

BikeWalk Marlborough – Annual Plan Submission 2009

BikeWalk Marlborough (BWM) wishes to encourage cycling and walking in Marlborough as it believes these activities provide numerous benefits to the district and community and that both our topography and climate are ideal.

BWM is currently finalising its Trust status, with nine trustees representing various interest groups as follows: Paul Millen Chairman, Bridget Forrest Wine Cycle Tours, John Pickering Picton Cycling and Walking, John Craighead Sustainable transport advocate, Anna Young Marlborough Harrier Club, Kim Willemse Sport Marlborough, Michael Cambridge Sustainable transport advocate, Robert Kennedy Marlborough Mountain Bike Club and David Craig, Road and Mountain bike cyclist.

BWM is involved in a number of projects that promotes walking and cycling in the District. Two significant planning projects currently underway include:

Marlborough's Walking & Cycling Strategy Review

A review of this document is currently underway by Viastrada and includes a review of the cycle network and urban cycle lane proposals.

Blenheim Urban Design Study

BWM congratulates Council on initiating the Blenheim Urban Design Study and appreciates the opportunity to be involved in the design workshops and promote walking and cycling needs. Viastrada's outcomes and revised cycle network plan are intended to be incorporated into the Urban Design process. To undertake a similar study in other Marlborough towns is also welcomed.

Key specific projects BWM are involved in or are promoting include:

Priority Projects

- Cycle Walk Paths along Rail Corridors to Riverlands and Spring Creek - to create safer off road access between towns. A Deed of Grant has now been secured for this path from ONTRACK.
- New Renwick Road – Wither Hills Winery to Fairhall Hall and School – widen road shoulders to enhance cycle safety on this section of popular cycling road. Open drains exist along this section making widening more difficult and costly. Acknowledgement and thanks to Marlborough Roads for significant widening works completed to date along other sections and roads.
- Blenheim to Picton Cycle/Walk Path – Research and construct a path along road corridor or rail. Similar to the Central Otago Rail Trail, this path would create another visitor attraction for Marlborough and provide significant economic benefits.
- Grove Road Bridge – Install a southern cycle approach and cycle crossing and dedicated cycle marking and improved surfacing across pedestrian bridge. This would compliment the new cycle path to Aberharts Road.
- Design and Production of a Walk and Cycle Wayfinding System and associated maps for both locals and visitors to encourage and better inform.
- Provide Travel Planning advice each year for nominated schools and work places.

- Undertake Neighbourhood Accessibility Plans to improve provision for walking and cycling - assess hot spots and mitigate or reduce cycling hazards around Blenheim and other towns, ie; pinch points, crossings, bridges, tight corners and merging lanes.
- Taylor River Paths – track extension up to the Dam and beyond and further linkages with the Wither Hills Farm Park.
- Investigate additional urban and rural bike/walk linkage opportunities and off road tracks to create additional walking and cycling opportunities around Blenheim and district wide.
- Picton – Waikawa CycleWalk Path, existing off road path – Upgrade to a sealed surface to better cater for college student and cycle commuter use.
- Link Pathways project creating paths along Queen Charlotte Drive – BWM fully endorses and supports this project.
- Provide improved safety for walkers and cyclists and encourage commuter walking and cycling to school, work and for other short trips, and encourage these activities for recreation.
- Promote and encourage public space providers and workplaces to provide secure bike parking, changing rooms and showers.

To continue the work BWM undertakes and to assist with progressing these objectives and the numerous projects above, we request that ongoing Council funding be allocated within the LTCCP each year to specifically support and promote walking and cycling facilities. We understand that additional funding is also available through Marlborough Roads/NZTA for walking and cycling facilities. We request also that the level of funding allocated in the Regional Transport Strategy for walking and cycling facilities over future years be retained or indeed increased to enable above objectives to happen in a reasonable time frame.

We also request Council to convey to central government that funding for walking and cycling should not be cut, as a more balanced and sustainable approach to transport funding must be adopted.

Cycling Advocates Network (CAN) spokesperson Stephen McKernon says, "about a third of New Zealanders cycle on our roads and cycling is one of the ten most popular recreational activities nationwide. The 2006 Census shows 9% of people walk and cycle to work, and the Household Travel Survey 2008 shows 17% of trips are made by walking and cycling."

"Yet cycling and walking in combination have received less than 1% of Land Transport Programme funding, and even this is now proposed to be reduced."

Supportive information to accompany this submission is attached below:

In line with central governments national walking and cycling strategy, we believe fostering and encouraging walking and cycling within the community are national and international best practice. This can be done through facility provision, increased safety and creating a supportive environment.

Dr Rodney Tolley, the international walking authority visited Blenheim in December 2008 and his recommendations included:

The five principal recommendations for the Blenheim town centre were thought to be:

Completing a wayfinding strategy

The town centre requires a wayfinding strategy to be carried out in order to identify the types and locations of interventions to counteract current high levels of illegibility.

Creating car-free (or shared space) plazas and focal points

Blenheim is deficient in good quality public space. There is a need to upgrade the quality of existing spaces, especially the Forum. There is also a requirement to identify further locations where attractive public spaces can be achieved.

Reviewing the opportunity to introduce shared spaces

Traffic safety in Blenheim town centre has been achieved inter alia by calming traffic with innovative crossing designs. However, modern shared space designs allow further increases in pedestrian safety, whilst achieving higher quality streetscape. It is recommended that these approaches be considered in the future.

Resisting proposals to increase road capacity

Proposals to increase vehicle throughput on roads bounding the town centre are not in the wider interest of the town as a whole and should be resisted.

Providing high quality bicycle connections and facilities

Blenheim has absolutely ideal cycling conditions but almost no cycling. There is an urgent need to create a new cycling culture through hardware and software strategies.

The benefits from walking and cycling are numerous and include:

- Increased tourism opportunities, jobs and visitor nights.
- Improved lifestyle for locals
- Increased recreation opportunities
- Commuter opportunity – less stress, congestion and parking capacity required
- Health benefits
- Less fuel use and savings for walkers and cyclists
- Reduced CO₂ footprint

Marlborough's unique topography and climate and Blenheim's compact nature lends itself to being an ideal walking and cycling town. Potential also exists to create a "Top of The South, Walking and Cycling Capital" shared brand with the Nelson and Tasman regions.

For the above reasons, we request that walking and cycling be promoted and sufficiently funded to meet the community's walking and cycling aims and objectives.