

NORTHERN ROADING OPTIONS STUDY - SUBMISSION ON DRAFT DOCUMENTS

Feb 2002

INTRODUCTION

Spokes Christchurch is a local cycling advocacy group dedicated to including cycling as an everyday form of transport within local regional planning. The group is affiliated with the national Cycling Advocates Network (CAN) and includes a number of national executive members. Spokes provides significant cycling expertise through the membership of many longstanding advocates, transportation professionals and (most importantly) regular cyclists. The group is represented on Christchurch City Council's cycling working group and provides regular feedback on various council transport/planning proposals.

We are pleased to offer this submission to you regarding the proposed Christchurch Northern Arterial and would be happy to provide any further information or clarification if required. In making this submission, Spokes has reviewed both the Draft Options Summary booklet (Oct 2001) and the Interim Assessment Report (Nov 2001).

GENERAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Spokes is concerned at the total lack of mention of cyclists and pedestrians when discussing options, particularly in the summary options booklet. Irrespective of subsequent community consultation, the impacts on these users should have been explicitly identified at this stage.

Some discussion in the Interim Assessment Report considers social effects, but appears to only consider cycling under "roadside recreation". It is not at all clear how this assessment is meant to cover cycle trips to work, schools, varsity, etc.

Spokes is also concerned about the general philosophy of the work to provide additional capacity for peak roading demand. Experience both here and overseas has shown this to be an insatiable problem. Putting further resources into providing for and promoting cycling, public transport, car-pooling and other trip reduction measures would help to stem the growth of traffic in a far more cost-effective manner. This would not necessarily have to entail expensive infrastructure, as the "Travel-Smart" programmes from Australia have shown. The minimal benefits of the proposed roading strategy appear to be reflected in the low B/C ratios reported when staging the work (<3.0).

The long-term strategy to provide bypasses to the existing northern highway is a welcome move for pedestrians and cyclists in Belfast, Redwood and Northcote. We are concerned however that, in the short-term, upgrading of Main North Rd and Cranford St will increase the severance to these communities. Provision for adequate crossing facilities (including grade separation if necessary) should be considered, as well as measures to limit traffic growth.

CYCLING FACILITIES

The study area is a part of Christchurch that is currently remarkably bereft of cycling facilities and routes. The chosen northern roading strategy will therefore have a major impact on the ability to provide and link to such cycling facilities in the future. We suggest that liaison with the CCC cycling team be undertaken to identify desired routes and how these can be incorporated into the future. For example, northern linkages to the Railway and QEII Drive cycleways should be allowed for.

Given that the old Main North Rd bridge provides the only link to Christchurch for cyclists from Waimakariri District and tourists further north, options for linking to this route should have been considered. As it is, the preferred strategy introduces two very busy roundabouts to the path of these cyclists to north & west Christchurch. The need to widen the old Main North Rd bridge to provide safer passage for cyclists and motorists alike should have been considered under the study options, as raised by the Waimakariri District Transportation Study. The current significance of Marshland Rd as a cycling route also needs to be allowed for.

The northern arterial corridor presents an opportunity to build at the same time a high standard off-road cycle route between Kaiapoi and Papanui/St Albans, with good linkages to adjacent roads and developments. We would expect that a suitable option is incorporated into the final northern arterial plans, given the relatively negligible additional costs required. We are aware of work underway to address current anomalies in Transfund funding guidelines, so that off-road cycleways can be funded via Transit NZ. We

would expect that this procedural improvement will greatly assist provision for cyclists in a project of this nature.

PROJECT COSTS AND BENEFITS

From the do-minimum analysis presented in the Interim Assessment Report, few links appear to be at a very high level of congestion ($v/c > 0.9$) in 2021, particularly away from Marshland Rd, which calls into question the need for an extensive roading development programme to cater for it. While accepting that trips are predicted to be suppressed because of this congestion, this in itself is not necessarily a bad situation, particularly if those trips can be adequately catered for by other modes instead or alternative trip reduction tactics are adopted (e.g. telecommuting, car-pooling, multi-purpose trips).

Although the Interim Assessment Report contained more details, it was surprising that the more widely distributed Draft Options Summary did not indicate what was considered the "do minimum" option for this network i.e. minor treatments planned anyway. To assess the relative merits of the options presented, it is important to know what they are being compared with. Similarly there was no indication in the summary document of the expected costs for any of the presented options (\$30-48m from the other report). Given that public money will be used to fund them, it is important for the public to assess their perceived value for money.

DESIGN OPTIONS

The preferred strategy proposes 12 new roundabouts. Given the known concerns by cyclists, particularly on multi-lane roundabouts, we expect that the designs will fully consider safe cycling provision, and if necessary introduce reasonable alternative cycle facilities or a change in intersection control.

We concur that the proposed four-laning cross-section for Cranford St / Hills Rd (in the Interim Assessment Report) is a minimum standard for providing for cyclists and motorists. It is difficult to see how it would work practically as a clearway option however. Meanwhile, it is not evident from the documents that similar cycle facilities will be provided on the other upgraded routes.

We are concerned at the proposal to extend Rutland St to Grassmere St and sever a cycle route linking a school, a park, and local streets. In the interim at least we suggest providing a cycle route only through to Grassmere St. Such short-cuts help to promote the advantages of cycling for transport.

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