

ROUTE PLANNING FOR SAFE AND HAPPY RIDES

This guide is to give you some tips for planning your cycling route. It's a starting point to help you to explore possibilities on your bike and to discover the hidden delights of cycle commuting.

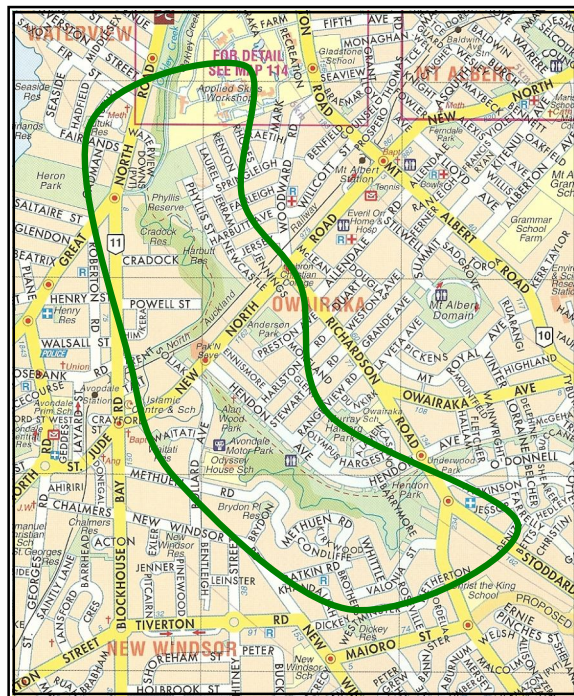
Begin with a map. A fold out sheet map might be a better bet than a map book as it gives you a broader view of the available alternatives. Your city or regional council might publish a bike map showing bike lanes and routes and the internet is a great source of information.

As a starting point, consider your current route to work. Many commuter websites don't advise this approach, but it has the great advantage that you know it, you know where the queues are, where the traffic is fast and where the tricky bits are.

Of course, it all looks different from the seat of a bike and if your regular commute includes motorway, you'll need to find an alternative because bikes are banned from motorways.

Think about the difficulties on your commute, look at the maps and consider:

- is there a bike lane or bike path through to bypass these areas?
- is there a parallel road that is quieter? it may have speed bumps to slow cars
- is there a safe place to cross a busy road?
- can a parallel route take you around a steep hill?
- there may be a park you can bike through (please be considerate to pedestrians), your map should show paths and tracks in city parks that might provide a quick and pleasant route
- think about things that might "add value" to your ride, for example you may be able to stop at a favourite deli on the way home, even if there's no parking in the park
- is there an overpass or underpass to cross over a motorway or railway line?



Plan a route that includes a bike shop, it's handy when you need an inner tube or brake blocks or want your gears adjusted. Ask other cyclists or walkers how they get to work, they may have good advice or suggest routes you haven't thought about.

Remember that a bike is legally a road vehicle and it's illegal to ride on the footpath, but if you see it as the only safe option at the time, use it. Get off and walk if necessary.

The Road Code for cyclists says that you should use a bike lane or shared footpath if there is one, but you may choose to ride on the road. If there is no cycle path, you must ride on the road and keep as far left as you safely can. If there is a sign prohibiting you from riding on the road, you must ride on any cycle path or use an alternative road.

Map: kiwimaps, Auckland 2007

Test your route options: Get on your bike and try it out! Saturday or Sunday at 7:00AM is a delightful time to ride; there is little traffic, the day is fresh and you have time to explore. Riding it on the weekend makes it do-able on Monday!

- explore alleyways, schools, cul-de-sacs and walkways, they may open up new opportunities.
- Google Earth may give some ideas
- stop at intersections and watch how the traffic signals operate; consider your path through the intersection, where will you start from and where do you need to end up?
 - is there a green arrow if you have to make a right turn?
 - if turning right or if there is a free left turn and you're going straight through or turning, where's the best place to change lanes?

Be confident, **visible** and assertive when you ride:

- be predictable and give unambiguous signals
- make eye contact with drivers and be clear about what you're going to do
- a reflective band on your wrist makes hand signals more visible, especially in the dark.

Hills: You'll be amazed how roads that are obviously flat in your car make you to change down a few gears on the bike. But they build strength and endurance and are fun in the other direction! Don't grind up hills, change to a lower gear early to keep your pedalling speed up.

Time: You may need to leave home earlier to ride to work than for driving or riding the bus, but think of it as re-shuffling your morning. Showering at home takes the same amount of time as showering at work; at home it just takes place a little earlier. Leaving earlier may mean less traffic and clearer roads.

Your skills and confidence will grow: You will quickly become stronger, fitter and more confident on your bike. A route that is initially daunting will become familiar and easier. In time you may be looking for more challenge through a longer route, more hills etc. all of which will add to the fun and satisfaction!

Resources:

Auckland region cycle maps can be downloaded as PDFs, or ordered from the Maxx website, including a recently updated southern (Manukau City) cycle map. A new Auckland City map should be available in February 2008, with North Shore to follow; see:

<http://www.maxx.co.nz/cycle-maps.html>

Bikes are free on the ferries, which make cross-harbour commuting possible and pleasant,

<http://www.maxx.co.nz/ferry.html>

Some helpful websites, many cover more than just route planning, so have a wander around. Remember that many sites will give instructions for driving on the right hand side of the road, so be careful to read right for left and left for right in these!

<http://www.bikewalktwincities.org/bike/>

www.mapmyride.com great application shows the distance, topography etc for your ride, enter your physical details and it will evaluate your workout! post comments to help others

<http://www.bikexpert.com/streetsmarts/usa/index.htm> very comprehensive on-line manual for riding the streets, many illustrations, WARNING – all show driving on the RIGHT of the road

<http://www.runmuki.com/commute/index.html>