

Safe and Viable Cycling in the Perth Metropolitan Area

Report 22: October 2015

Objective and Overview

A number of strategies, plans and policies have supported the development of cycling networks and infrastructure in WA since the 1970s. The *Western Australian Bicycle Network Plan 2014-2031* (WABN Plan) was released in March 2014 and aims to make cycling in WA 'safe, connected, convenient and a widely-accepted form of transport'. The Department of Transport (DoT) coordinates the activities of agencies in delivering cycling facilities.

This audit provides an assessment of whether there is suitable infrastructure and support to enable cycling to be a safe and viable mode of transport in the Perth metropolitan area.

We focused on two lines of inquiry:

- Is there a well-connected and maintained cycle network that covers the main metropolitan transport routes?
- Are suitable actions in place to enable cycling to be a safe, convenient and viable mode of transport?

Audit Conclusion

The State Government has gradually improved cycling infrastructure in Perth. Cycling has become a more viable mode of transport, however there has been a lack of informed planning and sustained funding. Without this and cooperation by Local Government Authorities (LGAs), the cycle network will remain incomplete and safety levels will be less than desirable.

Only 48 per cent of the planned Principal Shared Path (PSP) cycle network is complete. Of the existing routes, many sections lack connectivity, and older paths need upgrading if they are to cater for increasing demand.

A planned review of local routes, including within the Perth Central Business District (CBD) needs to be completed. Local government roads and paths vary in design and level of maintenance, which do not always comply with relevant standards and good practice guidelines. This creates conflicting and less safe conditions for cycling.

DoT has not yet compared the economic, environmental, health and social benefits of cycling with other transport options. DoT has also yet to complete a detailed implementation plan for the WABN Plan and transport agencies have not outlined funding requirements for each of the key actions. This is likely to jeopardise the timely completion of a well-connected cycle network.

Government is unable to measure progress against its objective to double the number of cycling trips in WA by 2019 as data on where people are cycling is measured only on limited routes. In addition, many crashes involving cyclists are not reported. More comprehensive knowledge is needed to plan and prioritise cycling infrastructure, improve safety, and increase cycling.

Transport agencies have placed limited emphasis on strategies to improve public awareness about cycling safety. Well designed and targeted safety campaigns and education are important if cycling is to become a more common and safe mode of transport.



Key Findings

- Sections of the arterial cycle network along major transport routes within 15 km of the Perth CBD are incomplete. Over the last 30 years state transport agencies have constructed approximately 172 km of the arterial PSP cycle network, of which 93 km is within the 15 km radius. The WABN Plan outlines 185 km of additional routes. Critically, gaps tend to be on priority routes along railway lines and freeways. Past planning has resulted in PSP routes to the CBD but few dedicated, safe cycle paths through or within the city environment.
- Transport agencies have invested \$143 million in cycling infrastructure since 2004, of which \$100 million was spent on the PSP network but only \$20.3 million was spent on priority routes.
- Local cycling routes to connect with the PSP network, community facilities and employment centres have historically not been well planned, and vary in design and construction. The result is an inconsistent and unconnected local cycle network which lacks integration into the broader transport system.
- There is a lack of comprehensive knowledge and public reporting about where people are cycling. Crashes are not always reported and crash data is inconsistent between agencies. Without good data, agency and LGA efforts to plan cycling infrastructure and improve cyclist safety rely on a subset of information only.
- The Government's transport planning framework is not finalised. Until this strategic planning is complete investments in cycling will be made in isolation of other transport options.
- Investment to promote cyclist safety has mostly been minimal and sporadic. Without measures to improve awareness, achieving mutual respect among road users will be difficult.

Recommendations

In the next six months, DoT should prepare and publish a WABN Plan implementation schedule with funding requirements, and a progress report on WABN Plan actions.

In the next 12 months, DoT should implement an improved strategy to collect, monitor and analyse data on cycling participation to inform planning and safety.

In the next two years:

- DoT should identify demand for transport options to inform and finalise a transport planning framework for Perth, which integrates all forms of transport
- DoT should progress the review and development of Local Bicycle Routes with LGAs
- Government should consider developing a central cycling crash and hazard reporting facility
- DoT and RSC should work together to develop public awareness strategies to target safe cycling and mutual respect among all road users.

In the next five years, DoT and Main Roads should support and promote existing and new cycling infrastructure, including innovations trialled by LGAs, to improve participation in cycling.

