



Submission on Marlborough District Council's Marlborough Walking and Cycling Strategy

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Introduction

1. Nelson Marlborough Health (Nelson Marlborough District Health Board) (NMH) is a key organisation involved in the health and wellbeing of the people within Te Tau Ihu. NMH appreciates the opportunity to comment from a public health perspective on the Marlborough District Council's (MDC) Marlborough Walking and Cycling Strategy.
2. NMH makes this submission in recognition of its responsibilities to improve, promote and protect the health of people and communities under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 and the Health Act 1956.
3. This submission sets out particular matters of interest and concern to NMH around pedestrian and cycle safety and has a number of recommendations for consideration which would further improve health outcomes for the community.

General comments

4. NMH commends MDC for its draft Marlborough Walking and Cycling Strategy. Walking and cycling has a wide range of positive benefits for individuals that include improved mental and physical health, increased independence for children, convenience and affordability. In addition, there are numerous community benefits through greater social connectedness, crime prevention through "more eyes on the street", along with economic and environmental benefits.
5. NMH supports the main aims of the Strategy to provide for a safe, convenient and attractive integrated walking and cycling network. The provision of such a network will enable people to engage in physical activity.
6. NMH agrees with the approach taken to make the Strategy a "living document" with an incorporated action plan as this will make it easier to achieve the aims of the Strategy.
7. The Strategy is very clear about how it integrates with other associated Plans and Programmes. This makes it easier for the reader to understand how the Strategy interrelates with other documents and identify the funding streams, especially in terms of related programmes that are in the Road Safety Action Plan, Community Walkability Improvement Policy and Visitor Economy Growth Plans.
8. NMH is pleased to see that MDC has taken a broad approach to the Strategy by including walking and cycling facilities for both main centres and small townships. This will mean that the standard of the active transport network will increase district wide enabling a greater number of people to walk and cycle.

9. NMH congratulates MDC for focusing on schools as a priority because this sets up a travel habits for life. Walking and cycling can make children calmer and happier which can improve their concentration making it easier to focus in school. Walking and cycling also promotes children's independence and freedom. The number of school children walking and cycling has fallen considerably over the past thirty years. Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure around schools along with behaviour change promotion will be beneficial to increasing the numbers of children engaging in active transport. Specifically, NMH supports the following:

- a. The provision of separated cycle routes to schools
- b. The cycle skills training programmes.
- c. The continuation of the Bikes in Schools programme in the region
- d. Increased funding for playgrounds in schools because these both encourage physical activity.

10. It is noted that safety has been highlighted as a concern for people who cycle and walk, and whilst the numbers of injuries that occur are relatively minor, people perceive that there is a risk to walking or cycling. Therefore consideration should be given to identifying which areas are seen to be high risk, such as roundabouts for cyclists as specified in the consultation document, and narrow margins on roads for example, the margin on the bridge crossing over the Opaoa River. Further analysis needs to be undertaken looking at the design of roundabouts along with the speeds and the crossing points to ensure that less confident cyclists are able to navigate the crossings, and if not, where there is an alternative route cyclists can use. Crossings can be a significant barrier to people walking and cycling. It is important that on every street, people of all ages and abilities are able to find a safe place to cross without having to go out of their way.

11. NMH recommends that MDC uses the Healthy Streets Indicators¹ as a guide to understand how to make streets healthy, safe and welcoming for everyone. The Indicators focus on the experience of people using streets and there are two main indicators:

- a. Pedestrians from all walks of life use the streets
- b. People choose to walk, cycle and use public transport in the area

The Indicators include a series of questions related to whether a street is easy to cross, noisy, safe, interesting and welcoming. Applying the indicators to streets in the Marlborough district may be one way MDC could assess the level of risk for

¹ <https://healthystreets.com/2017/11/21/guide-to-the-healthy-streets-indicators/>

pedestrians and cyclists. The indicators could be used as a tool for addressing the identified challenges of the district: designing a more complete network, and reducing the conflict between multiple users.

In addition, Healthy Streets has an inclusive view that streets should be able to be used by people of all ages and abilities. This is important given that the population is ageing, that walking and cycling are activities that easily accessible for everyone. Encouraging higher rates of cycling in our older population can lead to significant health benefits; a study by King's College London on a group of cyclists aged 55 to 79 found these cyclists had levels of physiological function that are comparable to people much younger².

