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### **Proposal for a Copenhagen style bike lane to service Newcastle CBD.**

It is so much easier and enjoyable driving a car during the school holidays. Why? Fewer cars on the road, less congestion. Bike riders notice it too, it's better for everyone. So what if there was a way to reduce congestion all the time? Newcastle Cycleways Movement is proposing a new bike facility that will improve the road for all users and help the modernisation and rejuvenation of the Newcastle CBD.

Newcastle has many natural advantages for cycling. It's not too hilly, has a pleasant climate, and a few areas have quality cycling facilities. Many people commute to the CBD each day, and the East-West cycleway from Wallsend, Lambton and Broadmeadow would be a useful route for this purpose. Coming from the west the East-West cycleway is of good quality until it reaches the Donald St Bridge in Hamilton when it becomes nothing more than a painted line on the road. Bicycles are forced to squeeze dangerously close to parked cars in many places or be bold enough to take their place in the main stream of motorised traffic. Figures from the RTA show that in an average year there are 60 cyclists hospitalised and one death after hitting car doors in NSW.

This proposal is for a high quality Copenhagen style bike lane to complete the missing link in the East-West route. It will provide safe access for bike riders to reach the CBD. NSW has a state target of having 5% of urban trips by bicycle by 2016. In Sydney the Council has a 10% target. NCM believes Newcastle is well placed to equal or better these targets. The key strategy is to provide safe space for bicycles on currently crowded sections of road.

### **Copenhagen / Sydney style lanes**

Common in Europe, these bike lanes have a barrier separating the bike lanes from vehicular traffic. The separation can be by a median strip, a traffic barrier, or a height difference. This design is the minimum standard safe enough to take primary school children or inexperienced riders on roads with speed limits over 40km/hr. Separated space on the road is the minimum standard of safety required to attract new riders to use their bikes for urban transport trips.

This standard of cycle way has been built in most Australian capital cities over the last decade, with NSW lagging behind the national trend. Sydney is catching up however, with an ambitious program of cycleway construction underway. Sydney has a new cycleway across town on King St opened in May 2009 and one is under construction on Bourke St in 2010. A great number of people say they would like to cycle but are scared of traffic, and the provision of protected space on the road is the key measure to get such people onto their bikes.



Swanston St Melbourne



George St Brisbane



King St Sydney

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## Why cycling?

Fifty percent of urban trips in Australian cities are of less than 5km, a distance easily reached by bike. Using bicycles for urban transport has myriad benefits:

- reduced air pollution
- reduced traffic congestion
- health benefits for the rider
- reduced parking demands
- less sensitivity to petrol prices
- equity for those too young, too old or medically unfit to drive
- positive social interactions while riding.

While the concept of peak oil has had plenty of discussion there have been few steps taken to prepare for \$5 per litre petrol. A city that has cycling as a viable transport option will suffer less disruption from oil price spikes or shortages than one fully dependant on private cars for transport.

Cycling has in the past been seen as sport or recreation, however more and more people are adopting it as a viable transport option. Why drive to the gym after work when you could ride to work instead, saving both time and money? Utilitarian cycling is reflected in the equipment available such as bikes with comfortable riding positions, panniers, baskets, and child seats to help meet the demands of urban transport. New designs of folding bikes can be very quick on the road yet fold up for storage at home or under a desk at work, and can be carried as hand luggage on public transport.

Bikes and public transport are a good fit. Many cities around the world have introduced bike racks on the front of buses allowing bike commuters to take the bus home on a rainy day, and bikes are easily carried on trains. For these reasons NCM supports retention and improvement of the CBD rail service and the introduction of bike racks on Newcastle Buses.

## Future Development of Newcastle

The Newcastle City Center Local Environment Plan 2008 outlines a tourist/residential precinct at Newcastle East, educational and legal precinct at Civic, and massive commercial-residential development centered on Wickham station. The number of people expected to be moving in and out of downtown Newcastle on a daily basis has been modeled by traffic engineers and that number of cars would completely overwhelm the capacity of the road system. The planned development will result in gridlock on the roads unless the transport task can be shifted to other modes of travel. Public transport, cycling and walking are the options that can deliver people where they have to go as Newcastle develops into a modern high density city. Newcastle Cycleways Movement shares a vision of the CBD area welcoming cyclists as commuters, tourists, and shoppers making it a vibrant and friendly space.

## Details of the proposal

The 4.8 Km Copenhagen style bike lane starts at the intersection of Jackson St and Griffiths Rd and extends east along Donald St, over the railway bridge and past Beaumont St to Selma St. The section past Eva St may be off road as there is open space between Donald St and the railway.

