

Bike Waikato Submission to Waikato District Council 2024/2025 Annual Plan

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, we would like to remind WDC of how enabling more people to ride bikes safely contributes positively to the Community Outcomes specified in the WDC Annual Plan consultation document, specifically:

- Environmental
- Social
- Economic

The environmental harm caused by cars can, and should, be addressed by increasingly 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.

The social benefits of cycling have been well-documented, with 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.

As the cost of car ownership continues to increase, 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.

More provisions for cycling also relate to the Strategic Priorities in the Draft Annual Plan:

- Improving Connectivity
- Supporting Sustainable Growth

Providing a range of transport options for people to get around their communities will only enhance connectivity and remove barriers and disconnection, especially those unable to drive. Regarding growth, careful planning must take place in any new development to ensure cycling is a legitimate, safe transport option for new residents. This will ensure sustainability in the long-term and help negate car dependency and therefore climate emissions.

As you might expect, we support any cycleway and walking enhancements in the Annual Plan, such as :

- FN DIW District wide footpaths - walking and cycling improve
- FN NGA Waingaro Road Bridge walking and cycling
- FP (District wide footpath cycleway improvement programme)



We support any upgrade of the Harrisville Road / George Street / Dominion Road intersection that enables and improves pedestrian and bike access. For example a wide and comfortable shared walking and cycling path connecting the Dominion road shops with the rest of Tuakau via George street would be sensible.

We note there are no planned changes to the cycleway improvements budget (roughly \$1 million per year) since the 2021/2031 LTP. Funding for sustainable transport should be boosted over time to accelerate mode-shift and meet the Community Outcomes and Strategic Priorities outlined above. In a climate crisis and cost-of-living crisis, continuing with the status-quo funding model of cars-first is unsustainable for the environment but also for individuals.

We implore Waikato District Council to make brave decisions to not only sustain funding levels for cycling and walking infrastructure, but increase them over time so that everyone in the Waikato District can have safe, healthy and sustainable transport options to get around their communities.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Kind regards

Bike Waikato Committee