

Waikato District Council

Trails Strategy

2016

Walkways, Cycleways & Bridle Trails



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PART ONE

I. Introduction

Walking, cycling, and bridle trails serve an important recreational purpose as well as providing access to nature. Trails are popular facilities that are sought after by communities because of the offroad linkages that they provide. They link greenspaces and encourage increased park usage. The provision of trails also contributes to a healthy community and can increase safety by reducing the number of walkers, cyclists and horse riders sharing roads with other traffic.

The Waikato District has made a commitment to improving trails in the district through the development of this strategy. The Strategy provides an overview of the existing network and issues. With stakeholder engagement future opportunities and priorities have been identified and potential future linkages have been spatially mapped.

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 trail networks.

The Strategy focuses on recreational usage of trails, but includes commuter usage where applicable.



I.1 Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- map the existing track network and identify the key challenges and issues associated with it
- map out a spatial 'vision' identifying opportunities for track improvements, expansions and linkages
- provide strategic direction for prioritising the creation of new trails
- specify the role of Council in implementing the Strategy, and also provide positive guidance to the community (with Council input or facilitation) on how best to achieve local trail projects
- provide guidance to assist Council in undertaking its role of buying, selling and managing land
- identify funding priorities to guide Council expenditure and to assist in leveraging external funding for trails

In doing the above the strategy will bring additional benefits such as promoting the health and fitness benefits of walking, cycling and horse riding.

This strategy has been prepared to identify trail expenditure priorities over the next 10 years. However Part Two of the Strategy includes aspirational trail linkages, developments and extensions which may be implemented over a much greater time period.

1.2 Vision

The vision of this strategy is:

A safe, sustainable and well planned network of trails provided in partnership with our communities.

To realise this vision, the Strategy has a number of objectives and policies. Part One defines the role of Council in driving priority trail projects, and how Council can assist communities in planning and funding local projects. Part Two prioritises future extensions and linkages with the assistance of spatial mapping.

1.3 Structure of Strategy

The Strategy has been divided into two parts, to reflect the different functions of the document and to separate out the spatial maps.

- Part One discusses the benefits of trails in our district and outlines how they fit in to national, regional and local context. It discusses the current trail environment and identifies key issues/challenges and key objectives. It also defines the roles of both the Council and the community.
- Part Two contains a series of spatial maps which have been used to outline the existing trail network and to indicate proposed future linkages and trails. It prioritises the future projects through the use of pre-defined assessment criteria. Part Two also addresses the implementation, funding and monitoring of the strategy.

1.4 National, Regional and Local Context

National Context

The Government is promoting walking and cycling as ways of addressing traffic congestion and public health issues. The Resource Management Act states that access to and along rivers, lakes and the sea is a matter of national importance. In addition the Te Araroa Trust national walkway is passing through the District.

In New Zealand there is no national body representing horse riders. The New Zealand Horse Network has been established to help local clubs, promote and create trails and share resources.

National strategies and plans include:

Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2015

The Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (GPS) sets out the government's priorities for expenditure from the National Land Transport Fund over the next 10 years. It sets out how funding is allocated between activities such as road safety policing, State highways, local roads and public transport.

The New Zealand Cycle Trail (Nga Haerenga)

An investment by the government to create a network of cycle trails that provide a healthy and enjoyable way for Kiwis and International visitors to see the country, and generate economic, social and environmental benefits for our communities.

Safer Journeys - New Zealand's road safety strategy 2010-2020

Safer Journeys is the government's strategy to guide improvements in road safety over the period 2010 to 2020. The strategy's vision is a safe road system increasingly free of death and serious injury and introduces the Safe System approach to New Zealand.

- National Walking and Cycling Strategy 2005: Getting there – on foot, by cycle
The government's vision of a New Zealand where people from all sectors of the community walk and cycle for transport and enjoyment, helping to ensure a healthier population, more lively and connected communities, and a more affordable, integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable transport system.
- Connecting New Zealand 2011
A summary of the government's policy direction for transport.
- New Zealand Disability Strategy 2000 (being revised in 2016)
The New Zealand Disability Strategy's vision is of a society that highly values the lives and continually enhances the full participation of disabled people. It provides a framework to guide government agencies making policy and services impacting on disabled people.
- New Zealand Walking Access Commission National Strategy 2010–2035
Through implementing this strategy and its objectives, the Commission will develop approaches, policies and plans to encourage better access.
- Sport New Zealand Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2009-2015
The Strategy focuses on increasing participation in outdoor recreation, building the responsiveness of sector groups to the changes that impact on participation, and ensuring that pressures on the natural areas used for outdoor recreation are managed effectively and in a way that is beneficial to outdoor recreation.
- Ministry of Tourism New Zealand Cycleway Market Research 2009
Commissioned by the Ministry of Tourism to gain a better understanding of the scope, size and characteristics of cycling markets, both domestically and in New Zealand's key international markets.

Regional Context

Te Awa river ride is a significant regional development. When complete, Te Awa will travel 70 kilometres along the Waikato River. This is a multi-party project with planning currently well underway to develop the Cambridge to Hamilton link. Estimates have shown nearly 150,000 will benefit from Te Awa each year, and it will bring significant positive economic benefits. When Te Awa is complete, commuters in the Waikato surrounds will be able to cycle to work and to events, enabling exercise to be integrated into their daily lives and easing congestion and pollution.

Waikato District Council has been involved in regional conversations and has contributed to the Waikato Regional Council Strategic Case for investing in cycling. This collaboration is a way of working together to get the most out of cycling in the Waikato.

There are a number of Department of Conservation trails within the Waikato District and this strategy gives consideration to their locations and potential future linkages.

State highway and expressway developments also provide an opportunity to create walkways and cycleways that link with local routes.

