

12 May 2021

Submission on the Marlborough Long Term Plan 2021-2031

Introduction

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission Ara Hīkoi Aotearoa is the Crown agent responsible for providing leadership on outdoor access issues. Our role is to provide New Zealanders with free, certain, enduring and practical access to the outdoors.

The commission administers 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 resolve access disputes and negotiate new access.

An independent board governs the commission's work. Our governing piece of legislation is the Walking Access Act 2008. We have a team in Wellington and a network of regional field advisors.

Much of our work focuses on public access. We help communities create, maintain, enhance and promote walking and cycling. This can be for commuting to local destinations such as schools, places of work and shops and for recreation.

We encourage local authorities to include objectives, policies and rules in their plans that achieve links and connections for walkers and cyclists through good urban design and tracks and trails planning for urban and rural areas. Open space, parks and reserves can provide safe off-road links. Unformed legal roads (ULR) also offer opportunities for public access, with potential for walking and cycling.

Investment areas

The Marlborough Long Term Plan (LTP) Consultation Document 2021-2031 identifies four investment areas – infrastructure, the economy, the environment and the community. Three of these – infrastructure, the economy and the community are relevant to the commission.

Infrastructure

The introduction to the Marlborough LTP Consultation Document (p4) says the strategy considers key challenges over the next three decades, from climate change to population growth, and how the Council will maintain and grow its infrastructure to overcome these challenges.

Yet, infrastructure investment outlined in the document is restricted to pipes in the ground, water treatment and roads. There is no reference to investment in cycle paths/lanes, walkways or trails. The commission regards this as a significant omission. The document overlooks the contribution that active transport makes to connecting communities, improving access, promoting health and wellbeing, providing recreational opportunities and the economic benefits of attracting visitors.

Failure to prioritise investment in active transport also abdicates from responsibility for reducing carbon emissions. This is despite the Council being a signatory of and committed to the Local Government Leaders of NZ's (LGNZ) Climate Change Declaration 2017. It is also out of step with Government direction with the Climate Change Commission which this year recommended that by the end of the decade, walking will need to rise 25 per cent, cycling by 95 per cent and public transport use by 120 per cent.

In contrast, the the Nelson City Council LTP 2021-2031 Consultation Document acknowledges:

Transport is the second biggest carbon emitter in New Zealand/Aotearoa, behind agriculture. New Zealanders must be encouraged to change attitudes to transport and to transition to more sustainable modes.

The Nelson consultation document commits to:

Continuing investment to support a shift away from single occupancy use of private vehicles towards public transport, cycling and walking between home, work and recreation e.g., \$3.5 million to improve shared walk/cycle paths

The Commission submits that the Marlborough LTP:

- extends its infrastructure focus to investigate and invest in multi-modal transport options, including active transport. This would connect communities, improve physical and mental health by encouraging exercise, improve walker/biker safety and offer recreational opportunities for locals and visitors while reducing emissions
- provides infrastructure to support safer and easier walking and cycling. This should include building/connecting existing cycle lanes and shared walking/biking paths, providing e-bike charging stations, raised crossing points, secure bike parking that does not impinge on pedestrian space, slower speed limits, bylaws that give priority to walkers and cyclists
- elevates the importance of and funding for multi-modal transport, especially to schools, places of work and recreation spaces.

This would align with the Council's Climate Change Integrated Work Programme – Land Transport (5/9/19).

The economy and communities

The LTP Consultation Document refers to the Marlborough Smart+Connected economic development programme. It proposes operating budget increases to grow related technology, food and screen sectors.

The commission understands that Smart+Connected has earlier identified that communities value local walks. This prompted the council to develop a new pathway at Havelock which locals and visitors including walkers of Te Araroa Trail will use. The plan should also invest in creating new walking/biking opportunities for rural communities. Potentially the council could do this under the Small Townships Programme.

The commission supports funding for community facilities including Grovetown Reserve and Lagoon, Taylor River Reserve and Wither Hills Farm Park, all of which provide recreational opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Marlborough LTP; the Commission would welcome the opportunity to speak to our submission.

Penny Wardle,
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