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14 April 2018

**BIKE TAUPŌ SUBMISSION TO THE TAUPŌ DISTRICT LONG TERM PLAN**

Please find attached a submission from Bike Taupō on the Long Term Plan

Please note that we are more than happy to present our comments in person and discuss them with  
Taupō District Council Councillors and Staff.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Masters (ONZM)

Bike Taupō Chairman

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<b>Date</b>	:	April 14, 2018
<b>No. of Pages</b>	:	Nine (including the covering letter)

## **BIKE TAUPŌ SUBMISSION TO THE TAUPŌ DISTRICT LONG TERM PLAN OPTIONS**

### **1 Introduction:**

Bike Taupō is a cycle advocacy group which provides the Taupō community with a voice for cycling. The organisation was formalised in 2002 and currently has over 5,500 members.

To date Bike Taupō has helped create a cycling culture within the district through constructing and maintaining over 200km off road tracks, partaking in continuous dialogue with regulatory authorities; promoting cycling and cycle safety and playing an active part in Taupō's growing cycling community.

Cycling is an important part of the Taupō economy. Bike Taupō alone has an asset base worth approximately \$3 million dollars, making Bike Taupō a significant investor in the local community.

In addition, Bike Taupō is also very concerned about the safety of cyclists in the Taupō District especially those members of our community who currently or could cycle in our urban areas. If Taupō gets a reputation as an unsafe place to ride it could result in significant economic impacts, not to mention the actual physical harm to residents and visitors. A recent economic assessment of the value of cycling to Taupō, put it at least \$11 million dollars per annum.

Taupō is now an internationally recognised riding destination. In 2012, Taupō received silver level Ride Centre status from the International Mountain Bike Association. Taupō is one of only five silver level ride centres globally and the only one in the Southern hemisphere.

Bike Taupō believes that the safety of all of our road users is an important matter and has been advocating to TDC for nearly ten years on this point.

## **2 Bike Taupō Funding**

Bike Taupō seeks an increase in the level of funding that Bike Taupō receives from Taupō District Council on an annual basis. Currently the funding we receive goes towards trail maintenance, trail development, Kids Bike Taupō and administration. The reason for asking for additional funding is in recognition that our trails are an important part of Taupo used by locals and visitors alike. These trails are now seen as a key part of the destination and infrastructure supporting that destination. The growth in mountain biking in NZ and the increase in trails around the country has meant that more and more people are biking, which is positive. It also means that the expectations on our trails are increasing including the levels of maintenance. In addition the increase in severe weather events is putting significant pressures on our resources and funding streams to maintain our trails to meet expected levels. These pressures are exceeding our current income streams Some extra funding would be useful to keep up with these expectations and allow us to better maintain these important community assets.

## **3 Destination Great Lake Taupō Funding**

Bike Taupō supports an increase in funding of Destination Great Lake Taupō (DGLT) for the purposes of bike marketing. DGLT provides a very valuable service and brings a lot of people to our District. DGLT is the key agency marketing our trails to the nation and the world, and has promoted Taupō as a cycling destination which mean more people ride our trails and support local cycling based industries. As more people ride and more places develop trails in NZ this local marketing effort becomes more and more important.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the DGLT team for the proactive and collaborative approach to marketing Taupō as a Cycling Destination. Bike Taupō has a good working relationship with DGLT and provides them with information and support to facilitate their ability to market Taupō District as a Cycling destination.

## **4 Taupō District Cycling Strategy**

Bike Taupō would like to see priority spending on making the urban areas of the Taupō District safer for cyclists. This includes signage, cycle lanes, better road sweeping, growing easy cycling opportunities (such as the lions walk) information for road users on sharing the road and

working with Bike Taupō and other groups to get more people on Bikes. Bike Taupō would like to see more recreational and commuter cyclists in Taupō Town and strengthen the cycling culture in Taupō to reflect the fact that Taupō is a world class cycling destination. It is this cycling culture which adds to Taupō as a destination for visitors and as a base for a lot of the events which are held in Taupō.

