

**07 May 2021**

*Submission to the Waikato District Council Draft Long-Term Plan 2021-2031*

**From: Bike Waikato**

### ***Who we are.***

Bike Waikato is an incorporated society run by volunteers and funded by an active membership.

We believe that by providing safe and convenient cycle facilities means that our cities, towns and villages can function efficiently and provide a catalyst for vibrant and healthy communities. We advocate on behalf of our members in the community to seek change.

Our goal is simple. To get more people on bikes, safely.

### ***Why we are submitting on the Waikato Draft Long Term Plan.***

There has been a groundswell of support for cycling during 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19 and the need for communities to maintain and improve their well-being. Communities realised that recreation opportunities were easily met by cycling as lockdowns provided low traffic environments. As a result, there is a shortage of bikes, not only in NZ, but globally.

With the increase of people on bikes, there is a dawning realisation that transport infrastructure is inadequate for those that choose two wheels over four.

We acknowledge the investment from Waikato District Council in cycling infrastructure over the previous long term plan, in particular the extension of Te Awa River Ride to Tamahere and Ngaruawahia. However, with the continued growth of cycling in the community, continued investment is critical. The Waikato District LTP has a prime opportunity to signal to ratepayers and central government that traditional transport funding is insufficient to provide for a road to zero philosophy for those that choose an active travel mode. This philosophy is relevant in our current urban settings especially the increase in populations all our towns are experiencing.

For too long both the central and local government has underfunded cycling infrastructure. Recent central government policy regarding climate change and greenhouse gas emissions now makes the identification of low-emissions transport a priority. Effective communications from local government on the benefits of cycling investment for all road users is crucial as an increase in people choosing to cycle in the community can lead to;

- Reduced vehicle traffic as a result of less cars on the road (in particular for the 'school drop off and pick up').
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and a contribution to central government climate change goals. Transport emissions contribute to a large proportion of the national emissions profile. A clear generational change is occurring where a climate change emergency is acknowledged and seen as real.

- An increase in educational initiatives, in turn triggering social change and legitimacy for cycling as a valid travel choice.
- Safe cycling infrastructure leads to more people on bikes, healthier communities and a new perception that is families on bikes – Mums, Dads, Brothers, Sisters and children of all ages and abilities.

There must be brave moves made in securing transport investment for a District-wide cycling investment. There have been great successes in recreational infrastructure and Bike Waikato appreciate the continued investment in the extension of the regional cycle trails network. However, there is now the demand for an increase in cycling infrastructure in our towns, villages and rural areas to provide for an increase in those that choose to ride bikes.

### **What we like.**

- A vision of connected, liveable communities. It is important that active travel is an integral part of future structure plans, particularly in the District's rapidly expanding main centres, to offer the community affordable, environmentally sustainable travel choices.
- A Capital Projects list with over \$1m invested each year for footpaths and cycleway improvements over the ten year LTP period.
- A further \$1.2m investment in the Te Awa River Ride between Hamilton and Cambridge in 2023.
- "Working together with you" Bike Waikato welcomes the opportunity to work together with Council as a key stakeholder in developing the Waikato District's active travel network.

### **Where there could be improvements.**

- Tackling Congestion & Public Transport
  - The opportunity to reduce vehicular traffic through enabling greater use of active travel modes is not considered in the options presented for tackling the significant issue of increasing traffic volumes.
  - The preferred option for reducing congestion does not improve public transport or active travel options except for minor improvements to Huntly rail station.
  - In a decade where transformational change is essential to reduce carbon emissions from private transport, a more ambitious strategy to enable modal shift is imperative.
- Road to Zero
  - Bike Waikato do not support the preferred option of funding a reduced programme of safety improvements as part of the road to zero strategy. Given the high rates of deaths and serious injuries on our District's roads and Waka Kotahi's commitment to reducing deaths and serious injuries(DSIs), applications for further funding or reallocation of existing funds must be implemented.
  - Reducing the reliance on motor vehicles is not considered as a means of reducing DSIs. Short-term investments in active travel will reduce the reliance on the already deteriorating road network, saving maintenance costs in the future as walking and cycling facilities are significantly cheaper to maintain than roads.
- Encouraging Active Travel options

- We disagree with the preferred option of funding only a footpath improvement programme when addressing the issue of poor walking and cycling connectivity.
- Bike Waikato supports well-connected active travel network will not only help to reduce our effects on the environment, but also enables more equitable transport options for those in our community who do not have the option of driving.
- Security of funding
  - The LTP un-funded projects list includes a significant number of walking and cycling initiatives. There must be a clear signal to central government that funding for cycling infrastructure is non-negotiable. For too long the NLTF has underfunded cycling and active travel modes or prioritised road improvements and maintenance.
  - If there are project delays, then funding for cycling infrastructure should not be reallocated to other activities. Funding secured via the LTP and Waka Kotahi should stay with cycling initiatives and project delivery should be structured in order to be responsive.
  - Recent central government policy regarding climate change and greenhouse gas emissions now makes the identification of low-emissions transport a priority. Investment in alternative travel modes should be the new business as usual.
- We suggest that a district-wide active travel network is developed, with a particular focus on connectivity between existing and growing centres, including links to existing infrastructure in neighbouring areas such as the Auckland and Hamilton borders. Bike Waikato welcomes the opportunity to work together with Waikato District Council to develop this plan to best serve the needs of our community.

We would appreciate the time to be heard at a hearing.

Yours sincerely,

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