



Cycling Support NZ Inc

**“BUT...
CYCLISTS DON'T PAY
TOWARDS THE ROADS...”**

*“Enhancing the community through
enjoyable safe cycling”*



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Everyone agrees transport funding needs reform...

At present, the money going into transport depends on how much comes in from petrol taxes, and charges based on truck weights. Some say motorists and truckies pay through the nose far more than is spent on roads (which is true), so that we don't get the roads we need.

It's also said that cyclists (and pedestrians) “get off free” by paying nothing at all.

NOT SATISFACTORY, IS IT?

We now live in an age where “transport” is NOT just seen as providing for private motor traffic, so why should motor taxes and transport budget be linked at all?



AND WHAT ABOUT THE “FREE-LOADING CYCLISTS”?

Let's go back to where these taxes came from. The old “Turnpike Trusts” taxed “carriages” to repair the damage they did to road surfaces – which hindered others from using the roads.

Modern road taxes originated in the same way – because the first motor cars required tougher road surfaces than other users (including cyclists).

So how much damage to the road does a cyclist do? Pretty well zero. THAT'S WHY CYCLISTS PAY ZERO ROAD TAXES.



But let's bring the debate up to date. What damage do motor vehicles do now? We're not just talking about churned-up road surfaces. Petrol fumes pollute the air we breathe – some estimates say as many are killed by this as by road crashes.

Which is another thing. Do we stop to think just how many people are killed by cars? If this number of deaths came from any other source, there'd be an outcry.



Tyre residue and spilt nasties (like petrol again) goes into our watercourses with little more than a sump pit to stop it, damaging our ecosystems. Car-dependent lifestyles clog up our hospitals with obesity-related ailments through lack of exercise. People who DO want to cycle feel intimidated from doing so by the traffic. And then what about climate change – perhaps far bigger than the rest when the long-term effects are considered?

Are THESE costs counted by those who say motorists pay through the nose? Well – no. In fact in a lot of cases we haven't even started to count how huge they might be. Some say that motorists are getting off extremely lightly when looked at in this way.

And what about cyclists? Well, most adult cyclists own a car, and pay petrol taxes and local body rates, so they're saving society a packet in various forms of damage by choosing to cycle. They're also saving the health services a packet by getting what a lot of us don't – gentle regular exercise, the best health insurance there is. And they impose next to no costs on others - nor do they put others' lives at risk.

If we REALLY set the transport budget according to REAL costs and benefits – we could well end up paying cyclists as benefactors – and as for taxing motorists, it looks like what motorists pay towards the real costs is only the tip of the iceberg.

Transport spending should be set according to "costs and benefits to the nation" - this is no more than the existing legal mandate given to transport funder Transfund – with the FULL range of cost and benefit factors counted into the equation. Car and truck taxes should in turn be set according to damage caused, and transport funding set according to explicit transport strategy – not on how much happens to come in from petrol taxes and truck charges.



Would THIS then give us "the roads we need"?

No – it would give us the TRANSPORT we need, and if we're honest that's what we REALLY want.

It might also help end this idea that transport spending somehow "belongs" to the motoring and trucking lobbies.

It doesn't – it belongs to all of us.



“Only for Greenies”?

Who ARE the cyclists? Exercise freaks? Lycra-clad posers? Greenies?

The stereotypes abound. Here are a few more: *Children. Those too poor to own a car. “Leisure” users.*

None of these is true. Statistics on cycle usage are very sparse (an issue in itself) but such as there is blows a lot of the above sky-high as myths. For example... Only about half of all cycle trips are made by children and teenagers. High, but not so high considering they don't have the choice of driving – and a lot lower than some would have us think. The rest are adults going about their ordinary business.



The proportion of cycle trips used for “transport” - such as journeys to, from and at work – is higher than that proportion for car trips.

About one third of cycle trips are for leisure. What proportion of car trips are for leisure? About the same – one third – and among car users leisure use is growing by leaps and bounds.

If anything, it's the car which is the leisure mode, more than the bike. Think of that next time you drive to the beach. For years cycling, unlike car use, has been thought of as not important to the economy – after all, saying it's “for leisure” is like calling it an “optional extra” – and that the car is the “real” driver of our prosperity. Balderdash!

