

Ngauranga to Petone Cycleway

Executive summary of cyclist survey findings

A high-level summary of the method and findings from an internet user survey and focus groups held between May and August 2012 with cyclists or potential cyclists using the corridor between the Hutt and Wellington. It discusses the implications of the findings for upcoming investigations into the Ngauranga to Petone Cycleway and key considerations for the next tranche of work.



Executive Summary – Cyclist Survey and Focus Groups

Background

The NZTA has submitted an application for a project which is now contained within the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP) 2012-15 as a “probable” project. This project proposes to “close the gap” between Petone and Horokiwi by building a cycleway on around 800m reclaimed land, and constructing a bridge or crossing to the existing but upgraded cycle path south of Horokiwi, thus providing a two-way off-road cycle route. This project has been costed at \$15.45m with a benefit cost ratio (BCR) of 2.85, which was calculated based upon the Land Transport New Zealand Report “Estimating Demand for Cycling Facilities in New Zealand”, and an extrapolated mode share assuming 50% of existing cyclists will shift onto a new cycleway from the shoulder. Based on existing flows it was assumed that 267 of these existing cyclists would shift to a new facility.

The NZTA has undertaken video surveys of the current usage of the corridor between Petone and Ngauranga. These surveys demonstrated that 97% of cyclists ride on the SH shoulder southbound rather than using the cycleway at peak times, and 94% use the SH shoulder at weekends. Around 40% of cyclists using the corridor continue or come from north of Petone on SH2, while 60% exit / enter at the Esplanade. Four survey days of data were extrapolated to approximate cycle flows over a typical 12 hour period. It was determined that around 420 cyclists currently cycle between Petone and Ngauranga over a 12 hour period on a fine weekday. This count is in line with previously recorded cycling numbers, but regular counts should continue to be taken.

Survey Data

The NZTA undertook a survey of cyclists who have an interest in cycling between Wellington and Petone, noting their cycling habits and preferences. 708 responses were received.

The cycling survey data indicated that 35% of respondents do not currently cycle between Wellington and the Hutt Valley. The most common reason was that the journey was too dangerous. Of those who do cycle, around 75% cycle for commuting, and 82% of these cyclists do not use the cycleway (note that this is a lower percentage than that indicated by video survey).

Respondents were asked what would make them more or less likely to cycle between Petone and Wellington. 76% said that the ability to use a dedicated, off-road cycleway would make them more likely to cycle. 43% respondents noted that more road traffic would make them less likely to cycle, while 42% said that being forced to use the cycleway would make them less likely to cycle.

Focus Group Data

A selected group of survey respondents were invited to participate in one of four focus groups to discuss their observations about cycling the corridor and give their opinions on a

number of suggested scenarios for improving the cycling facilities between Petone and Ngauranga. The groups were comprised roughly half confident cyclists on the route and half less confident cyclists. The majority of focus group participants did not use the cycleway, but a higher proportion (45%) than either the video survey or internet survey indicated use the cycleway at least southbound. This selective sample therefore reflects both existing and potential cyclists on this route.

A number of scenarios were presented to the focus groups, all representing potential improvements to the cycleway route between Petone and Ngauranga. These were considered to be realistic improvement scenarios, though of varying expense and difficulty.

Some consistent comments received were that cycleway options on the eastern side of SH2 (and particularly those on the seaward side of the rail line) were inconvenient for those coming from or continuing north on SH2 (40% of current users). A cycleway on the seaward side of the rail line (such as the scheme nominated in the NLTP) would require access via the Esplanade, thus requiring those coming from north of Dowse to exit the state highway at Dowse and then travel southbound on the Hutt Road.

The nature of any cycleway represented a significant factor in whether it would be used. While the least confident cyclists were content to have any form of off-road provision rather than using the road, more confident cyclists were concerned about the efficiency of their travel and safety. The main concerns were that a narrow two-way cycleway would provide insufficient room for passing, particularly at high speeds, that it would be poorly maintained, and that it could create an expectation amongst motorists that all cyclists should use it resulting in negativity towards those cyclists continuing to use the road shoulder.

There was a clear indication that many cyclists prefer to maintain their speed rather than use a sub-standard cycleway and that they would not use facilities with poor connectivity or which were slower than using the shoulder. For these cyclists provision of a continuous cycleway similar in standard and access to the existing cycleway would not encourage them to use it. However, there is a further group of potential cyclists for whom safety is paramount and the provision of an off-road cycleway would be attractive to them. The BCR assumes cyclist growth of 4.75% per annum as a result of the new cycleway, and focus group feedback suggests that this is a minimum that could be achieved, provided that continued use of the shoulder is available for commuter cyclists.

A final observation from the focus groups was that the redesign of the Petone Overbridge (which is likely to occur as part of the Petone to Grenada Link Road project) would be a good opportunity to enhance connectivity to any seaward side cycleway. However, they further noted that this interchange should be designed in such a way that cyclists would not have to navigate an elevated roundabout to access the cycleway.

Conclusions

With regard to the calculated BCR, the transfer of 50% of existing cyclists to the cycleway now seems optimistic (54% of the focus group said that they would use the scheme proposed in the NLTP, but the focus group comprises over-representative numbers of less

confident cyclists, and 45% of the focus group were already using the cycleway, as compared with only around 3% usage of the cycleway in video surveys). However, higher growth in cyclist numbers than assumed (4.75% per annum) seems probable as a result of the new scheme, as long as cyclists can continue to use the shoulder. Therefore, the BCR for the scheme would probably be lower than 2.85 but still of a magnitude warranting further investigation.

It is important that any scheme provides for both confident and less confident cyclists. Accordingly, the Scope of Works for investigations will consider improvements for both less confident and more confident cyclists, which may or may not be provided by the same facility.

A funding application to undertake the investigation and design works will now be sought. This will enable further work to investigate the optimal cycling provision in the corridor. This funding application will be supported by an Investment Logic Mapping (ILM) exercise with key stakeholders to determine the purpose and need for this project. The scope of works for the investigation will be influenced partly by this piece of work and also by the ILM process.