



Monday, 17 December 2007

Kirsten Ferguson
Christchurch City Council
PO Box 237
Christchurch 8011

Re: Christchurch Bus Priority routes - SUBMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. Spokes strongly supports the establishment of these three bus priority routes and endorses the principles behind them, namely:

- Making travel by bus more attractive, efficient and more reliable.
- Encouraging people to leave their cars at home.
- Protecting buses from the effects of growing traffic congestion.
- Improving the environment, health and social welfare.
- Working towards an accessible and sustainable transport system.

We see the concept of bus priority routes as an important step towards integrating transport options in Christchurch. In this light, the bus lane sends an important message to road users that the prime purpose of arterial roads is for transporting people and any resulting parking space is a luxury. We believe that the bus lanes should be permanent as far as this is possible.

We are particularly pleased that cycle lanes and provisions for cycling generally have been incorporated into the bus priority project. We consider that this will aid integration between cycling and public transport and significantly improve cycle access and safety on the more congested parts of these routes as well as encouraging more people to use cycles for trips within Christchurch. There is also potential for the proposed bus and cycle lanes to provide a buffer for pedestrians and to improve pedestrian safety generally. Published research shows that the safety gains for pedestrians from installing cycle lanes on arterial roads is even greater than the safety gains for cyclists.

General submissions

Parking on arterial routes

Car parking contributes to congestion on arterial routes both by taking up road space and slowing traffic during parking manoeuvres. Use of road space for parking can impede traffic segregation by preventing or reducing opportunities for bus priority and cycle lanes, and can increase the risk (or perceptions of risk) for cycling by forcing cyclists to travel between parked cars and moving traffic. As a general principle, we consider that arterial routes should primarily reserved for transportation and that

parking on these routes should only be permitted where this allows for the safe and efficient movement of people and vehicles. This is consistent with Policy 5A of the Councils Parking Strategy, which states:

Policy 5A: Protection of the Arterial Network Function

To give priority to the safe, efficient and sustainable movement of people and goods over the provision of parking.

We note that car parking (including parking for commuters which has the lowest priority for car parking under Policy 5A) has been retained along most of the proposed bus priority routes. This includes sections that are experiencing significant congestion. We also note that when lanes are not in use by buses during the day they will, with some exceptions, be able to be used for car parking.

We question whether allowing continued car parking in congested areas on these routes is consistent with the Parking Strategy, the safety of cyclists, and the goals of the bus priority project. In areas where retail activities predominate, and there is a need for customer parking, we encourage the council to facilitate convenient parking off the main carriageway. This may involve improving signage, creating time-restricted parking on side streets (thus reserving space for shoppers rather than all-day use), and working with private car-park owners to maximise use of their car-parks.

Hours when bus priority lanes apply

If bus priority lanes are introduced on a part time basis, we consider there should be no further reduction in the hours that have been proposed (i.e. 7-9 am, 2- 6pm). On the Papanui-Main North Road route in particular, congestion is apparent from around 2pm and it would be appropriate for bus priority lanes to have effect from this time.

Width of combined bus priority/ cycle lanes

We consider that the proposed combined 4.2 metre bus/ cycle lanes are the very minimum width necessary to allow for safe separation between cyclists and buses, and between cyclists and parked cars and moving traffic when not in use by buses. This is on the basis that the channel is flat, and that there is no lip between the channel and the carriageway, otherwise the width of the channel would need to be added to this dimension. Where space permits, 4.5m wide lanes would be preferable. In areas where speeds above 50km/ hour prevail, lane width should be increased accordingly.

We do not consider that the 3m wide bus priority lanes proposed for some sections are suitable for combined bus/ cycle lanes, and these should be avoided as far as possible. We are absolutely opposed to the use of 3m lanes for parking when not in use by buses as this width does not provide for a sufficient level of separation for cyclists between parked and moving vehicles.

Marking of lanes

We consider that cycle lanes should be clearly marked within bus priority lanes as this would provide guidance to both cyclists and bus drivers. The road surface of both combined lanes, and cycle only lanes should also be permanently marked in appropriate colours. This would enable drivers to identify where these lanes exist, dissuade illegal parking, and give cyclists greater confidence.

Provision of cycle facilities

Adequate provision should be made for cycle facilities along the proposed routes. This includes bike racks and standing/ manoeuvring areas and access across curbing in shopping and other high use areas. Cycle-and-ride bus stops with appropriate facilities should also be considered, along with the provision of directional signage and map boards identifying links to adjoining cycle paths and other routes.

Submissions on Papanui Road - Main North Road bus priority route

Section 2

This part of Papanui Road through Merivale gets very congested and our general preference would be for the removal of all car parking and the provision of full bus/ cycle lanes through this area. We are concerned that retention of road side parking through this section will compromise bus priority and result in risks to cyclists through people parking on the proposed cycle lanes and/ or exiting cars into the lane. Short term parking is likely to exacerbate congestion particularly when traffic is stopped by drivers manoeuvring into parking areas.