Other regional strategies and plans include:

- Waikato Regional Walking and Cycling Strategy 2009-2015
Developed by Waikato Regional Council in collaboration with the Regional Walking and Cycling Steering Group, stakeholders of whom are located throughout the region. The strategy outlines policies and actions and maps that are intended to enhance walking and cycling in the region.
- Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan 2015-2045
Developed for the region by the Waikato Regional Transport Committee, and sets out how development of the region's land transport system over the next 30 years. It also identifies proposed regional transport activities for investment (local and/or central government). Policies of particular relevance to this strategy include:
 - P25 - Plan and develop the region's transport network to enable appropriate connectivity between local networks and strategic corridors.
 - P32 - Support walking and cycling as a viable transport mode, particularly in greater Hamilton.
- Waikato Regional Rural Cycling Survey 2014
The purpose of the research was to better understand the extent and nature of rural road cycling, and to provide evidence to inform policy and investment decisions related to cycling infrastructure.
- Sport Waikato Regional Sports Facilities Plan 2014
The purpose is to provide a high level strategic framework for regional sports facilities planning. It is designed to provide direction on what should be done and crucially, what should not be done. The plan is designed to focus thinking at a network wide sports facilities level with emphasis on national, regional and sub-regional assets, while also capturing local level facility data.
- Waikato Regional Policy Statement (updated January 2016)
A regional policy statement (RPS) is a mandatory document that provides:
 - an overview of the resource management issues of the region,
 - the ways in which integrated management of the region's natural and physical resources will be achieved.The role of the RPS in the context of this strategy is to provide policy guidance around the access and walkway development alongside rivers and lakes.
- The Future Proof Strategy and Implementation Plan 2009
A plan to know our future by planning today. It's important we work together now on the complex issues - future urban and rural land use, transport, natural and cultural resources, roads and essential infrastructure - and come up with a plan for our region to grow well and make the most of sharing its resources, so we have a quality of life we can all enjoy.

Regional Cycling Business Case Provides a robust strategic framework for the development and coordination of regional cycle trail projects. As part of the Business Case development, the following strategic responses have been identified, which are broadly aligned with the objectives of this strategy:

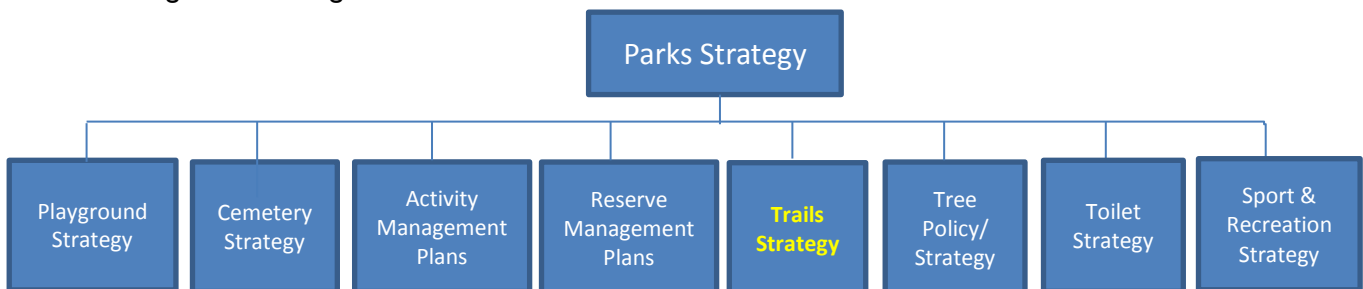
- Strengthening joint working on cycling related activities across stakeholder organisations,
- Driving more coherent and strategic investment decisions through alignment of organisation roadmaps to a regional strategic roadmap and raising awareness of funding opportunities and coordinating bids,

- Increasing awareness of cycling opportunities for both transport and recreation by promoting cycling directly and supporting stakeholder promotional activities; and
- Improving actual and perceived safety of cycle routes, by identifying and investing in priority routes and connections and undertaking safety trials in the Waikato Region.

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 Trails Strategy fits into the Parks Strategic Work Programme which was adopted by Council in 2014. Everything falls under the Parks Strategy which is our guiding document in terms of park provision and was adopted in December 2014.

Strategic Work Programme:



Structure Plans

A structure plan sets out the broad layout of appropriate land uses, key infrastructure and transport links and provides a long term planning framework for future growth.

Structure plans incorporate recreational facilities such as reserves and trails. It is important to align this strategy with the trail networks identified in existing and future structure plans, which have been/will be prepared with input from local residents, iwi and other key stakeholders.

Tamahere Cycle Strategy 2016

This strategy has been prepared to inform and co-ordinate infrastructure development to ensure it is appropriate to future cycling, pedestrian and traffic demand. This strategy goes in to a greater level of detail and is complimented by the opportunities for Tamahere identified in this district wide strategy. Similar strategies may be prepared for other communities over the coming years.

Waikato Integrated Land Transport Strategy

The Waikato Integrated Land Transport Strategy (WILTS) sets out the high level direction for our transport network over the next 30 years. The Waikato District has challenging road and roadside environments where driver behaviour and driver error result in a high number of fatal and serious injury crashes. The WILTS identifies the key transport problems and future investment priorities for the district which will have significant implications to the draft strategy, particularly the linkages between the local transport network and future walking and cycling trails.

Other strategic documents that have been considered in developing this strategy include:

- Waikato District Council Esplanade Strategy 2000
- District Plan – including subdivision rules
- The Long Term Plan and Community Outcomes
- Draft Walking and Cycling Strategy 2013 (not adopted)
- Community Plans
- Signage Strategy
- Reserves and Recreation Policy 2010

Whilst this strategy is focused on recreational trails, 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.

