

Contact: Dr Lynley Hood
Trustee, VICTA
PO Box 5862
Moray Place
Dunedin 9058

enquiries@visualimpairment.org.nz

Ph. 027 222 9279

7 July 2017

SUBMISSION on the DUNEDIN URBAN CYCLEWAYS CONSULTATION

ABOUT VICTA

VICTA (Visual Impairment Charitable Trust Aotearoa NZ) is a Dunedin-based charity with nationwide reach established in 2013 to address the unmet needs of the 100,000+, mainly older, New Zealanders with incurable vision loss who are not blind enough to qualify for help from the Blind Foundation.

VICTA supports cycling, and cycling safety, but not at the expense of the safety of our most vulnerable road users: elderly and disabled pedestrians.

VICTA would welcome the opportunity to make an oral presentation on this matter.

THE ISSUES

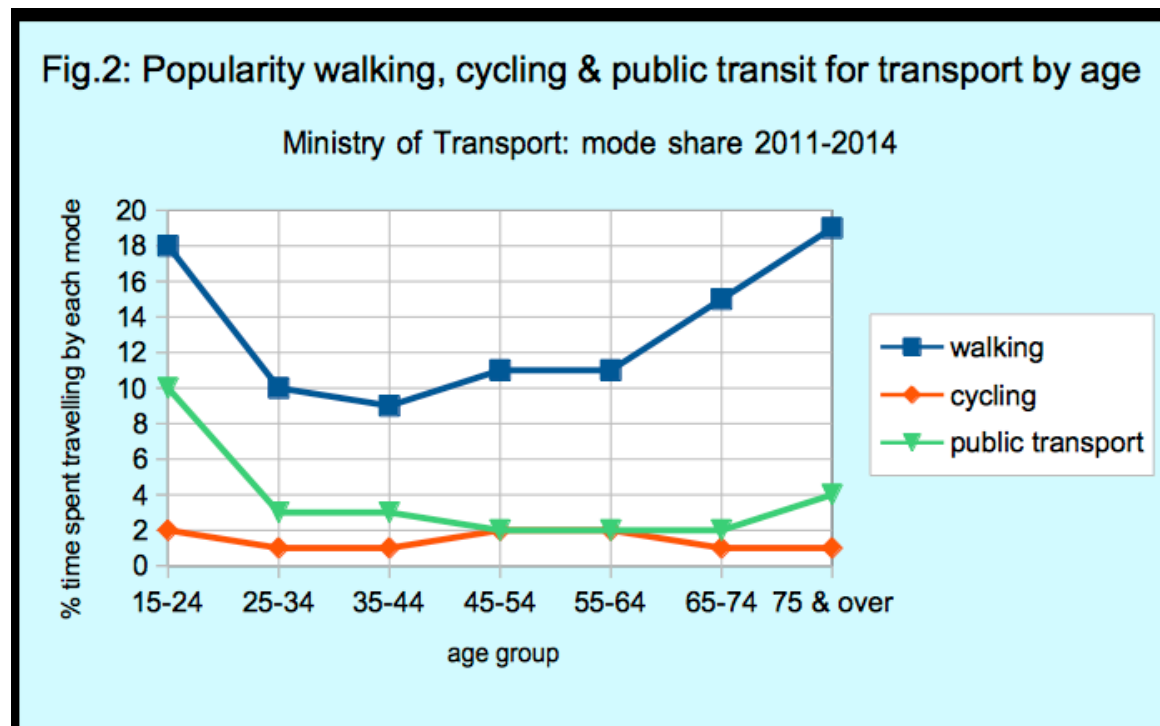
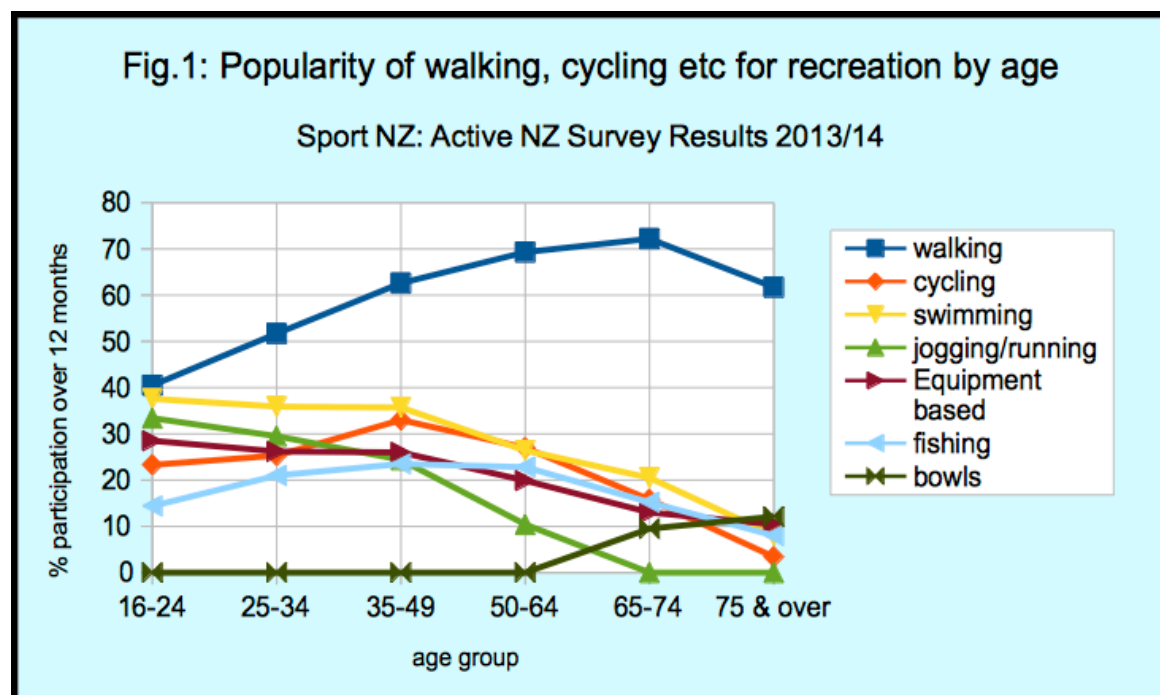
- A safe harbour-front walkway, accessible from Dunedin's central city, would be a highly attractive location for elderly and disabled pedestrians to take a walk and enjoy the view.
- Shared paths, designed and built according to current guidelines, are dangerous and unpleasant places for elderly and disabled pedestrians,¹ and a source of conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.²
- Transport planners are subject to the Human Rights Act, and the UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities, both of which protect New Zealanders against discrimination on the grounds of disability and age.
- There is plenty of space for two separate paths - a cycleway and a walkway - along the harbour-front between Fryatt and Birch Streets where the NZTA/DCC plans to build a shared path.
- VICTA accepts that the current government's prioritisation and funding of cycling safety and cycling infrastructure, and its neglect of pedestrian safety and pedestrian infrastructure, makes funding a separate harbour-front walkway a challenge at this time.

