

Submission to: Palmerston North City Council  
From: Cycle Aware Palmerston North  
Date: 20 April 2006  
Re: PNCC Draft 10 Year Plan 2006/07-2015/16

## **Preamble**

Cycle Aware Palmerston North (CAPN) is a local community group that promotes everyday cycling (cycling for transport) and recreational cycling. The current membership is around 40 (some of which are family subscriptions). Our aim is to bring about improvements for cyclists and an increase in numbers cycling. We support other road user groups who experience difficulties similar to those experienced by cyclists (e.g. lack of safe and convenient mobility and access) and we support environmentally friendly modes of transport. For several years we have made draft annual plan submissions highlighting the need to promote cycling and provide for cyclists. CAPN is affiliated to Cycle Advocates' Network (CAN), the umbrella organization of cycling advocacy groups in New Zealand. For more info you can visit the CAN website: [www.can.org.nz](http://www.can.org.nz)

### **1. General Comments**

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft 10-year plan. Overall, we consider that the plan fails to adequately integrate social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of well-being. The goal of achieving a population of 100,000 by 2020 is based on an outmoded assumption that population growth and household growth are required if Palmerston North is to have economic growth and well-being.

The lack of integrated thinking is seen in, for example, the lack of recognition that Urban Design (page 30) is linked to the outcome of "easy to move around Palmerston North". And on page 37 Council initiatives in relation to urban design are confined to only four areas (heritage protection, regulatory design controls, strategic projects and properties, and environmental initiatives). Yet transportation is critical to good urban design. Likewise, the list of Council Plans and Policies related to City Planning does not include the Transportation Management Plan yet transportation planning and land use planning need to be inextricably linked. Similarly, the list of Council Plans and Policies related to Economic Development (page 76) does not mention such things as the Transportation Management Plan or the Natural and Built Environment Policy yet there is a clear indication in geographical research that attracting businesses and growing jobs is linked to the quality of life in a city and high amenity values.

In the 10-year plan PNCC states that, not only is it committed to relatively high population growth, it seeks to "become a leader in environmental and urban sustainability" (page 91). We believe that the latter is a more appropriate vision than the population growth target. To achieve both these goals PNCC will need to be much more vigorous in implementing new policies, strategies and plans and realigning existing policies, strategies and plans (in particular the District Plan and Transportation Management Plan) to ensure that planned population growth in the coming 15 years is not accompanied, as it has been to date, by urban sprawl, resource depletion and environmental degradation (including threats to indigenous biodiversity, more animal and plant pests, transportation systems that are not environmentally sustainable, and pressure on clean water and clean air).

In short, while there are some positive proposals, overall the proposals in this draft 10-year plan are inadequate for achieving sustainable growth, including sustainable transportation

## **2. Comments on Groups of Activities**

### **2.1 Strategic Planning**

We support the aim to get a clearer difference between urban and rural areas but we consider that current plans for residential growth in the Cloverlea, Aokautere and Te Matai areas are likely to result in significant traffic growth given the absence of comprehensive planning for walking, cycling and public transport in the city as a whole.

We recommend that a review of the Transportation Management Plan by 2008 be included in the list of performance measures on page 34. The submission details concerns below which justify reviewing the Transportation Management Plan.

We support **Operating Programme 622.01 Support for Environmental Co-ordinator**. This position has been very effective for building the network of environmental groups in the city. This programme recognises the importance of volunteer activity.

### **2.2 Urban Design**

The colour photograph on page 17 is telling: it shows a solitary cyclist, a fringe of green, a vast area of tarseal, and a mass of traffic lights and vehicles many of which appear to have one person in them. This, the current situation, is a result of the city's plans and urban design policies of the past 15 years. We do not support a continuation of this approach. In particular, this image reflects what the ring road and arterials are intended to be like. What the photo doesn't show is the effect on the community of the severance and the lack of connectivity between the two sides of such roads. Nor does it show the noise, air pollution and stormwater contaminants

Having a city that is easy to get around by car is not central to good urban design as is suggested on page 37. Good urban design is recognised by the Ministry for the Environment as fostering sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport because these are associated with a more pleasant and healthy environment (less car parking, less roading, less congestion, less noise, water and air pollution).