1.5 Stakeholders

In formulating this strategy Council has sought input from a variety of stakeholders, including:

- Community Boards and Committees
- Cycle Action Waikato
- Department of Conservation
- Hamilton City Council
- Iwi
- New Zealand Walking Access Commission
- New Zealand Horse Network
- Riding for the Disabled
- Sport Waikato
- Waikato Regional Council

Common themes that came across from stakeholders that provided input include:

- Support for the objectives of the strategy and recognition of the benefits of recreational trails.
- Promotion of trail connectivity and linkages.
- The importance of health and safety.
- Identifying how the strategy fits within the regional and national context.
- The importance of identifying the desired user groups and required standards at the project planning phase.
- Recommendations for additional trails.

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

2. Benefits of walking, cycling and horse riding

Walking, cycling and horse riding have a number of benefits, including health, environmental, community/social and economic benefits, some of which are discussed below.

Improved Health

The link between regular exercise and good health is widely recognised. Research indicates that regular physical activity reduces:

- Incidence of heart disease
- Risk of strokes
- Disability in people
- Depression
- High blood pressure.

Walking, cycling and bridle trails provide increased opportunities for people to observe and experience the outdoors in the Waikato District. In addition, horse riding can offer increased mobility in some cases for those with limited mobility.

Improving the Environment

Walking, cycling and horse riding are non-polluting forms of travel that do not use fossil fuels and help to improve the quality of the environment. Motor vehicles contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and poorer air quality. Sustainable and energy efficient modes of transport can help reduce air pollution and reduce traffic congestion and the associated costs.

Community and Social

High usage of trails means the surrounding areas are under natural surveillance, creating a safer environment. Walking, cycling and horse riding also provides opportunities to interact with others in the community. Reduced traffic congestion also contributes to a safer community.

Economic Development

Walking, cycling and horse riding are all recreational activities and this means a good trail network will attract visitors to the district, thereby benefiting local businesses. Replacing short car trips with walking and cycling has the potential to help local communities, as goods and services can be purchased locally without the need to drive to shops. This also reduces pressure on carpark spaces. Also, increased numbers of pedestrians within a neighbourhood reduce traffic. This can promote a sense of safety in the local area, which may encourage more visitors and tourists and attract new businesses and jobs.

‘The Value of Parks: Inspire, Refresh, Conserve, Protect, Play’ is a document by Parks Forum which provides valuable information about the significance of parks; the messages within this document are also relevant to this strategy. The benefits include protecting our natural world, building healthy communities, contributing to our economy, reflecting our culture and insuring our future.

3. Dogs

Council has a Dog Control Policy to ensure owners can enjoy the benefits of having a dog, while ensuring the safety and protection of the public and public areas.

The objective of the policy is to enable people to enjoy the benefits of dog ownership with no negative impacts on the public.

Dogs are permitted on a leash in almost all public reserves and parks in the Waikato district. The Council also has off-leash areas, including beaches, where dogs may be exercised off the leash if they are under continuous control and all faeces are removed.

Many people enjoy exercising dogs on trails. Conflicting usage such as safety issues with dogs and cyclists need to be considered for current and future trails. This strategy contains policies regarding signage which will provide clarity to all trail users once implemented. Initiatives to ensure dog faeces are removed from trails are also encouraged.

4. Signage and Track Classifications

4.1 Signage

Council has prepared a Brand Guide (2014) to create uniformity in the visual image of Waikato District Council. This ensures the visual design elements of Waikato District Council are applied correctly in every application in which the Waikato District Council logo is identified.

Council has also prepared a Signage Strategy to provide additional details on the design, procurement and application of signs that will enhance the presentation of parks and visual image of the Council.

Such guidelines are essential for providing consistency in all communications, including outdoor signage.

An audit of Council signs at parks undertaken in 2014 found that despite the Council having an established system for the design and production of outdoor signs, application of the system within the parks network is limited and variable.

Signage is an important component of an effective trail network. Staff will implement signage in accordance with Council's Signage Strategy to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify and connect people and places
- Produce signage and information that is consistent, accessible and predictable
- Reduce visual clutter
- Make the visit easier, safer and more enjoyable
- Reassure and encourage discovery and use of parks
- Be consistent with the established Council brand guidelines
- Improve the visual identity of the Council outdoors








There is an international etiquette standard for shared trails; "heels before wheels", and where applicable this standard will be applied to trails in the Waikato District.

Specific policies relating to signage are outlined in Part I, Section 6 of the Strategy.

4.2 Track Classifications and Grading







Walking Tracks

Tracks are classified and grouped into six main categories for the purpose of providing visitor information (in accordance with SNZ HB8630:2004).

Path 	<p>Well formed firm surface Suitable for all ages and most fitness levels</p>
Short walk 	<p>Easy walking up to one hour Track is well formed, with even surface Few or no steps or slopes Suitable for people of most abilities and fitness Stream and river crossings are bridged Walking shoes required</p>
Walking track 	<p>Easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day Track mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities Clearly sign posted. Stream and river crossings bridged Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required</p>
Easy tramping track  	<p>Moderate day or multi-day tramping/hiking Track generally well formed, may be steep, rough or muddy. Suitable for people with moderate fitness and limited backcountry experience Track has signs, poles or markers Major stream and river crossings bridged Light tramping/hiking boots required</p>
Tramping track 	<p>Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking Mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections Suitable for people with good fitness Moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required Track has markers, poles or rock cairns Expect un-bridged river and stream crossings Tramping/hiking boots required</p>
Route 	<p>Challenging overnight tramping/hiking Track unformed and natural, may be rough and very steep Suitable for people with above average fitness High level of backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required Be completely self sufficient Track has markers, poles or rock cairns Expect un-bridged stream and river crossings Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required</p>

Mountain Bike Track Types

The following track standards are aligned with those on the Department of Conservation website. This is based on the Kennett Brothers grading system which is widely used by New Zealand riders. The difficulty descriptions have been slightly modified to better reflect the level of technical difficulty and physical exertion. Council will classify future mountain bike trails in accordance with these standards.

