

28 September 2022

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is providing an update about the Wellington to Hutt Cycling Network to the Minister of Transport.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

Background

- Cycling Action Network, Doctors for Active Safe Transport, and Hutt Cycle Network (referred to in this document as "the cycling group") are collectively advocating on issues about the Hutt to Wellington cycling corridor.
- The cycling group also sent a letter to the Hutt City Council Mayor and Greater Wellington Regional Council raising similar concerns.

The cycling route

- The cycling route between Wellington and the Hutt Valley is being designed to connect with existing and proposed paths. By utilising and adapting existing infrastructure where possible, this approach will ensure Waka Kotahi is delivering value for money to achieve the outcomes sought from the new infrastructure.
- The cycling route between Wellington and the Hutt Valley currently consists of four major sections which are undergoing design and delivery over a multi-year period. Each section is unique with different geographical constraints and existing infrastructure to work with. The four sections are detailed below:
 - **Wellington Railway Station to Ngā Ūranga section** is being delivered as part of the LGWM Thorndon Quay Hutt Road project. The current designs are for separated walking and cycling facilities on Thorndon Quay, which tie directly into recently upgraded facilities on Hutt Road to improve safety for everyone moving through this busy environment, alongside improvements for buses. The scope of this project includes improvements to the Jarden Mile intersection (at Ngā Ūranga).
 - **Ngā Ūranga ki Pito-one section** is being delivered by Te Ara Tupua Alliance. This section provides the critical missing link between Wellington and the Hutt Valley.
 - **Pito-one to Melling section** is being delivered by Waka Kotahi. This section is a two-way off-road cycle path being delivered within the rail corridor, which will link directly into the Ngā Ūranga ki Pito-one section to the south of the Petone railway station and to the existing Hutt River Trail at the northern end of the cycle path.
 - **Riverlink** is being delivered by Riverlink partners, consisting of Greater Wellington Regional Council, Hutt City Council and Waka Kotahi. Crown funding is also provided as part of the NZUP to fund this project.

- The width of the corridor varies due to the geography (the harbour, the hills and river), expected local patterns of use, and existing rail and road infrastructure. This has resulted in varying path types in different places although all the major projects aim to provide suitably wide paths to cater to growth in user numbers. There are some shared paths and some segregated/separated paths on the wider Wellington to Hutt Valley corridor.
- The forecasts from Waka Kotahi and external peer-reviewers show that most commuter cyclists will use the new safe, separated facilities rather than continue to cycle on SH2.
- In addition to the four major cycling route projects that we are delivering as part of the route between Wellington and the Hutt Valley, we are also continuing to make improvements to existing routes along SH2 as part of the Low Cost Low Risk programme, including:
 - Minor improvements to the Hutt River Trail along SH2 near the Fairway Drive intersection, including constructing a new walking and cycling bridge over a local culvert/stream mouth to provide a more direct connection.
 - Other minor enhancements to the existing pathways further north, around Upper Hutt

Requests for design changes

- The various projects are engaged with the cycling group, however not all requests for design changes can be accommodated within the scope and budget of existing projects.
- For instance, the group has asked if we could provide a level crossing of the Melling rail line at Scales Lane to provide an additional access to the Pito-One to Melling section, linking the suburb of Alicetown. We investigated this option and liaised with KiwiRail to seek their advice. Although there would be benefits to providing this link, KiwiRail policy does not support additional level crossings and under- or overpasses are not feasible at the location. Therefore, this option cannot proceed.
- While we appreciate the feedback that we are receiving from the group on Low Cost Low Risk (LCLR) improvements, the level of service set for the LCLR projects are different than the level of service set for major capital projects. In general, LCLR projects are being delivered with an aim to provide better service than it currently is. They are unlikely to provide the same high standard (e.g. of paving, lighting, path width) as the major capital works projects and may not be able to be delivered within the LCLR programme at all if a higher standard was applied.
- Some requests can be accommodated and there are success stories. For example, the cycling group asked if we could include widening the existing Korokoro Stream Bridge as part of the Ngā Ūranga ki Pito-One section. A previous plan for the project was limited to providing enhancements to the existing narrow bridge. As a result of engagement through the group, Te Ara Tupua Alliance is now designing a widened bridge so that a consistent 5 metre wide path will be delivered.

The status of the Riverlink legal process

- The Riverlink project is a programme of three separate but interdependent projects: Flood protection, Urban revitalisation (the Making Places Urban Development Plan), and Melling transport improvements. As part of the Melling transport improvements, a range of cycle ways are being proposed to provide transport choices.

- The RiverLink programme remains before the Environment Court for final determination. The Project Partners responded to questions from the Court in its interim decision, and comments by the combined cycling submitters, by proposing a more detailed set of conditions.
- As part of this process, the cycling group met with representatives of the RiverLink programme partners on 13 September 2022 to discuss the questions arising from the interim decision
- The Riverlink group's response, including the cycling group commentary, and a more detailed set of conditions, was provided to the Court on 30 September 2022, and we expect a final decision from the Court in December 2022.

Mandate for the Project Design and Liaison Group

- The cycling advocacy groups have indicated they would be happy to be part of the RiverLink programme Project Design and Liaison Group (PDLG), along with mana whenua and other active mode representatives.
- The PDLG shares information and seeks feedback on detailed design and allows for attendees to raise concerns to which the Project Partners must respond (accept or reject) with reasons.
- The mandate for that group will be contained within the conditions ultimately approved by the Environment Court.
- Presently proposed by the Project Partners, and within the interim decision, the "purpose of the PDLG is to promote safe and user suitable cycle and pedestrian facilities, consistent with the scope of works illustrated on the [Indicative Active Transport Plan]."
- Until the Court makes its final decision the format of this condition remains for the Court to accept.

The reference group

- Waka Kotahi has been having regular quarterly meeting with the cycling group to discuss cycling issues. This may not meet the group's previous expectations of a Reference Group, however it provides a regular forum at which representatives can raise concerns about projects and the existing network. Project teams provide design and delivery updates and are available to answer questions. Staff of the relevant local councils are invited to participate and regularly attend.
- All questions and concerns raised by the group are investigated and responded to. However, as noted above, not all requests for design changes can be accommodated within the scope and budget of existing projects.