

7. CHRISTCHURCH TO LITTLE RIVER RAIL TRAIL – LITTLE RIVER TOWNSHIP SECTION

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Community Board on the progress made in gathering assessment information on the Rail Trail route options into Little River Township and to meet the Boards request for a report to it prior to the Council. The assessment information is due to be reported to Council at its meeting on the 11 October 2007.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. This report is responding to the Akaroa/Wairewa Community Board members' request 25 July 2007 (following the Councils' 19 July 2007 resolution calling for a further staff report to Council before November) that staff report back to the Board on this subject prior to reporting to the Council.
3. A staff report is being prepared for the Councils 11 October meeting which as resolved by Council further investigates the feasibility and technical issues for the options in the development of the Rail Trail.
4. This report presents the assessment information to date for the feasibility phase of the project and staff will be reporting to Council towards gaining confirmation of both a preferred 'long term' option for the Rail Trail to progress into the public consultation phase and an immediate term option to implement.
5. Since the initial report further information is now reported on drainage, land use and construction issues with rough order costs attached (public excluded) and associated information included from consultation with other potential stakeholders.
6. The Community Boards preferred long term option to take to public consultation is covered in this report. The details of each option are described briefly and the significant or potentially significant issues are noted.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. The work associated with the consultation and adoption of a preferred Railtrail route can be accommodated within existing budgets, but it is not appropriate to consult on a project prior to funding being confirmed. The capital costs for any such route will be submitted as part of the 2009/19 LTCCP review.

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2006-16 LTCCP budgets?

8. The capital funding for the Little River Township section of the Railtrail is not included in the 2006/16 LTCCP.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

9. There are considered to be no legal implications however dependent on options selected some resource consent, legal easements etc will need to be gained.

Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?

10. As above

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

11. As per above

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2006-16 LTCCP?

12. As per above

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

13. The project aligns with the Councils Walking and Cycling Strategies. It also aligns with the Strategic Plan for Banks Peninsula.

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

14. Yes

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

15. Consultation with directly involved significant stakeholders and interested parties has been undertaken to a level commensurate with a feasibility study. If the project is to be progressed the preferred long term option will be used as a basis for public consultation as part of the standard capital projects development process.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Community Board consider the additional feasibility information provided along with the Councils resolutions to date and then confirm its preference for both long term and short term option/s for the Little River Township section of the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail.

(However no work can commence until project funding is authorised by the Council in the 09/19 LTCCP.)

BACKGROUND (THE ISSUES)

16. Members will recall the staff report and feasibility study on the Rail Trail presented at the Boards 23 May 2007 meeting to gain its view on a preferred short and long term option. The Community Board recommended to the Council:
 - (a) 'That in the long term, the final section of the Christchurch-little River Rail Trail, from the Little River Hotel to Little River Township, stay on the eastern side of the State Highway, tracking along its corridor to a point opposite the Little River Historic Rail Station car park where a crossing is developed.'
 - (b) The Community Boards considerations were added to the report to the Council meeting on the 19 July 2007 where the Council resolved:
 - (i) That the Council support the concept of the Rail Trail shared pathway in Little River.
 - (ii) That the Council support the recommendations within the attached feasibility report for the immediate actions to be progressed.
 - (iii) That staff be asked to further investigate options for the successful development of the Rail Trail in consultation with local landowners and Transit NZ, and report back to the Council before 1 November 2007.
17. The feasibility study recommended immediate improvements for giving Railtrail users access into Little River - refer to section 4 of the study - these were:
 - Arrange Railtrail shared pathway access along the length of the rail embankment on property 4165 Christchurch - Akaroa Road.
 - Install railtrail markers.
 - Utilise the existing footpath between Morrisons and Barclays Roads and possibly mark a cycle lane for north bound cyclists.
18. Discussions with Transit New Zealand are in progress and the outcome/ progress of this will be reported at the meeting.
19. Discussions with landowners have progressed and the details are reported within the relevant route options.
20. The Community Board requested that staff consult further with stakeholders towards identifying better short term options and to report back to the Board.
21. Now that both the Board and the Council have expressed their preferences, staff have subsequently been able to further investigate the feasibility of the options and are now able to report on the findings for consideration and guidance.
22. The rough order costs that include estimated values for gaining access to private properties are reported in the public excluded section.
23. This report should be read in conjunction with the attached previous report and feasibility study (both attached).