<p>Grade 1. Easiest</p> 	Fairly flat, wide, smooth track or gravel road.
<p>Grade 2. Easy</p> 	Mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.
<p>Grade 3. Intermediate</p> 	Steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at the track's outside edge
<p>Grade 4. Advanced</p> 	A mixture of long, steep climbs, narrow track, poor traction and obstacles that are difficult to avoid or jump over. Generally exposed at the tracks outside edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.
<p>Grade 5. Expert</p> 	Technically challenging. Giant climbs, narrow track and numerous hazards including dangerous drop-offs, sharp corners and difficult obstacles. Expect walking and possibly bike carrying.
<p>Grade 6. Extreme</p> 	Downhill/free ride specific tracks. Extremely steep sections with large drop-offs and other unavoidable obstacles. May include man-made structures and jumps.

Bridle Trails

Horse riders can be grouped into the following three groups:

- Recreational club horse rider
Riders, like walkers, and cyclists wish to ride their horses without the restraints required by formal organised groups – time and place. Some may compete, or take part in organised treks, but frequently do so on an ad-hoc basis. Just as someone who walks for recreation may sometimes participate in an organised event such as a 5km fun walk (or charity event). Some (very few) belong to recreational horse riding clubs – these are generally set up as a means of enabling access for recreational riding, or for social reasons.

- Trekking horse rider
Trekking commonly has 2 connotations:
 1. Commercial horse trekking – Companies that own and hire out their horses for people to ride, on set guided routes.
 2. Organised treks – Clubs or Events for people with their own horses to travel a route at a set time. Most often a few hours, or a day, but can be multi-day or even longer. This is a

popular option for some recreational riders, but does not replace the regular recreational/exercise requirements of horse/rider.

Trekking is sometimes used as a term to recognise informal recreational horse riding.

- Sporting horse rider
Including top level sports competitors.

A trail classification system must be based on the key physical attributes of the trails, such as the:

- width of the trail
- gradient on the trail
- the trail surface
- obstacles, or additional criteria that are important to horse riders e.g. is it a shared trail? Is it well sign-posted? Is there mobile phone coverage in an emergency? Are there water crossings, bridges, gates or other animals to deal with e.g. deer, pigs, cattle or more exotic and startling animals like emu, Llama etc

The New Zealand Horse Network suggests the following grading system for horse trails:

Grade 1 Green	Easy, wide, fairly flat or rolling, natural surface (grass or dirt), open, and generally wide enough for green horses, novice riders, mostly at least 2 wide. Well sign-posted.
Grade 2 Independent Novice	Easy, wide, fairly flat or rolling, natural surface (grass or dirt). May include some narrow (single track) trails, close bush, shallow water crossings, exposed roots or other low obstacles and/or gates to open. Good route signage.
Grade 3 Advanced	Both horse and rider need to be capable of dealing with low tree branches, narrow trails, exposed roots, or other track obstacles. Sections may be steep (up or down), narrow, or with drop-offs. Sporadic signage, usually only good near the most high use areas.
Grade 4 Extreme	May include extremely steep or narrow sections, rough footing including water crossings and/or slippery sections. No signage, or poor signage. May include sharing with motor vehicles, trailbikes, pig hunters etc. May require jumping or off-trail skills (bush bashing).

5. Walkways, Cycleways and Bridle Trails in the Waikato District

5.1 Existing network

Recreational Trails

There is approximately 22 kilometres of existing maintained trails in the Waikato District (this does not include footpaths in residential areas). The locations of the existing trails are spatially mapped in Part Two of this strategy, and these maps have been used to assist with the planning of future trails and linkages.

The spatial maps of the existing trail network help highlight the following generalisations about the existing network:

- The existing network is largely focused around townships
- The existing network is generally made up of smaller trails
- There are opportunities to link a number of existing trails
- There are more walking and cycling trails than bridle trails
- We have a large number of unformed legal roads which could be utilised for future trails

Future condition assessments of the existing network will provide a greater level of detail regarding trail issues and challenges.

Unformed legal Roads (Paper Roads)

An unformed legal road (ULR) is a parcel of land that has been legally designated as a road but has not been formed (physically constructed). An ULR has the same legal status as a formed road which means that the public may access it. As a result ULRs can contribute to our trails network. They can provide good off-road links between key areas. They also need to be considered as we explore potential new trails and linkages in our district trail network, especially for bridle and walking tracks.

It is important to note that some paper roads in our district are not considered safe or appropriate for trail usage. Staff will look to provide clarity around paper roads to encourage public usage where it is safe and appropriate (through Unformed Legal Roads guidelines).

Unformed legal roads have been included in spatial plans in Part 2 of this strategy.

5.2 Existing usage levels

There is currently limited data available regarding the number of users using trails in the district. Over time the intention is to obtain a greater level of detail and identify trends. This information will play an important role in assisting us to prioritise future works.

Walking

Council is in the process of installing trail counters at various locations within the Waikato District trails network. Systems will be put in place to allow monthly monitoring of trail usage at these sites.

The Te Araroa Trust has identified an increasing number of users walking the national trail. This passes through the Waikato District and will continue to create economic benefits as user numbers increase. It also provides an opportunity to link local trails to Te Araroa and this opportunity has been explored in this strategy.

The Department of Conservation manage trails within the district which also have increasing usage levels. For example, the Hakarimata walk is highly utilised and opportunities exist to further link this to local trails.

