



Cycling Case Study:
Improving the Reporting Process
for Management Planning
by Councils

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LOWER HUNTER &
CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



Prepared by Twyford Consulting for the Lower Hunter & Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy (LHCCREMS) including the Councils of Cessnock, Maitland, Port Stephens, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Wyong, & Gosford.



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Reasons for increasing cycling in the community	1
State Government policies.....	2
What Local Government can do	2
The status of bicycle planning practices within Local Government in NSW.....	3
Review of implementation of Bike Plans	4
Using an annual review of Bike Plan implementation.....	5

Introduction

Increasing the level of cycling in the community is a policy goal of *Action for Air: the NSW Governments 25 year Air Quality Management Plan*. This goal would also increase the participation of the community in physical activity – and contribute to the goal of Simply Active Everyday, a whole-of-government strategy, to increase safe and ongoing participation, particularly by less active people. Thus values of health, equity, social inclusion, and environment would be advanced. The OECD recently concluded that

‘insufficient progress has been made so far towards achieving environmental sustainability for the transport sector. A new target-oriented approach is needed that places environment and health at the top of the policy agenda for transport and related sectors, at international, national and local levels.’

This case study looks at how the reporting process for cycling can assist councils to move toward more environmentally sustainable practices and to support their social plans and commitments to environment protection.

New information has been drawn from a study commissioned by Lgov (formerly the Local Government and Shires Association) and the RTA on bicycle planning practices by local government in NSW.

This document also sets out the NSW policy context for local government action; discusses the current level of implementation of bike plans (both the infrastructure and social programs) and suggests a standard format for annual reviews of the implementation of Council Bike Plans.

This document shows that by reviewing the implementation of its Bike Plan, Council would be better prepared for the management planning cycle early in the calendar year. Later in the year, the indicators can be used in Councils’ Social/Community Plan and its State of the Environment Report. These indicators would also be useful for regional planning, such as regional PlanFirst and regional public health and environmental health planning.

Encourage your Council to undertake an implementation review of its bike plan, and to do this review in preparation for the management planning cycle.

Reasons for increasing cycling in the community

Cycling is both healthy for the person cycling and good for the health of the community. It is cheap, available to young and old, and encourages social inclusion.

Increased cycling will contribute to the NSW Government’s aim of reducing car dependency outlined in *Action for Transport 2010*. Cycling rather than driving

will improve air quality, urban amenity and the health of the community. Increasing cycling is a means of increasing physical activity of the population that serves to maintain healthy weight, and to reduce the risk of heart disease, some cancers, diabetes, anxiety, depression and other conditions.

Resolutions at the NSW Obesity Summit called for Local Government to take a leadership role in creating a supportive environment for walking and cycling and by implementation of plans. Resolutions on transport and planning include express attention to cycling in particular the acceleration of the implementation of Council Bicycle Plans (9.4). <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/obesitysummit/docs/communique.pdf>

Surveys show that a significant number of people travelling by car to destinations such as shopping centres and TAFEs live within a comfortable cycling distance of 5 kilometres. If only a small proportion of these journeys were by bike on some occasions, improvements in local urban amenity and local traffic congestion would be significant.

State Government policies

Several NSW Government policies recommend that actions be taken to increase the number of people cycling. For example, the *Action for Air: the NSW Government's Air Quality Management Plan* (1998) called for a threefold increase in cycling by 2001 as one of the strategies to improve Sydney's air quality.

Providing safe cycleways as a 'supportive environment' for cycling is one necessary step towards increasing the level of cycling in New South Wales. The RTA's *BikePlan 2010* (1999) sets out a costed plan to create an average 200 kilometres of cycleways across NSW per year for 10 years. The Plan recognises that it is vital to create a network of cycle paths with links to important destinations such as employment centres, education centres, retail and recreation centres. The RTA supports Councils in planning local and regional cycleways and in construction. The RTA has recently released guidelines on how to prepare Bike Plans and Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans (PAMPs); training programs are being prepared to develop the capacity of Council staff to plan, design, and install safe 'continuous paths of travel' for people walking and cycling.

The Minister for Health has made an initial response to the NSW Obesity Summit in requiring Area Health Services to establish obesity prevention plans. In addition, the health portfolio will fund a position at Lgov to co-ordinate 'healthy weight' activity at the local level.

What Local Government can do

The goal of increasing the level of cycling in the community requires a package of measures, including:

- safe, appropriate conditions for cycling;
- organisations ('trip generators') to be cycle-friendly;
- education and support for personal development e.g. offering cycling proficiency training, 'buddy cycling' opportunities
- community development activity involving increased physical activity by cycling and walking through promotional programs administered jointly between community groups, government agencies and corporate organisations.

