

Minimising Pedestrian-Cyclist Conflict on Paths



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Regulation and enforcement

It cannot be assumed that all users will either be aware of or act in accordance with the rules relevant to footpaths or shared paths.

Nor should it be assumed that current rules are necessarily the most appropriate for such facilities (see, for example, Information Note 7, *Information*, on the value of advising pedestrians to keep left on paths even though there is no longer a legal requirement for them to do so).

Regulations relating to the use of footpaths or shared paths may need to be changed. Selective restriction of users, advisory speed limits and regulatory signage may also be useful ways of modifying behaviour that leads to conflict between users.

Regulation is only likely to be effective when combined with enforcement. Enforcement may be a police or a local government function.

The main issues (see *Overview*) addressed by this Information Note are:

- footpath users
- user behaviour: awareness
- user behaviour: operational
- speed
- path capacity
- signage and information
- path safety.

Regulation

Regulatory signage

Standard regulatory signs, other than those to indicate path designation (as shared path) are not commonly used on footpaths or shared paths. However, judiciously used, where their application clearly relates to the path and not to any roadway in the vicinity, regulatory signs can convey a clear meaning that is readily understood by all users.

Give Way signs

Give Way signs may be used in a similar way as for roads, predominantly to emphasise 'right of way' regulations or functional priorities where different paths meet.

On roads, priorities are usually clearly identified by road traffic control devices, including signs, road markings and signals. On paths, users are not provided with comparable information, even where the volume and speed of some users can lead to conflict.

Signs may be reinforced by stencilled pavement markings.



Give-Way signs and pavement markings can alert users to the presence and priority of other users.

Prohibition and restriction signs

In locations of high pedestrian use, it may be desirable to restrict or prohibit bicycle use and some other uses such as skateboarding, roller-blading and even the walking of dogs. Bicycle prohibition signs of various types are set out in Austroads (1999, Ch 9) and in the Australian Road Rules.

However, any such restriction should recognise the need for appropriate and convenient alternative routes or locations for the restricted activity.

Simple signage is all that is needed in most path situations, but in areas of very high usage, such as malls, more complex signs may be necessary.



Signs may be combined on existing street furniture to minimise clutter but complex signs should stand alone.

Advisory Speed ‘Limits’

The speed of bicycle users on shared paths, in particular, can be a cause for concern, especially for other less mobile or less experienced users. This applies equally to pedestrians and to cyclists, as many senior and child cyclists prefer to ride at a slow speed and may feel extremely uncomfortable in the presence of high speed cyclists.

Since bicycles are not required to have a speed-measuring device (and most do not have one), mandatory speed limits are not a viable option, even if they could be enforced. However, advisory speed signing on paths where there are large numbers of slower users can be effective when used selectively at appropriate locations, and in accordance with the prevailing conditions.



Advisory speed limit signs have been used successfully in key locations overseas. Note the use of ‘tandem signing’ on a post that also carries a ‘share the path’ sign (Photo: Neighbourhood Transportation Branch, City of Vancouver)

The actual indicated speed is less important than the fact that the sign indicates a need for faster users to slow down to speeds compatible with those of other users.

Enforcement

A need for enforcement can be a result of failure to provide an environment that is adequate for usage or encourages appropriate behaviour. Often, however, enforcement is a necessary corollary of information and awareness initiatives. Enforcement may be the responsibility of and carried out by the police and/or local government.



Police enforcement activities relating to path usage should focus on:

- speed
- dangerous behaviour
- personal security.

Whilst it can be expensive for police to undertake occasional patrols, consideration should be given to dedicated bicycle-mounted patrols (Queensland Transport 2004), especially where paths are not clearly visible from roadways.

Highly visible police presence coinciding with community education campaigns would also be beneficial (Road Safety Council 1998a).

In areas of very high use, it may be desirable to apply video surveillance. This is likely to be required for other reasons such as security, to identify and deal with the more extreme acts of irresponsible use.



The aim of police enforcement should be to achieve high standards of user behaviour through penalising misuse of paths, not simply to stop cyclists (or others) from using certain spaces as a matter of course.

An effective enforcement program must overcome a range of practical and perception barriers. For example (Litman and Blair 2004) concluded that:

- Police officers may be unfamiliar with traffic regulations as they apply to bicycles, cyclists’ rights to use the roadway or footpath, or how to effectively enforce bicycle traffic laws. Also, in some locations, traffic enforcement in general may be a very low priority for the police.
- Non-motorised traffic violations tend to be considered a low priority by officials and the general community.
- Standard traffic fines may appear excessive for children.
- Cyclists and pedestrians may ignore citations unless police departments develop a suitable processing system.

Local government enforcement

Local government enforcement responsibilities largely relate to 'static' rather than traffic issues. These include the following:

- obstruction of paths, e.g. parking on/over footpaths, street furniture and alfresco furniture
- damage to paths (e.g. by public utilities), which adversely impacts on usability and can force users into conflict with each other
- obstruction of cycle lanes (given that cycle lanes are an important alternative to riding on paths for many cyclists).



Vehicle parking over path should be promptly dealt with and, if possible, prevented by use of wheel barriers away from the kerb



Obstruction of paths by street furniture is another issue that should be reported to the local government

Community responsibility

The general community might be able to play a more active role in facilitating the safe and convenient use of footpaths and shared paths by a range of users. Consideration may be given to establishing a counterpart to the hazard reporting system (see Information Note 6, *Path Construction and Maintenance*) or expanding the scope of existing systems to include issues that result in conflict. This would enable the responsible authorities to identify locations or behaviours that are causing conflict and to develop appropriate countermeasures.

On the National Cycle Network in the United Kingdom, voluntary path rangers are used as part of an

organised program (Sustrans 2000). This may be appropriate where regular users or local residents can keep an eye on particular paths away from roadways.

References

Austrroads 1999, *Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice: Part 14 – Bicycles*. Austrroads: Sydney, NSW.

Litman and Blair 2004, *Managing Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs) On Nonmotorized Facilities*. Victoria Transport Policy Institute: Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Queensland Transport 2004, *Reducing Conflict Between Bicycle Riders And Pedestrians*. Cycle Note C2 State Cycle Unit, Queensland Transport, QLD.

Road Safety Council 1998a, *Conflicts on Shared Paths*. Road Safety Council: Perth, WA.

Sustrans 2000, *Information Sheet FF04: Shared Use Routes*.