We appreciate that a compromise has potentially been reached with local business people that provides for the retention of cycle lanes through the area. It is important to ensure that the proposed cycle lanes in this section are of a width that provides for a safe separation between parked and moving vehicles. We consider that, if implemented, the revised plan for this section should be monitored to ensure that that it does not create a bottleneck or pose a risk for cyclists.

Section 5 & 6

Our comments in respect of this section and the need for monitoring are similar to those for section 2. Our preference in terms of cycle safety and improved bus transit times would be for a full bus/ cycle lane on the eastern side of Papanui Road from the Harewood Road intersection to Bligh's Road. However, we acknowledge the compromise that has been reached with local business people, and would generally accept the layout in the revised plan for this area along the lines of that considered at the meeting in Papanui on Thurs 6 December.

Section 8

While we support the provision of a cycle lane on the south side of Main North Road from the Cranford St intersection to opposite the Northlands car park entrance, and the removal of parking from this area, we consider that bus priority measures also need to be provided along this section. Buses experience delays along this part of Main North Road from congestion due in part to the reduction from two traffic lanes on the north side of the Cranford St intersection to one on the south.

We are concerned that traffic (including buses) merging south of the Cranford Street intersection would occupy the cycle lane, potentially creating a risk for cyclists. The creation of a priority lane would overcome delays for buses in this area and provide increased segregation for cyclists from other traffic. We consider that sufficient space for such a lane may be to be achieved through the elimination of the flush median, and a slight reduction in the footpath width at this point. Alternatively, a combination of bus priority lanes and bus boarders may be suitable for this section.

Submission on Queenspark bus priority route

Section 2

Two options are provided for the section between Whitmore Street and Hills Road utilising either bus boarders or bus priority lanes. Our preference is for Option B: bus priority lanes as this would provide a better environment for cyclists by avoiding the need to cycle between parked cars and moving traffic during busy periods over affected parts of the route. We also consider that bus priority lanes may deliver superior bus travel times over this particular section of the Queenspark route, without the perceived delays to other traffic associated with bus boarders. However, bus boarders may be more suitable in other locations where space does not allow for full width bus and cycle lanes.

Submission on Colombo Street / City South bus priority route

General

Colombo Street South is, for cyclists and bus users, almost the only viable direct route between the south Christchurch suburbs and the central city. The four parallel routes through Sydenham and the city centre: Montreal, Durham, Gasson/ Madras and Barbadoes/ Waltham, are primarily one-way streets, designed to facilitate cars travelling at speed. These other streets are far less pleasant and less safe (in perception, probably also in reality) for cyclists and bus passengers, than is Colombo Street.

Therefore, in redesigning Colombo Street South it is essential that the road space fully meets the safety and convenience needs of bus passengers, cyclists, and pedestrians. While cars may still use Colombo Street (especially if that is their destination), there are many other options for driving to or from town.

It is important for retailers and their customers and suppliers to have ready access to the shops along Colombo Street. However, we also look forward to the goal of the Bus Priority project – an anticipated “mode shift” which will see many of Christchurch’s current car commuters and shoppers choosing instead to travel by bus and cycle.

Section 1 – Bus Exchange to Moorhouse Ave

Although nothing is proposed for this section until the new Bus Exchange is built, we draw attention to the present inadequacies of this stretch of road, for all modes of transport. It is frequently congested for both cars and buses, and presents an intimidating, smelly and noisy environment for cyclists and pedestrians. We look forward to the completion of the Bus Exchange, and further work on the Inner City Revitalisation Plan, and trust that this part of Colombo Street will soon become a main street that a sustainable garden city can be proud of.

We hope that, rather than simply segregating traffic on this part of Colombo St (using bus or bike lanes), a mixed-use, slow-speed environment might be created. A narrowed slow road (with a limit of 30 or better still, 20 km/h), will naturally give priority back to pedestrians, cyclists and buses. Car drivers will use other routes if they are passing through, and behave as “guests” in a slow-speed environment if they are visiting the street. On-street parking could be retained in suitable locations

(once ample bus shelters and cycle parking had been provided), and Colombo Street central would become an attractive destination rather than just a corridor.

Section 2 – Moorhouse Ave to Milton St

Of the two options presented, we support Option B (4.2m wide, part-time bus/bike lanes, north- and south-bound) over Option A (3m wide, permanent bus/bike lanes, south-bound only).

