

13 March 2008

John Howell



CYCLIST USE OF BUS LANES – RESPONSE TO PETITION

I refer to your petition that you presented to Council on 28 February 2008

In Wellington there are “Bus Lanes” and “Bus Only” areas. It should be noted that cyclists are currently able to use bus lanes as stipulated in the road code. However lanes or areas marked “Buses Only” are considered unsafe for other vehicles to use.

Buses only areas are considered unsafe because these areas are for bus operational purposes or used as contra flow bus lanes. Contra flow bus lanes are only a single lane running in the opposite direction to the general traffic stream. Therefore to pass a stationary vehicle in the lane would require the other vehicle to pull out in front of oncoming traffic. This practice would be extremely unsafe particularly for cyclists. Equally buses passing cyclists in the lane would have the potential to knock or squeeze the cyclist out of the lane. As a result all other vehicles including cyclists are prohibited from using contra flow bus lanes which are appropriately marked as “Buses Only.”

There are currently 3 Bus Only lanes. Lambton Quay southbound from Panama Street to Hunter Street, Southbound on Willis Street and the southbound central lane at the southern end of Thorndon Quay. Thorndon Quay is restricted because any vehicle travelling in this lane must continue through to the Lambton bus interchange. This is a bus operating area and for safety reasons all traffic other than buses are excluded.

Elected Members reaffirmed their support for "Bus Only" lanes when considering the Bus Priority Plan in April 2007. Officers maintain that it is unsafe to allow cyclists or any other vehicles in areas marked “Buses Only”.

Council is currently developing a cycling plan for Wellington. This plan will set out future direction for provision of cyclist as a transport mode within our city. At this stage we are not considering allowing cyclist to use the bus only lanes and areas, but there will be a strong link to the proposed bus priority scheme which will increase the network of bus lanes and make provision for cyclist to share these priority lanes.

The draft cycle plan will be presented to Council in June and will then be followed by a period where the public can input before the final plan being adopted in September.

I am happy to discuss these issues or any other cycling issues further.

Yours sincerely

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