Cycling

A survey was carried out in 2014 of existing cyclists in the Waikato region (outside of Hamilton City). Reasons for cycling, safety concerns and least preferred cycle routes were identified. The majority of cyclists (91% out of 675 respondents) cited 'general fitness and exercise' as major reasons for cycling, 75% of all respondents also outlined 'recreation' as a major factor and over 50% wanted to 'enjoy the scenery'. Whilst this survey captured responses from all types of cyclists including the 'fast and fearless', there was a strong majority view that the least preferred cycle routes were those that had high volumes of traffic (85% of respondents). This was primarily due to safety concerns.

Evidence being gathered from other regional cycleways (Hauraki Rail Trail and Te Awa Cambridge – Karapiro) also supports the theory that there may be considerable latent demand from recreational cyclists who wish to ride primarily off-road. The experience on these trails has been that they have attracted large numbers of cyclists from the local area as well as national and international visitors. Notably the trails are attracting many younger and older cyclists who feel safe using these off-road facilities whilst enjoying the opportunity to visit local facilities and attractions. The trails are also well utilised by walkers and runners from neighbouring areas.

Cyclists can be categorised in to different types (as specified by Cycle Action Waikato):

- I. Tourist, Children and novices. The highest priority is to protect weaker modes of transport, particularly where vehicles create a danger by their greater weight and speed.
- II. Commuter cycling – normally they take the most direct route
- III. Biking for fitness / sport -. Their speed tends to be high for cyclist often cruising at 30km/hr on the flat and higher than 50 km/hr on downhill runs. They tend to cycle on-road.

Bridle Trails

The existing level of public bridle trails does not allow for high usage. This does not mean there is not desire for good bridleways. Horse riders currently need to consider alternative opportunities such as private land and road edges. Council is keen to facilitate the creation of bridle trails in conjunction with a coordinated approach from the horse riding community.

5.3 Key Issues/Challenges

There are a variety of existing issues and challenges listed below which need to be taken in to consideration as part of the trail development. Methods to address key issues and challenges are identified in Part 1, Section 6: Strategy Objectives and Policies.

Financial

- Determining the rate at which trail networks will be created and/or expanded across the district. This will be linked to available funding for capital and maintenance works.
- Producing a framework to prioritise future trails, extensions and linkages to ensure maximum value for money.
- Acknowledging financial limitations and identifying opportunities to overcome these e.g. external funding providers, community driven projects.

- Maintenance of existing trails, including those gifted to Council following capital development by the community.

Health and Safety

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

Strategic Planning

- Maintaining awareness of national and regional efforts to promote walking, cycling and horse riding, including how these efforts can link to local goals.
- Accurately mapping both existing trails and future opportunities. Identifying strategic opportunities for linkages/connectivity, land acquisitions, esplanade reserves, opportunities to utilise paper roads.
- Cross boundary linkages.
- Reliance on other agencies contributing to the network.

Meeting Community Needs

- Respecting property rights of private landowners whilst encouraging access agreements.
- Lack of existing trails and infrastructure in some communities and/or lack of potential to link.
- Developing high amenity walking and cycling routes that link residential areas and services within towns.
- Encouraging and providing support for community led projects, including enabling community involvement with trail maintenance.
- Balancing the needs of three different user groups, a variety of fitness levels, disabled users, etc.
- Demographic changes – catering to existing and future communities giving consideration to population projections, aging populations, etc. Increasing population in growth areas creates increased expectation in community infrastructure.
- 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, off road routes, etc.
- Actively encouraging community engagement throughout the trails process from initial planning to completion.

Consideration should also be given to the draft Regional Cycling Strategic Case, produced by the Waikato Regional Council and key stakeholders. This identifies the following regional cycling problems that need to be addressed:

- Problem one: Absence of a region-wide shared and compelling vision for cycling is limiting ability to gain buy-in from stakeholders.
- Problem two: Uncoordinated approach to planning, funding and promotion is reducing efficiency and effectiveness of funders and delivery agencies.
- Problem three: Concerns about safety and the poor quality of some cycle routes are discouraging people from cycling in the region.

6. Strategy Objectives and Policies

6.1 Objective One: Our trail network will be safe and well promoted

Policies:

1. Council will encourage walking, cycling and horse riding by providing and promoting trails in the district.
2. Council will promote safety and education through the production and future reviews of this strategy, track maintenance and signage, and also through standard Council health and safety policies and procedures.
3. Whilst some trails will cater for specific user groups and/or ability levels, as a whole our trail network will endeavour to cater for all fitness levels and for disabled users where practicable.
4. Consideration will be given to ensure the actual and perceived safety of trail routes is progressively increased (e.g. through lighting, natural surveillance, planting choices, signage).
5. Trail maintenance will ensure the surface is appropriate for all intended users.
6. Trails will be built to the appropriate classification standard (see Section 4.2). Trail crossings of major roads will require consultation with Council's Roding team and in some cases external agencies (e.g. NZTA) to ensure there is not an acceptable health and safety risk.

6.2 Objective Two: Maximum value will be achieved with the available budget

Policies:

1. Maintaining the existing trail network to an acceptable level of service will be prioritised over new projects. Service levels are to be defined for each trail type.
2. New projects will be prioritised in accordance with the spatial plans and prioritisation criteria contained in Part Two of the Strategy.
3. Community driven projects that have not been prioritised will be able to be addressed in accordance with Section 7 of the Strategy.
4. Shared usage of trails will be encouraged where possible as part of the desire to encourage high usage.
5. Council will investigate land purchase opportunities identified in the spatial plans.
6. Council will continue to collaborate with other agencies with trail responsibilities to stay informed and maintain awareness of wider opportunities.
7. Corporate sponsorship of trails (or portions of trails) will be permitted when an assessment has been undertaken and a benefit has been identified.

6.3 Objective Three: There will be an increasing usage of trails in the Waikato District

Policies:

1. Council will promote increased usage through signage.
 - a. Signage will be used to promote the location of trails.
 - b. Signage will be in accordance with approved Council signage guidelines and strategies.
 - c. Where required, signage will be used to promote health and safety considerations.

