

Waikato District Council

Draft Connectivity Strategy 2023

Walkways, Cycleways & Bridle Trails



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I. Introduction

Walking, cycling, mountain biking and bridle trails serve an important recreational, commuter and micro-mobility purpose as well as providing access to nature and open spaces. Tracks and trails provide many benefits for our communities, particularly for their health and wellbeing. They are popular facilities that are sought after by communities because of the offroad and commuter connections that they provide. They link greenspaces and encourage increased park usage. The provision of connectivity also contributes to alternative modes of transport, a healthy community and to reduce traffic congestion on roads.

The Waikato District has made a commitment to improving connectivity in the district through the development of this Strategy. The Strategy provides an overview of the existing network and with community engagement, future opportunities and priorities have been identified and potential future linkages have been spatially mapped via a live database.

The Strategy acknowledges it is not financially viable for all improvements and track expansions to be undertaken by Council. As a result, it also provides guidance to assist communities in situations where there is local desire for new, improved and/or expanded connectivity networks.

Adoption of this connectivity strategy will provide for a range of opportunities for local communities, and the wider district.

I.1 Purpose

The Connectivity Strategy aims to promote recreational connectivity through all active modes of transport – walking, cycling, riding. This strategy focuses on the district's off and on road linkages (trails and footpaths). It guides decision-making about the provision, development and management of trails and connections, to ensure we have suitable and well used trails and connections, in the right locations, managed in the right way, to meet the needs of our communities.

This strategy review incorporates the original Trails Strategy 2016, Te Kauwhata Cycling and Walking Assessment 2016, Tamahere Cycle Strategy 2016, and identified projects through our Blueprints process. Although some of the trails are aspirational, they will form the basis of funding applications. It has linkages with Taiao in the Waikato (Conservation Strategy) to promote access and provide linkages through reserves, esplanades, Significant Natural Areas, and gullies where feasible.

Ultimately, this Strategy will provide positive guidance to Council, and the community, on how best to promote, manage, plan, and provide for trails and connections in the Waikato District.

I.2 Vision

The vision of this strategy is:

***A safe, sustainable and well planned trail network
provided in partnership with our community that connects
places and people together.***

To realise this vision, the Strategy has several objectives and policies.

1.3 Structure of the Strategy

Connectivity Strategy

- This document discusses the benefits of connections in our district and outlines how they fit in to national, regional and local context. It provides a clear definition of connectivity via trails and identifies the benefit this infrastructure has for our community and the objectives in developing the network. This document categorises trails, defines the level of service and provides a prioritisation matrix for proposed trails.

Spatial Mapping

- Supporting this document is a live spatial dataset. This dataset maps all the current, proposed, and aspirational connections identified throughout the Waikato District. The information in the dataset was provided through existing tools and information Council holds, and community consultation and engagement.
- The live spatial maps are supported by a prioritisation table which categorises what connections are existing, what are proposed to be completed in the Long-Term Plan (LTP) and other connections yet to be included in the LTP and completed.

2. Mana Whenua

As Treaty Partners, Council will work in partnership with Mana Whenua to implement the principles of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of reserves and recognise Mana Whenua's connection to the land. Council will work with Mana Whenua to understand their aspirations and priorities on how our connections and trails are planned, developed, and managed. The values held by Kaitiaki (guardians or protectors) include their environmental and spiritual ties to ancestral lands, water, sites, wāhi tapu (sacred areas) and other taonga (treasures), and the wellbeing of the community. Kaitiakitanga invites people to form and maintain relationships with the environment in which they live. These values will be incorporated into trail development projects.

By nature of these principles, we will work together to address access to sites and resources to support cultural practices and incorporate sites and of significance to Mana Whenua.

3. Planning and Policy - Setting the context of the Connectivity Strategy

The Connectivity Strategy needs to be aligned with other national and regional connectivity strategies, policies, and frameworks, to clearly align with council's broader priorities. This section outlines the setting of the Connectivity Strategy within these documents.