Of particular concern in Option A is that a 3 metre bus/bike lane would only provides limited space for cyclists between parked cars and traffic. Given that a 3m lane is also too narrow for bikes and buses to pass one another, it would be perceived as unsafe and unpleasant by a large proportion of cyclists. The part-time lanes in Option B have the following advantages:

- They are wider and therefore will feel safer for bikes and buses to share.
- When buses are using the lanes, there will be no parked vehicles on the inside of the lane.
- When cars are parked in the lane (off-peak), there will be sufficient width for cyclists to ride outside them: the inclusion of parking “tick” markings to keep vehicles close to the kerb is welcome.
- Providing bus lanes both north- and south-bound is prudent: although the morning peak (north-bound) is at present less congested than the evening (south-bound), it is best to anticipate possible future congestion and provide for bus priority in both directions.
- Part-time lanes require no permanent loss of parking

We have concerns about the merging of car/bus/cycle traffic at some of the intersections in the section (Sandyford, Wordsworth and Brougham Streets), and we thank council staff for extending an invitation to Spokes and to local business owners to further discuss details of the plans in late January.

Section 3 – Milton St to Cashmere Rd

Apart from the Beckenham shops area (discussed below), we generally support proposals for this section. Although there are currently far fewer bus movements here than in Section 1 and 2, future years may see an increase and it is good to see this being planned for.

We have concerns about the merging of car/bus/cycle traffic at some of the intersections in the section, and over the Heathcote River bridge. There also appears to be the loss of an existing bike lane (south-bound, outside No. 234) – this may just be due to the scale of the map. We thank council staff for extending an invitation to Spokes and to local business owners to further discuss details in late January.

The **Beckenham shops area** (between and either side of Strickland and Tennyson Streets) is not currently addressed by the project, but requires special attention. There is severe competition for road space in this area, with a double set of lights, a considerable number of traffic movements along, onto and off the main road, and a local shopping area. Even if no bus priority measures are installed the effects of congestion and the safety compromises that have been made (principally to maximise on-street parking) are unacceptable. The area is dangerous and unpleasant for active transport users such as cyclists and pedestrians, particularly during heavy traffic flows.

There is a particular problem with drivers turning left onto Strickland and Tennyson Streets (particularly the latter) having inadequate space to enter the left-turn lanes, and waiting with their cars stopped across the (red-painted) cycle lanes. A visit to the area at 8.45am or 3.15pm will demonstrate how many of these vehicles are being used to drive children to school. Black spots like this are a major deterrent to attracting new cyclists and bus passengers (pedestrians) onto Christchurch streets, and to parents allowing children (even high school age) to walk or cycle to school unaccompanied. In effect, what should be the community's heart is instead the least safe, least pleasant part of Beckenham.

Below we consider four possible approaches to this problem:

1. Remove all parking and extend bus/bike lanes through the area, either part-time or permanently (part-time wouldn't really work, because heavy traffic runs in both directions both morning and evening on this stretch). Bus/bike lanes would make cyclists safer than at present, and would improve overall traffic flow. However, with two lanes and no parking in this area, traffic speeds could increase. In addition, business owners would be faced with the removal of all parking from the main street.

2. Extend parking right up to the corners and eliminate the left-turn lanes altogether, adding an advance stop-box for cyclists to avoid conflict with left-turners. This would make the cycle lane safer, add to parking, but decrease the level of service for car traffic. This option contradicts the priorities of the Citywide Parking Strategy, but we raise it to illustrate the competition between stationary and moving vehicles, and the need to ensure that cyclists are not caught in the middle of this conflict.

3. Provide an adequate left turning lane into Tennyson Street to get cars off the cycle lane by removing the 3 or 4 car parks nearest the intersection. Some may also need to be removed on the west side of Colombo, at the Strickland Street corner. In addition, signage could remind drivers only to enter the left lane when there is space to do so (i.e. not to stop across the bike lane, as many currently do because there is so little road space). However, this would only partly address safety and congestion problems in the area.

4. Finally, a community-focussed, holistic approach: create a mixed-use, slow-speed environment for this neighbourhood-focussed 100-metre stretch of Colombo Street. A slow-road (30 km/h speed limit), with "Living Street"-style thresholds and paving, would give priority back to pedestrians, cyclists and buses. Car drivers would be "guests" through this part of Colombo Street, giving way to these other road users. If such an environment were successfully created, cycle lanes may not even be necessary, and on-street parking could be fully retained.

The last option may be outside the scope of the current project, but is potentially the solution that would best take into account the needs of all users of the area. What isn't an option in the Beckenham shops area is to do nothing – this is a dangerous piece of road.

Section 4 – Cashmere Rd – Colombo to PMH

We support the proposed layout, assuming the part-time lane is 4.2 metres. This would allow for safe cycling during off-peak hours, when cars are able to park there. If space permits, we would support the installation of a cycle lane on the south side of Cashmere Rd along this section.

Thanks again for the opportunity to make this submission. If there are matters requiring clarification, please contact our submissions co-ordinator Robin Delamore in the first instance. His contact details are: Phone 3599746, Email: robind@actrix.co.nz

Matthew Cutler-Welsh

Chairperson
SPOKES Canterbury