- d. Where required, signage will be used to identify which user groups (including dogs) can use trails. When more than one user group is permitted (e.g. cyclists and walkers) signage will identify who has right of way.
 - e. Where required, signage will be used to outline trail classifications so users are informed of necessary ability levels.
 - f. Council will investigate the potential to incorporate Pou signage in to the trail network in appropriate locations.
 - g. Signage for cyclists will be designed to be legible at higher speeds than pedestrian orientated signs.
2. Council will investigate and implement initiatives to monitor trail usage, which will be used to identify trends and opportunities (e.g. installing trail counters).
 3. New trails will be prioritised in accordance with the criteria in Part 2 of this strategy, which ensures maximum value for money and benefit to trail users.
 4. Council will work with private land owners to encourage access agreements whilst respecting property rights.
 5. Electronic bikes will be permitted to access cycling trails and riders will be required to travel at a safe speed no greater than that of push bikers.

6.4 Objective Four: Council and the community will work together

Policies:

1. When responding to trail requests from members of the public and community groups, staff will follow the processes identified in this strategy – see Section 7.
2. Staff will prepare a list of potential funding providers for trail projects which can be shared with community groups.
3. Where appropriate, staff will advocate and liaise with private landowners in order to establish trails.

6.5 Objective Five: Council will make informed decisions regarding land purchases and sales

Policies:

1. Staff will refer to the future projects identified in Part 2 of the Strategy as one step of the process when considering adhoc land purchase opportunities (this is particularly relevant for esplanade reserves that become available during subdivisions).
2. Staff will refer to the future projects identified in this strategy when considering land for disposal, to ensure it has not been identified for potential future trail usage.
3. Staff will refer to the future projects identified in this strategy when providing input in to future strategic documents, e.g. structure plans. Provision will be made in structure plans and town centre plans for walking and cycling and planning for parks will be linked to the trails network.
4. Land purchases are not the only option for establishing trails on private land. Council will also advocate the use of easements, e.g. under the Walking Access Act 2008.

6.6 Objective Six: Unformed legal roads and stop banks will be utilised where appropriate

Policies:

1. Council will not actively promote usage of all unformed legal roads in the district, as some routes are not considered safe or appropriate (In saying this Council acknowledges that all

unformed legal roads are legal roads). Council will identify unformed legal roads that are strategically important to the trail network and work with adjoining landowners to make these practical. Unformed legal roads are identified within the maps in Part 2 of the Strategy.

2. Council will ensure unformed legal roads are not blocked off from public access, preventing public use of trails.
3. Council does not generally encourage the use of stop banks but acknowledges they are used in some instances, e.g. Te Araroa. Trails will be permitted to be built on stop banks in certain locations where a detailed assessment has occurred and this has been identified as appropriate. These decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

6.7 Objective Seven: Trails will be built to a fit-for-purpose standard

Policies:

1. Trails will be built to the appropriate classification standard (see Section 4.2).
2. New formed tracks created in residential subdivisions will be built to a minimum width of 1.5 metres.
3. New local purpose accessway reserves will be required to be at least 7 metres wide to allow adequate space for a trail and also achieve Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles.
4. Trail surfaces will be chosen with longevity and maintenance costs in mind.
5. Council will ensure the aim of a trail (including intended users) is clearly identified in the planning stage before any physical work begins. Trails will be built in accordance with the Department of Conservation Track Construction and Maintenance Guidelines.
6. Council will encourage a standard built width of 3 metres for new multi-use paths.



7. Actions and Responsibilities – Council and Community Roles

Part 2 of the Strategy identifies a strategic approach for prioritising future track upgrades, expansions and connections. Spatial maps have been used to identify future priorities. These priority projects will be driven by Council as funding allows. This approach will allow Council to achieve maximum benefit with existing budgets. 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 trail planning and obtaining funding.

The Strategy also acknowledges the potential for adhoc projects to be proposed. These are most likely to be raised by individual/s or community groups and be in relation to local opportunities and desires; as such they may not be captured in the strategy or they may not be identified as high 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.

7.1 Priority Projects

Priority projects are track upgrades, expansions and/or connections that have been strategically identified as priorities through the formulation of this strategy. As a result these are the projects which Council will allocate funding towards as budgets allow via Long Term Plan processes. 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 out Trails network. Generally trails maintenance will remain the responsibility of Council.

If appropriate, Council will consult with the community and other organisations at a level considered suitable for each specific project.

Priority projects have been identified and prioritised in Part Two through the use of spatial mapping and assessment criteria.

7.2 Non-Priority Projects

Non-priority projects are those that are not identified as 'high priority' in Section Two of the Strategy (they may still be identified on maps). 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 trails network. Due to financial constraints and the desire to strategically prioritise projects, in these scenarios the local community will need to play a leading role in achieving their local aspirations. However Council will endeavour to offer advice and support; an important objective of this strategy is to outline the role of the community and provide practical guidance to assist individuals/community groups to drive forward projects.

In scenarios whereby individual/s or community groups approach Council with a desire to undertake projects that have not been identified as priorities within this strategy, the following shall apply:

Council will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the individual/s or community group are aware of the trails strategy and the process that was undertaken to identify priority projects.

- Providing advice on potential funding providers that the individual/s or community group may wish to approach.
- Considering ongoing maintenance costs that are likely to fall under Council's responsibility if the project is undertaken/ determining whether to take on ownership of the assets which are created.
- Staff may provide technical advice in regards to the route of the proposed trail/s.
- Easements over private property. However these may be able to be negotiated by the community in Council's name – if this is community led it may increase the chances of easements being granted.
- In rare cases Council may be able to provide financial assistance (although the standard practise will be for Council to allocate funding in accordance with the priorities identified in this strategy). In such cases it is likely that a formal request for funding will need to be presented to elected members.

