

## **Speed reduction, traffic calming or cycling facilities: a question of what best achieves the goals?**

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Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this session. From an Australian perspective, the major issues of global importance which should be addressed include and arise from the following:

**1**

Speed of traffic discourages people of all ages from walking and cycling while changing the relative convenience of other modes. Even where off-road paths are possible, in most urban areas, most of the typical trips require a fine network of different routes in order to encourage more walking and cycling instead of car use. However, such trips require road crossings which must be safe and convenient. As there are so many other supporting reasons for reducing speed of traffic on much if not most of the urban road and street network, using the existing road and street network by reducing the speed of traffic reduces the costs of providing separated facilities by allowing shared use of the existing networks without the cost and negative effects of unnecessary traffic calming devices of the barrier or nuisance types.

**2**

In Australia, the legal speed limit in urban areas is 60km/h (approx. 36mph). While many people accept that this is too fast for people walking or cycling, most people then prefer to use a car rather than walking or cycling and thus avoid being exposed to the risks or threats of high speed traffic. Thus while Australia may appear to have a relatively low annual road fatality total of around 1500 and have successfully achieved this number despite a growing population (approx. 18m), the relatively small number of people walking and cycling in the predominantly car oriented urban environment tends to ensure that little of the transport budget will be spent on separate cycling facilities.

**3**

The problem for Australia and other countries with speed limits and car traffic dominance which combine to threaten people who would like to walk or cycle more often instead of using their car is that while people agree with cycling and walking, they don't do it, and while they might promote it, they don't fund it. Who are these people?

**4**

Frequently, they are organisations such as road safety authorities and road authorities who know the threats of walking and cycling but, recognising car dominance, promote cycling and walking safely ... often in such a way that trips for most people are not safe, not direct, and not convenient. Sometimes these people may seem to have little choice in how they act. However, if these people are supportive and recognise and accept the situation, advocacy can achieve benefits by demonstrating the inconsistency between what is being promoted and what is being provided ... and what should be provided.

**5**

Based on acceptance of much experience and research with low speed roads in Europe and in India, it seems that promoting a 30km/h speed limit in urban areas is essential. However, as the urban

speed limit in Australia is currently 60km/h, 30 was too slow and would be rejected politically as unacceptable. The Bicycle Federation of Australia therefore decided to develop and promote the idea of a "safe urban speed limit" and thus, as it seems reasonable to have a safe urban speed limit and a safe road system, advocate reducing of speed limits to an acceptable limit from a safety perspective which includes many more people with access disabilities, people walking and people cycling. With adequate research by the road safety and road authorities, the appropriate speeds and facilities and the level of safety and convenience would emerge as increased usage and exposure was achieved with a reduction in injuries and fatalities, not only for people walking or cycling ... but for all people including motorists.

## **6**

Currently various state and local governments are introducing lower speed limits in various forms with the reduction to 50 (30mph) in residential streets generally preferred although one city has 40km/h (25mph) on all such streets and many residents groups want speed reduced to 40 or less.

## **7**

The problem seems to be that Australians are so used to 60 that 50 seems too slow yet "50 is too fast" and 40 and preferably 30 (20mph) is needed to provide safety and convenience for people of all ages to walk or cycle. Even cyclists disagree about the practicality of driving at 30, perhaps forgetting that they might be spending a lot more time cycling if driving was so much slower!

## **8**

Increased use of traffic calming devices has only demonstrated that people who would tend to obey the speed limits are disadvantaged while for engineering reasons, higher speed traffic still proceeds. Traffic calming devices over large areas, like extensive off-road bikepaths, also prove expensive and in many cases in Australia, local dissatisfaction is such that traffic calming devices are later removed, not to encourage higher speed but to reduce the negative effects. At the same time, residents areas recognized the difficulty in achieving police enforcement of speeding (i.e. speed judged by the residents as inappropriate). Increasing acceptance by some police in some regions has led to recognition that enforcement of speeding in low speed and residential areas is an important component of general policing, community relations and speed management.

## **9**

Increasingly, the necessity to examine why it is that speed limits and acceptable traffic speeds are so high is being promoted and examined. In Australia, it is the majority motorists view that determines the speed limit and thus by seeking higher speed limits, motorists effectively excluded cycling and walking. However, global issues such as global warming suggest that Australia, like many other car dominated countries, cannot continue to rely only on cars and must begin to promote walking and cycling. In doing so, those responsible for road safety are increasingly being exposed when they promote walking and cycling but without safety and convenience.

## **10**

Therefore, as it is becoming increasingly more urgent for car dominated countries to address (i) car domination, (ii) global injuries and fatalities caused by car domination and (iii) global economic and environmental obligations such as pollution and oil availability, there is a point where the need to quickly and widely implement strategies to meet these commitments will be reached if countries are to maintain their status as global examples of leadership.

## 11

Based on the experience and research already in place and ongoing in other places notably Europe but also in India for example, the only practical option which will be available and readily applicable which will allow people to choose whether to use a bike, a bus, a car or their legs, will be reduced speed of traffic.

## 12

Therefore, promotion of individual, local, regional and national speed reduction in Australia is ongoing in order to implement projects which can be assessed and where appropriate, used to demonstrate the benefits while at the same time, increasingly raising the issue of speed reduction places pressures on the road safety and road authorities to provide a safe road system which is safe and convenient for people who wish to walk or cycle.

Implicit in the above is the benefit of experience in other places. One result is the ability to transfer this experience. Another is to use it comparatively to achieve political and social changes. Thus it is the areas or issues which are accepted and those which are disputed, and by whom and why, which this "round table" session should seek to identify and clarify.

Conclusions ought to include a strong position on those areas of agreement and disagreement with a goal to promote the agreed areas and to explore and better resolve those not agreed.

It is in this way that the importance of international co-operation and global connections emerges. Although only a very small group with limited capacity and great diversity of interest, the Global Network for Gentle Mobility formed in Graz at Velo-City '99 provides an opportunity to connect various national strategies, experiences and advocates concerns internationally and many of these views will be presented during this and other sessions.

It is increasingly becoming important for all interested in transport generally and cycling specifically to be able to assist others with both experience and ideas and to subject research, reports and strategies and experience to review and for possible use and adaptation in other places.

This session must aim to assist in moving in that direction.

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