



Bike Waikato Submission to Matamata-Piako District Council LTP 2024-2034

Kia ora koutou

We acknowledge the economic headwinds Aotearoa New Zealand is facing nationwide and appreciate that councils across the motu are facing some difficult decisions. However in the face of these challenging circumstances, unlocking growth in cycling needs to be a priority and should not fall aside as a 'nice to have'. Some key benefits of cycling investment for ratepayers include:

- **Affordability:** A key driver to the proposed reduction in cycleway investment is cited as affordability. However, investing in and maintaining bike infrastructure is far cheaper than roading in the long term, due to the extremely low impact bikes have on the road surface. For individuals, cycling is a great way to reduce individuals' spend on transport. This will become increasingly important as the cost of emissions, and therefore fuel will increase in the medium term, due to the Emissions Trading Scheme.
- **Health:** The health benefits of active transport are well documented, reducing long-term mortality rates dramatically when people ride their bikes as opposed to driving. Encouraging cycling to get around town and even between towns is a win-win for public health.
- **Environmental:** The environmental harm caused by cars can, and should, be addressed by encouraging mode-shift - that is, more people switching to environmentally friendly forms of transportation wherever possible. Short trips within small rural communities can often be achieved by bike, but hostile car-centric roading discourages this.
- **Social:** The social benefits of cycling include more face-to-face interactions with neighbours and members of the community made possible by the slower pace. Also people unable to drive due to age or health can still access their community by bike if safe infrastructure is provided.
- **Economic:** As seen around the motu in examples such as the Otago Rail Trail and the Te Awa River Ride, scenic cycleways connecting rural communities are a boon for the local economy and bring cycling tourism and dollars to relatively isolated areas. Projects such as the Te Aroha to Morrinsville cycleway can unlock further investment in these communities in unexpected ways.

We urge Matamata-Piako District Council to approve the Alternative Option for cycling - continue to fund key biking infrastructure over a slightly longer and more affordable timeline. This is a reasonable compromise and ensures that momentum is not lost and residents will increasingly have more positive transport options and access to their communities. In a climate crisis and cost-of-living crisis, we cannot afford to abandon our progress towards a healthier, cleaner and financially sustainable future of transport.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Kind regards

Bike Waikato Committee