

2024/2025 Chairperson's Report

Who is Bike Waikato

Bike Waikato is a community and advocacy group who are focused on getting more people on bikes, safely.

Our committee is elected every year. Melissa was first elected to the committee in 2022 and immediately picked up the mantle to be Chair and has since stayed on, becoming Co-Chair with a dual role as Treasurer this past year. Chris signed up as Co-Chair when first elected to the Committee at the last AGM. Jackson was first elected to the committee in 2023 and stepped up to be Secretary in 2024. Phil was an active volunteer and rounded out the committee, providing a lot of passion and cycling enthusiasm but unfortunately had to step down in March.

By showing up at events and engaging with the community we can dispel beliefs and concerns about cycling and show how far you can go on two wheels. Over the past year we have hosted over 100 bikes with the Bike Valet, a great statistic to prove the value of the Valet! While the committee has not organised as many cycling events this previous year, we are looking forward to getting back into and growing the community.

Through our advocacy we continue to engage at all levels of governance from making submissions on speed limit changes, taking members' concerns to council, and national regulation changes. Our focus is broad when considering advocacy: what are the greatest challenges to people getting onto bikes, and how can we protect people once they start cycling? With this being a local election year, we are preparing to take the concerns of our members and cyclists generally straight to those running for council and provide valuable feedback on whose campaigns to look out for.



Our Achievements

What submissions were done

Every year is a good year to advocate for cycle lanes, better infrastructure, and hold every governance level to account for the way they hinder and support cycling. This year was no different. We submitted on the:

- Cobham Drive Speed Limit Reduction,
- Waikato District Council Long Term Plan,
- Graduated Driver Licensing System (GDLS) Changes, and
- Morrinsville Road Fit-For-Purpose Upgrades.

We also spoke out for cyclists everywhere through:

- An open letter to Hamilton City Councilors, both Hamilton MP's, the Minister of Transport, and the New Zealand Transport Agency Chief Executive, outlining our concerns about the serious accidents that have occurred this year and the impact of the

recent trial concerning a cyclist killed in 2022.

- Working with our local members to bring their concerns directly to the HCC regarding road layout changes and lack of infrastructure on key work routes.
- Reaching out to the Waikato Regional Council to enquire about the issue of bike racks on buses and how the matter will be resolved with minimal disruption to cyclists.

Our advocacy work and input is getting increased recognition, and we are being asked to attend early workshops on proposals for Cambridge Connections and the Nawton Community Link. Being a point of contact for District Councils is a huge honour and we look forward to representing our members.

While we bring weight and urgency to advocacy, often it can come down to many individual submissions to change things for the better. Informing our members about what we are most concerned about has been a weak point over the past year and something we want to change. Everybody has a voice and should be heard, our job should be to amplify whenever possible.





Community and Events

While we aspired to get out into the community much more than we had (and had to cancel a couple), some key events we were proud to get behind were:

- *Hiikoi o te Tiriti*
- *Waitangi Day* celebrations at Waikato Museum
- The annual *Christmas Parade* in Hamilton
- *Te Ara Pekapeka Bridge* opening

On top of these events we made donations to the Paeroa BMX Bike Club's team fundraising to attend nationals and helped one student, Dannika, to attend World Championships in Denmark! We have this amazing ability to encourage cycling and help build opportunities through our membership contributions.

Bike Valet

As many of you know, we operate a Bike Valet and have been pairing with the Hamilton City Council to provide this at different events as a way of encouraging cycling and giving it a go when you might not otherwise consider it. We have provided this service to over a hundred people over the past year and had dozens of amazing conversations about how cycling can become an everyday activity. Some of the key events we were involved in were:

- *Bike to Sports* at the Gallagher Hockey Centre and Hare Puke Park,
- *Maanawatia a Matariki* at Lake Rotoroa, and
- *Ninja Valley* free event

Recent investment into the valet, through Phil's hard work, has greatly increased our capacity for events. It's only upwards from here!





Future Opportunities

The future is bright for Bike Waikato and even brighter for cycling generally. Despite how the political attitude may appear, there has never been so much investment in cycling and we will continue to fight for the gains that have been made. There is more than enough space for every mode of transport and by showing up with a constructive attitude we can continue to pressure for positive change.

Local Elections

In a couple months ballots will be sent for Hamilton residents to vote for their next council and we plan to have a questionnaire and candidate event set up to encourage cycling infrastructure talk, future proofing our city, and tackling emissions and health in one. While we are preparing a list of questions to ask we would encourage you to contact us (by email or social media) with any questions or concerns you may have as well!

More details will follow after our AGM and as the election cycle gets into full steam.

Lecture Series

Melissa, our amazing co-chair and passionate cycling advocate, has recently finished her Masters thesis (well, recent enough) and wants to share her insight and results with the wider community. The committee is in the process of planning a lecture series to this effect and we hope to see you there! An official set of dates and locations will be coming out shortly so if you're subscribed to us look out for the opportunity to learn and build community with other cyclists in Hamilton.

Bike Hub

The Go Eco Bike Hub has become a bit of an institution the past couple years, providing free check ups and educational opportunities to the community. Unfortunately, as many of us are keenly aware, times have become very tough in the community space. When Go Eco (formerly the Waikato Environment Centre) first came to us with the difficult position they had found themselves in and wanted to share a vision of incorporating the Hub into Bike Waikato, we couldn't have thought of a better new home for this project.

With the handover finalised, we are excited to be hosting the amazing work the Hub does and want to get it out into the community as soon as possible. While it was a tragedy to see it no longer fit with the work of Go Eco, there is an amazing opportunity for us to support the Hub into the future. The exact shape this takes will be shared shortly but for now we would like to thank Jacob for the amazing work that has been done over the last four years at Go Eco and welcome him into our network.



Community Engagement

Previously we trialled a new way of connecting our members with Bike Waikato to offer new opportunities for engagement. Unfortunately this didn't quite go to plan. This year, we have been working on our governance structure to improve organisational resilience and ensure that people can volunteer or provide input without having to make major time commitments to Bike Waikato's everyday operation and governance through the Committee. This work is still ongoing and perhaps opening up happened too early.

While we have been reassessing we have not stopped looking for new opportunities. We are always interested in hearing from our members and the wider community about what you might like to see happen, and are still open to growing our members' involvement with us and with each other. Get in touch and/or look out for our future events!

Final Thoughts

I have thoroughly enjoyed the last year; meeting some of the amazingly talented and energetic members, having great conversations about what is missing from Bike Waikato and where it can go, and providing a fresh set of eyes on the organisation. This has been a space to reconnect with old friends and make new ones and I am excited to continue to be a part of this mission.

Cycling can be so much more than a hobby or a weekend activity with the family, it can be a primary way to get around the city and interact with your community. It's low emission, cheap as chips compared to alternatives, and good for your physical and mental health. As I see it, the biggest barriers to more people taking up cycling are good infrastructure, a little bit of courage, and of course a bike. All things Bike Waikato should be able to help with.

As we set our sights to the next year and growing our regional support and outreach, I hope to see us create more opportunities and engage further with the wider community. In the meantime, our AGM has been set for 12 July (Hamilton Central Library, 10:30am), come along, talk to current committee members and find out if joining the committee is right for you. And if I don't see you there, hopefully we'll see each other around on smaller wheels!

Chris Manson.

Co-Chairperson 2024/25.

June 2025.