

1. CHRISTCHURCH TO LITTLE RIVER RAIL TRAIL – CHRISTCHURCH LINK

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment, DDI: 941 8656
Officer responsible:	Transport & Greenspace Manager
Author:	Michael Ferigo, Transport Planner

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to recommend to the Council the preferred option for providing a pathway link from Christchurch to the developing Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The intention is to establish a combined walkway/cycleway from Christchurch to Little River, following the alignment of the original rail line where practical. The concept arose as a “new millennium” project, and was developed by a working group involving a number of agencies, councils and interested parties. Subsequently the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust (CLRRT) was established. The Trust is made up of a broad group of enthusiastic community supporters who are the driving force in planning, fundraising and developing the trail.
3. In September 2002 the Council resolved to support the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail, and subsequently approved capital funding to develop linkages as part of the trail within the Christchurch boundaries.
4. This report is focused on the development of the first linkage to the trail from Hornby to Prebbleton, and specifically focuses on the section within the Christchurch boundaries which is located within the Wigram ward.
5. A decision on a preferred option will allow staff to develop a detailed concept plan for community consultation and report back to the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board and the Council towards implementation.
6. All three proposed options have been discussed with relevant Selwyn District Council staff and the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust. Both parties are agreeable to the options and the recommended preferred option. The part of the section of the trail that is within the Selwyn District Council’s boundary will be funded by the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust with support expected through Land Transport New Zealand subsidies via the Selwyn District Council. The Christchurch linkage will not be implemented until the Selwyn District Council’s area funding is confirmed and a coordinated implementation plan is established.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7. The funding for this project is identified within the capital cycleways budget for the years 2007/08/09 and totals \$600,000. Ongoing maintenance costs have also been budgeted for in the operational budget to cover the cycleways capital programme.
8. There are no legal considerations.

BACKGROUND ON THE CHRISTCHURCH TO LITTLE RIVER RAIL TRAIL – CHRISTCHURCH LINK

9. The Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail offers an opportunity to create a continuous trail from Christchurch to Little River, and has come about through collaboration from a broad range of organisations and interests. Most of the path will be off-road, and will provide a range of benefits for better commuting, recreational opportunities, tourism and health. The Council resolved to support the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust’s development of the Trail by resolving to plan and fund the development of improved city links to the proposed Trail.
10. The Trail mostly follows the route of a twentieth century railway line between Hornby Junction and Little River via Prebbleton, Lincoln, Motukarara and Birdlings Flat which closed in 1962. The Trail passes Lakes Waiwera and Waihora, which are of immense cultural importance to Ngai Tahu and formed major parts of the cultural redress within the settlement of the Ngai Tahu claim.
11. Several major sections of the trail have been completed, with several more nearing completion and the remainder progressing at various stages of planning towards completing the 45 kilometres of the Trail.

12. An open day was held in August 2006 to celebrate the completion of two connected major sections of the Trail, totalling 20 kilometres. The open day attracted a large crowd that, following the formalities, rode and walked the trail alongside both Ellesmere and Forsyth Lakes, from Motukarara to near the Little River township.
13. The Lincoln to Prebbleton off road section was opened in November 2006. This is a seven kilometre section of off road pathway along the roading corridor.
14. After several years of promotion by a working party comprising the Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, Selwyn District Council, Banks Peninsula District Council, Transit New Zealand and others, a group of enthusiastic supporters came together in November 2003 with the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust to develop a cycleway/walkway from Christchurch to Little River. The Trust, which is incorporated, is also recognised as a charitable organisation. The Trust has around ten core members including local area representatives, who collectively have a range of very relevant skills to meet the considerable demands required to successfully undertake such a large project.
15. In September 2002 the Council resolved:
 - (a) That the Christchurch to Little River walking/cycleway project be supported subject to funding approval.
 - (b) That the Council consider capital provision for the Christchurch section of the Christchurch to Little River Cycleway/Walkway project as part of its 2003/04 annual plan process.
 - (c) That the Council investigate alternative linkages and routes to join up with the cycleway.

OPTIONS

16. Ideally there could be a number of linking cycle and walking routes to match up to the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail at various points. However, initially this project is looking to create the first formalised linkage that will provide a level of service that matches the expected type and level of demand. It is recognised that whilst this section of the trail will mainly be used by recreational cyclists there will be a significant demand by commuting cyclists, and in any off-road pathway section there will be considerable local pedestrian recreational use.
17. Some of the route being investigated falls within the Selwyn District Council's boundaries, and as such the final decision rests with that authority for those parts. Staff have been in consultation with Selwyn District Council in developing these options.
18. It is expected that the opportunity for a further significant Christchurch linkage will come about with the extension of the Southern Motorway corridor that will include a shared cycle and walking pathway scheduled for construction within the next five years.
19. At an early stage in this process the project team explored an option to use the railway corridor commencing from near Main South Road through to Prebbleton. Initial discussions with the owners of the corridor, OnTrack, proved positive. However, further into the process when written agreement in principle was requested following a joint site visit, the Southern Regional Manager advised that it was not possible to use the corridor in the sections where the track is still in use. This is the majority of the length of track from the Main South Road up to just before the Marshes Road intersection. At the time it was advised that there was a national OnTrack policy being developed that required clear way from the track of five or six metres. The majority of the rail corridor is 10 metres wide with the tracks in the centre.
20. Whilst this is a disappointment to the project team, the width available was always going to be very narrow based on previous agreed track clearway widths and may well have not been chosen as the preferred option. The option to purchase strips from the adjacent properties to widen the corridor path provided a complicated, expensive and only partial solution as there are areas that could not be purchased with buildings, vehicle turning areas and access to loading areas on the properties that would result in a number of pinch points on the pathway.