OUTCOME SOUGHT:

- VICTA proposes that if funding is unavailable now, land should be set aside for a two-metre wide walkway on the harbour side of the planned cycleway between Fryatt and Birch Sts, and that completion of this walkway be prioritised in the next DCC budget, and
- that, wherever cycleways transition to shared paths on Dunedin's cycling network, effective measures be taken to ensure that cyclists slow to walking pace at the entrance of the shared path, and bike slowly for its entire length, and
- that the creation of safe and pleasant cycle-free urban footpaths and walkways become a DCC priority.

PEDESTRIANS NEED SEPARATE WALKWAYS

- Walking is New Zealanders' favourite exercise by a very wide margin - for both recreation (fig.1) and transport (fig.2). It's popularity increases with age. Cycling is far less popular. It's popularity declines with age.



- Walking suits people of all ages and abilities. Many people - including seniors, small children, and people with disabilities - don't have the strength, skills or balance to ride a bike. Many people can't afford a bike. Many people walk for convenience, or to burn calories. Many people enjoy walking because it's the only form of transport in which the mind, the body and the environment can be so pleasantly synchronised.

- Elderly and disabled pedestrians are at risk of serious injuries from collisions with cyclists. They have brittle bones. They move slowly, often with the help of mobility aids. Their vision and hearing may be impaired. Even the fittest geriatric gym bunny no longer has the reflexes that enabled their younger self to leap out of the way of fast moving vehicles. Also, like younger pedestrians, older pedestrians can be poor judges of speed and distance.
- In the five years from 1 July 2009, to 30 June 2014, 184 pedestrians were seriously injured in collisions with cyclists. Thirty-nine of those pedestrians (21%) came from the 13% of the population aged 65 and over.³
- Over the same period, 1145 cyclists were seriously injured in collisions with fixed or stationary objects, and 9465 cyclists were seriously injured in non-collision accidents (i.e. they lost control and fell off their bikes without colliding with anything).⁴ These statistics support the view that cyclists should not be allowed near elderly and disabled pedestrians who lack the reflexes to leap out of the way.
- Dunedin's population is ageing. In 2013, 14.7% of Dunedin's population was aged 65 and over. By 2018, that figure will have risen to 16.2%. By 2028, more than one in five Dunedin residents will be aged 65 and over.⁵
- Disabilities increase with age. According to the 2013 Post-Census Disability Survey almost 60% of seniors have a disability.⁶
- Elderly and disabled people know that the best thing they can do for themselves, for the economy, and for the environment is to live active, independent, socially engaged lives in their own communities. So that's what they're doing. Statistics NZ rest home data, and retirement village occupancy data, show that only 10% of Kiwis aged 65 and over live in rest homes and retirement villages. The other 90% lives independently in the community.⁷
- As our population ages, the proportion of people who walk rather than cycle - whether by choice or necessity, whether for transport, exercise or recreation - will escalate.
- For a healthy, safe, and inclusive, future-proof city, we need to prioritise pedestrian safety now - starting with a pedestrian-friendly harbour-front walkway.