Council has the right to disallow proposals for trails on Council land if it considers appropriate reasons exist for doing so. Partnerships with community lead groups under management agreements will be entered into on a case by case basis.

The individual/s or community group driving the project will be responsible for:

- Approaching Council to discuss proposals involving Council land before undertaking any actions to progress their proposal.
- Determining whether Council support exists for the project and whether Council will allow it to occur.
- Obtaining funding to implement the work and covering legal costs.
- Applying for resource consent and/or meeting other legislative requirements, if applicable.
- Contributing to conversations with private landowners in regards to easements, if applicable.

On a case by case basis an agreement will be reached in regards to trail assets and maintenance obligations. In certain scenarios there may be potential for these to be vested in Council; alternatively they may be managed by the Trail Trust.

PART TWO

1. Existing Trails Network and Proposed Future Trails/Linkages

The existing trails network has been mapped and is shown below in Part Two, Section Four. By mapping the existing network we have been able to gain a clearer understanding of existing locations, user groups currently being catered for, linkage opportunities and gaps in facility provision.

With the input of stakeholders, we have used the aerial maps of the existing trails network as a starting point to map potential future trails and linkages.

This strategy acknowledges it is not financially viable for all improvements and track expansions to be undertaken by Council. An assessment criterion that has been used to prioritise Council funded future trail projects is outlined in Part Two, Section Two below.

2. Prioritisation of Future Trail Projects

The future projects identified in the spatial maps have been prioritised using the following criteria.

Assessment Criteria	Weighting
Tenure (conditions under which land is held or occupied)	1
Economic Impact	3
Connectivity	3
Attractions	2
Demand	3
Cost Impact	-3

Each trail was given a score between 1 and 3 for each of the above criteria. Through this process, every proposed trail has been given a total score. This is displayed in the below table. If a proposed trail has a high total score this indicates that it should be prioritised above proposed trails with low total scores. As Council will not have the budget to fund all potential projects, this information will be used to assist with future decision making and budget allocation.

Potential trails that have not been identified as 'high' priority are still important. In some cases these projects may be driven by community groups and Council may still be able to assist in their development via methods identified in this strategy.

An additional Tool is provided as Appendix One which is also designed to assist with the prioritisation of future trail projects. . This addresses additional issues Council should consider before committing funds to specific trail developments.

Prioritisation of Future Trails

Proposed Trail No.	Proposed Trail Location (see Aerial Maps)	Priority
206	Te Uku/Raglan Coast/Raglan East/Raglan Town Centre/Raglan West	High
663	Ngaruawahia Town Centre/Ngaruawahia	High
388	Eureka	High
3	Lake Waikare/Te Kauwhata East, West & Town Centre	High
205	Raglan Coast/Raglan Town Centre/Raglan West	High
201	Raglan Coast/Raglan East/Raglan West/Te Uku	High
208	Raglan Coast/Raglan Heads	High
516	Te Kauwhata East & Town Centre/Lake Waikare	High
4	Lake Waikare/Te Kauwhata East/Te Kauwhata Town Centre	High
505	Hakarimata/Hamilton Environs/Ngaruawahia Town Centre/Ngaruawahia	High
209	Raglan Coast	High
300	Tuakau East/Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Tuakau Town Centre/Tuakau West/Tuakau East	High
659	Hakarimata/Huntly South/Taupiri/Ngaruawahia	High
191	Te Kauwhata West, East & Town Centre/Lake Waikare/Rangiriri	High
788	Bruntwood/Matangi	High
203	Raglan Coast/Raglan Town Centre/Raglan West	High
207	Raglan Coast/Raglan Heads/Raglan West	High
806	Hamilton Environs	High
601	Hamilton Environs/Te Kowhai/Waipā River	High
611	Hamilton Environs/Waipā River	High

387	Eureka	High
807	Hamilton Environs	High
303	Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Tuakau Town Centre/Tuakau East	High
304	Tuakau Pokeno Environs	High
60	Port Waikato/Waikato Heads South	High
180	Mercer/Tuakau Pokeno Environs	High
340	Eureka/Eureka Town	High
302	Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Tuakau West	Medium
955	Waikato Heads South/Port Waikato	Medium
951	Raglan West/Raglan Heads/Ragland Coast	Medium
952	Waikorea Beach/Raglan Coast	Medium
55	Port Waikato/Waikato Heads South	Medium
1	Port Waikato/Waikato Heads South	Medium
184	Pokeno West/Tuakau Pokeno Environs	Medium
506	Hakarimata/Ngaruawahia	Medium
183	Mercer/Pokeno East/Pokeno Town Centre/Pokeno West/Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Whangamarino	Medium
650	Hamilton Environs/Waipā River/Whatawhata	Medium
602	Raglan Coast	Medium
810	Hamilton Environs/Waipā River/Whatawhata	Medium
600	Hamilton Environs/Te Kowhai/Waipā River	Medium
103	Hakarimata/Huntly East/Huntly Town Centre	Medium
606	Glen Afton Pukemiro/ Rotowaro	Medium
583	Waipā River	Medium