Bike Taupō's 'Kids Bike Taupō' initiative is proving effective with many children in numerous schools taking part. This initiative is growing the cycling base in Taupō meaning that in the future there will potentially be an increase in the number of commuter and leisure cyclists on the streets. Bike Taupō urges TDC to look at what has been done in centers such as Hastings and New Plymouth to see the kind of cycling based improvements that have been made and how these could be made in Taupō. Bike Taupō sees this as a priority for TDC if it wants the District to continue to have cycling as one of its defining activities.

In previous years LTP and Annual Plan processes, we have sought a review of Taupō District Council's Walking and Cycling Strategy. To date this has not happened, even after receiving undertakings that such a review would occur. As TDC considers the issues associated with the significant growth of car use in the Taupō and the wider district, such a strategy is becoming more and more important.

The current strategy was adopted in February 2010 and had a focus of making Taupō a cycling friendly District. Since 2010, Taupō has grown significantly as a cycling destination, the current strategy does not reflect this, and it is questionable whether or not the urban areas are cycle friendly, or whether the targets of the existing strategy have been met or are being monitored. Given the importance of cycling to Taupō, it is our preference that a specific cycling strategy is developed and is drafted to reflect the importance of cycling to the District. This could include the following objectives:

- *Taupō District will be a place where locals and visitors alike can safely ride for transport and recreation purposes.*
- *The biking experience in the District will help the district prosper financially, socially and environmentally.*
- *Urban areas in the District will have a set of safe and connected cycle routes. Children will be able to cycle safely to school and around town.*

Bike Taupō has undertaken an on-ground assessment of Taupō town with a view to identifying key locations and improvements to the roading / cycling network to make the town safer for cyclists. While we are happy to discuss the results of this in more detail, our initial recommendations from this process include:

1. Widen the Great Lake Walkway to 2.2m along its length and connect it to the Huka Trails.
2. Improve linkages to the Great Lake Walkway from the towns gully systems and roads that connect to Lake Terrace, including slowing down traffic on Lake Terrace and increasing the number of safe crossing points
3. Complete the cycle path from Acacia Bay, (ends at Jarden Mile), to bottom of Norman Smith st, using some of the quieter streets in Nukuhau (i.e. to avoid the top of Norman Smith street).
4. Increase the width of the road shoulder on Mapara Road to Highland Drive (especially the Mapara Hill section).
5. Develop some gravel based feeder routes down through the gully's beside Harvey st and Ingles ave and upgrade the existing ones so that they are rideable for more people.
6. Gravel feeder route down new council development reserve/gully, just south of Rainbow drive, all the way to lakefront, using storm water tunnels to get cyclists under Lake Terrace.
7. Remove the barriers from the path alongside the Napier Taupo road,
8. Focus on developing better cycling walking infrastructure immediately around central schools in the residential area's,
9. Make more footpaths shared use so nervous riders/families feel safer there and get cars to stop before they cross a footpath, especially as they leave their driveways. Potentially on busy main streets like Spa and Rifle Range.
10. Most parks in residential areas would have some sort of concrete riding surface so little kids have somewhere off road near home that they can learn to ride bikes, scooters etc. on. Preferably in a loop or at least over a good distance so they can keep going. A basketball court could serve several purposes. Bike tracks and bikes on marae and in small towns.
11. Development of a community bike hub place for people to go for bike help. A workshop/shed/office where the community bike shed, KBT workshop, Road Safety bikes/equipment, good quality 2<sup>nd</sup> hand gear could be handed on. Somewhere accessible for the kids/whanau such as Crown Park. Include a mechanic to keep bikes rolling and to show people how to fix them. This hub would also have the resources to support smaller operations in Wairakei, Turangi and Mangakino.
12. Have a concrete path at Crown Park to link all the schools around the path. Revitalise the little bike road with new lines and maybe add on more streets. Put a concrete pump track there. Maybe the shed/shop/office could be there too. Needs to be somewhere accessible to people. Crown Park ideal because of all the schools and ECE that border it.

Social responses could include the following:

1. A TDC Cycling Champion to support people learning to ride and safe cycling programme.
2. Grade 2 Road Safety training for all children before they go to College. Then Grade 3 for those who want it, thinking about those who would be getting their driver's licence

soon after. Rider safety for people returning to bikes. E bike course for 'late adopters' on E-Bikes.