THE OBJECTIVES

24. In 2003, the Christchurch-Little River Railtrail Trust was formed as an incorporated charitable trust to transform the former railway route into a trail catering for walkers and cyclists wishing to view the region at close quarters, while avoiding the traffic on the busy road between Little River and Christchurch.

25. The objective of the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust is to achieve a mainly off road walkway/cycleway linking Christchurch to Little River and the communities between.
26. The Trust works closely with its partners in developing the Railtrail - Department of Conservation, Wairewa Runanga, Selwyn District Council, Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury and Transit New Zealand. The Trust has key objectives of raising funds to complete the Trail and to engage in consultation with the wide range of interest groups.
27. Whilst the Wairewa Runanga has formal responsibility for the trail development up to the vicinity of the area opposite the Little River Hotel (Department of Conservation land) it is also acting in an informal facilitating and advocacy role in the process of establishing a route for the remaining section of the Trail into the Little River Township on behalf of the CLRRTT. The Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust has maintained the overall responsibility to ensure the objectives of the Trail are met.
28. The Wairewa Runanga and CLRRTT representatives met in August to discuss their collective stance on the Trail development into Little River Township. If the Trail travels across the SH 75 in a high speed area the Runanga would require an Underpass. Whilst recognising that the decision making rests with the Council and Transit NZ, the west side of SH 75 is seen as feasible by the Runanga but its preference is for the Trail to remain on the eastern side of SH 75 until it crosses within the lower speed environment of the township.
29. The Trust also sees both the eastern and western options as feasible but its preference is for the Trail to be developed on the west. It would prefer some type of formalised crossing facility in the high speed area on the SH 75 with preference for an underpass. If the Trail were to progress along the eastern side and cross in the township (currently 70 kph) it would still prefer some type of formalised crossing facility
30. Short term options were also discussed between the two organisations with the Runanga having a preference for the Trail to be developed on the eastern side as it isn't supportive of the level crossing of SH 75 to access the western options. The Trust recognises that the existing Trail crossing point on SH 75 meets Transit NZ's crossing requirements and whilst it wants a better grade crossing in the long term, the short term existing level crossing is acceptable to it.

THE OPTIONS

31. The Railtrail route options are segmented into section elements that can be linked in differing combinations to make up complete routes. These section elements are individually detailed on maps in the options report attached to assist the Community Board and Council in their selection process.
32. The Council has resolved an immediate option be implemented but added resolutions that are linked, requiring staff to investigate and report back prior to November 2007.
33. The long term options for public consultation described below should be read in reference to the maps attached.
34. Generally securing of access through private properties will be sought via way of legal easements.
35. No legal surveys have been undertaken on the routes and the land boundaries have been deduced from existing generic mapping data.
36. The Community Boards preferred long term option from a route from Wairewa Pa Road to the Historic Rail Station following the road corridor was investigated – Transit New Zealand are unsupportive of this option as it would need to substantially utilise the road carriageway. There would also be considerable drainage costs involved and some form of separation costs to segregate the railtrail users from the carriageway traffic. In addition it is probable that most on road car parking would need to be removed along the eastern side. However other options that would achieve an eastern route for the Railtrail in this section have been investigated and are presented below (Options D1 and D2).

Options Reference: Section elements

Option A1

- (a) The construction of an underpass for the Railtrail pathway to cross SH 75 in the southern area immediately next to the Little River Hotel and the continuation of the Railtrail pathway north along the western side of the Highway for 350 metres.
- (b) The underpass is predicted to require the use of an area of land owned by the Hotel which includes housing the underpass ramp area and use of the parking area frontage. Widening of the existing culvert just north of the Hotel will be needed to allow the trail physical passage way past.
- (c) Suggested piping of drain area on road corridor in front of number 4111 Christchurch to Akaroa Road (Historic Cottage) approx 130 metres north of proposed under pass rather than resumption of strip of flat land closer to the cottage that is also on legal road corridor but used as a cottage garden.

Issues:

- (i) Council will need the continued involvement and agreement of Transit New Zealand to the underpass on SH 75. Progress of a management approach to Transit New Zealand will be reported at the meeting.
- (ii) Topographical and legal surveys will need to be undertaken to progress investigations of any underpass. Staff advice is that the underpass appears viable but technically difficult to build and if pursued will require more site work investigations.
- (iii) Use of the Little River Hotel land will require careful design to ensure safety of users especially around the car park area and also successful negotiation for securing the access with the owners.

