up to 600m from their route, and 600m back again simply to avoid a congested road. In particular, cyclists will not use Suva-Peverel, as they simply have to return to Riccarton Road, or go to Blenheim Road, to access Hagley Park (see attached diagram).

The final report still made the recommendation to provide alternatives to Riccarton Road however. It is felt that this showed poor understanding of cycle movement patterns or cyclists needs. However, by assuming that cyclists could be removed from Riccarton Road, the report was more easily able to deal with the issues of all other road users and adjoining parties.

PRESENT SITUATION

As a result of the Riccarton Road Traffic Management project, capital works are planned for the Clarence/Riccarton/Straven intersection within two years, and signals are proposed for Mandeville/Riccarton in year four. Both projects will include cycle facilities. Other work from the project report has yet to be confirmed or programmed.

Despite the conclusions of the report, there still remains a need to safely accommodate cyclists on Riccarton Road. It remains one of the highest priority routes for cycle facilities development in the city - by virtue of its volumes, collision history and perceptions of difficulty from cyclists, it ranks as the same priority as Papanui Road and Colombo Street.

The cycle projects capital programme has allocated funding to Riccarton Road over the next four years. The intention is to progressively work westwards along the road from the Riccarton Roundabout (which is being improved for all users this financial year) - thereby expanding the cycle network outwards from the City Centre.

RECOMMENDED FUTURE ACTIONS

The City Streets Unit would like to begin a public and Community Board consultation process to determine how to develop cycle-friendly infrastructure along Riccarton Road. However, the unit is cautious about initiating the process when there may be some community and committee expectations that the consultants' report would be delivered in full at some stage in the future.

It is proposed that the City Streets Unit initiate consultation on the development of cycle friendly infrastructure on Riccarton Road, using the consultants' report as a starting point. This will require some acknowledgement that the information provided within the report was a useful foundation to future work, but did not fully capture the needs of all road users, nor respond adequately to the concerns raised during the initial discussion process. The subsequent cycle facilities consultation process will need to ensure that as many of the final report's objectives as possible will be worked toward, however the final project may not represent the same balance as the report.

It is considered necessary to inform the City Services Committee of the intention to work on Riccarton Road cycle facilities prior to any planning, design or consultation, to ensure that a likely departure from the consultants' "package" is acceptable, and that the reasons for doing so are sound.

The Committee is asked to note the cycle planning intention to start a cycle route project on Riccarton Road and confirm that it is acceptable to proceed with a consultation, planning and design process that may depart from the details of the consultant's traffic management strategy.

Recommendation: That the Committee support the intention to start a cycle route consultation, planning and design process on Riccarton Road that may depart from the previously prepared Riccarton Road Traffic Management Study.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the Cycle Planning Officer report in due course to the Committee on a design concept for Riccarton Road cycle facilities before commencing consultation planning and detailed design, including information on any changes to the Riccarton Road Traffic Management Plan which may be needed.