

11.0 BENEFITS OF WALKING and CYCLING

11.1 Individual Benefits

Individuals derive benefits from walking and cycling in many ways:

- ▶ Convenient door to door access without parking hassles in urban areas.
- ▶ Improved mental and physical health and fitness – evidence suggests the health benefits of cycling outweigh the associated risks, risks from walking are minimal.
- ▶ Increased independence, especially for school age children.
- ▶ Access to a vehicle (bicycle) which is relatively cheap to own and operate.
- ▶ Increased opportunities to observe, experience and enjoy the scenery and environment.
- ▶ Cycling is a very versatile form of fitness training, as not weight bearing there is no straining of joints.
- ▶ Cycling and walking are relatively cheap forms of exercise, requiring minimal equipment.
- ▶ Exercises can be adapted to suit the health and fitness of the participant, both activities are very adaptable.
- ▶ Convenient forms of exercise as can be undertaken almost anywhere.

11.2 Community Benefits

The presence of walkers and cyclists within an area can contribute to community well-being in a number of ways:

- ▶ Greater social interaction amongst neighbours is likely to occur.
- ▶ Personal security and crime prevention are enhanced with more 'eyes on the street'.
- ▶ Provision of improved facilities for walkers and cyclists can also improve amenities available to local residents (such as paths through parks).
- ▶ Provision of cycling facilities can reduce traffic speeds and volumes in urban areas, improving quality of life in our towns e.g. reduced noise and air pollution.
- ▶ Cycling can reduce the amount of space we devote to roads and car parking thereby enabling the enhancement of the urban amenity.
- ▶ Provision of walking and cycling facilities promotes civic pride.
- ▶ A generally healthier community and reduced health care costs.

11.3 Health Benefits

With a reduction in work-based physical activity and with most people living increasingly stressful lives, opportunities are needed to incorporate some form of regular physical activity into our lives. Allowing people to choose cycling or walking for transport provides good opportunities for increased physical activity.

There is well known evidence as to the benefits of incorporating exercise into daily living patterns in a manner that is regular and moderate. Activities that meet these requirements and can be maintained throughout life include walking, gardening and cycling.

Choosing walking or cycling as a mode of transport can significantly improve health and fitness as well and the health and well being of our community.

11.4 Economic Benefits

Cycling contributes to the local economy in a number of ways. In particular, formal and informal recreational cycling events could attract both local residents and tourists with money to spend on food, refreshments, entertainment and accommodation.

Cycle travellers typically spend more per person per day than local people. Cycle tourists (who often travel only as far in a day as motorists do in an hour) are simply around longer and have more time to spend their money in our community.

Walking activities have many of the same potential economic benefits as cycling activities. Travellers often do not have their own vehicles and will tend to walk around urban areas more perhaps than locals. Attractive, well signposted walking routes will add to a positive impression of the district. Medium distance walking tracks that connect to provide a more versatile set of walking opportunities, would greatly benefit the tourist community and enhance the economic benefits that flow from enticing visitors to stay additional nights and to come to town in the first instances.

Cycling and walking can have economic advantages for our transportation system by:

- ▶ Reducing the number of trips made by cars, thereby reducing congestion and freeing up road space for essential motor vehicle trips.
- ▶ Reducing costs for construction and maintenance of roads.
- ▶ Reducing costs for provision of parking facilities.

11.5 Environmental Benefits

Cycling and walking improves the quality of our natural environment and minimises environmental impacts:

- ▶ Cycles are the most energy efficient land transport vehicles.
- ▶ Walking is also a very efficient mode of transportation.
- ▶ Up to 100 times less material is needed to manufacture a cycle than a car.
- ▶ Cycles have a minuscule effect on our fossil fuel reserves.
- ▶ Cyclists and walkers emit no pollution, noise pollution or greenhouse gases.
- ▶ Promoting cycling and walking as a means of travel helps to achieve New Zealand's Kyoto Protocol obligations.

Clearly there are major benefits in enabling even small number of people to walk and cycle regularly. Because of its low cost, negligible energy consumption and environmental compatibility, cycling should be planned for as an integral part of the transport system and encouraged and promoted as a long term sustainable form of transport.