East of Selma St the route may stay on Parry St/King St or may cross to Hunter St. This choice would be made after detailed assessment of the two options by traffic engineers with experience of cycle way design. Parry St / King St has the advantage of greater

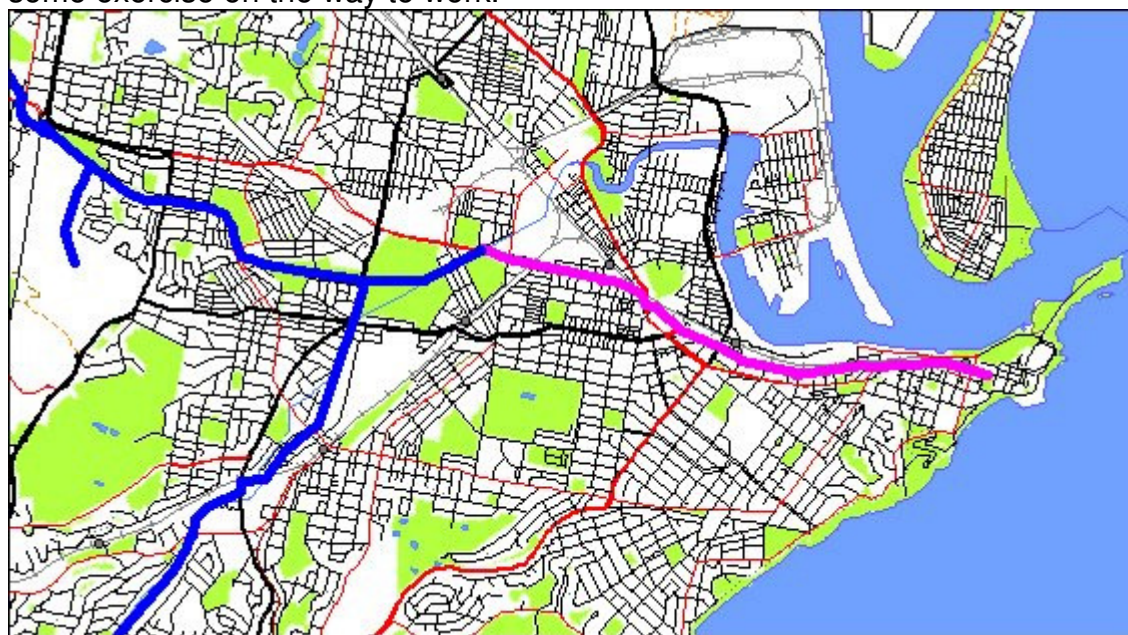
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width as far as Union St, and may have less businesses interested in on street parking at their front door. Hunter St however is under consideration for redevelopment and a cycle lane may be a good fit with other changes being considered as part of the Hunter St Revitalisation Masterplan.

At the eastern end the cycle lane would connect to the Hunter St mall, then along Hunter St to Pacific park giving access to Newcastle beach and the east end tourist / residential precinct. . At the west end it connects to the existing high quality section of the East-West cycleway from Lambton, Jesmond and Wallsend, and the existing North South cycleway from Kotara.

This proposal provides high quality safe bicycle access to many trip generators in the CBD area such as the city campus of the University, government offices in the Civic area, the Civic theatre, cinemas, and the TAFE at Parry St and Hunter St. It also connects to retail centres at Market town, and the Newcastle Mall.

The International Sports Centre attracts large numbers of spectators on game days and despite its large car park the surrounding roads become choked with spectator cars. An upgraded East-West cycleway would allow game promoters to encourage travel by bike to ease some of this parking problem. On week days the sports centre car park is being used for park-and-ride access to John Hunter Hospital, and could be used by commuters to bring a bike on their car, park for free and cycle to the CBD. This would be an attractive option for people from outer suburbs too far to cycle but who want to get some exercise on the way to work.



Proposed East-West cycleway upgrade is marked in pink. Existing cycleways blue.

## **Design questions for community debate**

### Parking

Construction of this high quality bicycle facility will require re-allocation of road space. There are approximately 90 parking spaces per Km on each side of Hunter St, with 2 hour or 5 minute time limits to encourage use by business customers rather than all day workers. The proposal would see parking spaces reallocated to the other side of the road or in side streets. Figures from the NSW transport data center show that if the 5% bicycle trip target is achieved there will be 1571 less cars being driven to work in the Newcastle LGA each day. If only 20% of these commute to the CBD demand for car parking spaces will drop by 314, fully offsetting the spaces converted to a cycle way.

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At Newcastle Cycleways Movement we believe that use of public road space for parking is of less value to the community than as a cycleway. In some places there is adequate road width to accommodate both parking and a cycleway, and if some parking is deemed to be of exceptionally high value it can take space from traffic lanes. Bicycles can be parked at 10 times the density of cars, but as most bicycle parking is off road, provision of bicycle parking does not compete with car parking for space.

### Bus stops

Where a Copenhagen style lane runs between the footpath and traffic lanes bus stops are generally moved to a median strip outside the cycle lanes, and bus passengers have a pedestrian crossing marked across the cycleway.

### Intersections

Both cyclists and motorists will need to learn how to negotiate intersections with a Copenhagen style lane, and this will require public education efforts once it is constructed. Awareness of the cycle lane is improved by the use of green pavement paint through intersections. Signage and road markings will be the same as those used on such facilities across the state, and if possible nationally.

### Unidirectional or bi-directional cycleways

The attached photos show bi-directional cycleways from Brisbane and Sydney and a unidirectional cycleway from Melbourne. A pair of unidirectional cycleways as shown for Swanston St is the norm in Europe as it is the safest and gives the simplest intersections. Newcastle is lucky to have Hunter St so wide at 18m gutter to gutter, and King St is even wider so it should not be difficult to design a truly world class cycling facility.

### Summary

Newcastle has the opportunity to build a first class cycling facility as part of the rejuvenation of the city centre. Completing the East West cycleway with a high quality Copenhagen style lane will have lasting health, environmental and social benefits for the people of Newcastle. The recently announced NSW bike plan indicates the state government's support for cycling and Newcastle Cycleways Movement calls on the state government to back up the fine language with some funding for this practical proposal.