



December 7th 2021

Submission on Paneke Poneke: Wellington City Council Bike Network Plan proposal

Introduction

The Newtown Residents' Association has been an Incorporated Society since July 1963. We are residents and business owners from Newtown and the surrounding area, who take a keen interest in the community and local issues. We are concerned with maintaining and improving our area's liveability, connectedness and sustainability and working to make our community a thriving, diverse, great place to live. The Association has a long history of contributing design ideas and pro-actively lobbying for cycling initiatives that connect our community, the central city and the south coast. We strongly supported the 2015 Cycling Network Draft Framework and it is a source of some frustration that only now does it seem to be about to happen. A safe cycling corridor has the ability to transform our part of the city.

Overview

The background document makes a strong case for measures to improve cycling safety and enable increased numbers of people to use this mode of transport for getting to work, school and recreation. We note that WCC has now adopted the 2015 proposals which we have already given support to and that Paneke Poneke owes a lot to this earlier work.

Probably the most frustrating factor in the move to better facilities for safer cycling has been the length of time it has taken to make substantial changes. We do note the Evans Bay and Crawford Road initiatives however. For this reason we support the proposals to fast track routes from the Botanic Gardens and Newtown to the city. It will be a huge move forward if new developments encourage less confident cyclists onto the road, and enable children to cycle safely to school.

Specific proposals

Putting in place a cycle lane from Mein St to the city will be a benefit to commuters and others wishing to go to the city or points along the way, or alternatively, from the city to Newtown. It is great to see that this work is being prioritised with a focus on interim improvements to ensure we get the design right for the future. This helps to provide certainty for the community and gives something to respond to rather than having to imagine how people and transport modes will interact within the transport corridor. Ensuring that the design caters for cyclists of all ages and abilities and considers how other modes like motorised scooters and skateboards are likely to use this space will be key to achieving success. This is a critical corridor linking the hospital to the city, to schools and providing for commuters and use will significantly increase over time. The proposed route also complements the areas identified for higher density residential housing. This should assist in ensuring the success of such developments.

Any development that improves the situation for one group of road users inevitably means that other users will feel disadvantaged. One significant concern we would like to note is the loss of parking in the area of the hospital and SCL medical laboratory which is likely to cause problems

for some users, particularly perhaps, those with mobility issues. Some way of addressing this would be welcomed. In our 2015 submission we advocated reducing the vehicle corridor in favour of preserving car parking if space for adding the cycleway is scarce. The loss of parking on the main streets is also likely to be an issue for businesses located there.

The principal routes identified in the consultation document which affect Newtown are Newtown to the city, Newtown to Berhampore and Newtown to Kilbirnie.

1. Newtown to the city will be addressed in part by the fast track project. Issues of parking in Riddiford St will later be a significant issue for the section between Mein St and Wilson St.
2. The Newtown to Kilbirnie route proposes to use Wilson St as the conduit. This is likely to be relatively fine for the top two thirds of Wilson St but the bottom third is one way going east. Wilson St is constrained at the bottom by a narrowing which includes 4 mature trees. It might be possible to use Wilson St for uphill traffic but downhill would not work for the last section. It should also be noted that emerging into Riddiford St from Wilson St would be problematic for cyclists. Using Constable St for downhill traffic might be possible.
3. The route between Newtown and Berhampore goes via Rintoul St. This means that a cyclist coming from the southern end of Newtown, who wanted to use it would have to back track. It might be desirable to have a secondary route which might link up with Rintoul St via Russel Tce etc.

These comments above are indicative only and we would be keen for members of our association, particularly those who cycle regularly, to work through some of the specific issues with WCC staff as the plan becomes more detailed.

An important adjunct to these safer cycling initiatives would be to reduce the speed limit through Newtown to 30 kph. The wider membership of the Association has advocated for this change in the past.

Conclusion

We strongly support initiatives to make cycling more attractive as a safe mode of transport. We support the idea of a fast track trial route from Mein St to the city. We would like to continue to work with WCC staff on the details of the proposals.

Rhona Carson

President
Newtown Residents' Association