Recently materials have been produced to assist Councils, developers and non-government organisations to increase cycling, including:

- *How to prepare a Bike Plan* (RTA)
- *How to prepare a Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan* (PAMP) (RTA)
- a joint RTA-SEDA brochure *Producing and Using Transport Access Guides*.

These documents are available from the website www.rta.nsw.gov.au

The status of bicycle planning practices within Local Government in NSW

The RTA, in conjunction with the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW [since renamed Lgov], commissioned *A survey of bicycle planning practices at the local government level* in 2001 (authors Roddis S. & King K.). Some findings of this survey are reported below:

With respect to 'effectiveness' of Bike Plans:

- Councils (urban, regional and rural) agreed that the 'strategy perceived as most likely to improve cycling related to the building of cycleways...and the repair of treatment of existing roads' (p.39).
- 35% of responding Councils reported that they had decreased spending on cycling by more than 5% between 98/99 and 00/01.

With respect to the content and use of Bike Plans:

- Cycling participation targets and network or health-based promotions were the issues least addressed in the responding Councils' Bike Plans.
- 20% of responding Councils indicated their bicycle plan was used only as an internal council document.
- 52% of responding Councils said they'd be reviewing their Bike Plan between 2001 to 2005.

Suggestions for increasing the use of cycling as a sustainable form of transport (and physical activity):

In addressing the potential to increase the use of cycling as a sustainable form of transport, the report made several suggestions about Council Bike Plans, including:

- bike plans need to be developed as part of transport provision responsibilities;
- bike plans should reference and be referenced by other council planning documents;

- bike plans should be made accessible to the community both as a hard-copy document and internet resource;
- sources of funds for facilities and promotions need to be made readily available to Council staff e.g. Roads to Recovery, s94 contributions plan, Department of Sport and Recreation, Diabetes Foundation, Heart Foundation etc.

Councils should conduct an annual implementation review, that is - a report on progress with bicycle planning to cover:

- infrastructure works completed in the last 12 months
- active promotions and bicycle programs organised by council in the last 12 months
- a record of bicycle-related queries and actions
- money spent on bicycle facilities in the last 12 months.

It would be useful for an annual review of Councils' Bike Plans to be reported on to inform the Management Plan and strategic planning.

This information would be useful for Councils to monitor and report on their progress in implementation in their annual State of the Environment Report so that it feeds into the management planning early in the calendar year.

Review of implementation of Bike Plans

We support the recommendation of the LGSA-RTA study of bicycle planning by local government, that is, that Councils annually review the implementation of their Bike Plan.

We recommend that the scope of this annual review cover:

1. Infrastructure works for cycling completed in the last 12 months.
2. Planned cycling infrastructure works and budget for the next 12 months.
3. Active promotions and bicycle programs organised by council in the last 12 months (increases in participation over previous years).
4. A record (including the number) of bicycle-related queries and actions.
5. Money spent on bicycle facilities in the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months (similar to the comparisons required in the Social/Community Plan).
6. A description of Council's own practices related to cycling (e.g. cycling to work; bicycle pool).
7. Recommendations for Council's consideration.

The elements of this annual review of implementation would supersede and replace the measure or indicator proposed earlier by the Department of Local Government: the extent of bicycle lanes expressed as the length of cycleways in kilometres.

Councils own practices related to cycling

Government agencies, including Councils, can set up a bicycle pool for staff use and thereby encourage local, work-related trips to be taken by bicycle rather than by Council car; and encourage staff to cycle to work by providing good end-of-trip facilities.

We recommend, in reviewing Councils' own practices, to use the following indicators:

1. adequate end-of-trip facilities (secure parking, lockers, showers) for staff
2. availability of visitor bicycle parking
3. availability of a bike pool for staff use and use of bike pool (kms/year)
4. availability and uptake of bicycle proficiency training by staff – yes/no; how many?
5. inclusion of organisation's *Transport Access Guide* in recruitment and induction information
6. percentage of staff cycling to work.

Using an annual review of Bike Plan implementation

The findings of the review, particularly recommendations, should be included in the Council's State of the Environment Report for Councillors, Council staff and the community, especially Bicycle User Groups and Area Health Services.

The recommendations from the review would help connect the State of the Environment Report to the Management Plan. Prior to that step, the review and its recommendations should facilitate the links between environment, social plans and recreation. The recommendations would enable Council staff to more easily assess what budget bids should be prepared for cycling facilities and promotion on the basis of the value of cycling in transport, environment, social, health and recreation areas.