4.0 A Framework for Supporting Cycling in Lake Macquarie

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents a framework of enabling factors for creating a supportive environment for cycling in Lake Macquarie. This framework is based on a synthesis of the outcomes of the community engagement process, the working group workshops and the audits of the existing bicycle network.

The enabling factors are presented for both adults and young children, as the underlying influences are often different.

4.2 The policy context for cycling

A review of key local, state and federal policies provides a strong case for supporting investment in cycling in Lake Macquarie.

Supporting Lake Macquarie policies

The Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy supports the overarching goals of the Draft Lifestyle 2030 Strategy, the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (ESAP), and Green House Gas Emissions Reduction Target Policy.

The above three plans and policies provide the long-term direction for the overall development of the Lake Macquarie municipality. The strategy recognises the importance of encouraging walking and cycling for short trips in order to achieve a well serviced and equitable city with attractive and liveable urban areas. In particularly, the Strategy includes direction to design, implement and maintain a safe, convenient and integrated cycle and pedestrian network.
Adjacent LGA cycling policies

Newcastle City Council, Wyong Shire Council and Cessnock City Council have each adopted a cycling strategy and plan to encourage cycling in their local areas. Some of these strategies present a significant opportunity for Lake Macquarie City Council to partner with adjacent Councils to achieve a consistent and connected regional network and to provide links to key attractors outside the Lake Macquarie area.


The Newcastle Cycling Strategy Action Plan outlines the proposed cycling network, promotional, educational, leadership and advocacy activities to encourage cycling in Newcastle. The plan contains several proposals for routes that link the Lake Macquarie municipality with Newcastle including:

- An extension of the Fernleigh Track from Adamstown Heights (at the Lake Macquarie LGA boundary) to provide a scenic route to Fern Bay, and
- A link from Bennetts Green in Lake Macquarie which connects with John Hunter Hospital and the University of Newcastle.

These proposals recognise Lake Macquarie as a key attractor for trips from Newcastle and present the opportunity to link Lake Macquarie residents with key attractors in the Newcastle area.

The Newcastle Cycling Strategy Action Plan also identifies Lake Macquarie City Council as a key partner in order to achieve a coherent and connected network with consistent quality treatments across municipal boundaries.

Wyong Shire Council On-road Bicycle and Shared Pathway Strategy and Action Plan 2010

This strategy and action plan sets out the direction and policy framework to achieve an improved cycling network in the Wyong municipality over the next 10 years. The plan presents actions for priority shared path and bicycle lane projects, educational initiatives, and promotional activities to encourage walking and cycling.

This includes a proposal to provide a shared pathway around the entire Tuggerah Lakes system to connect with the Lake Macquarie area. This route could support the recreational facilities outlined as part of the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy.

Cessnock City Council Bicycle Plan 1995

The 1995 Cessnock City Council Bicycle Plan was developed in an effort to encourage cycling within the community and reduce bicycle accidents. The Bicycle Plan focuses on engineering physical infrastructure that is likely to strengthen links between the Lake Macquarie area and the Cessnock area.

However, discussions with Cessnock City Council suggest that the Bicycle Plan is likely to be revised in the near future. This presents an opportunity for Lake Macquarie City Council to engage with Cessnock City Council to achieve connectivity between the two networks, and to seek alignment with future proposals for cycling promotion initiatives.

Supporting state policies

The NSW Bicycle Plan 2010 and the RTA Bicycle Plan 2010 are key supporting state policies that complement the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy by promoting and facilitating cycling at a wider regional level. The plans also include several actions to provide direct support to Local Councils and to improve connections in the Lake Macquarie area.

NSW Bicycle Plan 2010

The NSW Bicycle Plan outlines the NSW Government’s 10 year vision for cycling.

The Bicycle Plan aims to support cyclists concerned about the ease of travel, safety and end of trip practicalities by implementing actions to overcome these barriers and focus on the delivery of new infrastructure to create a connected cycling network. It recognises the importance of collaboration with Local Councils, developers and organisations to accelerate and support this connectivity.

The plan includes the following actions outlined which directly support the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy:

- Accelerate the completion of the Fernleigh track, creating a major regional cycleway from Adamstown to Belmont (Action 2.3)
- Increase funding to improve signage for existing facilities and to provide facilities in NSW country towns (Action 2.4).