In countries with a lot of cycling, like the Netherlands, they don't have this stereotype problem. Cycling is “no big deal”, it's an ordinary part of everyday life, and no one wears special clothes.

(They don't wear helmets either, and guess what? They don't have as many injuries as us. Funny that).

And as for politics, we haven't asked cyclists how they vote, but there are some RIGHT-wingers among them.

It was under a CONSERVATIVE Government that Britain launched its National Cycling Strategy and National Cycle Network. The former Minister who did that, Steven Norris, will be speaking at the National Cycling Conference in North Shore City (Auckland), October 2003.



At the height of 1980s Thatcherism, it was Thatcher's henchman Norman Tebbit who said the unemployed should “get on their bike and look for work” like his Dad had done.

You see, he saw the bike as a passport to self-reliance – individual initiative – the ideals of the Right.

And if you are poor, choosing cycling in preference to a car which you can ill-afford empowers you by putting cash in your pocket – an ideal of the Left.

Of course it's good for the environment, an ideal of the Greens – but it's not only them. Whatever your politics, there are cast-iron reasons to “Vote Bike”.

And don't believe the stereotypes. You don't have to wear lycra. **Most cyclists are “people like you”.**



Safe and Sound: Isn't Cycling Dangerous?

There's a lot of "unsound" talk about what is "safe".



What do YOU mean by "safe"?

You probably think of the ability to walk or bike down the road without being hit by a car. Right?

Right! So if there aren't many bike/ car crashes, then we have a safe situation. Right?

WRONG! If the road is too dangerous, you wouldn't dare cycle, would you? And so the crashes wouldn't happen because there would be precious few cyclists to get hit.

That's not a safe situation. That's a dangerous one. In fact, the more dangerous, the fewer cyclists, the fewer crashes, and the fewer crashes the more "safe" it seems IF WE ONLY MEASURE SAFETY BY CRASH AND INJURY DATA.

Tragically, we often do measure safety this way. Or at least road safety officials do – and they all too often base their strategies on nothing more than what will bring down the crash and injury figures.

If we are serious about creating a world where it's safe to cycle, we must look at other factors other than crashes. Crashes compared to numbers of cyclists may be useful, but traffic volumes and speeds would also be a good place to start. And numbers cycling may in itself be a good indicator of how safe a road is. Research has also shown that the more people there are cycling, the safer it becomes to cycle.

Which bring us onto another question: **ISN'T CYCLING DANGEROUS?** It is certainly perceived as being dangerous. Ask the general public – ask YOURSELF – why you don't cycle, and this may well be the answer.

But have you really been given a chance? We don't mean "do you have a bike" - we mean, if you are new to cycling (or haven't done it for years) – who is there to teach you the skills you need to cope with even average traffic situations?

Well let's have a look.

Cyclist training programmes. There aren't many of these, and those there are are all for children. You're not going to be talked down to as a kid, are you?

And even these only usually teach you the basic preparation – balance, road rules, signals, maintenance, signalling, safety clothing and precautions, and then get you to tootle around cones in playgrounds – hardly what you need to give you confidence to, say, tackle an intersection when there's traffic about.

You wouldn't dream of teaching someone to drive a car this way – after a bit on the basics, you'd get them out of the road and coach them. But how many cyclist training courses do this? Even if they WEREN'T patronising for adults.

Oh well, at least we can read up on it. Where?

Not in the NZ Road Code – the "cyclist" parts are again preparation for going on the road. There's not even something as basic as where to position yourself on the road.

If you're lucky enough, you might have heard of "*The Safe Cycling Book*" (an official publication). If as an adult you don't mind the children's comic style, you can find in here advice to position yourself one metre from the kerb. Great – but will the motorist behind you realise you're "behaving correctly", or think you're just being needlessly obstructive? Because it's not in the Road Code – and anyway, who reads the Road Code once they've got their licence?

WE SAY put A LOT more than at present into REAL teaching of cyclists – including on-road coaching – plus education for motorists on how cyclists should and are likely to behave. **It's all very well saying "Take Care" to a cyclist and "Watch for Bikes" to a motorist – but this doesn't go very far, does it?**



And another thing...

