

Bicycle transport – a lifestyle choice: Four immediate state-wide bicycle programs

Let's make bicycling part of everyday life again!

Australia's premier state is lagging far behind other states when it comes to investing in cycling infrastructure and getting people back on bikes. Cycling is a community based, low cost, environmentally friendly form of active transport and for recreation. It can provide many benefits to people of all ages, potentially everyday for many persons.

Cycling is about:

Active healthy living – addressing obesity and people's well-being;

Improving transport utilisation – connecting up with public transport;

Dealing with traffic congestion and road safety;

Social inclusion – by providing affordable travel choices as an alternative to the car, thus improving access to work, schools, shops and for recreation for all;

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions – addressing climate change.

Cycling is the cheapest way to increase transportation capacity and public transport use while also diversifying individuals' travel choices. It is the best way to contain road traffic congestion - now a real problem in our cities – and improve road safety generally.

The public is eagerly taking up bicycling – more bikes are now sold than cars. It is an alternative to using cars, particularly for around 1 - 5 km trips. But most people are deterred due to their perceptions and the reality of risks on roads both in towns and country.

Lack of safe interconnected bicycle facilities and services is the main deterrent to people taking up bike riding for their daily trips.

The solution is an integrated transport policy and cycling infrastructure that satisfy bicyclist's needs and raises public awareness and promotes safety. This will make it attractive and possible for bicycling to become part of everyday life again.

Did you know that the RTA currently spends only about \$1.29 per person on bicycling out of over \$400 per person spent on roads every year? This is the

All we ask is that this be raised to at least \$4.00, approximately 1% the current +\$4 billion roads budget.

Please refer Bicycle NSW Policy Recommendations in lead up to the 2007 State Elections: <http://www.bicyclensw.org.au/PolicyRecommendations.asp> and the Cycling Promotion Fund's web site for all the reasons why more could and should be done: <http://www.vote4cycling.com.au> - see their comprehensive survey.

Four key State bicycle programs

There are four broad programs for which seeks your support and commitment to enable local projects, identified in our paper *Cycling Infrastructure Program for Sydney's East*, to proceed. These may be funded by reallocating capital and recurrent funding from within the existing State budget, including by earmarking a min., of 1% of the RTA's roads budget – now. These programs are:

1. **Whole-of-government active transportation policy** – develop this approach for bicycling through more effective administration and by planning and undertaking land use, public transport, roads, public safety, health, education and sport and tourism initiatives.

Presently, the planning, promotion and satisfaction of cycling (and pedestrian) needs is not consistently addressed or adequately funded by this State. All State agencies should have a bicycle related program, cooperate and promote and undertake relevant service-delivery programs (in planning, policing, health, education, sport and recreation and the like).

Cost: Nil - to be subsumed within normal administrative and program running costs

2. **RTA bicycle infrastructure program:** – that fully funds the \$ for \$ local government grants scheme and updates and implements a State-wide regional bicycle network bike plan.

Funds need to allow the building/marking of between 200 - 400 kilometres of cyclelanes/paths – State wide – annually. This is in addition to bike facilities being provided as standard for all new and upgraded road projects. Councils want to proceed with more local routes, but are not getting wanted matching grants: this demand must be fully met each year. The RTA must also re-start building regional bike facilities as promised under *Action for Bike 2010* to complete the network – it is known to BIKEast that the RTA has projects ready to proceed, subject to funding.

Cost: \$30M - up to \$40 M per/annum by 2010

3. **Safe main roads & intersections scheme for cycling:** Develop a State-wide RTA traffic light controlled crossing scheme for main/arterial roads ensuring bicycle network continuity and safety of cyclists/pedestrians in cities and towns along key bike routes.

Many cycleways already built do not have safe and convenient crossing of main roads. Such discontinuities make it relatively riskier and unattractive for riding. Local bike routes usually follow low traffic streets that meet major roads that must be crossed. Traffic light controls are essential to cater safely for cyclists at such crossings. This needs doing in advance of demand to convince people that riding is safe and eventually attract ordinary people out of cars to bikes. Between 40 – 75 intersection treatments annually should be undertaken – State-wide.

Cost: \$10M, growing to \$15M per/annum by 2010 (a totally new program is required)

4. **Coastline Cycleway program:** This intends to achieve a continuous cycleway system from the Queensland to the Victorian border. The program is to link all coastal cities, towns and important resorts serving local commuting, recreational and international tourism travel.

The program presently omits the 90 kilometre Sydney Metropolitan coastal strip and this must be added. It needs accelerated funding and implementation to achieve the total route by 2011. The program, administered by the Department of Planning, has been very successful, so far. However, the funding level of \$11 million for the four year period 2003-07, has not been sufficient to fund all local connecting schemes submitted on a \$-for-\$ basis.

Cost: \$5M per/annum for the next four years; with a 50% contribution to this amount from RTA funds to address needed work along and across main/arterial roads.