

Boulter Consulting
urban and transport planning

Roger Boulter, 281 High Street South, PO Box 89, Carterton 5743
Tel 06 379 8909, mob 021 872 654, email roger@boulter.co.nz
website www.boulter.co.nz

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Greetings – I hope the picture opposite cheers you as weather turns colder!

This April, Masterton’s Lakeview School opened its ‘*Bikes in Schools*’ project. Among the well-wishers was a man you would not have picked out – although he could have stolen the limelight. This was Hastings businessman Paul McArdle, who a few years ago paid for a track, bikes and other equipment for his own children’s school, and the rest is history: *Bikes in Schools* projects are now all over the country.



Two lessons: firstly, one person taking a lead is contagious. A large number of individuals, trusts and official bodies have made the Lakeview project a success (for example, buying a bike or two), but never would have done without Paul’s first initiative. Secondly, especially in smaller settlements, a lot is led by voluntary initiative, rather than official programmes or money. Consultants like me work with the enthusiasm which exists, more than bringing change from our own contribution.

Apart from Masterton, I have also worked with South Wairarapa and Carterton District Councils on cycling strategies, and many roads here have little traffic for most of the day! Official advice, no doubt written with larger cities in mind, seems rather unreal, and even more so when funding is considered. In smaller local authorities, it seems a mistake for cycling infrastructure to form the core of a cycling strategy or business case.

The book project, about which I wrote in my last newsletter, has also moved in this direction. Following a professional peer review I have broadened its scope, with the current working title ‘*Humanising urban and transport planning*’. You can’t consider planning for cycling outside the context of broader transport planning, and you can’t consider transport planning outside the context of planning as a whole. I’m still within the scope of a paper I am giving on this – ‘*Walking and cycling – getting the mainstream planning right*’ – at this July’s 2 *Walk and Cycle* conference in Auckland, but the book isn’t just about the history of planning for cycling in New Zealand any more!

History shows that the best way to help cycling is not through building cycleways, even with some travel behaviour change and updated cycling engineering standards thrown in, but

through mainstream transport planning, in relation to which planning for cycling (at least in New Zealand) has tended to be a rather separate 'silo' area since its 1970s origins. We learnt this from the failed cycle route and cycling facility programmes of the 1980s and early 1990s. Planning's wider history seems similar – grand, idealistic and rather unreal planners' dreams against which 'lay' people have rebelled again and again, as lessons are learned and then forgotten again.

A particular theme, of which I've become conscious through recent examples, is the importance of the distinctive contribution of planning in its own right, not as incidental to surveying or transport engineering (some planning professionals have been fighting this battle for decades). You should let engineers lead work on (say) an engineering guide (that's their skill) and similarly you should let planners lead on planning work. Both are needed, working together, for a satisfactory outcome. Planning may involve infrastructure, but equally it may not; it is essentially about qualitative thinking, with numerate processes added in when these add value. The ultimate test (in transport planning as well as in more general planning) is what works for the people who have to live with the results.

I've reviewed the development of underlying ideas over the past couple of hundred years, which strongly conditions what we do – including from thinkers Max Weber, Friedrich Nietzsche and others. Did you know that the first cycleways came together with the first motorways, in 1930s German thinking about hierarchies between 'advanced' transport (motorised) and 'superseded' transport (foot, bike, horses)? Along with work at the same time in the United States (notably Chicago) on data-driven modelling of motorised traffic, this established a transport planning approach based around analysis of motor traffic data and provision of arterial road networks, which has been strong ever since. Conventional cycle planning, from the late 1970s, then took and used a similar approach based around cycle route networks as alternatives to road networks. Over the last 20 years, however, the old ideas have been changing, with more recently total vehicle kilometres travelled remaining largely static, and adolescent driving test numbers showing a decline. This opens up a lot of challenges and possibilities, and calls for new and different approaches.

It was a sad end of an era in my home town of Carterton just recently. For over 60 years, local identity Nancy Blackman has been riding the main street on the bike she bought as a teenager (not much older



than the girl over the page) for her first job. She has recently taken to a mobility scooter. Following "a bit of a stroke", her doctor had told her to "put the bike away" because her balance had been affected. But what a run!

With best wishes

Roger

both pics by yours truly