Don't forget how good cycling is for your health. If you CAN get some decent training on the road (which, as we've said, is as scarce as hens' teeth in New Zealand) cycling has been shown to be one of the best forms of health protection out – **the best combination of the three S's, strength, stamina and suppleness**. One expert has worked out you add 20 times as many years to your life by cycling as you lose, statistically, by the road safety risk. So it's a lot safer to cycle – seen this way – than NOT to cycle.



With today's welcome focus on "little and often exercise", health promotion publicity does include cycling, but isn't it a pity that it seems to see cycling as something "extra" you do, i.e. for leisure - "ride in the park with the kids" sort of thing. We can in fact work cycling into everyday life, like some other countries do. If you cycle to work, for instance, it may not take you much longer (depending where you live). You save travel costs, you may save time and money you'd have spent going to a gym to sit on a bike, AND you get "free health insurance".

"Cycling isn't Practical"

It has been said that cycling isn't practical like the car is. For example, it rains, there are hills, you get sweaty, you can't carry luggage on a bike, or passengers.

Are these REALLY obstacles to cycling, or are they excuses thought up by someone who doesn't ride?

RAIN: How often does it NOT rain? About 98% of trips. And if it does there is such a thing as waterproof clothing.

HILLS: Yes hills are a bit of an obstacle, but not THAT big a one. Ever heard of gears? And I wonder why Switzerland and Scandinavia have such high cycling levels? It sure ain't to do with flatness.

SWEATY: True, few workplaces have showers, but do you really need them? The average work commute isn't THAT long, and if you've showered before you set off, you're unlikely to be "not nice to know" during the day. And at a pinch you can wash in the bathrooms.

LUGGAGE: Funny how no one says you can't carry luggage on public transport. Ever tried carrying luggage on a bus? Not a lot of space, but then be honest – we DON'T hump round loads of luggage on most of our trips. A bag on your back is usually all it takes. And if you need to carry more, you can fit a luggage rack and panniers. Ever wondered how cycle tourists manage?

PASSENGERS: Next time you're waiting in traffic, try playing "spot the passenger" – most cars only have the driver. This objection really is rubbish. If whoever wrote it was thinking of dropping the kids off to school or sport – doesn't it occur that the kids could be pedalling their own bikes? Trailer-bikes, kiddie-seats and kiddie trailers are also options.

In fact, cycling is much, much more practical than many give it credit for. It's not only ordinary people from whom this is a well-kept secret – transport planners also fall into a tired routine of seeing transport choice as a two-horse race between the car and public transport. Nationally, how many people bike to work compared to using public transport? About the same. Even in traffic clogged, bus-and-train-served Auckland, as many bike or walk to work as use public transport. In many cities, like Christchurch, Hamilton, and Palmerston North, there's considerably more cycling than public transport use. **Cycling is a major player in the urban transport mix – and policies should support it as such.**



“More Cycle Lanes!” – Oh Really?

It all seems so easy.

We need more cycle lanes. Let’s put them in.

But where? Between intersections isn’t where the main need is. Also, the existing road may not be wide enough, and if it isn’t, narrow cycle lanes could be worse than none at all.



Especially if there are parked cars. It’s easy to get swiped by someone opening a car door in your face if a narrow cycle lane forces the cyclist too close.

And intersections? Well there are techniques for traffic-light junctions, like advanced stop boxes, but it isn’t always easy to fit these in either, because the numbers of possible movements are so complex.

And roundabouts – often best for smooth traffic flow and a lowered general crash rate – are a real headache for cycle engineering. They are perhaps the toughest nut of all to crack, and show how important traffic volumes and speeds are for cyclist safety.

But, if bikes and other traffic were travelling at the same speeds – there wouldn’t be a need for cycling facilities, would there? And some people, even some cyclists, think this is a better approach.

One way to achieve it is “traffic calming” — slowing the traffic so bikes can share the space safely. On local residential streets this may be the way to go, and pedestrians are big winners too.