As in previous submission we remain opposed to the **City Heart expenditure (Programme 382.01)**. We support CBD revitalisation at a much more modest level and only if there is adequate provision for cyclists. The recent changes to the Square have neglected the specific needs of cyclists that we have highlighted in previous submissions such as provision of cycle sensors at traffic lights, sheltered and secure cycle parking and advance stop boxes, and reduced posted speed limits. Without these features, the CBD is not cycle friendly and cycling is therefore not viewed as a preferred mode of transport, which it could be for many, given that the CBD is at the heart of a relatively compact city. It was particularly disappointing that the new I-Site did not incorporate sheltered and secure cycle parking when this could have been so easily and inexpensively achieved.

To summarise. quality urban design means that active, sustainable modes of transport receive much greater prominence so that they become modes of choice for many more people than at present.

### **2.3 Economic Development**

An attractive city with high amenity values draws people (both visitors and new residents) to it and from that comes job creation. Palmerston North needs to throw off the perception that it is the spiritual home of stock car racing (as described in a recent poetry collection) and develop the other amenities that other nearby local authorities (e.g. Wellington, Napier, New Plymouth) are developing (in particular, walking and cycling facilities) that are a magnet for residents and visitors and which push up property values.

## 2.4 Leisure

Sustainable transportation is closely linked to walking and cycling for leisure. To date, there has been a significant lack of integration between this activity and Council's roading activity. An example is the unwillingness of Parks and Recreation staff to remove barriers to cycle access to the riverbank.

Yet providing safe walking and cycling facilities (especially off road) for transportation has the added benefit of supplying a recreational asset. This is precisely the case with the sealed path that was developed initially as a cycling facility for commuter cyclists whom the Council wanted to keep out of the Esplanade. The riverbank cycle path is now a shared path, which is heavily used by recreational walkers and cyclists.

Surprisingly, the overview of recreational facilities on page 122 does not mention cycleways. This omission should be corrected in the final draft of the 10-year plan. Similarly the reference on page 125b to "existing riverside walk pathway" should be amended to "existing shared walking and cycling path".

We support the development of the Te Araroa Pathway (Programme 674.05) on the understanding that on certain stretches (such as Feilding to Palmerston North and Manawatu riverbank) the facility is a shared use path.

We support the development of a new cycle pedestrian bridge across the river as this will be a tremendous enhancement of the existing off road riverbank cycling and walking facilities. Given that the shared use path on the riverbank is so popular and successful it is now time to revisit the earlier aspiration for cycle-able paths within the Esplanade so that cycling is accommodated as part of a genuine variety of recreational opportunities.

We support improved cycling and pedestrian flows through the Esplanade/Fitzherbert/Ongley Parks as a key priority of any redevelopment of the Esplanade. The map on page 125a is difficult to read and does not clearly indicate what changes are planned to improve cycling and pedestrian flows. Our group wishes to be included in any further consultation about this proposed re-development.

We recommend that a key feature of the Esplanade redevelopment should be a cycle-pedestrian bridge between the city and the Fitzherbert Science Centres in the vicinity of the Esplanade. A bridge would achieve the Council's goal of connecting the city and Esplanade to the river and would mean the goal could be achieved without loss of existing forest. We understand that a **programme providing \$1 M to construct an upstream cycle-pedestrian bridge was inadvertently omitted from the draft 10-year plan.** We support this level of funding for a bridge but, rather than upstream, we believe it should be in the vicinity of the Esplanade because it will create a loop for cyclists and pedestrians including the Fitzherbert bridge and the cycle lane to Massey. This would be a route with minimal vehicle conflict, taking in the existing shared use path on river bank beside the Esplanade. In addition, it will serve as a major commuter link to Massey and the Science Centres reducing commuting time, reducing vehicle traffic and greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing personal health and fitness. The benefits for commuters and the enhancement of the Esplanade are more significant than the benefits of a bridge linking the city to a still hypothetical recreational lake in the Aokautere area.

In general we do not advocate additional paths within the Esplanade/reserve, much less the removal of any of the existing forest; a cycle-friendly leisure facility can be achieved through lime chip laid on existing unsealed paths.