The main pieces of legislation affecting the provision and/or management of trails and connections include:

- Reserves Act 1977
- Local Government Act 2002
- Resource Management Act 1991
- Conservation Act 1987
- Government Policy Statement on Land Transport

National Context:

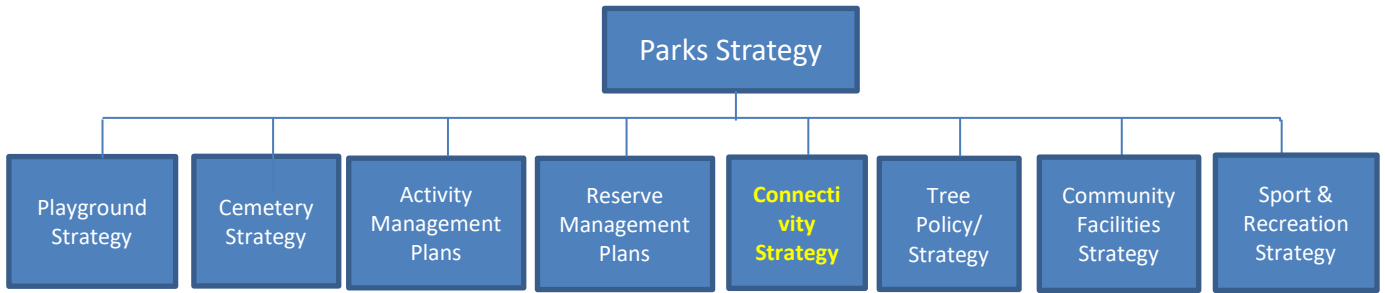
- Transport Strategy
- Planning Standards
- New Zealand Cycle Trail
- Conservation Policy
- National Walking and Cycling Strategy 2005: Getting there – on foot, by cycle
- Connecting New Zealand 2011
- New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026
- New Zealand Walking Access Commission National Strategy 2010–2035
- Sport New Zealand Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2009-2015
- Ministry of Tourism New Zealand Cycleway Market Research 2009

Regional Context:

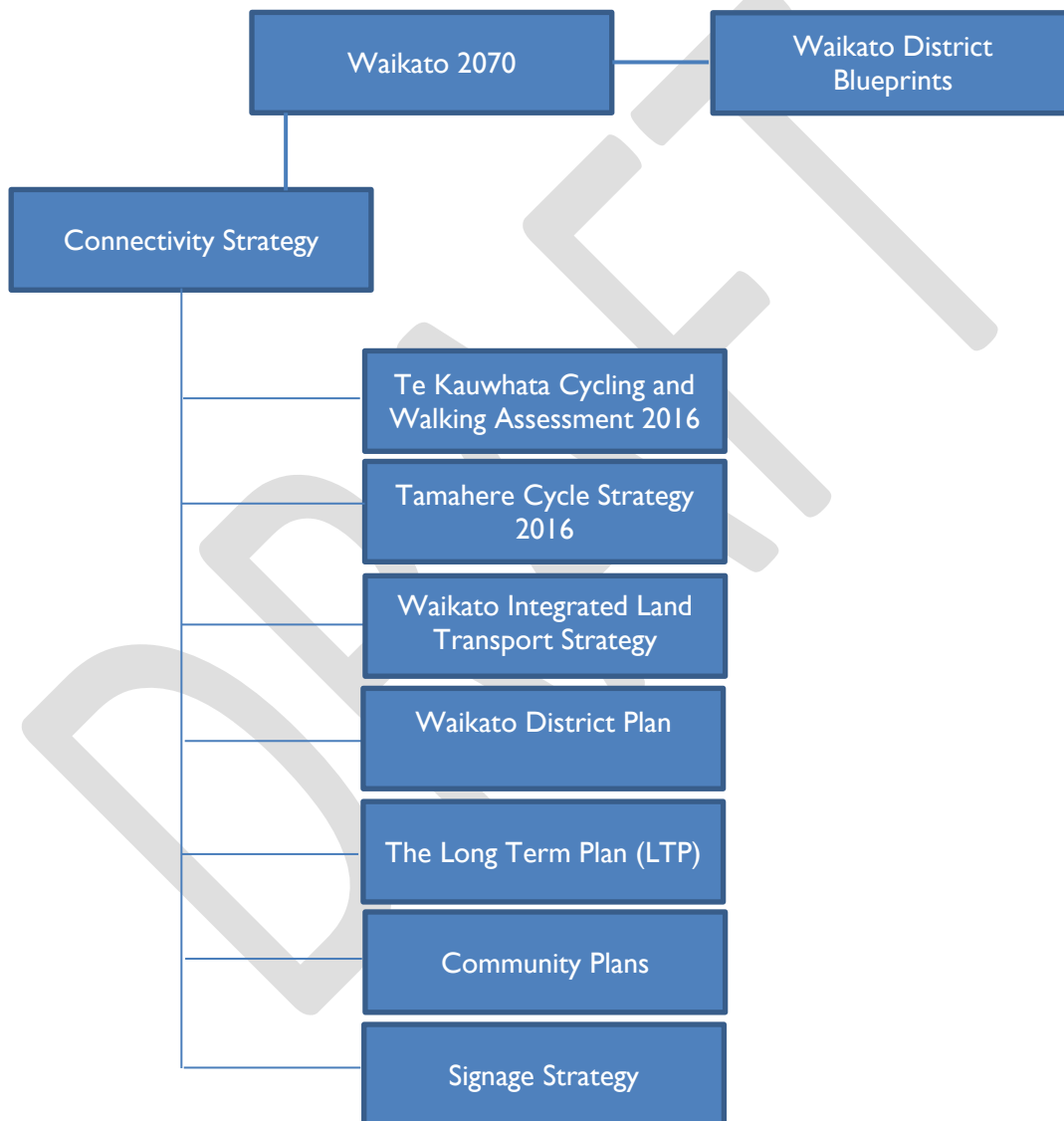
- Waikato Regional Walking and Cycling Strategy 2009-2015
- Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan 2015-2045
- Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan (3rd Edition)
- Waikato Regional Policy Statement (updated December 2018)
- The Future Proof Strategy and Implementation Plan (Draft updated strategy released October 2021)
- Walking Access New Zealand - Franklin North Waikato Tracks and Trails Strategy (May 2020)

