

Submission on Draft Regional Cycle Trail and Network

Introduction

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission Ara Hīkoi Aotearoa (the commission) is the Crown agent responsible for providing leadership on outdoor access issues.

Our role is to provide advice on free, certain, enduring, and practical access to the outdoors.

We administer a national strategy on outdoor access, including tracks and trails. We map outdoor access, provide information to the public, oversee a code of responsible conduct in the outdoors, help to resolve access issues and negotiate new access.

The commission has a team in Wellington and a network of regional field advisors. An independent board governs our work. Our governing piece of legislation is the *Walking Access Act 2008*.

Much of our work focuses on active transport. We support the creation, maintenance, enhancement, and promotion of walking and cycling access, for recreation, for safety, health and wellbeing, for a shift to more sustainable travel, and including for commuting to local destinations such as schools, places of work and shops.

The commission is already working at local level with community trails groups, iwi, landowners, and others to create new walking & cycling access in various parts of the Bay of Plenty. We are keen that this work is considered in the strategic analysis in due course.

Support for the Strategy

The commission notes that the strategy has an extensive list of key stakeholders (appendix A of the Strategy) and supports this.

The commission supports the development and overall goal of the Strategy and would like to continue to be involved.

Further the commission supports:

- (a) the benefits of the Regional Cycle network (section 1.2);
- (b) the consultation with Toi Kai Rawa Trust, as the Bay of Plenty's Regional Māori economic development organisation, with the purpose to advance the prosperity of Māori across the wider Bay of Plenty; and,
- (c) the broad vision of the strategy to have interconnected cycle networks that are fit for purpose and provide a wider 'network benefit' (section 1.1).

Recommendations

- 1. Given our experience in producing regional tracks and trails strategies, the commission recommends the Strategy provides some clarity around where the responsibility for Strategy implementation lies.** It may be that Bay of Connections (as a mandated cross-regional workspace) is the ideal body to take responsibility for implementation, but it would be beneficial to set this out now, in the early stages of Strategy Development to prevent this becoming a barrier or challenge in the future (section 3.4).
- 2. The commission recommends that the Strategy provides for both walking and cycling.**

This could include renaming the strategy and setting out some rules or standards for shared use etc. For example, the Hauraki Rail Trail is shared use and is used by many walkers, possibly even more than cyclists.
- 3. The commission recommends that the Strategy provides an assessment of the amount of private land holdings and a strategy for negotiating access.** The Walking Access commission can support this assessment.
- 4. The commission recommends that the Strategy considers looking at points of interest and cycle and walking access to these in their potential routes for the Cycle trail (section 3).**

The commission has priorities for enhancing public access: access to areas of scenic or recreational value, coastal access, connecting to and along rivers or lakes; linking up existing outdoor access; and access to and within conservation areas. We would encourage the regional strategy to respond to these priorities and can provide support and advice to address them as part of the strategic network.
- 5. The commission recommends that mana whenua organisations are engaged now and for the duration of the process to ensure they are an active stakeholder and contributor.** The commission would support the allocation of resources specifically to enable iwi and hapu to engage actively with and shape the strategy through identifying their interests and objectives
- 6. The commission recommends that Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga are engaged now and for the duration of the process to ensure they are an active stakeholder and contributor.**
- 7. The commission recommends that the Strategy considers providing allowance for cabling to be placed in the cycleways.** Network services and utilities can be included under cycleways instead of adjacent roadways. This may be of interest to key service and network providers and create an opportunity for funding also.
- 8. The commission recommends that there is more detail given about the actual cycle tracks to ensure all tracks are fit for their intended usage.** Allowance needs to be given for increased future usage as cycling increases, and for busy/congested areas, and mixed use etc. This will ensure the cycleways are fit for purpose and meet a minimum standard.

This could include details on track widths, markings, signage etc

- 9. The commission recommends that the strategy provides for a detailed and standardized signage system throughout the network.** The commission can assist with this.
- 10. The commission recommends that the Strategy should look to support local communities to encompass trail building through other work that attracts funding.** For example Land Care Catchment Groups, One Billion Trees funding.
- 11. The commission recommends that the Strategy should look to support and incorporate as much opportunity for Biodiversity corridors and supporting kaitiakitanga as possible.** This will provide resilient access, involve the community, and benefit the region and the country. This could include approved plant lists or planting plans to ensure biodiversity is encouraged and provided for when planting is necessary or possible; signage for significant areas or ecological features; and ensuring sensitive environmental areas are not disturbed by the cycleways.
- 12. The commission recommends that the strategy addresses other potential public access namely horse riding to ensure it is clear whether this will be encouraged and planned for on the new network or not.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on Draft Strategy. The commission is happy to advise and assist with refining the regional strategic approach to cycling connectivity outlined by Bay of Connections.