

Adelaide has a window of opportunity, writes SAM POWRIE.

Wheel turns but not enough for cyclists

ADELAIDE has a long way to go to fulfil its potential as a cycling-friendly city, accommodating the needs of recreational cyclists and commuters.

Every day bicycle use, however, will benefit significantly from the State Government's announcement of a bikeway bridge alongside the new tram overpass over South Rd. This bicycle and pedestrian bridge will provide a safe and convenient crossing for a new 10km shared path, Tramway Park.

The overpass will assist pedestrians and those using mobility aids, eliminating any delay and disruption to motor traffic and danger to vulnerable road users.

Investment in this sort of major bicycle project is badly needed right across our sprawling city. When Enrique Penalosa, former mayor of Bogota in Colombia and advocate of bicycle-friendly cities, visited Australia recently he observed that, unlike other cities of similar size around the world, ours remain "wedded to the car".

Many observers of Adelaide's transport system have felt that, in the rush to invest in motorways and improved public transport, the relatively modest needs of bicycle commuters have been overlooked.

Many will be surprised to learn that, despite high-profile Government support for the Tour Down Under and frequent referral to Adelaide as "the ideal cycling city", our per capita spending on cycling infrastructure remains among the lowest in Australia and way behind that of similar cities overseas.

Adelaide remains anything but an ideal cycling environment. This is especially so for those who need to travel significant distances in the suburbs or into the city to get to work, school or the shops.

It is relatively easy for Government to "talk up" active transport - and cycling in particular - as a panacea for many of the challenges our community faces but it requires more than words to make the necessary changes a reality.

Hopefully, this new bicycle overpass on Tramway Park will prove an important milestone for our Government in responding to the community's demand for balanced transport investments and a more cycling-friendly city.

The City-to-Glenelg Tramway Park route is just one of several Green Travel Corridors planned development. All require similar investments in bridges, overpasses and stretches of bicycle path.

Most run alongside Adelaide's rail and tram lines, including routes from the city centre to the showgrounds, to Outer Harbour and Grange in the west, to Christies Beach and Willunga to the south and to Salisbury and Gawler in the north.

All are close to public transport routes, making "mixed mode" travel using buses, trains and trams a real possibility.

At this stage, only the tramway route has been surveyed and

costed but there is support from local government in seeing the other Green Travel Corridors built.

Several councils already have factored them into their local area cycling plans and investment strategies. Importantly, they also are closely aligned with the Government's Transit Oriented Development zones which should put them at the top of ministerial spending lists.

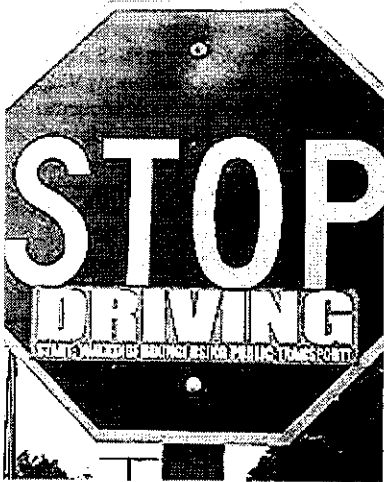
A comprehensive Green Travel Corridor Network would establish Adelaide internationally as a centre for sustainable living and a major cycling-friendly tourism destination. That also would provide direct encouragement for a local government focus on cycling-friendly neighbourhoods, especially around shops, service centres and schools.

Crucially, it would make every day bicycle use a much more re-

The bicycle already is with us. It is cheap, popular and healthy and contributes very little to greenhouse gas emissions. Given all of those advantages and the challenges we face, investing in major bicycle infrastructure seems just as important as more buses, new rail and tram routes and the electrification of our rail system.

Neither the Green Travel Corridors nor other bicycle-related Adelaide now has a window of opportunity to create its "ideal cycling city" starting, as Perth did a decade ago, with a fully-costed and integrated approach that brings cycling and walking into the mainstream transport system. Adelaide's need for such a plan is urgent. The Paris-based International Energy Agency has predicted a worldwide oil crunch by about 2012, when burgeoning oil demand overtakes static supply.

Although no one really knows what will occur, the CSIRO's Future Fuels Forum has proposed \$8/litre by 2018 as one rather challenging outcome. Continued rises in fuel prices and even shortages seem possible. Australia's own oil production and self-sufficiency are under pressure, making us increasingly dependent.



CLEAR: An anti-traffic message on an Adelaide street sign.

alistic possibility for children and students, for parents "locked in" to using their cars and for older folk and those with disabilities unable to use motor transport.

Not everyone will jump on their bikes, of course, but there seems little reason why Adelaide could not reach levels of bicycle use similar to many European cities.

We also would see the extraordinary benefits of bicycle use that these cities enjoy, including reductions in road congestion and pressure on public transport and a much healthier community with significantly reduced health costs.

Traders will find increased cycling brings more money into local circulation as people spend less on petrol and main streets become friendlier places to visit.

Importantly, a Green Travel Corridor Network, also will provide Adelaide with a large measure of resilience as we face rising fuel costs and the prospect of "oil shock". There are signs the freight and service sectors and our mortgage-stressed suburbs may be buckling under rising fuel prices. There is little prospect of relief any time soon from new transport technologies, alternative fuels or other technical solutions.



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