Local Context:

The following table lists the key strategic documents which will form a foundation for the Parks and Facilities activity in terms of forward planning and direction. It shows how the Connectivity Strategy fits into the Parks Strategic Work Programme. All strategies and specific management plans fall under the Parks Strategy which is our guiding document in terms of park provision.



Supporting documentation:



3.1 Long Term Plan

The Connectivity Strategy does not allocate funding towards specific projects or programmes – this is done through the Long-Term Plan (LTP). The Local Government Act 2002 requires Council to develop an LTP. An LTP outlines the main things Council plans to do over the next ten years, when it plans to do them and how those activities will be funded. Additionally, when projects or programmes are to occur and how they will be funded influences rates.

4. Benefits of walking, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding

There are many and varied reasons for promoting more walking and cycling both locally and nationally. Key benefits of increased walking and cycling in Waikato District can include (in no particular order):

- Promotes healthy living improved fitness and wellbeing, which can in turn contributes to overall increases in productivity.
- Reduces the pressure on road space.
- Improves the environmental sustainability of the transport system – micro-mobility has a limited carbon footprint, with no harmful emissions, less space per person used by vehicles, and modest infrastructure requirements.
- Increases social interaction through creating vibrant streets which are socially safe – promotes social inclusion and community life as they are available to nearly everybody, regardless of their age, gender, education, or income.
- Safety from road crashes (more so for walking than cycling)
- Increases access to and appreciation of our surrounding environments.
- Promotes tourism and a range of leisure and outdoor experiences.

5. What are the key issues we face?

For this strategy to reach its full potential, we need to address some key issues. There are a variety of existing issues and challenges listed below which need to be considered as part of the Connectivity strategy development.

Meeting Community Needs

- Respecting property rights of private landowners whilst encouraging access agreements.
- Encouraging and providing support for community led projects.
- Balancing the needs of different user groups, a variety of fitness levels, mobility impaired and age groups.
- National trends and publicity - i.e. increasingly other districts and regions are developing great trails which can raise the interest of our rate payers for linkages, commuter paths, off road routes, etc.

Strategic Planning

- Maintaining awareness of national and regional efforts to promote and map walking, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding, including how these efforts can link to local goals.
- Accurately mapping both existing trails and connections and future opportunities.
- Identifying strategic opportunities for connectivity, land acquisitions, esplanade reserves, opportunities to utilise paper roads.
- Alignment with national and regional walking and cycling access.
- Multimodal connectivity supports climate change initiatives to reduce vehicle kilometres travelled.
- Cross boundary linkages.

Health and Safety

- Terrain
- Ensuring maintenance of connections and user safety are priorities.
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and general safety concerns.
- Providing adequate connectivity information, particularly through the use of signage.
- Crossing points of major arterial roads, e.g. Waikato Expressway.

Financial

- Producing a framework to prioritise future trails, extensions, and connections to ensure maximum value for money.
- Funding for connection development is generally easier to attract than funding for ongoing maintenance. As the connectivity throughout the district expands, the available funds for maintaining a strong also needs to increase. Identifying opportunities to include more community driven and externally funded projects.

6. Strategy Objectives and Policies

Objective One: Our trail network will be safe and promote the mental and physical health benefits of connecting people and places together.

Exercise and a connection with nature has been proven to increase mental and physical wellbeing. To sustainably achieve access to both recreation and a connection to nature, balanced consideration of the whole trail network needs to take place. Ensuring that the trails provide amenity as well as connection opportunities, through facilitated targeted investment, betterment in the mental and physical wellbeing of communities can be achieved.

