

An investigation of bike speed on shared paths in Victoria

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Abstract

The high speed of a minority of bike riders on shared paths is an emerging road safety issue. VicRoads has a number of bike loop counters, most are on shared paths or bike paths. They record the speed of each passing cyclist.

This poster will provide an overview of a project that was run from December 2015 to February 2016 to investigate the issue of bike speed on shared paths and to determine countermeasures to address it. A key focus of the investigation was the interaction between bike riders and pedestrians, and creating a safe shared environment on shared paths.

Background

This *Monash Interdisciplinary Team Initiative* project was a practical project undertaken at VicRoads that involved two students doing an investigation into bike speeds on shared paths, and bike riders interaction with pedestrians.

Injury data related to shared path conflicts is sparse, neither Victoria Police reported crash data or hospital data provide specific data for shared path locations, yet evidence shows that bike speeds can be high and therefore pose a risk to slower bike riders or pedestrians. The investigation involved a number of methods and resulted in a comprehensive set of recommendations for VicRoads to consider.

Methodology

A number of different methods were used. A literature review was undertaken and the VicRoads bike loop counters set up on shared paths and bike paths were interrogated to determine bike speeds in specific locations. Observations were done on five shared path locations, these were determined due to their bike use and issues with fast speed cycling or proximity to a school. The observations focused on the interaction between pedestrians and cyclists, 131 bike/pedestrian interactions were observed. A small number of intercept surveys were undertaken on shared paths at the same five locations, 16 interviews were done in total, 13 with pedestrians and 3 with bike riders. In addition, 27 stakeholders contributed their thoughts either via e-mail, interview (by phone or in person), or attendance at a workshop; with a final workshop held to validate the recommendations that emerged.

Results

Results are available for each of the methodologies implemented. In terms of bike loop counters, looking at the 10 shared paths with the highest 85 percentile bike speeds, the speeds measured ranged from 29.9km/h to 32.78km/h. While the top 10 shared paths showing the highest maximum speeds, showed speeds ranging from 59.6km/h – 60km/h (note 60km/h was the upper limit extracted as so few cyclists exceeded that number).

Council stakeholders raised a number of issues on shared paths including bike speed, narrow path width, lack of bike forewarning of other path users, unpredictable pedestrians, distracted pedestrians, lack of stencils/signage. Other stakeholders reported a number of issues including bike

speed, conflicts between users, lack of cyclist etiquette, low perceived pedestrian safety, and inadequate path infrastructure.

The observations revealed that 82% of cyclists did not give a warning to the pedestrian they were overtaking in the same direction. Also 62% of belled and 64% of not belled pedestrians took no action when approached by a bike rider (did not divert from their path of travel).

Conclusion

As a result of this investigation a number of recommendations were proposed to address high bike speeds on shared paths. These included a range of engineering recommendations; some education recommendations, an enforcement recommendation and some miscellaneous recommendations.

This presentation will provide an overview of the project undertaken and discuss some of its findings and recommendations.