In particular, we are concerned at the proposal under Stage 7 (page 125c) to recreate the link between Fitzherbert Ave and Park Road to improve flows of traffic through the reserve. This will bring traffic noise and vehicle emissions to an even greater part of the reserve than is already the case – thus removing the possibility of being in a park that is synonymous with a traffic-free space. Existing access for motorized vehicles is quite sufficient. If anything the city should be contemplating having car-free Sundays in the Esplanade along the lines of car-free city centres in many cities around the world. At present vehicles turning into the Esplanade at the Fitzherbert Avenue entrance create a hazard for cyclists on the city-bound cycle lane. For example, cyclists are often not noticed while cars on the eastern side of Fitzherbert Ave concentrate of finding a break in the two lanes of vehicular traffic, and cars turning in from the western side of Fitzherbert Ave often cut in front of cyclists on the inside cycle lane.

We support the development of a mountain biking facility at the Awapuni Landfill (the draft plan does not clearly state which programme this is so we are unsure of the level of funding proposed).

## **2.5 Rooding and Parking**

The draft 10-year plan notes a key Council Plan is the Active Transport Strategy. At this stage the draft Active Transport Strategy has not been adopted by Council for public consultation. Submitters cannot make an informed submission about the **Active Transport Implementation Programme (Programme 705.02)** without knowing what the strategy's goals and policies and targets are and what the implementation plan provides. Nor can submitters make informed submissions based on the information in the draft-10 year plan also on page 154 about such proposals as Inner CBD Rooding works (Programme 701.06), Strategic Road Widening (Programme 701.45). No details are provided about these Programmes..

All that we can say at this stage is that the level of funding for Active Transport Implementation appears to be a positive improvement on previous years' funding. However, the level of funding **is likely to be the minimum** given the changing emphasis in central government land transport policy and given the impacts of other policies of PNCC which appear certain to increase vehicle traffic. Indeed, the Transportation Management Plan (page 7) notes that "The countries with the highest GDP also have the highest number of trucks per capita." This would appear to suggest that if PN seeks economic growth then growth in number of trucks per capita and providing access for trucks in and out of the city is a desirable and necessary feature of economic growth. Growth in traffic will necessitate further expenditure on facilities to ensure the safety of people who are being increasingly encouraged to cycle and walk more.

This level of expenditure should be seen as an investment in the health of the city's population, in the quality of the urban environment (in light of the Significant Negative Effects of Rooding and Parking mentioned on page 151), and in the city's leisure facilities (as discussed earlier). We note that capital programmes for rooding are about \$148 M of which only about \$4 M are cycling/pedestrian/public transport related i.e. about 3%. This is much too low a ratio to be consistent with the New Zealand Transport Strategy and other elements of the country's land transport policy and funding framework.

Expenditure on cycling promotion and infrastructure and wider travel demand management is a positive investment as it frees up road capacity for essential users and public transport and there is reduced wear and tear on roads. There are benefits to the business sector because reduced expenditure on transport by those who cycle and walk results in more disposable income that can be spent in the local economy. At a time when fuel prices are increasing

steadily it is important that people have the choice of cycling and are not deterred by inadequate facilities.

Performance measures (page 150) need to include a measure and target that is relevant to the facilities required for safe, convenient and pleasant cycling. We would like to see a key success measure related to implementation of the principal cycle network (which was intended to be implemented by 2007).

The **proposed independent audit of the asset management plan** should include audit of cycling facilities and the results of the independent audit should be forwarded to interested parties.

Given the increasing emphasis being placed on walking and cycling by central government policy ministries and funding agencies there is likely to be growing pressure on existing facilities. Therefore it is **disappointing that PNCC proposes no major increase in the level of service in relation to footpaths and cycle facilities** (page 151) even though we are pleased that PNCC plans to “promote the benefits of alternative transport [by which we assume is meant cycling and walking], especially in terms of the City’s flat terrain.”

In particular the draft 10-year plan does not indicate whether funding proposed for Active Transport Implementation includes funding for quarterly Cycling Forums which we requested last year and which the Council indicated it favoured in lieu of re-establishing the Cycle Advisory Group. As noted in our submission last year, funding should be provided at a level similar to the funding given to DPA for its roading forums.