Several proposed actions to support cycling in the neighbouring municipality of Newcastle will also encourage cycling trips between the municipalities and complement the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy. This includes improvements to the sub-regional cycling network, providing end of trip facilities and adult cycle training.

In addition, the plan includes several actions to support all Local Councils to encourage cycling. This includes assistance with promoting cycling facilities, support cycling related initiatives and providing information and tools to facilitate the delivery of behavioural change initiatives (for example, providing tools and information and encourage businesses to grow jobs in cycling).

Action for Bicycles RTA Bicycle Plan 2010

Action for Bicycles is a 10 year forward plan with the objective of providing transport alternatives that make it easier and more convenient for people to get to the places where they want to go and reduce the rate at which the demand for car travel increases in the future.
The plan will support the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy through actions to promote and fund cycling infrastructure at a regional level. This includes events such as Bicycle Week, advocating to state and federal government, publishing cycleway maps, and providing training in schools.

The plan also presents several opportunities for funding and direct support for implementing the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy. The plan includes actions to sponsor events run through Council and to assist Local Government Road Safety Officers to provide bicycle support to communities.

**Supporting federal policy**
Federal level policies such as the Australian National Cycling Strategy and the Australian Vision for Active Transport set out the overarching vision for cycling in Australia. While these strategies do not include specific actions related to the Lake Macquarie area or adjacent regions, they provide federal level support for local actions. The strategies also propose several initiatives to provide nationally consistent frameworks that are likely to assist with implementing and monitoring of the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy.

*Australian National Cycling Strategy 2011 – 2016*

The Australian National Cycling Strategy aims to realise a step-change in attitudes towards cycling in an effort to double the number of cyclists by 2016.

The Australian Transport Council (ATC) of Federal, State and Territory Transport Ministers has developed this strategy in consultation with the range of government and non-government organisations. The strategy comprises 6 key objectives to promote cycling as a safe and enjoyable activity, extend cycling routes and facilities, address cycling needs in transport and land use planning, improve cyclist safety and road user perceptions, improve cycling program monitoring and evaluation and support knowledge sharing and development of national guidance.

There is a strong focus on actions that provide guidance and support to Local Government and other organisations. For example, the strategy proposes to develop nationally consistent guidance for monitoring and evaluation for cycling programs. Such a framework could be used as a guide for future revisions of the monitoring and evaluation of the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy.

The Australian National Cycling Strategy also outlines several actions that will promote cycling at a national level. This includes investing in cycling networks, developing end of trip facilities, and implementing marketing and educational programs.

*Australian Vision for Active Transport 2010*

The Australian Vision for Active Transport was developed with the aim of achieving sharp improvements in preventative health and physical activity, to the environment, social inclusion, traffic congestion and road safety, and to create liveable urban communities. It presents 9 key calls for government action at a national level to support and facilitate an increase in active transport.

The actions presented in this vision, if implemented, are likely to support the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy in achieving its targets. This may include potential funding opportunities, support and guidance to deliver the strategy, and national level action to promote active transport.
4.3 Behavioural model for the strategy

The behavioural model that underpins the development of this Strategy is presented in Table 4. The model is based on key enabling factors that address cycling behaviour at three key stages (1) pre-trip, (2) the trip, and (3) end-of-trip.

The enabling factors have been presented for both adults and children. However, some enabling factors are relevant to both groups. The enabling factors are explained in more detail below.

Enabling factors for adults

Dedicated, separated and connected bicycle routes

The desire for dedicated bicycle infrastructure, particularly separated bicycle routes is largely a factor of the perceived risks associated with cycling. The perception of risk is high because most cyclists (regular and infrequent) and non-cyclists believe that there is a lack of awareness of cyclists on the road and a lack of respect for cyclists among motorists.

Furthermore, and as a result of these issues, some cyclists have indicated that they have been the victims of both physical and verbal abuse from motorists on Lake Macquarie’s roads. Although this is a minority of bicycle riders the impact of such events is high and travels quickly through local social networks. The outcome of which is the stigmatisation of cycling as an unsafe activity, one that is socially disapproved of among family, friends and peers. Social disapproval is a strong barrier to for non-cyclists to take up riding and for infrequent riders to cycle more often.