1. Submission of Road Controlling Authorities Forum on Petition 2014/59 of Joanne Clendon, NZ Parliament, 2016.
2. The Clendon petition concerned cycling on footpaths. In addition to submissions from experts and organisation, many people made personal submissions, reflecting on the joys of walking in pleasant and safe environments, and reporting collisions and other frightening experiences involving cyclists on footpaths and shared paths. As a result of these encounters, many submitters said they would never use, or no longer used, shared paths. Here are excerpts from some of their submissions:

"I no longer use the shared Hamilton river walkways as adults on mountain bikes use them as race tracks."

"Over the past 5-10 years, my mother and my mother-in-law, both in their mid-late 80s, have had their pleasure diminished and/or their walking routes curtailed after being overtaken without warning by speeding cyclists."

"I am 71 years old and for over ten years have relied on public transport and walking for my mobility... the alarming experience of being overtaken from behind at close quarters and without the slightest warning by a cyclist travelling at excessive speed is one to which no-one should have to be subjected."

"I have experienced the shock of a road bike rushing past without warning or dodging between pedestrians. I have seen the fear on older people's faces when this happens."

"I know one elderly man who was knocked down by a cyclist riding at speed on the footpath and had to be taken to hospital."

“As a keen walker, I like to be able to enjoy the outdoors without having to be alert every second to the likely need for stepping aside quickly for faster traffic. I like to have my little thoughts, and to listen to my Spanish lesson tapes. Or stop to chat with friends or fellow walkers.”

“Currently I walk around the waterfront in Auckland where the footpath is a shared space between pedestrian and cyclists. In my view it is a dismal failure for both users and as a pedestrian I feel very unsafe due to the speed and lack of consideration of most cyclists. I also cycle and have used this shared cycleway. After one use of it I felt that I could not ensure the safety of the pedestrians without dismounting often.”

“Shared Pathways have been permitted by NZTA, and have led to conflicts between users, cyclists and walkers, here in Nelson/Tasman. (Great Taste Trail, Bishopdale link shared pathway, Railway Reserve etc.) Injury accidents have occurred to walkers, people walking their dogs have upset cyclists.”

“I am a fit, well, and strong, older citizen but avoid shared cycle/walking pathways at weekends and other busy times. They are TOO dangerous.”

“Nelson CC has introduced ‘shared pathways’ for walkers and cyclists and I have experienced and observed - pedestrians experiencing near misses from cyclists and cyclists being injured trying to dodge pedestrians - cyclists rarely indicating their approach which is a real concern to the elderly. Older friends feeling extremely vulnerable and nervous; depriving them of the simple and healthy pleasure of walking, relaxing and enjoying their environment - often commuters riding at dangerous speed and children appearing to lack an awareness of safe distance and courtesy.”

“The advent of well-intentioned ‘shared’ pathways is already making walking more stressful for pedestrians, especially for the elderly, and those of us with young families.”

“Imagine taking a child along a walkway. You want the child to be able to run forward, see a bird, stop and watch it for a while, then run to the other side of the track to look down at the stream, and then spot another bird and follow it to the other side of the track, and then be distracted by an interesting fern, and so on. That behaviour is not possible if there is a risk that a fast cyclist will come around the corner.”

“I am elderly, have hearing difficulties, but my biggest problem is my personal balance... The footpath is now the only place left for me to walk safely as all walkways are used by cyclists.”

“As an older person ... I am very aware that if I was to be hit by a cycle - even at a relatively low speed - I would probably be quite severely injured.”

“Try walking around the Farm Cove Walkway in Pakuranga, Auckland and see how you get on. Those cyclists are not aware of sharing with care and in fact it is frightening. As people age and start to slow down, lose their hearing and sight, should they not walk because of the dangers imposed by cyclists on paths?”

3. Publicly funded hospital discharges for year ended 30 June (2009/10-2013/14), Ministry of Health.
4. *ibid.*
5. Statistics NZ, Subnational population projections: 2013 (base)-2043 update.
6. Disability Survey: 2013, Statistics NZ.
7. Statistics NZ (total population aged 65+, population living in residential care for older people 2013); NZ Retirement Village Database Whitepaper February 2017.