Policies:

1. Council will encourage walking, cycling and horse riding by providing and promoting trails connections in the district where suitable for mental and physical well-being.
2. Our trail network will endeavour to cater for all fitness levels and for mobility impaired users where practicable.
3. Build and maintain trails and connections to ensure the surface is appropriate and New Zealand standards have been met to ensure safety and usability for intended users.
4. Promote education initiatives that increase physical safety for trail users.
5. Invest in supporting infrastructure appropriate to intended trail use.

Objective Two: Strengthen partnerships to enable growth of the district's connectivity network.

Partnerships contribute to the success of the trail network for our communities. Collaborating and empowering communities contributes to the vision either financially or by incorporating their values, ensures we strengthen a connected network that caters to all user groups.

Policies:

1. Encourage and enable community involvement in trail design, construction, and helping maintain the trail.
2. Partner with mana whenua and communities about the location, history, and purpose of the trail. Where appropriate, acknowledge and encourage connections to cultural and natural areas, significant areas or landmarks along the trail to ensure access, protection and maintenance.
3. Advocate and liaise with private landowners in order to establish trails.
4. Actively seek user groups input to identify and overcome trail utilisation issues.

Objective Three: Environmentally sustainable design is at the heart our connected network.

Well planned trails can help connect people to public transport and community hubs, reducing the need to use private cars for short journeys such as getting to work, school or services. Rural trails also have the potential to reduce emissions. Trails that connect towns to recreation areas or provide an easily accessible recreation option can reduce the need to drive locally.

Policies:

1. Prioritising connecting trails that allow for commuting options to community and transportation hubs.
2. Ensure transport and land use planning result in facilitating trails being well integrated into the transport network.
3. Ensure trails are appealing to use through a maintenance agreement. Ensure that trails are well maintained for the enjoyment and accessibility of the community
4. Reduce carbon emissions in communities through responsive trail planning.
5. Maximise environmentally sustainable materials and construction design.

Objective Four: Continue to evolve a well planned network to meet our community needs

The Waikato district is experiencing significant growth in many townships, which changes how our communities move around their town and access open spaces. The current and future trails network must plan for growth to ensure opportunities are realised in an efficient and timely manner for our existing and growing communities.

Policies:

1. Adopt a forward-thinking approach to trail design and proposed network linkages, that considers urban growth and intensification.
2. A staged approach is considered for trail designs (such as poled routes) that encourage the creation of trails that can be upgraded later.
3. Maintain and continuously review this strategy to remain relevant to the community's needs, new technology and best practice.
4. Require residential development to meet the strategy's vision.
5. Consider all proposed trails prioritised for the community's benefit, health and wellbeing.

7. Types of users/ Categories

Tracks and pathways enable people to access and enjoy reserves. Reserves can also form part of the districtwide walking and cycling network linkages and are destination points within the network. Different grades of track or pathway can facilitate enjoyment of reserves for people with different levels of mobility and can provide a range of opportunities and challenges from wide open paths through to cycle paths, mountain biking opportunities, and bush walks, for example.

Some benefits of accommodating for different user groups include, improving adverse environmental effects, facilitates positive health outcomes, increases connectivity for communities; and connect communities without the need for a car. Improved access to and within reserves has the potential to increase their use by people of all abilities, noting that different degrees of accessibility will be achievable at different reserves.

For the purpose of this strategy, different types of connections include pathways and trails, cycleways, shared paths, mountain biking trails and bridle paths. The classifications for each of these can be found in appendix I.

Paths (Walking)	
A path should be well defined so that it is easy to follow in either direction in all weather and low light conditions. Markers will not usually be required. Can include suitable access for disability if suitable to the location.	
User access to pathways	<p>Steps, stiles, turnstiles and/or kissing gates will be included on paths where the location is unsuitable for mobility access. Pathways can be developed for people with mobility difficulties if the path meets the disability access requirements.</p> <p>Paths will be clearly labelled at entry points by use of appropriate signage outlining the suitability of the path for different users.</p>
Trail Width and Gradient	The minimum trail width and maximum gradient may be reduced for environmental or aesthetic reasons for short sections provided there is a low risk to user safety.
Surface	<p>Well-formed and even. Made of durable material, such as concrete, chip seal or asphalt, or compacted gravel.</p> <p>The track surface shall be such that it can be walked on comfortably in both dry and wet weather. The surface shall allow users to walk without having to constantly look down at where they place their feet.</p>
Structures	<p>Boardwalks shall be used over wet, swampy, sandy or muddy sections to achieve a stable dry surface for visitor comfort and/or to protect the environment.</p> <p>All major or minor watercourses shall be bridged.</p> <p>Where a significant hazard exists, a barrier or guardrail shall be provided. Barriers and guardrails shall extend for the full length of path along which the significant hazard exists.</p>
Vegetation	<p>Vegetation shall be maintained as part of the council's routine maintenance schedule.</p> <p>All cut vegetation shall be removed from the path surface and disposed of out of sight of path users.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for community groups to plant and maintain areas of native habitats, this provides increased biodiversity and more enjoyable travel.</p>

