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By email

Mission Bay Safety Improvements

We have noticed a number of issues associated with the safety improvements at Mission Bay, and would like to bring these to your attention.

The issues fall into two categories; relatively minor issues that can be easily remedied, and more fundamental issues that will be more difficult.

Minor issues

1. The western end cycle lane transition is confusing.



- a. The west-bound lane of the 2 way cycleway ends and it is not obvious where west-bound cyclists should go. In reality, they can choose to continue riding on the shared path, or cross the road to ride on the road, but the choices are not obvious.
- b. The problem with the shared path option is that nothing indicates that this is an option; there is no arrow on the cycle lane pointing towards the shared path, no cycle symbol on the shared path at that point (there is further west, but not visible from this point, and no signage).

Solution: We think that this can be easily fixed with improved markings on the new and old cycle lanes, and possibly signage. This would include arrows on the west-bound cycle lane showing the two options (road or shared path) and an arrow and cycle symbol on the shared path where cyclists are expected to join.

- c. Crossing the road to continue cycling with the traffic is difficult. The west-bound cycle lane simply ends with a kerb across the end of the lane. To get onto the road, the cyclist must ride the wrong way through the gap in the kerb, and then wait for a gap in the traffic.

Solution: We think that a better transition for west-bound cyclists could be designed. Perhaps the existing kerb that ends the lane could be removed, rumble strips or similar could be installed to make cyclists recognise that they need to slow or stop before crossing the road, and a clearly designated waiting area painted on the road.

- d. It is surprising that the point at which cyclists will need to cross the road is just outside the 50km/h zone, rather than within the 30km/h zone. This is a higher risk point so deserves greater protection.

Solution: We recognise that moving the 30km/h zone is difficult from a regulatory perspective. Instead, perhaps removing one or two of the 'tim tam dividers' might allow for a marked waiting area at the end of the west-bound lane. This could help solve the problem in (c) above as well.

2. The eastern end cycle lane transition is confusing.



- a. There appears to be just a single lane exiting the 2-way cycle path and no way to enter it from the road.
- b. The cycle path appears to suddenly end before the bus stop, then resume as a single lane. There is a cycle path as part of the shared path throughout this section, but there is nothing to show that cyclists should move across to this area. Instead, the markings suggest that cyclists should cycle straight ahead right through the bus stop waiting area.

Solution:

- The cycle path could be painted green throughout this section, with the two lanes moving across onto the shared path and leaving an unpainted island beside the bus stop. This would make it much clearer where bus passengers, pedestrians and cyclists are supposed to go.
- The single exit lane should be converted to a two-lane entry/exit.
- We also think that clearer markings to show the options of either moving onto the shared path or the road (as suggested for the western transition) would help.

3. The shared path by the clock tower is confusing

- a. This area combines the cycle lanes, footpath plus bus alighting areas into one shared path. While it is wider than the footpath elsewhere, there is a lot going on here and it is far from obvious where each type of user should go. There is no guidance to any users about where they should go. The old shared path at least had a line down the centre to delineate cycling and walking, but the new shared path has nothing; it is just a free for all.
- b. Possible solution: greater pavement marking to delineate areas.
 - an area beside each part of the bus stop could be marked as a 'safe zone' to prevent people getting on or off a bus from being hit by cyclists.
 - The shared path could be marked out to guide both cyclists and pedestrians from their dedicated paths onto the appropriate parts of the shared path. A line down the centre to separate cyclists and pedestrians, walking and cycling symbols on the appropriate parts of the path, and arrows to provide guidance at the transitions at each end would help.
 - A large number of pedestrians cross this path at right angles at the pedestrian crossing, typically in large groups when the lights permit. This is not compatible with cyclists proceeding along the path at even moderate speed. We suggest either painting a crossing across the shared path to warn cyclists they need to slow down, warning signage, or reducing cyclist speeds through a speed limit, rumble strips or similar.

4. Problems with levels and drainage



- a. There are several areas where the paving slopes away from drainage, causing water to accumulate.
- b. There is also a drainage problem where the footpath connects to the path to the fountain.

Solution: These are construction errors and should be repaired by the contractor.

Major issues

Several issues arise simply because there is not enough width in the road reserve to allow everything to be built to the best standard. Compromises have been made to fit everything in, and the primary compromise has been to the usable width of the road for vehicular traffic.

1. The new traffic lanes, while of adequate width for normal driving, are very narrow for a busy town centre with heavy traffic and parking. This causes either safety issues or traffic flow disruption for a range of common non-driving activities. For example:
 - a. If a parked-car door is unexpectedly opened, passing vehicles have to choose between swerving onto the oncoming traffic lane, or potentially hitting the door. There is no other choice as the lane is too narrow to accommodate evasive action within the lane, and there is no painted median.
 - b. If someone is getting children out of car seats on the road side, vehicles either have to wait until they are finished, holding up all traffic, or move into the oncoming lane if it is free. Likewise for vehicles backing into parking spaces.
 - c. In afternoon peaks, any more than about 4 cars waiting to turn right into Patteson Ave fill the right-turning lane and then block all through-traffic.
 - d. Pedestrians crossing Tamaki Drive between crossings no longer have a safe place to wait in the middle of the road, making it harder and less safe to cross.
 - e. Opposite Selwyn Ave, buses waiting to turn right will block through-traffic, particularly if another bus is at the Tamaki Drive bus stop.
2. Opening car doors beside the cycle path can extend beyond the width of the 'tim tams' and hit cyclists. We have been advised that some accidents have already happened but cannot confirm it.

Proposal

These problems are a direct consequence of compromises that were made to try to accommodate as much as possible in the road reserve. Over the coming months we will have the opportunity to assess whether the right compromises have been made, or whether we have introduced more hazards and inconveniences that outweigh the benefits.

It is much more difficult to solve these problems, and so we recommend a measured approach of monitoring performance over the summer, and then reviewing the situation to check whether any further changes might be required.

Yours sincerely



Don Stock
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