Specific Comments

12. NMH supports the policies that are listed under Objective 1: encourage and support people to choose walking and cycling for an active, healthy lifestyle and an improved environment.
13. NMH supports the policies that are listed under Objective 2: develop a safe, convenient and attractive integrated travel network for walking and cycling.
14. NMH supports the policies that are listed under Objective 3: Ensure that all relevant strategies, policies, plans and practices for Marlborough include and support walking and cycling.
15. Under section 4.3 Education and promotion, there is a sentence that discusses the health benefits of all age groups participating in regular exercise. NMH recommends that the descriptors "physical and mental" are added before the word "health" because this shows the range of the benefits.
16. NMH supports the inclusion of SMART targets that will determine whether the Strategy's objectives are being achieved. NMH notes that 75% of the SMART targets are related to people's commutes. NMH recommends that an additional SMART target is included around increasing the percentage of people who cycle and walk for leisure. This would enable MDC to collect more data on the wider population rather than restricting it to just the working and school population.
17. It may also be useful to include a SMART target that measures data regarding transportation choice for those over 65 years old. As this population cohort is growing, it is important to monitor data for this group to ascertain if this group is

² Pollock, R.D. et al. (2015). An investigation into the relationship between age and physiological function in highly active older adults. *The Journal of Physiology*. 593 (1).

walking or cycling as a result of active transport initiatives, and whether this group has access to a range of transport modes.

18. NMH notes that the monitoring section of the action plan contains surveys regarding cycling facilities but there is nothing specific for walking. NMH recommends that survey data is obtained for walking and this includes collecting age related data.
19. NMH supports the implementation plan for urban walking and cycling infrastructure including the increasing the cycle network, improving cyclist hotspots, upgrading footpaths
20. NMH supports the installation of 40km/hour signs around Marlborough schools but recommends that Council reduces the speed limit around schools to 30km/h. The Ministry of Transport's Safer Journey report³ shows that there is a 10% probability of death for pedestrians struck by cars travelling at 30km compared with 50% probability for pedestrians struck by cars travelling at 45km. The World Health Organisation and AusRoads both have recognised that that speeds of less than 30k/m are required to minimise vulnerable or unprotected road user deaths, particularly those involving pedestrians.^{4,5}
21. NMH supports the broad implementation plan for rural infrastructure including the installation of 40km/r signs around Marlborough schools, continued improvements to footpaths and crossings, and the upgrades to tracks and cycle paths.
22. NMH supports the range of programmes related to behaviour change. NMH recommends that consideration is given to adopting behaviour change programmes that are aimed at the parents of school children that highlight the benefits of walking and cycling and address safety concerns.
23. NMH notes that Policy 1.3 relates to leading Marlborough community by example through the Council actively supporting walking and cycling in its day-to-day operation. As part of the behaviour change programme, it may be of value for NMH and MDC, as large employers in the district, to work together on a behaviour change programme for staff. This would demonstrate that both our respective organisations are leading by example, as well have staff being able to enjoy the positive benefits of walking and cycling. Other large employers may be interested in joining such a programme.

³ <http://www.saferjourneys.govt.nz/assets/Safer-journeys-files/SaferJourneyStrategy.pdf> page 2

⁴ World Health Organisation (2017) *Managing Speeds* retrieved from <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/254760/1/WHO-NMH-NVI-17.7-eng.pdf>

⁵ AusRoads (2016) *Achieving Safe System Speeds on Urban Arterial Roads: Compendium to Good Practice* retrieved from <https://www.onlinepublications.austroads.com.au/items/AP-R514-16>

24. It is also noted that the Walking and Cycling Strategy makes no mention of integrating the walking and cycling networks with public transport. The provision of cycle stands at bus stops or the ability to take bicycles on buses would give people addition transport options.

Recommendations

25. That the Healthy Streets Indicators⁶ are adopted to audit streets.
26. That an additional SMART target is included aimed at increasing the percentage of people who cycle and walk for leisure.
27. That SMART target that measures data regarding transportation choice for those over 65 years old is included.
28. That the monitoring section of the action plan includes surveys regarding walking.
29. That the speed limits of roads around schools is reduced to 30km/h.
30. That the travel behaviour change programmes for school children is extended to include parents.
31. That NMH and MDC pilot a travel behaviour change programme for staff.
32. That the Strategy identifies the linkages between walking and cycling and the public transport network.

Conclusion

33. NMH thanks MDC for the opportunity to comment on the Marlborough District Council's Marlborough Walking and Cycling Strategy.

Yours sincerely



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⁶ <https://healthystreets.com/2017/11/21/guide-to-the-healthy-streets-indicators/>