In addition to these, we have submitted a number of recommended improvements (see section 5 of our submission) which could be made as part of the Taupō Northern Outlet and CBD Investigation.

We acknowledge that there are a whole bunch of ideas which we have submitted. These ideas and concepts have been developed over time in anticipation of the elusive review of the Biking strategy. Bike Taupō is happy to work with the Council on the revision of this strategy and recognises that it has a part to play in making this new strategy work, including leading and or assisting in the delivery and funding of some of the initiatives which come out of the strategy. As TDC will be aware, we are able to access funds for projects which TDC cannot and are keen to partner with TDC on such projects. On this basis, TDC should not be fearful of developing a bold strategy due to the costs of its delivery, instead they should identify positive outcomes and work with the community to deliver them. In saying that, we would like to see a reasonable amount of funding placed aside in the 2018 LTP for the strategy review and implementation.

## **5 Taupō Northern Outlet and CBD Investigation**

We have read and reviewed the Final TDG Report identifying options for the Taupō Northern Outlet and CBD. We commend TDC for being proactive in addressing a fast growing issue in Taupō. On review we will not provide comment on the majority of options identified in the report as it is generally considered out of BT's ambit. However we do feel that the importance of cycling, and other modes of transport, has not been considered enough in the development of the report. We note that BT has been identified as a stakeholder in the report. We had a met with the TDG in their initial investigations but apart from that one meeting we had no additional input into the report or the options considered. Given the importance of such a project and its implications for Taupō and our members, we would have anticipated a greater level of involvement in this work.

Promoting cycling and facilitating its growth for recreation and as a transport alternative is an element that seems to have not been included in the report. The report is focussed around a range of engineering solutions to address the growth of traffic numbers in Taupō. There is little consideration in the report in the value of reducing local based traffic numbers by promoting cycling as a cheaper and more healthy transport solution. While there are a number of cycling based issues and options identified in the report it appears to be starting from a point of managing the flow of growing traffic numbers rather than looking at ways to reduce them.

Consideration of social responses to this issue, as well as the development of cycling infrastructure is important to effectively consider all the options open to TDC. These are also options which are also likely to have additional benefits to the community in respect to personal cost savings, lower co2 emissions and a healthier population. Such options are also generally cheaper than the significant capital works identified in the report and signalled for the future.

Ideally such matters would have already been considered through a revised walking and cycling strategy for Taupo which has still yet to be undertaken. We note that there is no reference to the current walking and cycling strategy in Section 2 (Strategic Context) of the report, however Section 8.6 (page 35) refers to a more comprehensive study of the Taupo walking and cycling network needing to take place prior to the option of Option A6 being considered. While we discuss the importance of this document elsewhere in our submission, we think it is important that any assessment of traffic issues in Taupo is done in a manner that considers the value of cycling and a safe and efficient cycling network.

With our above comments in mind we submit that the TDG Report and its recommendations be reviewed in the context of looking at reducing local traffic numbers through incentivising and facilitating alternative modes of transport, including cycling.

BT does support the issues identified on pages 12 and 13 of the report, especially those relating to cycling. We note in Section 4.7 of the report that the need for more provisions for cyclists, such as cycle lanes was raised, “however, this was more of a “wish list” than a specific issue”. We disagree with this point as we see such developments as being a necessary consideration by TDC when planning for such issues. The degeneration of the importance of such initiatives to a “wish list” appears to be a reflection of the way which the consultation was undertaken with little real engagement with the cycling community. On this note we see the following initiatives, and their like, as important and necessary considerations by TDC when looking at options to address the growing traffic issues:

- A. Developing additional cycling infrastructure along key routes including:
  - i. An underpass under Wairakei Drive between Control Gates Bridge and Norman Smith Street to provide a safe connection across this busy road for commuters and school children,
  - ii. Further consideration of an overpass connecting the amphitheatre and the Countdown Site (Option A6). BT kicked off an assessment of this structure a few years back and Opus International undertook some preliminary work on this option for us including costing preliminary investigations. Not only would this option provide a safe connection for people to cross this busy road but it would