21. It is possible that OnTrack will reconsider its stance at some stage in the future, however, at the time its representative was adamant that we could not proceed. Hence the team focused on the other options that are immediately available.
22. The three options presented below share a common starting point – Denton Park, which provides for car parking demand and makes a logical starting point in the rail trail journey. All three options travel along the road/footpath on Chalmers Street crossing the signalised intersection at the Main South Road to continue along Goulding Avenue. All three options have been proposed towards linking up to the newly built off road pathway in Birchs Road corridor that travels all the way to the Lincoln township, which is a part of the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail.
23. It is proposed that cycle lanes be used for Chalmers Street and Goulding Avenue, that the existing layout at the intersection with Main South Road be reviewed, and that no stopping be implemented on one side of Goulding Avenue. This will affect all day on street parking for some staff in the area and will result in some employees having to park further away from their work.

Option 1: Amyes Road – Springs Road Route (Ref. Appendix 1)

24. This route travels along Goulding Avenue to the signalised intersection with Shands Road and then proceeds along Amyes Road and turns into Springs Road where it travels south along Springs Road all the way to the Prebbleton township.
25. Cycle lanes are recommended for Amyes Road and Springs Road south to Boston Avenue, and from the speed threshold south an off road pathway is recommended to be constructed up to Prebbleton.
26. This route is relatively direct from Denton Park to the Prebbleton township and follows a direct commuting route along Springs Road to Lincoln. It also has the advantage of connecting, in three or four years' time, to the scheduled extension of the Southern Motorway with its shared cycle and walking pathway at Halswell Junction Road. This option also gives an advantage of providing a more cycle friendly environment on Amyes Road which will benefit a large residential area of Hornby.
27. However, there are significant difficulties on this route, notably having to turn right into Springs Road at a non signalised intersection, negotiating the busy roundabout at Halswell Junction Road, and the volume of traffic on Springs Road which has a seven day average between 10,500 to 17,500 vehicles/day. It also does not allow for the use of any of the Hornby Railway Corridor which the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust is trying to utilise elsewhere as a fundamental characteristic of the route.

Option 2: Shands Road – Blakes Road Route (Ref. Appendix 2)

28. This route travels along Goulding Avenue and will preferably cut through Goulding Reserve near the library to meet Shands Road where a crossing point will be needed, or continue to the signalised intersection with Shands Road and then turn south into Shands Road. It will follow Shands Road to Blakes Road where it turns east to travel along Blakes Road through to Prebbleton township.
29. Cycle Lanes are recommended for Shands Road up to where the posted speed changes from 50 km/h to 70 km/h. A pathway on the east side of Shands Road and on the south side of Blakes Road is recommended until the urban 50 km/h section of Blakes Road where it ideally would revert to cycle lanes again. There is likely to be some need to formalise some parking areas and to reduce some parking along with changes to some existing road markings to accommodate these changes, as a reflection of existing low parking demand the reduction in parking is not considered to be significant.
30. This route uses Shands Road with a comparably lower traffic volume than Springs Road, and it also has a wider road corridor that is more readily able to have a pathway constructed on it. The roundabout at the Halswell Junction Road intersection is comparably less expansive and less complex or as busy as the intersection with Springs Road in option one.

PREFERRED OPTION

Option 3: Shands Road Marshes Road – Railway Corridor (Ref. Appendix 3)

31. This route travels along Goulding Avenue and will preferably cut through Goulding Reserve near the Library to meet Shands Road, where a crossing point will be needed or continue to the signalised intersection with Shands Road and then turn south into Shands Road. It will then follow Shands Road to Marshes Road where it turns east to travel along Marshes Road to the old rail crossing, where it again turns south to follow the disused rail corridor to the Prebbleton township.
32. Cycle lanes are recommended for Shands Road up to where the posted speed changes from 50 km/h to 70 km/h. A pathway on the east side of Shands Road and on the south side of Marshes Road up to the railway corridor where the pathway continues to Prebbleton is recommended.
33. Like Option 2, this option has comparably lower traffic volumes on the arterial road and has a wider and more amenable corridor in which to construct a pathway. The roundabout is again more easily negotiated than the roundabout in option 1. This option also has the advantage over Option 2 in that it utilises the unused section of the Hornby Railway Line. This also provides further options to extend the railway line's use if the Hornby Industrial line should become available in the future.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Council adopt Option 3 of developing a cycleway route from Denton Park along Goulding Avenue, Shands Road to Marshes Road at the disused railway junction to form a first link from Christchurch to the developing Rail Trail to Little River.

BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That the staff recommendation be adopted, subject to the route not travelling along Goulding Avenue.
- (b) That staff continue to work with the Board's Transport & Roding Committee on developing a detailed concept plan around Option 3 for community consultation.