

# **New Zealand Cycleways Project Arthur's Pass to the Sea Cycleway**

**Notes of meeting held at Flock Hill Station 25<sup>th</sup> August 2009, 3- 5 pm**

## **Introductions**

Following afternoon tea upon arrival at 3 pm, Sir Kerry Burke welcomed all attending the meeting and described his vision for an Arthur's Pass to the sea cycleway. The concept broadly aligns with the Midland Line railway, and it is hoped that the proposal will gain the support of the Prime Minister's New Zealand Cycleways Project.

All in attendance then introduced themselves and described their interest in the proposal. (List of attendees attached).

## **Background**

Robert Woods (Environment Canterbury) then provided an overview of the origins of the Prime Minister's cycleway project, and described how it had evolved from the idea of a single cycleway along the length of New Zealand, to one in which a number of separate "great rides" could be developed.

The Prime Minister's objectives for the project are to boost cycle tourism in New Zealand, thereby increasing employment (short term through construction and long term through business development) and economic activity of directly and indirectly related business sectors.

## **Concept refinement**

Robert Woods then handed over to David Hewson (Environment Canterbury), who facilitated discussion for the remainder of the meeting, structured around four key questions. The ideas the group came up for each question are recorded below.

### **1. What's good about the proposal?**

- Increased tourism in the area
- Safer route for cyclists (than the state highway)
- A more scenic cycle route
- Opening up public access to new territory
- Gets more people on bikes
- More employment and commercial opportunities
- Greater public exposure of the area
- Greater investment in nearby townships and amenities
- Sustainable business opportunities with minimum ecological degradation & impact
- Creation of construction phase jobs
- Utilises existing infrastructure, formations and paths
- Chance to bring urban people onto farms. PR opportunity for the farming community.
- Another opportunity / option for physical exercise
- Making better use of existing rail infrastructure and services
- Increased value placed on our history and natural environment

- Increased knowledge and awareness of our cultural heritage
- Rail gradients are conducive to cycling (1 in 50 grade)
- Opportunities for collaboration between community and local government
- Compliments existing tourism operations

## **2. What are the challenges?**

- Safety issues– Railway lines are not compatible with people.
- Tunnels (16), viaducts (5), bridges (~100) – important to manage people very well at these structures. These points create opportunities to kill people.
- The Staircase will be very steep for cyclists. They may be tempted to use the tunnel.
- The rail corridor is wide in places and narrow in others
- Trains run infrequently; people can become complacent (24 passes per day max)
- Will be taking people away from existing tourist routes and activities
- Permission needed from land owners / holders to provide and maintain public access
- Disruption of day to day farm activities (concern about people disturbing stock, straying onto farm land and leaving gates open)
- Vehicular access into cycleway at remote points to pick up or rescue people
- No cell phone, telephone contact. Lack of drinking water.
- High costs due to difficult terrain – track construction, sewerage, drainage, water supply, Broken River crossing etc
- Introduction of additional rural fire risk
- Convincing decision makers
- Alpine environment. Lack of shelter.
- Adverse weather events. Closed in the winter?. How to rescue stranded cyclists?
- Risk to people where required to use the state highways
- Rubbish left by people
- Public liability issues and insurance costs
- Track will require cyclists having a high level of fitness
- Dogs and motor bikes. Neither to go on the trail.
- Improved access into new territory for poachers and trail bikers

## **3. What are some route options.- Pros and cons**

- Staircase Gully presents significant engineering challenges and needs to be looked at closely. 65 metres high. Cableway bridge?
- For the Staircase section, people could travel by train only
- Or could have a jigger to ferry people across difficult / expensive bits as an interim solution, or during the construction phase.
- Broken River may need a new bridge to get cycles across. (Safety of existing bridge?)
- Kowhai River to Waimak Gorge – better to use the quiet roads and road bridges and not the rail bridge
- Cross on the Mount White bridge – have the cycleway on the true left side of the Waimakariri
- Seasonal track?

- The 4km opposite Broad Stream presents a problem – how to cross the Bealey?
- Don't forget about the Cass to Arthurs Pass section. Plan this right from the start.
- Bealey to Arthur's Pass – Get the cycleway included with NZ Transport Agency plans to straighten this section of the state highway.
- Where will people stay?
- A new 1000km cycle way has been constructed from Perth. They have used Prison Service labour to construct 3 walled pre cut open huts. These have been installed very cheaply every 20km and made the track very pleasant and user friendly.

#### **4. Ideas for adding value to the concept**

- Develop new or existing secondary routes off the main track so people can see natural and historic features, such as Forest Parks, DoC areas and the Broken River coal mine. (Have marked and guided trail of this interesting historic area)
- Bungy jumping off Staircase viaduct?
- Development of wildlife sanctuaries and the national park
- Fishing opportunities
- Marketing in association with the Tranzalpine – train up, bike down
- Marketing in association with multi sport events, such as Blue Dog
- Link to Lake Taylor / Taramakau trail.

#### **Vote on whether ECan should continue to develop the proposal**

- The meeting unanimously agreed that ECan should continue to develop the concept and submit a funding proposal to the Prime Ministers fund, in association with stakeholders

#### **Next steps**

- ECan to send meeting notes out to all attendees
- ECan staff to meet with land owners with to document their requirements / concerns
- ECan staff to meet with Ontrack and DoC to define safety and engineering issues, challenges, opportunities
- Have another meeting of this group with any additional stakeholders / key supporters prior to submitting a proposal to the Ministry of Tourism
- Appoint a small steering committee to get the project underway?

Robert Woods (Environment Canterbury) presented further information known at the time on the Ministry of Tourism's timeline for receiving and developing proposals, summarised as follows:

- Process to be made known by the Ministry late September 2009
- Feasibility studies (by Ministry advisors) start February 2010, followed by economic viability assessment
- Funding announcement mid 2010
- Construction start summer 2010

Robert Woods noted that it would then make sense to target a submission for sometime in October 2009. The meetings outlined above should take place in a timely way to support the achievement of this.

## **Closure**

Sir Kerry Burke thanked all those for their attendance and noted the high degree of support around the room for the concept, and a willingness to progress the idea further.

The meeting closed at 5pm with light refreshments.

## **List of attendees**

- Richard and Anna Hill, and Jason Robinson Flock Hill Station
- Rick Johnson
- Hamish Faulkner
- Ainsley Burton, Springfield Visitor Information Buro
- Stuart Wright
- Barry Drummond On-track Cass
- Sally Widdowson and Paul Corwin Cass
- Chris Stewart DOC
- Paddy Freaney, Rochelle Rafferty, Marshall and Debbie Deaker Bealey Hotel
- Gerald Bruce-Smith, Arthurs Pass Community Centre
- Dave Stove Arthurs Pass Association
- Jack van Berkle Canterbury University Facilities management
- Brent Lancaster SI Manager Kiwi Rail
- Tony Spowart NZ Transport Agency Traffic and Safety Manager

From Environment Canterbury

- Sir Kerry Burke Chairman
- Councillor Eugenie Sage
- Staff - Ross Campbell, Robert Woods, Rose Dovey, David Hewson

## **Apologies**

- Amy Adams MP
- Lloyd Ferguson and Mark Fraundorfer Flock Hill
- Paul and Anne Jarman Cora Lynn
- Johnny Westenra Craigieburn Station
- Kelvin Coe Mayor and John Morten Selwyn District Council
- Mark Gilbert Hassle-free tours
- Rod Bennett High Country Explorer Tours
- Proff David Norton Canterbury University