Off-road trails	
These trails shall be well defined to allow inexperienced users to easily find their way in either direction in all weather conditions. Markers will not usually be required.	
User access to trails	<p>Steps, stiles, turnstiles and/or kissing gates will be included on paths where the location is unsuitable for mobility access. Pathways can be developed for people with mobility difficulties if the path meets the disability access requirements.</p> <p>Trails can be developed for people with mobility difficulties if the trail meets the disability access requirements.</p> <p>If applicable, the trail shall be clearly labelled as one suitable for people with mobility difficulties by use of appropriate symbols and words at track entrances and at junctions with other tracks.</p>
Trail Width	The minimum width may be reduced for environmental or aesthetic reasons provided there is minimal risk to visitor safety
Surface	The trail surface shall be well formed and even (wet areas drained) and suitable for walking shoes and provide reasonably firm footing in wet weather conditions.
Structures	<p>Boardwalks may be used over wet, swampy, sandy or muddy sections of the track to achieve a mainly dry surface and/or protect the environment. Alternatives to boardwalks, such as drainage of wet areas or raised, hardened sections of track, may also be use.</p> <p>All major or minor watercourses shall be bridged.</p> <p>Guardrails or barriers shall be constructed where a significant hazard to in experienced visitors (including children) exists.</p>
Vegetation	<p>Vegetation shall be maintained as part of council's routine maintenance schedule. Significant tree limbs and trunks may intrude into or above the track provided these do not obstruct users or place them at risk.</p> <p>All cut vegetation shall be removed from the track surface and where practicable, out of view of the track.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for community groups to plant and maintain areas of native habitats, this provides increased biodiversity and more enjoyable travel.</p>

Multi-use tracks	
<p>Tracks and paths can provide recreation opportunities for a variety of different users. Multiple use of tracks and paths can be cost-effective as one track or path can potentially fulfil the needs of a variety of users. Some uses are however more compatible than others. In some cases, shared paths can lead to conflict or safety issues. Walkers and cyclists can often share the same track provided it is wide enough and has good sightlines. Walkers can sometimes share mountain bike tracks but not always. If the mountain bike track is relatively flat, wide enough and has good sightlines it may be suitable for sharing but if it is steep, narrow and has many corners it may not at all be suitable for shared use. Horses also tend to require dedicated trails although sharing with walkers can sometimes be practicable (such as the use of former forestry roads or routes through open pasture). It is important that track/path use is regulated to minimise potential conflicts and promote public safety and enjoyment.</p>	
User access to trail	<p>Multiple access points (i.e. commuter trail)</p> <p>Steps, stiles, turnstiles and/or kissing gates will be included on paths where the location is unsuitable for mobility access but suitable for more than one use. Pathways can be developed for people with mobility difficulties if the path meets the disability access requirements.</p> <p>Trails can be developed for people with mobility difficulties if the trail meets the disability access requirements.</p> <p>If applicable, the trail shall be clearly labelled as one suitable for people with mobility difficulties by use of appropriate symbols and words at track entrances and at junctions with other tracks.</p>
Trail Width	<p>The minimum width may be reduced for environmental or aesthetic reasons provided there is minimal risk to visitor safety.</p>
Surface	<p>The track surface shall be well compacted to reduce degrading of the surface.</p>
Structures	<p>Boardwalks may be used over wet, swampy, sandy or muddy sections of the track to achieve a mainly dry surface and/or protect the environment. Alternatives to boardwalks, such as drainage of wet areas or raised, hardened sections of track, may also be use.</p> <p>Structures designed primarily for pedestrians and bicycles are not strong enough for horses and mules, because the decking cannot withstand the force of horseshoes or the point load per hoof. If trail use includes horses, bridges must be engineered to withstand the vibration caused by single or multiple animals.</p> <p>All major or minor watercourses shall be bridged.</p> <p>Guardrails or barriers shall be constructed where a significant hazard to in experienced visitors (including children) exists.</p>

