



Friday, 17 December 2010

Submission from Spokes Canterbury on the Three Laning of Main Road

Introduction

Thanks for the opportunity to provide feedback about this project. Spokes Canterbury is a cycling advocacy group with approximately 1200 members that is affiliated with the national Cycling Advocates Network (CAN). Spokes is dedicated to including cycling as an everyday form of transport in the greater Christchurch area.

Our submission relates to the following matters:

- General issues around three laning: traffic generation vs. bus priority.
- The need to protect future cycling and walking options within the corridor.
- Provision of separated cycle lanes.
- Safety and intersection design issues
- Other issues

If you require further information or there are matters requiring clarification, please contact the writer.

Submission

Issues arising from three laning

Spokes is concerned that the proposed three laning may increase traffic speeds and volumes, and add to congestion on other parts of Main Road, and the roading network in this part of Christchurch generally. This is because more drivers of single occupancy vehicles may choose to travel during peak periods if the project provides additional space on Main Road.

We consider that investment in three laning would make much more sense if its main purpose was to provide an additional lane for multiple occupancy vehicles. This would provide a real advantage for public transport over private cars. It will be much harder to make this type of provision in the future as private vehicle use will have become established over the additional lane. There is likely to be strong opposition from motorists to the lane then being designated for bus priority.

Spokes opposes the three laning project as it stands, and considers that it is not consistent with Council's goals for a more sustainable city, or the goals and objectives of the Climate Smart Strategy, Canterbury Regional Land Transport Strategy, or the Greater Christchurch Travel Demand Management Strategy. We request that the need for, and purpose of, the three-laning project be re-assessed against these strategies.

Protection of future cycling and walking options

Spokes is concerned that carriageway width requirements for three laning will compromise any future off road walking and cycling facility along this part of the estuary edge. There is strong community support for walking facilities around the estuary edge and for a Sumner to City cycling route utilising off road paths and quiet roads. If this goal is to be achieved, space limitations mean that a shared facility catering for both active transport modes is likely to be required along this part of Main Road. The three-laning project would inevitably further squeeze the space that is available on the northern side of Main Road, and potentially compromise the design and effectiveness of any future walking and cycling facility. If the three laning project does proceed, the final design must include adequate current or future provision for an estuary edge cycling and walking path of a suitable width.

Provision of separated cycle facilities

Spokes supports separated cycle facilities where practical, as these cater for a much wider range of cyclists (including less experienced and potential cyclists) than on road cycle lanes. However, we recognise that some cyclists (and road cyclists in particular) may prefer to travel in vehicle lanes.

Main Road is the only practical cycling route for most people between Sumner, Redcliffs, Mt Pleasant and other parts of the city, and carries considerable cycling traffic. However, the lack of separation between cars and cyclists means that it is intimidating and potentially dangerous in the eyes of less experienced or potential cyclists, and for children. Three laning is likely to increase both traffic volumes and speeds along Main Road, which could provide a further disincentive to cycling.

If three laning proceeds, the opportunity should be taken to trial cycle lanes that are separated by a median from vehicle lanes along this part of Main Road. These types of cycle lanes are used widely in overseas cities that are encouraging cycling. The median (which is both painted and textured) discourages cars from venturing into the cycle lane, and the extra separation engenders a greater sense of safety and security and encourages less experienced cyclists to use the roads. An example of a separated curb side lane is illustrated in Figure 1. We understand that Viastrada Ltd. have also developed design standards for separated cycle ways.



Figure 1: Median separated cycle lane, Albert Street, Melbourne

We consider that, with a slight reduction in the width of each carriageway, the three laning project would be able to accommodate separated cycle lanes of this type. However, if carriageway space is a limiting factor, the width of the curb side cycle lanes could potentially also be narrowed slightly to accommodate separation medians. In terms of rider experience and safety the loss of width is likely to be more than compensated for by the improved separation (both physical and perceived).

Safety and intersection design issues

Spokes considers there may be safety issues for cyclists travelling along Main Road and using the turning lanes to turn right into Mount Pleasant and McCormack's Bay roads. This is due to the likelihood that cyclists will be crowded and/ or squeezed by other right turning traffic. A possible solution to this would be to provide coloured advance stop boxes at the end of each right turn lane.

The proposed design of both the Mount Pleasant and McCormack's Bay Road intersections will almost certainly result in cyclists being squeezed by queued left turning cars.

No cycle lane has been provided on McCormack's Bay Road before the intersection, and cyclists are likely to be squeezed before being able to access the proposed shared path that would allow them to directly access the cycle lane on Main Road. There is also likely to be conflicts between cyclists and other traffic entering or exiting the proposed car park.

These issues could be addressed by shifting the shared path behind the proposed car park, with cyclists joining Main Road just past the end of the car park. An outline of this concept is shown on the plan at Attachment One. Alternatively an off road path or cycle lane on McCormack's Road could be provided, starting from about the boundary of number 6, and connecting with the shared path shown on the consultative plan. However, with this approach re-design of the car park entrance may also be required.

At the Mount Pleasant Road intersection a cycle lane is proposed, but from our experience of similar lanes in other parts of the city this will inevitably be occupied by left turning motorised vehicles that would block cycle access. We consider that a better solution would be to provide a shared path behind the Norfolk pines so that cyclists can directly access the Main Road cycle lane from Mount Pleasant Road. An outline of this concept is shown on the plan at Attachment One.

Other issues

Spokes supports the removal of car parking along the west bound lane between Mt Pleasant Road and the Ferrymead Bridge, as this currently constitutes a hazard for cyclists.

The proposed design has a number of bus stops on the west bound lane in locations where stopping buses will block the cycle lanes. This would either force cyclists to stop repeatedly, or move out into the traffic lanes. We consider that this issue could be addressed in some situations by "indenting" the stop into the side of the road to avoid cycle lanes. However, a better option would be to provide "bus boarders" with cycling bypasses on the inside, as previously trialled on Hills Road.

Note that the Typical Cross Section indicates a "Metal Shoulder" on the northern side of Main Road. Please ensure that that the full width of the cycle lane is sealed, that a sealed strip is provided between the outside edge of the cycle lane and the metal shoulder, and that the shoulder is finished so that it is flush with the seal. This will provide separation between the cycle lane and the unsealed shoulder, and ensure that a dangerous edge does not form and create a hazard for cyclists moving on and off the shoulder.

Conclusions

Spokes considers that investment in cycling facilities should be given priority over projects such as the proposed three laning project, in terms of the Christchurch City Council's overall transport planning and expenditure. We do not support the three laning of Main Road unless the additional lane is limited to high occupancy vehicles from the outset, and adequate provision is made for cycling. Any three laning proposal must ensure that options for an off road cycling and walking path along this part of the estuary edge are preserved.

Main Road is the only practical cycling route between SE Christchurch and the rest of the city, but carries significant traffic volumes. If three laning proceeds, the lack of alternative routes and volume of cycling traffic should be recognised through the

provision of separated cycle lanes. Potential safety issues for right turning cyclists need to be addressed at the major intersections, and intersection design changes are need to ensure that cyclists joining Main Road from Mount Pleasant and McCormacks Roads are not squeezed by queued traffic.

Removal of car parking on this section of Main Road is supported. Attention needs to be given to alternatives to the proposed bus stop designs to avoid blocking cycle lanes.

We would like the opportunity to attend any further consultative meetings held to consider this project, and to be consulted over changes to the design that could affect cycling access to and along Main Road.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries or require further information.

Yours sincerely

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