Likewise the draft 10-year plan does not clearly indicate whether the Active Transport Implementation Programme or Programmes 706.20 (Intersection Safety Improvements) and 706.21 (Intersection Capacity Improvements) include provision for redesign of the Fitzherbert Ave/Te Awe Awe Street intersection. For several years now we have highlighted our concern that Te Awe Awe Street, which is on the principal cycle network, has been experiencing considerable congestion at the intersection with Fitzherbert Ave. Cycle lanes should be provided on Te Awe Awe Street from Albert to Fitzherbert Ave as an interim measure.

We are unclear what it means to say “The CBD will be managed as carparking friendly rather than car traffic friendly”. Initiatives that make it easy to park a car generate traffic. What would be **more meaningful and forward-looking would be to have a commitment to making the CBD more pedestrian and cycle friendly than car friendly**. To date, the traffic flow changes such as on Fitzherbert Ave, Broadway and Main Streets create hazards for cyclists as vehicle speeds have not noticeably declined and cycle lanes have been removed/discontinued from within the inner ring road. This is inconsistent with national guidelines for cycle network planning. We would like to see specific enhancements for cyclists, such as the advance stop boxes in other city CBDs, cycle sensors, and reduced posted speed limits as part of Programme 701.06 (Inner CBD roading works).

We support demand management initiatives referred to on page 151 but the draft 10-year plan does not indicate which programme supports these and the level of funding.

The assumptions on page 151 should include some assumptions about anticipated take-up of public transport and expansion of public transport services, as well as assumptions about impact of rising fuel prices on travel patterns and related impacts on facilities.

We would like the **Church/Albert Street Roundabout redesign (Programme 706.18)** to be modeled on the Church/Cook Street Roundabout.

We note with interest that the draft 10-year plan states that Council “will implement the Transportation Management Plan.” The Transportation Management Plan requires implementation of the Bike Plan yet the Bike Plan has not been implemented as intended since the Transportation Management Plan was first adopted and more recently a new walking and cycling strategy has been developed which may well have policies and targets that are inferior to those in the Bike Plan.

We support increased pricing for CBD car parking and we are **strongly opposed to further provision of car parking by Council. In particular we oppose the Purchase of Land for Car parking (Programme 704.08)**. It is not clear in the draft 10-year plan where this land is located yet there are rumours that it is the site of the former Police station on Church Street. If this building was removed and replaced with car parking this would fundamentally contradict Council’s professed commitment to urban design and urban and environmental sustainability leadership. Employers and businesses are responsible for the provision of car parks and should also be given incentives to provide cycle parking.

We support an upgrade of **Kelvin Grove Road (Programme 701.26)**, as this is a very popular cycling route offering a quiet, more pleasant and interesting alternative to the main highway to Ashhurst and providing linkages to other popular cycling routes in the Bunnythorpe/Colyton/ Hiwinui/ Pohangina areas. It is vital that the upgrade includes a sufficiently wide shoulder for cyclists. Road signs indicating the presence of cyclists in the area should also be installed as they have been on Old West Road.

As per our comments above about Kelvin Grove road it is vital that the **Turitea Road realignment (Programme 701.31)** includes a sufficiently wide shoulder for cyclists. The road is popular for cycling, both by those wanting to do mountain biking between the Turitea valley and Kahuterawa valley and also by road cyclists. With more subdivision being allowed in the Turitea valley it is important that residents who want to cycle can do so safely and also that more residents are encouraged to cycle. Low intensity residential subdivision such as the Council is allowing will never sustain public transport so walking and cycling are key transport alternatives to the private car. It is approximately 10 km from the end of the valley to the city (less to Massey and the Sciences Centres) - a suitable distance for cycling.

We support the **Pahiatua Track upgrade (Programme 701.34)** on the condition that this upgrade provides adequately for cyclists – i.e. a sealed shoulder of an adequate width. This is a popular training area for cyclists given its proximity to the urban area and the appeal of the hilly terrain and the opportunity for loops back to PN City via the Gorge or Saddle Road..

We support funding for the **Aokautere Overbridge (Programme 702.02)**, which has been promised for many years now and is currently scheduled for 2007/08.

We support the development of a **cycle path on Railway Road (Programme 708.19)** and consider that this should be brought forward to 2007/08.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission. We are willing to answer any queries and provide further clarification and information to support our points.

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