“I like the idea of a cycleway on a road, but if there are two lanes of cars going 80 km/h... I don’t want to do the battle of bicycle vs. car”.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that cyclists and non-cyclists perceive the provision of dedicated space on the road for bicycle riding as a key enabler for getting more people cycling more often. Indeed, in the case of Lake Macquarie,

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Components of the Model</th>
<th>Enabling Factors for adults</th>
<th>Enabling factors for children</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Pre-trip/Individual Enablers</td>
<td>A combination of intrapersonal and social factors that influence one's self-efficacy to and acceptance of cycling</td>
<td>If Feasible</td>
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<tr>
<td>If Present</td>
<td>• Legitimisation of cycling</td>
<td>If Feasible</td>
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<tr>
<td>If Present</td>
<td>• Increased awareness among drivers</td>
<td>• Cycling skills training</td>
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<td>If Present</td>
<td>• Wayfinding and knowledge of bicycle routes</td>
<td>• Safe places to learn to ride</td>
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<tr>
<td>If Present</td>
<td>• Opportunities to ride with other children</td>
<td>• Opportunities to ride with other children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) The Trip/Trip Enablers</td>
<td>A combination of cycling infrastructure, wayfinding and relationships with other road users</td>
<td>If Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Present</td>
<td>• Dedicated, separated and connected bicycle routes</td>
<td>• Connected network of safe, attractive and comfortable bicycle routes</td>
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<tr>
<td>If Present</td>
<td>• Wayfinding and knowledge of bicycle routes</td>
<td>• Traffic calmed local and residential streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) End of Trip/Destination Enablers</td>
<td>Primarily concerned with the provision of appropriate facilities at destinations</td>
<td>If Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Present</td>
<td>• End-of-trip facilities</td>
<td>• Secure bicycle parking at schools</td>
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GOAL: More people cycling more regularly for all purposes
where many roads have speed limits of 60 kph and 80 kph, there is a strong desire for off-road bicycle routes completely separated from motorised traffic. The future development of Lake Macquarie’s bicycle network must deliver routes that are perceived to be safe among all ages, genders and abilities.

However, dedicated safe cycling facilities are not enough by themselves to provide the necessary enabling environment.

“It’s all about connecting destinations”.

In Lake Macquarie there is a strong desire for bicycle routes that connect people to key destinations, particularly public transport nodes. Connection is a fundamental criterion for an enabling environment for cycling. The development of Lake Macquarie’s bicycle network must therefore focus on locations where connection can be delivered.

Legitimisation of cycling

In addition to safe and connected bicycle routes, potential cyclists need to feel confident that cycling is a legitimate, socially sanctioned activity.

“The attitude is that the car has the right of way on the road”.

Typically in weak cycling cultures, motorists perceive cyclists as illegitimate road users who behave with little regard for the rules that drivers are required to obey. There are many misconceptions, stereotyping and stigmatising of cycling and people who cycle, driven by a combination of:

- Motorists’ perception of a negative interaction with cyclists on the road (e.g. not being able to overtake a cyclists when they are riding two abreast, even though this is perfectly legal behaviour);
- Motorists observing cyclists flaunting road rules (e.g. a cyclists failing to stop at a red light); and
- Negative discussions about cycling and people who cycle among the social circle of motorists, reinforcing negative perceptions of cyclists.

These experiences and discussions lead to negative stereotyping and stigmatisation of cycling as a socially disproved disapproved activity, and cyclists as a social deviant (i.e. someone who has violated a cultural norm, in this case, driving as the mode of travel).

The negative perception of cycling and cyclists is often reinforced through an imbalanced public discourse, often influenced by highly vocal individuals.

To address this issue cycling needs to become normalised, and viewed as a legitimate form of transport for all. For this to occur public discourse on cycling needs to be balanced so that families, friends and peers can have better informed conversations on the value of cycling.

“For more than half a century, bicycles had steered their way into the core of Danish self-perception through the visual arts, poetry and music.”

Danish Embassy for Cycling

Lake Macquarie City Council, in collaboration with other Government agencies, the police and local advocacy groups, has a significant role to play in legitimising cycling. For example, large scale cultural events like music, fashion, film events, ride to work days, cycling festivals or the integration of cycling with existing festivals and events are effective ways to generate positive experiences between the public and cycling. They are non-threatening, non-evasive events that allow people to connect with cycling without having to actually partake in the activity. Even if the events do not result directly in more people taking up cycling, they have proven to generate positive conversations about cycling.

