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Rationale

 Physical inactivity is a major public health issue in Australia, contributing significantly to the prevalence of lifestyle and chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

 Improving cycling infrastructure will promote opportunities for commuter cycling and in turn will promote physical activity as well as address the ever increasing issues of peak oil and human-influenced climate change.

Aim

• To formulate options for improving cycling infrastructure which are relevant in Warrnambool, Victoria.

Methods

 A global literature review of enablers within physical environments that promote commuter cycling and of the methods employed to promote the development of cycle-friendly infrastructure was conducted. A checklist of enablers and barriers of commuter cycling was developed from the review.

 The available cycling infrastructure in the City of Warrnambool will be critiqued in relation to the list of identified enablers and barriers by:

  • Conducting a focus group with key stakeholders which included the Warrnambool City Council Travel Smart Officer.
  • Reviewing census data regarding commuter travel in Warrnambool, and other literature provided by key stakeholders, including council planning documents regarding cycle path infrastructure.

Findings

The global literature review revealed a number of enablers within physical environments that promote commuter cycling. These included:

   Extensive systems of separate cycling facilities – well maintained, well connected and fully integrated paths, lanes and boulevards, with off-street short cuts.
   Intersection modifications and priority traffic signals to increase safety and help cyclists maintain speed.
   Traffic calming of residential streets via a speed limit of 30km/hr, as well as physical deterrents for cars.

Also of note:

   The City of Warrnambool reports one of the highest per capita expenditures for bicycle infrastructure in the State, with $15.47 per head, well above the $5 threshold set by Bicycle Victoria. This includes spending on lanes, paths, signs and other facilities for bike riders.

The critique component of this project, involving a focus group and use of census data, is still pending:

   Enablers that promote commuter cycling and create supportive environments for cycling will be identified in relation to the City of Warrnambool.

Implications

 These results may be used to inform local policy and improve resource allocation regarding infrastructure within the City of Warrnambool to promote commuter cycling. The findings may serve as a model for other regional communities to promote physical activity rates and community health.