204	Raglan Coast/Raglan East/Raglan West/Te Uku	Medium
742	Hamilton Environs/Waipua River	Medium
954	Waikato Heads South/Waikorea Beach	Medium
570	Hamilton Environs	Medium
742	Waipa River/Hamilton Environs	Medium
840	Pirongia	Medium
105	Hakarimata/Huntly East/Huntly South/Huntly Town Centre	Medium
512	Hakarimata/Ngaruawahia/Waipua River	Medium
213	Raglan Coast	Medium
212	Raglan Coast	Medium
50	Pokeno East/Pokeno Town Centre/Pokeno West/Tuakau Pokeno Environs	Medium
758	Eureka/Ruakura	Medium
661	Hamilton Environs	Medium
755	Eureka/Tamahere	Medium
653	Hautapu	Medium
654	Eureka/Ruakura/Tamahere	Medium
741	Hamilton Environs/Waipua River/Whatawhata	Medium
402	Meremere/Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Whangamarino	Medium
211	Raglan Coast/Raglan West	Medium
252	Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Tuakau West	Medium
900	Bruntwood/Eureka/Matangiri/Tamahere	Medium
558	Hamilton Environs/Waipua River/Whatawhata	Medium
950	Raglan Coast/Raglan West/Te Uku	Medium

401	Meremere/Whangamarino	Medium
740	Eureka/Tamahere	Medium
660	Bruntwood/Eureka/Tamahere	Medium
513	Hakarimata/ Ngaruawahia	Low
202	Raglan Coast/Raglan Heads/Raglan West	Low
743	Whatawhata/Hamilton Environs/Waipā River	Low
582	Whatawhata/Hamilton Environs/Waipā River	Low
301	Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Tuakau Town Centre/Tuakau West	Low
250	Tuakua East/Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Tuakau Town Centre/Tuakau West	Low
251	Tuakau East/Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Tuakau Town Centre/Tuakau West	Low
636	Te Kowhai/Waipā River/Hamilton Environs	Low
744	Hamilton Environs/Waipā River	Low
106	Hakarimata/Huntly East/Huntly South/Huntly Town Centre	Low
553	Whatawhata	Low
636	Hamilton Environs/Te Kowhai/Waipā River	Low
501	Hakarimata/Taupiri	Low
720	Hapuakohe/Waiterimu	Low
759	Eureka/Ruakura	Low
800	Lake Waikare	Low
761	Eureka/Bruntwood	Low
657	Hakarimata/Huntly East	Low
658	Huntly East	Low
510	Hakarimata, Hamilton Environs/Ngaruawahia Town Centre/Ngaruawahia/Waipā River	Low

104	Hakarimata/Huntly South/Huntly Town Centre	Low
511	Hamilton Environs/Waipā River	Low
305	Te Kohanga/Tuakau Pokeno Environs/Tuakau West	Low
751	Eureka/Tamahere	Low
754	Eureka/Tamahere	Low
760	Eureka/Bruntwood/Tamahere	Low
181	Tuakau Pokeno Environs	Low
802	Te Kohanga	Low
306	Tuakau East/Tuakau Town Centre	Low
502	Taupiri	Low
801	Te Kohanga	Low
655	Hakarimata/Huntly East/Huntly South/Huntly Town Centre	Low
657	Hakarimata/Huntly East	Low

3. Implementation, Funding and Monitoring of the Strategy

Implementation and Funding:

Part Two, Section Two of this strategy identifies high priority projects that will achieve maximum community benefits and value for money. This information will be used to inform decisions regarding expenditure of existing trail development budgets.

The following table shows existing budgets for walkways and trail developments in the Long Term Plan. Opportunities to obtain additional funding through external sources are encouraged to future advance the trails network.

Capital Projects

		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Growth										
1WK10000	District Wide walkways						458,244	587,126	483,086	
1WK10051	Te Kauwhata walkways		407,442	575,188		325,559				
1WK10090	Pokeno walkways	24,624	27,722	93,830		18,460	11,686			
1WK10046	Tamahere walkways	167,648	171,588	175,019	178,695	182,805	187,192	191,872	197,340	203,458
Total for Growth		192,272	606,752	844,037	178,695	526,824	657,122	778,998	680,426	203,458
LOS										
1WK10000	District Wide walkways						22,912	41,099	42,270	43,580
1WK10093	Puni walkways		56,706							
Total for LOS			56,706				22,912	41,099	42,270	43,580
Renewal										
1WK10000	District Wide walkways	41,040	52,505	53,556	54,681	55,938	57,280	70,455	78,501	80,935
1WK10030	Raglan walkways		278,280							
Total for Renewal		41,040	330,785	53,556	54,681	55,938	57,280	70,455	78,501	80,935

Operational Spend

		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
District Wide										
1WK10000	General Consultants		15,775		16,670		17,701		18,912	
1WK10000	Repairs and Maintenance	270,389	329,639	338,341	347,815	357,902	368,639	380,435	392,837	406,194
1WK10000	R&M Contractors							364	750	1,035
Raglan										
1WK10030	R&M Contractors	358	367	754	774	796	820	848	874	904
Tamahere										
1WK10046	Power/Gas	1,089	1,131	1,177	1,228	1,282	1,342	1,408	1,480	1,558
1WK10046	Repairs and Maintenance	5,121	5,249	5,388	5,538	5,699	5,870	6,058	6,255	6,468
1WK10046	R&M Contractors	594	819	1,057	1,308	1,573	1,856	2,161	2,476	2,822
North/Mid										
1WK10050	R&M Contractors	358	367	377	387	398	410	424	437	452
Te Kauwhata										
1WK10051	R&M Contractors	256	262	538	886	912	1,231	1,272	1,314	1,357
Total Operational		278,165	353,609	347,632	374,606	368,562	397,869	392,970	425,335	420,790

Monitoring:

This strategy will guide staff with day to day decisions relating to trail maintenance and development, as well as offering guidance to the community. Staff will monitor the effectiveness of this strategy on an ongoing basis as it is implemented, and keep a record of any issues that can be addressed in future updates. A review of this strategy is intended to be undertaken in five years of adoption.

The Regional Cycling Strategic Case includes key performance indicators and measure which can be referred to for monitoring of cycling activity in the region.

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

- Identifying external trail 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 trail projects and using this information to guide a works schedule.
- Keeping a record of any trail issues as they arise that can be addressed in future updates.