Option A2

- (a) The Railtrail pathway underpass construction in the northern area alongside the existing SH 75 culvert crossing, just north of the Little River Hotel and the continuation of the Railtrail pathway north for 300 metres along the western side of the Highway.
- (b) The notes and issues under this element are identical to A1 with the exception that no private property access will be needed for in and around the underpass and there are no extra costs for widening the existing culvert. It also utilises more of the existing pathway hence requiring less new pathway construction. For these reasons if an underpass option is pursued this option (A2) is considered preferable to option A1.

Option A3

- (a) The Railtrail pathway follows the existing trail path to the existing (unofficial) level crossing point at the finish of the existing path.
- (b) This option utilises the existing path and may require formalisation of a crossing point with some extra facility such as holding rails and path alignment if crossing SH 75 is progressed instead of staying on the eastern side of the highway.

Issues:

- (i) Management is approaching Transit New Zealand to discuss the best way forward in regard to speed reduction possibilities in this area. Progress will be reported to the meeting.

Option B1

- (a) The Railtrail pathway travels along the historic railway the length of the private property to Morrisons Road. By using the rail embankment only a surface treatment is required for the pathway development along with a stock gate at each end of the property.

Issues:

- (i) Successful negotiation for securing the pathway access with the owners although they are very positive about this facility as it complements their property development plans.
- (ii) Planning staff from the Environmental Policy and Approvals advise that a resource consent is needed to develop the walking and cycling pathway in the small settlement zone – this may take six months to gain.

Option B2

- (a) The Railtrail pathway crosses Morrisons Road from gateway at property number 4165 to SH 75 on the northern berm. A 2.5 metre sealed pathway will be constructed on the road corridor and will likely necessitate some resumption of land and the repositioning of a fence, posts and some work ensuring adequate path width around a culvert at the intersection of SH 75.
- (b) It may require some drainage being allowed for. This is a very quiet rural road providing a relatively safe road crossing environment and the northern side has only one residential driveway crossing.

Issues:

- (i) This section will probably involve some resumption of land.

Option B3

- (a) The Railtrail pathway travels along the historic railway for approximately two thirds of the length of the private property towards Morrisons Rd and then detours east towards SH 75 where it then tracks north alongside the western side of the road corridor where it is constructed as a 2.5 metre sealed pathway up to the intersection with Morrisons Road.

Issues:

- (i) The owners of the private property linking from Morrisons Rd to (approx 460 metres south) the State Highway are currently considering the option of detouring the pathway from the historic rail trail through the centre of their property a response should be available for the meeting.
- (ii) This alignment would skirt the pathway around the Small Settlement Zone and therefore not require the gaining of a resource consent.
- (iii) There may be some width issues utilising the western berm that may require some securing of access over private land.
- (iv) The detour would move the path off the historic rail trail alignment and its associated advantages or disadvantages would need to be considered alongside the chosen overall long term route.

Option B4

- (a) The Railtrail pathway travels along the western side of the SH 75 as a 2.5 metre sealed pathway from the existing crossing point to the intersection with Morrisons Road.

Issues:

- (i) There may be some width issues utilising the western berm that may require some securing of access over private land.

Option C1

- (a) A corridor and Railtrail pathway would be developed through two private properties to link the path directly from Morrisons Road to Barclays Road to a point opposite Council owned land on the northern side of Barclays Road.
- (b) This will involve securing access of a 4 to 5 metre corridor with the owners of the two properties - both are agreeable to considering this option subject to agreed negotiation conclusion.

Issues:

- (i) There is likely to be some need to re position one residential septic tank in providing a relatively direct link. The proposed concept alignment will allow regaining alignment onto the historic railway line north of Barclays Road. Some fencing and landscaping may be required.

Option C2

- (a) The Railtrail route travels alongside SH 75 from the intersection of Morrisons Road to Barclays Road.
- (b) The footpath would be a minimum 2.5 metre sealed pathway and likely provide contra flow shared usage.

Issues:

- (i) There would likely be some land resumption needed over all or part of the length of this link if the road carriage way isn't significantly utilised for the route.
- (ii) Transit New Zealand is not in favour of the narrowing of the carriageway such as with any physical works. Transit would accept use of their road corridor away from or separated from the carriageway.

Option C3

- (a) The Railtrail pathway is constructed on the southern berm side of Barclays Road, from the intersection with SH 75, to the historic railway line.

Issues:

- (i) There are no significant issues with only two residential driveways to cross. The northern side of the road has a drain close to the edge of the road that makes the southern side the better option of the two.