Wayfinding and knowledge of bicycle routes

“Signage identifying safe routes saying this will get you from point A to point B”.

Consistent and legible bicycle networks help to reduce the perceived risk of taking up cycling or cycling more often, particularly for novice cyclists. As people become more experienced riders and develop their knowledge of the local network, specific routes become habitual and the need for signage / wayfinding becomes less important. However, there will always be a role for wayfinding to support new riders and visitors.

The ability to navigate bicycle routes around Lake Macquarie will not only serve the needs of local bicycle riders but it will also benefit tourism cycling in and around Lake Macquarie.

End-of-trip facilities

As revealed in the social research, the fear of not having a safe (and in some cases attractive) location to store bicycles at the end of a trip is a significant barrier for the uptake of cycling.

Similarly, many people do not take up cycling because they do not want to arrive at work sweaty without the comfort of having good changing and showering facilities. This is particularly important at workplaces.
Appropriate end-of-trip facilities (parking, changing and storage) at key destinations (e.g. public transport nodes, workplaces, education facilities and local shops) are critical components of an enabling environment for cycling.

**Enabling factors for children**

Connected network of safe, attractive and comfortable bicycle routes

*“My daughter would love to ride her bicycle more [but] there are no bicycle paths or footpaths”*

The provision of safe, attractive and comfortable bicycle routes is a critical element in providing an enabling environment for children to cycle. The provision of this infrastructure is a key influencer on the decision of parents of the children to allow their children to cycle. Parents need to feel assured that they are allowing their children to take part in an activity that occurs in a relatively safe environment.

The provision of dedicated space for cycling, in the form of separated or off-road facilities provides parents with a higher degree of comfort that their children are safe from conflict with motorised traffic. However, the effectiveness of such facilities is diminished by gaps in the network. Therefore, connectivity is an important enabler for getting more children cycling.

**Cycling skills training**

Cycling training is one of the fundamental contributors of the Dutch cycling culture. It is mandatory that all children undergo cycling training and are prepared for the conditions and experience of riding their bicycles on the bicycle network. Such training also instils a high level of awareness of cyclists among these children when they begin to drive motorised vehicles on the road. The expectation of the presence of cyclists on the road is normal.

**Safe places to learn to ride**

Parents have noted that the road environment is currently not a suitable place for children to learn to cycle, given the general inexperience of children and the current lack of respect / awareness for cycling. Recent research (GHD, 2009) identified that the provision of a safe and familiar environment was essential for attracting more people to take up cycling. Such environments significantly lower the perceived risks many non-cyclists and novice cyclists have about taking up the activity.

**Opportunities to ride with other children**

Children are heavily influenced by their peers and opportunities to ride with other children can help to reinforce the idea that cycling is “cool” and aspirational. Events that are highly sociable provide an opportunity to generate positive “buzz” (word-of-mouth), which can generate conversation among young people, helping to spread the interest in cycling across social networks thus further raising interest in taking up cycling.

**Secure bicycle parking at schools**

For children to take up cycling parents must first make an investment in a bicycle and some cycling gear on behalf of their children. It is therefore not surprising that parents have identified secure parking at school as an important influence on this decision. Parents want to be sure that this investment will be protected. Furthermore, the loss or theft of a bicycle can have a strong negative impact on a child. The impact is not just the loss of a belonging but also the theft of their personal freedom, as the bicycle often provides children with their first experience of independence. This negative experience can have a very damaging and lasting impact on their perception of cycling.

**Increased awareness of cyclists among drivers**

At present there is a low expectation of cyclists on the road in Lake Macquarie. Cycling remains, very much a marginalised activity undertaken by a small minority of the population.

Parents are aware that cycling is not currently considered a socially sanctioned activity in Lake Macquarie and have identified the need to “legitimise” cycling as an important step in changing the mindset of other road users.

**Traffic calmed local and residential streets**

Local residential streets are common places for children to develop some basic cycling skills.

*“I would love to be able to ride my bicycle with my two kids in their trailer from my home but [the roads are] steep, curved & cars fly around the corners without looking”*

However, in many cases cars have been allowed to dominate these spaces, with minimal safe space left over for people to walk and ride their bicycles.

Parents have expressed a desire to take local and residential streets as safe and attractive locations for their children to learn to ride and develop enough experience that they can eventually ride on the road.