Vegetation	<p>Vegetation clearance, especially on corners, shall be sufficient to allow good visibility for all users. Vegetation shall be maintained as part of council's routine maintenance schedule.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for community groups to plant and maintain areas of native habitats, this provides increased biodiversity and more enjoyable travel.</p>
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Cycle and Mountain Biking Trails	
<p>Cycling has the potential to make a significant contribution to an integrated and sustainable transport system. Cycling has little impact on the built and natural environment, particularly in relation to pollution, making it an environmentally friendly form of transport. It is also a healthy form of transport providing an alternative to the car for travel to and from work or school and is also a popular activity for families and sports enthusiasts.</p> <p>Mountain bike trails nationwide are graded to help people chose the right ride of their fitness and ability. Grades start from Grade 1 (easiest) and move through to grade 6 (extreme).</p>	
User access to trail	<p>Multiple access points (i.e. commuter trail)</p> <p>Pathways can be developed for people with mobility difficulties if the path meets the disability access requirements.</p> <p>If applicable, the trail shall be clearly labelled as one suitable for people with mobility difficulties by use of appropriate symbols and words at track entrances and at junctions with other tracks.</p>
Trail width	<p>The minimum width may be reduced for environmental or aesthetic reasons provided there is minimal risk to visitor safety.</p>
Surface	<p>The track surface shall be well compacted to reduce degrading of the surface.</p>
Structures	<p>Boardwalks may be used over wet, swampy, sandy or muddy sections of the track to achieve a mainly dry surface and/or protect the environment. Alternatives to boardwalks, such as drainage of wet areas or raised, hardened sections of track, may also be use.</p> <p>All major or minor watercourses shall be bridged.</p> <p>Guardrails or barriers shall be constructed where a significant hazard to in experienced visitors (including children) exists.</p>
Vegetation	<p>Vegetation clearance, especially on corners, shall be sufficient to allow good visibility for all users. Vegetation shall be maintained as part of council's routine maintenance schedule.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for community groups to plant and maintain areas of native habitats, this provides increased biodiversity and more enjoyable travel.</p>

Bridle/ Horse Riding Trails

In addition to these standards, the likelihood of the trail contributing to startling the horse needs to be considered. Some instances when a horse may be startled include:

- Sharing the trail with cyclists
- Loud or unexpected noises (such as planes or machinery)
- High contrast or reflective surfaces
- Unfamiliar situations (golf driving range or train)
- Unfamiliar domestic animals such as llamas or pigs
- Unexpected trail obstacles (rubbish, fallen trees or boulders)

User access to trails

Parking be available with space for a horse float to be manoeuvred.

Access needs to be made available without impediments such as stiles, turnstiles, and kissing gates. Horse stiles can be installed that prevent motorbikes from accessing bridle trails.

Access to bridle trails may be via locked gates where users can hire a key for access.

If applicable, trails shall be clearly labelled as one suitable for horse riding, with signage installed at track entrances and junctions with other tracks.

Surfaces

Material with good grip is recommended such as crushed rock fines

OR

2 m wide grass strip

Structures

Structures designed primarily for pedestrians and bicycles are not strong enough for horses and mules, because the decking cannot withstand the force of horseshoes or the point load per hoof. In addition, bridges must be engineered to withstand the vibration caused by single or multiple animals.

Bridges identified along bridle paths that cannot support the weight of a horse and rider shall be identified.

Vegetation

Low maintenance, however maintained to a standard that allow horse and rider to travel through.

8. How will this strategy be implemented?

The implementation of the Connectivity Strategy requires co-ordination and collaboration across Council infrastructure activities (roading and open spaces), planning (District Plan and other development plans), key funding agencies, developers and the community.

This strategy identifies a strategic approach for prioritising future track upgrades, expansions, and connections. A **live spatial dataset** is used to identify future priorities. These priority projects will be driven by Council as funding allows. In some cases, they may also be considered high priority to members of the community, and individuals or groups may play a role in bringing projects forward through taking a lead role in connectivity planning and obtaining funding.

Priority projects are identified and prioritised using an assessment criteria (found in this document) and the live spatial dataset.

Non-priority projects are those that are not identified as 'high priority' in the live spatial dataset. These projects are likely to be locally driven by individuals or community groups and will still be beneficial to the advancement of the Waikato District connectivity network. In these scenarios due to financial constraints and the desire to strategically prioritise projects, the local community will need to play a leading role in achieving their local aspirations. However, Council will endeavour to offer advice and support.

Council's primary funding mechanism is the LTP. The LTP provides long-term direction and priorities for Council funding and identifies key projects. Funding from Council is critical in the delivery of connectivity infrastructure, as well as in supporting programmes to promote uptake of walking, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding.