Option C4

- (a) The Railtrail pathway route follows the footpath alongside the western side of SH 75 from Barclays Road to the Little River Historic Railway Station. To create a contra flow shared path the existing footpath would need to be widened towards the residential properties. Transit does not support the narrowing of the carriageway on this section.

- (b) There are five residential driveways to cross along this length as well as a petrol station forecourt, and then travel through or across the Little River Townships main car park.

Issues:

- (i) All the property frontages along this section occupy legal road, some resumption would be required.
- (ii) The pathway would lead through the petrol station forecourt. It is not possible to segregate pathway users and petrol station traffic as the petrol pumps are also located on legal road.
- (iii) The Trail users would need to be accommodated in and amongst the traffic parking within the Little River Townships main car park.

Option C5

- (a) The Railtrail pathway route would be developed following the historic Railway alignment from Barclays Road north to the Little River Historic Railway Station. This option element is on Council owned land.

Option C6

- (a) The Railtrail pathway route would use the existing gravel road from Barclays Road north to the Little River Historic Railway Station. This route has the public recycling centre near the southern end of the gravel road. From the recycling centre north there is a plan to close the road off to motor vehicles leaving the area north to the Historic Rail Station free of motorised vehicles. Careful design that recognises the historic values will be particularly needed in this area nearing the Historic Rail Station.

Option D1

- (a) A corridor for public access would be secured with land owners and a Railtrail pathway constructed along a 5 metre wide strip of land on the east side of SH 75. It would extend south from a point near the Little River Historic Rail Station, parallel to the SH to a midway point where it veers east to alongside the river and follows this to Wairewa Pa Road.
- (b) The land owners involved have given support in principle to negotiate with them for this access way.

Issues:

- (i) There are a number of drainage issues from replacing an old culvert with piping near the northern end to traversing ditches further south.

Option D2

- (a) A corridor for public access would be secured with land owners and a Railtrail pathway constructed along a 5 metre wide strip of land on the east side of SH 75. It would extend south from a point near the Little River Historic Rail Station, parallel to the SH to the intersection with Wairewa Pa Road.
- (b) The land owners involved have given support in principle to negotiate with them for this access way.
- (c) This option would also require using the road carriageway to navigate around the existing culvert at Wairewa Pa Road. Substantial tree and plant removal would be needed in the property on the north eastern corner of the intersection at SH 75 and Wairewa Pa Road.

Issues:

- (i) There are a number of drainage issues from replacing an old culvert with piping at the northern end to traversing ditches further south.
- (ii) This option offers less benefit to Railtrail users than option D1 being closer to the SH 75 and using the road carriageway at the intersection; it also has more impact on the Wairewa Pa Road corner property requiring considerable planting removal.

Option E1

- (a) The Railtrail pathway is constructed on the east side of SH 75 following the highway to Wairewa Pa Road from the existing end point of the Railtrail. The southern section is narrow in places and will likely require some retaining works. There will also be tree trimming and likely removal in places to create adequate width for the pathway.

Issues:

- (i) Transit New Zealand will need to agree to any scheme plan and have advised that it wants an emphasis on separation between the Railtrail pathway and the highway carriageway.
- (ii) Resource Consent will probably need to be gained for this section for the work near the river and tree felling.
- (iii) It looks likely that the Railtrail will be able to be constructed on a combination of road reserve and Department of Conservation land however this will be reliant on legal surveys confirming the generic mapping boundary indications.

Option E2

- (a) The Railtrail pathway is constructed on the east side of SH 75 following the highway from the existing end point of the Railtrail path to a point where the river veers east away from the highway at which point the pathway follows the riverside to intersect with Wairewa Pa Road.
- (b) This eastern section is able to be constructed on a combination of road reserve and Department of Conservation land. Fencing will be required between the pathway and the adjoining private property
- (c) The southern section is narrow in places and will likely require some retaining works. There will also be tree trimming and likely removal in places to create adequate width for the pathway.

Issues:

- (i) Transit New Zealand will need to agree to any scheme plan and have advised that it wants an emphasis on separation between the Railtrail pathway and the highway carriageway. This may require extra retaining work and / or total width for the pathway.
- (ii) Resource Consent will probably need to be gained for this section for the work near the river and tree felling.

Option E3

- (a) The Railtrail Pathway is developed on the southern berm of Wairewa Pa Road between the river and the SH 75 intersection. This section element would be used to link the other options if relevant.