- be beneficial for events and also has the potential to create a gateway for the town.
- iii. Develop a shared use path on the eastern side of Control Gates Bridge leading above the road to the Countdown site. This would be a better grade than the existing one and make it easier for cyclists and walkers to access town. This path could be developed cheaply and easily (BT has already scoped a route) and would provide a safe and rideable (i.e. not overly steep) connection to Spa Road. Ironically the current cycling connection (from Control Gates Bridge to Waikato Street) is steeper than the road.
  - iv. Widen the walking and cycling path on the upstream side of Control gates bridge to a similar width of that on the downstream side.
  - v. Identify and mark cycling friendly routes in and out of town to enhance and promote the safe cycling network in town.
  - vi. Identify and mark safe cycling routes to schools to try and get more school kids on bikes and reduce the volume of the 'school run'.
  - vii. slow down traffic at key intersections and areas (i.e. around schools) using speed humps etc., to reduce the risk to cyclists (this will be especially effective where roundabouts are being developed).
  - viii. Develop safe access points into town for cyclists including crossing points at busy roads and safe alternatives to busy intersections (i.e. spa road / Tongariro Street).
- B. In addition to these capital works TDC should look at other soft options including:
- i. Be able to become a registered commuter who can access benefits such as free showers at the SuperLoo, access to bike storage in the Town Centre, potential financial rewards for those who commute to work more than X days a month (sounds scary but you can guarantee it will be cheaper than a second bridge).
  - ii. Provide more information about the benefits of commuting.
  - iii. Consider subsidising commuter style E-Bikes (we do it for composting facilities) to rate payers as these are the ultimate foil to Taupō's hills and are a huge growth area that provide a realistic alternative to cars.
  - iv. Work with schools to incentivise students biking to schools.
  - v. Reducing traffic speeds in key locations and at key times to make the roads safer for bikes.

BT has no general view of the majority of the options proposed, provided they are considered within the context of reducing vehicles through incentivising other modes of transport.

BT does note that there is a proposed speed reduction at the northern entrance to Huka Falls road. While we are not sure of how successful that will be (given the lack of side friction in this area) we do feel that improvements need to be made to the Huka Falls / Wairakei Drive intersection at the Hub. This area is experiencing a significant growth in traffic with a lot of tourist traffic accessing Huka Falls and Craters of the Moon and the wider Wairakei Park. As

TDC will be aware BT is in the process of creating a biking hub on the reserve between Wairakei Drive and Huka Falls road, including building an underpass so that cyclists no longer need to ride across the road. This is a busy intersection used by people who are uncertain of how to navigate it. It is also an offset intersection with a lot of vehicles trying to go from Karapiti Road to Huka Falls road. There have already been a number of serious accidents at this intersection this year and given the increase of tourist and other traffic this is expected to grow. Whether the solution is a roundabout or intersection realignment, there needs to be some physical changes made to this intersection to improve its safety.

BT is keen to work with TDC to assist them in delivering on these solutions. The Hub Underpass project and the Great Lake Trail are good examples of our ability to deliver on capital works in a cost-effective manner. Our Kids Bike Taupō programme is a good example of our ability to deliver social responses to cycling issues. As an incorporated society we are able work in a manner which TDC is constrained meaning a wider range of options is able to be considered.

## **6 Support for Wairakei Tourist Park and Greening Taupō**

Bike Taupō would also like to acknowledge and support the work that is done by Wairakei Tourist Park and Greening Taupō. Bike Taupō has a close working relationship with both of these organisations. These organisations are successful in providing environmental and economic benefit to Taupō and have a history of working in synergy with Bike Taupō. This collaborative working relationship is important as the value that the community gains through such entities working together is multiplied given the volunteer base that is then combined. Bike Taupō supports the submissions of Wairakei Tourist Park and Greening Taupō to the LTP.

## **7 Destination Playground**

Bike Taupō does would support the development of a destination playground which incorporates a kids bike skills area. Not only will it be an attraction which reflects Taupō's cycling culture but it would also be able to be used by local kids to further develop their cycling skills.