The Strategy also acknowledges the potential for unprompted projects to be proposed or connection opportunities raised through residential development. These are most likely to be raised by individuals or community groups and related to local opportunities and desires. They can be added to the dataset at time of review and be allocated a project priority. The roles of Council and the community will vary depending on whether a project has been strategically identified as a priority and Council has the budget to drive it. Working collaboratively with developers provides the opportunity to complete segments of the connectivity infrastructure; and will enable Council to connect segments within a reasonable timeframe.

Generally, Council will be responsible for the planning, physical works and ongoing maintenance of priority projects. However, it is not imperative that this process is Council driven. Where priority projects align with the visions of individuals or Trusts the opportunity exists for these projects to be led outside of Council. Where the likes of Trusts are able to obtain outside funding and undertake project management this will be encouraged (with Council input) to allow Council's budget to go further in advancing the connectivity network. If appropriate, Council will consult with the community and other organisations at a level considered suitable for each specific project. The community will have the ability to input proposed trail that can overlap with the strategy's assessment criteria.

9. Prioritisation of Future Connectivity Projects

The following is the method for prioritising connections. It is based on the 2016 criteria as well as district council trail strategies from around Aotearoa. Each assessment criteria is weighted according to its importance for overall trail feasibility and alignment with WDC's values.

9.1 Prioritisation Assessment Criteria: Stage I

Assessment Criteria	Weighting	Assessment Criteria and Weighting Analysis
Land ownership/accessibility	0.08	<p>Who owns the land? If no easements or access way are required for the construction of the connection, it can decrease the cost, time and effort involved.</p> <p>POINTS: 3 – Ownership or legal accessibility established 2 – Partial ownership or legal accessibility 1 – No accessibility/private owned</p> <p>WEIGHTING: If the connection is supported by the community and landowners, easements might not be a barrier. Alternative routes could also be sought. Adversely, in this situation one landowner could prevent the whole connection.</p>
Connectivity	0.15	<p>Does the trail connect communities and other trails (DOC, Te Araroa, Te Awa) within the Waikato and other districts? The more connected a trail is the more potential there is for use of the trail and associated benefits.</p> <p>POINTS: 3 = connects to existing trails (including sidewalks and community hubs) 2 = connects to proposed trails 1 = connects to no other trails</p> <p>In town/ commuter/ sidewalks end up being ranked higher than possibly scenic recreation trails</p> <p>WEIGHTING: The more the trail connects to other trails the more utilised it becomes.</p>
Modes of transport	0.04	<p>What type of user can the trail accommodate for? Can it be shared with other users?</p> <p>POINTS: 2 – Multi-use 1 – Single use</p>

		<p>WEIGHTING: There are already a number of walking and cycling trails in the district, preference is given to other modes or joint modes.</p> <p>There are few trails dedicated to mountain biking in the Waikato District. Mountain Biking activity is increasing in popularity. Mountain bike trails are not easily shared with other modes. This needs to be noted in any plans to develop mountain biking trails. nationwide.</p> <p>There are few trails dedicated to horse riding in the Waikato District. When horse trekking areas are identified, Council can assess whether these trails are suitable for walkers as well.</p>
<p>Presence/absence in Council and community documents</p> <p>e.g. Blueprints, Reserve Management Plans, community group documents, iwi, hapu and Maori management and environmental plans etc</p>	0.12	<p>Active community interest in developing their townships means there is a drive to complete the trail, possibly providing volunteers and fundraising for the construction.</p> <p>POINTS: 3 = supports a Blueprint/Structure Plan initiative 2 = supports a community lead document 1 = not currently detailed anywhere</p> <p>WEIGHTING: If the community is willing to take on responsibility of some trail construction and/ or helping with funding it can make the trail much more feasible.</p> <p>Delivering on community initiatives such as Blueprint projects and community lead documents is a priority Council is committed to.</p>
Benefits of the Connection	0.13	<p>What benefits does the trail bring to the local community?</p> <p>POINTS: 3 = connection direct link to a park / open space or township centre 2 = connection through space that allows people to be within nature or for recreational activity 1 = connection that is an additional supporting route</p> <p>WEIGHTING: Trails have the potential to improve health, safety, recreation and provide economic opportunity for a community. The importance of these contributions is reflected in the weighting.</p>
Significance	0.07	<p>Does the trail provide amenity value and who is likely to use it?</p> <p>POINTS: +1 point for each of the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail follows natural feature (waterway/ forest/ coast) for most of the way.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail follows or passes cultural sites of significance • Trail is Nationally significant (part of or connects to Te Araroa or a Great Ride, likely to get international visitors) • Trail is Regionally significant (part of or connects to well established and popular trails in the greater Waikato and Auckland Regions, likely to get visitors from around the region) • Trail is Locally significant (provides community connections and commuting possibilities, unlikely to get non-local visitors) <p>WEIGHTING: The potential significance of a trail can make it more likely to attract the target users. (maximum – 5 points)</p>
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9.2 Stage 2 – Scoping Assessment

The following is a list of other criteria that can be considered in relation to each connection *after* the initial prioritisation using the weighted assessment criteria. By considering these criteria after the initial prioritisation it allows the high priority trails to be more accurately considered.

