

NAPIER CITY ANNUAL PLAN SUBMISSION

ORGANISATION: CYCLE AWARE HAWKES BAY

SUBMISSION

Cycle Aware Hawke's Bay (CAHB) is the region's biking advocacy organization. We seek to be a voice for people who ride bikes in Napier and Hastings. Our vision is for biking to be a safe, comfortable, and convenient mode of transport for people of all ages and abilities, and we advocate for improvements that will achieve this vision.

Recent investment in Napier's biking facilities, particularly the Rotary Pathways, has led to marked improvements for people who bike and walk recreationally. However, significant changes are still needed to achieve the "Pedal Power" principle of the City's vision statement "to build a strong cycling culture, and make journeys safe and enjoyable."

However, within the past two years, 3 cyclists have been killed while biking in Napier. This is an unacceptable number and a stronger and renewed focus on improving Napier's bicycling network, especially on our roads and commuter routes is warranted. The numerous and well established benefits of biking to health, well being and the environment further support the case for bolder action.

The lockdown period in response to Covid-19 illustrated the potential of a more bike- pedestrian friendly city as people took advantage of the reduced vehicle traffic on our streets to walk and bike more frequently. We at CAHB believe that the 2020/2021 Napier Annual Plan should include the following components to take advantage of the lessons learned from lockdown, to more adequately address current deficiencies in the existing bike network.

If adopted Napier would truly become one of the best places in New Zealand to live and ride a bike.

Develop an Active Transport Strategy

While Hawke's Bay has a regional cycling plan, the development of a Napier-specific active transport strategy is imperative for ensuring that local biking and walking needs are adequately addressed. The absence of a strategy also puts the Napier Council at a disadvantage when attempting to access national funding to advance active transport goals. An active transport strategy will provide the opportunity to establish a clear and publicly-supported strategic direction for pedestrians and bicyclists in Napier city, determine work programme priorities, and better position the Council to compete for limited national funds.

Reduce Speed Limits

The recent lockdown gave citizens an opportunity to use and enjoy road space when it is not dominated by vehicle traffic. Unfortunately things have since returned to the status quo and the quiet, safe streets of lockdown are little more than a pleasant memory. Napier has the opportunity to build on the lessons learned by instituting initiatives that will recreate some of the benefits to our road environment realized during lockdown.

Lowering speed limits is one relatively simple and cost-effective way to achieve safer and more comfortable streets for everyone. Vehicles traveling at lower speeds have a shorter stopping time, providing motorists with more time to react to potential conflict with a pedestrian or bicyclist. When a collision does occur, the likelihood of death or serious injury is significantly reduced when vehicles are traveling at lower speeds. In the Napier CBD and other built-up areas where there are high numbers of bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists sharing the public space, speed limits of 30kmh are warranted to improve safety for all users. Recently Wellington and Auckland lowered the speed limits on many of the streets in their CBDs from 50 kmh to 30 kmh. If these large cities with significantly more traffic are able to implement these changes, there is no reason Napier cannot as well.

Active Transport Consideration in Transportation Projects

If Napier is to become an exemplar city for biking, the effects on active transport should be considered for all transportation projects. We propose that this should become an explicit Council policy. We also propose the establishment of quarterly Council facilitated forums with groups representing walking and biking communities to ensure that active transport needs are adequately addressed for future transportation projects.

Summary

Napier has the potential to become one of the best places in New Zealand to ride a bike. Its temperate climate, relatively flat topography, and network of off-street pathways make it naturally suited for bicycling. But deficiencies remain and for biking to be truly safe and enjoyable for everyone, there is still significant work to be done. Developing an active transport strategy, reducing speed limits, and considering bicyclists and pedestrians in all transportation projects will help Napier to become a national leader in active transport, will create a more vibrant and safe city, and will improve the quality of life for everyone who lives here. Why not take the action needed to achieve this vision?

Alan White
Cycle Aware Hawkes Bay