Or there is “vehicular cycling” - behaving just like a car, same speed, same positioning, which may be safer than it seems because you are clearly visible and so your presence is respected. But it needs a lot of “learning by experience” - which as we’ve said elsewhere in this brochure isn’t available – and a lot of people (like young children) can’t be expected to acquire the skills needed. In some situations, like busy roundabouts, even experienced cyclists aren’t able to behave like a car. Imagine trying to “merge like a zip” in a 100kph situation



But we hope we’ve made our point that it’s no good just calling for “more cycle lanes” as an easy solution. Traffic needs to be calmed, and cyclists need a massive increase in available on-road coaching (as we’ve said elsewhere in this brochure) AND we need a lot more cycle engineering – not just cycle lanes but the right choice from the wide range of technical solutions, for the different specific situations.

No single one of these is “the” answer, but by combining them in the right way we might just be able to make the roads safe for cycling.



Cycle Touring – Why Not Give it A Go?

How can you have a summer holiday, travelling for miles on NZ's wonderful back-country roads knowing that you will never get caught in traffic and that you won't spend a bean on petrol? **Go cycle touring!**

Almost anyone can do it. A standard mountain bike is fine, perhaps changing to less knobby tyres if most of the route will be on the road, full mud-guards are a plus, a rear luggage rack, pannier bags and possibly a handle-bar bag.

Cycling Support New Zealand's Executive Director, Paul Doherty, escaped this summer for a 7 day trip from Whangarei to Cape Reinga – let's see how he got on!

Why Cape Reinga? *"Last February I cycled from Whangarei to Wellington (I was delivering a letter to the Prime Minister about a Cycle-Walkway Network project in Northland!) – so now I can say I have cycled the length of the North Island!"*



Was it enjoyable? *"It was GREAT! I deliberately headed for the back roads, some old coach roads and I cycled along 90 Mile Beach for part of the way! It's just such a wonderful way to get away, to really see the countryside. I met so many interesting people, stopped often and took heaps of photos! One of the greatest things about travelling by bike is that it's so easy to engage in conversation with people – and that's one of the beauties of travelling, meeting people."*

Where did you stay? *"On this trip I took a tent, a small cooker, food and camped each night. On the Wellington trip I travelled much lighter and stayed in Bed And Breakfast accommodation or Backpacker lodges. New Zealand is great for cycle touring because there are so many accommodation options available."*

Any advice for someone wanting to try it for the first time? *"Travel light – don't be too ambitious distance-wise, especially if you are travelling with kids. Perhaps a weekend trip for a start? Make sure your bike is in good condition and that you are able to do minor repairs if necessary. But the most important thing – give it a go, it's great!"*

New Zealand Cycling Strategy Foundation Project

This brochure marks the end of the work of the **"New Zealand Cycling Strategy Foundation Project"**.

Transport planner *Roger Boulter* from Hamilton has been undertaking the bulk of the work, with help from *IPENZ Transportation Group*, in 1999–2000. The *Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority* supported the project by organising New Zealand's second cycling conference *"Making Cycling Viable"*, held in Palmerston North in July 2000. Boulter's employers, *Hamilton City Council*, also helped.

In October 2000, the final report *"Into The Mainstream"* was issued in provisional form. This raised many of the issues outlined in this brochure, which are drawn largely from it. The Ministry of Transport welcomed the work, and it can be seen to have had an influence on the work of a number of government agencies.

The Final Edition of *"Into The Mainstream"* is now available on our website, www.cycling-support.org.nz, along with Supplementary Reports on Process, Consultation and an "Interim Position Statement".

New Zealand Walking and Cycling Strategy

Cycling Support NZ wish to congratulate the New Zealand Government for its commitment to developing New Zealand's first "Walking and Cycling Strategy".

"We are delighted this major breakthrough has been achieved", said CSNZ Chairman John Struthers. "New Zealand has never had a strategy like this before, and we very much hope it will set the scene for continued Government commitment to giving cycling the place it deserves in all transport policy decisions.

"We in the cycling sector look forward to cycling becoming more popular and safer in the years ahead. **All of us will gain – through a cleaner, healthier country, more prosperous in the fullest sense**" said Struthers.

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