9.3 Other Considerations

Topography and detailed design	<p>Does the physical terrain impact trail construction negatively? Is it physically possible to have a trail along this route? Is extensive detailed design required?</p> <p>(Ideally this assessment would have been done when the trail was first submitted)</p>
Part of another project	<p>Can the construction of the trail easily be added to another project that is happening in the area? This might include riparian planting, esplanade and gully rehabilitation.</p>
Known Obstacles (excluding easements)	<p>Are there significant obstacles that would stop trail construction? I.e., the trail is proposed to go over a culturally significant site/near wetlands. Discuss with iwi, hapu and Maori at the outset of new trail considerations.</p>
Trail is easily completed	<p>Is the trail or parts of the trail already underway?</p>
Pivotal linkage	<p>Will the construction of the trail directly contribute to a level of service increase in an area or remove a blockage to non-motorised transport? I.e., significant crossings of railway or highway.</p>

Funding availability	Co-funded projects often have associated timeframes. Where additional funding can be sought for a particular project, that project maybe prioritised to meet funding deadlines.
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10. Monitoring and review

This strategy will guide staff with day-to-day decisions relating to connectivity planning, maintenance and development, as well as offering guidance to the community. Council will review the strategy from time to time, in response to changing circumstances or better information, to ensure it remains up to date and relevant. Council intends to review it five years from when it was adopted, unless circumstances warrant an earlier review.

The following specific actions will support the objectives and policies in this strategy and feed into future reviews of the document:

- Identifying external connection development funding sources.
- Undertaking assessments of all our tracks (in accordance with SNZ HB8630:2004 standards) and preparing an improvement schedule.
- Identifying costs of implementing the high priority connectivity projects and using this information to guide a works schedule.
- Keeping a record of any connectivity issues as they arise that can be addressed in future updates.

11. Amendments and Updates

Updates and corrections that do not change the intent of the plan e.g., name changes to organisations or other documents mentioned in the text may be made without public consultation as they do not change the intent or meaning of the document. Major amendments to the document should be approved by Council and be subject to public consultation if the matter is significant.

Appendix 1 Strategic Actions

- Develop and maintain additional spatial data that assists in prioritisation of trails
- Create a list of standardised assets to support trail usage (bike stands etc)
- Signage and wayfinding internal policy
- Align development planning through the District Plan, using best practice methods
- Promotion of walking and cycling to increase participation
- Identify and put forward projects that meet criteria for funding (specifically NZTA funding)
- Support initiatives to educate children about safe walking practices
- Support councils and relevant authorities and organisations in maintaining and making improvements in walking, cycling and bridle infrastructure
- Encourage and support partnerships with local communities, clubs and groups for trail management and maintenance

Appendix 2 Stakeholders

In formulating this strategy Council has sought input from the following stakeholders:

- Community Boards and Committees
- Bike Waikato
- Bikes in Schools
- Department of Conservation
- Hamilton City Council
- Iwi and Hapu, with ongoing partnership which will be undertaken at specific locations.
- Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa (Outdoor Access Commission)
- HAAWI (Horse Access Advocates Waikato Incorporated)
- Raglan Mountain Biking Club
- Sport Waikato
- Raglan Ramblers
- Waikato Regional Council
- Waikato River Authority (WRA)
- FAWN (Franklin Access Walking Network)
- Tamahere Mangaone Restoration Trust
- Known local developers and project groups
- Waikato District Council internal teams
 - Council's Roding Team has been consulted as the likes of footpaths may provide strategic linkages. Where applicable, integrating walkway development into existing roading and utility works programmes will be cost-effective.
 - Open spaces team – implementing the document.
 - Strategic planning team

The feedback that has been received from stakeholders has contributed to the final makeup of this strategy.

Appendix 3: Proposed Trails Spatial Map

**Editors Note: A link will be made available for the online spatial maps within the final Connectivity Strategy. The live spatial data map will identify potential trails and contain information relating to their priority and background details.