

# Bike Waikato Submission to Lane Use Improvements

Kia ora New Zealand Transport Agency

We are Bike Waikato, a cycling advocacy group based in the Waikato that advocates to help get more people riding bikes safely.

There are numerous benefits to riding a bike as transportation, including improved physical and mental health, stronger local economies (due to an increase in disposable income), and reduced environmental and noise pollution. However, a perceived lack of safety is consistently cited as the primary barrier to people riding bikes in Hamilton, and indeed, across the country. The road rules play a large role in this perception, which is why we have a strong interest in these proposed rule changes.

## **Proposal One: Allow children aged 12 years and under to ride bikes on footpaths.**

We support the intended purpose of the first proposal: “*cycling on busy roads can be a safety risk for younger or less experienced bike riders and is concerning for their caregivers*”<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, while there is a common belief that riding on the footpath is safer than riding on the road, especially for young cyclists, there is limited evidence that this actually reduces the likelihood of crashes between drivers and people on bicycles, especially because many drivers still do not expect to see people on bikes on the footpath.

The discussion document states that a possible impact of the change is a “*greater uptake of cycling from children who currently feel unsafe cycling on the road*”<sup>2</sup>. However, under the proposed rules, children aged greater than 13 years are legally required to ride on the road, which is unlikely to encourage uptake (and unlikely to occur, as the discussion document already notes that many children and caregivers currently ride on the footpath despite this being illegal).

Fundamentally, this rule change does not address the underlying cause for the danger of riding bicycles, which is inadequate cycling infrastructure and poor behaviour from drivers towards cyclists.

Therefore, while **we support this proposal in principle**, it must be noted that it is **unlikely to have the intended positive impacts** as anticipated in the discussion document.

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<sup>1</sup> Page 6, *Lane use improvements: Consultation document*.

<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/consultation/lane-use-improvements/lane-use-improvements-consultation-document.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Page 7, *Lane use improvements: Consultation document*.

<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/consultation/lane-use-improvements/lane-use-improvements-consultation-document.pdf>

## **Proposal Two: Set a minimum passing gap for when vehicles pass other road users.**

We support the second proposal. Inadequate passing from drivers is often cited by people riding bikes as a significant risk while riding and legislating for minimum passing distances has been campaigned for over many years.

However, **the speed at which a greater passing distance is required should be set at 50 kph** instead of 60 kph. This ensures that the new rule covers the majority of residential, urban streets, where people are most likely to be biking.

We strongly agree with this statement from the discussion document: *“There may be challenges in tight spaces, like narrow roads or busy streets, where drivers may have to slow down or wait longer before overtaking. However, these are also situations where people walking or cycling are most at risk, which is why this safety rule is being proposed.”*<sup>3</sup> While this is already implied by the rule, many of our members have experienced drivers passing them around a blind corner or while there is oncoming traffic, and so this concept is clearly not well understood by all drivers and must be emphasised when educating road users about this rule change.

Additionally, the rule change should **make clear the minimum passing distance applies even where there is bicycle infrastructure**, especially unprotected bicycle infrastructure such as painted bicycle lanes. Adequate passing distance is still required in these situations to minimise risk for vulnerable road users.

## **Proposal Three: Allow people to ride e-scooters in cycle lanes.**

We are supportive of this proposal and do not anticipate any significant issues.

## **Proposal Four: Require drivers to give way to buses leaving bus stops.**

We do not have a view on this proposal.

## **Proposal Five: Clarify signage requirements for enforcing berm parking restrictions.**

We do not have a view on this proposal.

To conclude, we are broadly supportive of the proposed changes, however some clarifying tweaks and changes are still required to fully realise the intended benefits.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Kind regards

Bike Waikato Committee

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<sup>3</sup> Page 8, *Lane use improvements: Consultation document*.

<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/consultation/lane-use-improvements/lane-use-improvements-consultation-document.pdf>