

1. CHRISTCHURCH TO LITTLE RIVER RAIL TRAIL – LITTLE RIVER SECTION

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek adoption by Council of the recommended option of the rail trail route to be included in the 09/19 LTCCP.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail (CLRRT) was initially raised as a concept of creating a continuous pathway for walkers and cyclists between the two locations. After several years of exploring the idea and support between interested parties a group of enthusiastic supporters came together to progress the idea towards implementation.
3. 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.
4. The Trust works closely with its partners in developing the Railtrail. Whilst the Railtrail Trust has an overall interest, the other parties have varying interests in different sections of the Trail with the Trust sometimes being a secondary player to the partner. The partners include - 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.
5. More than half of the 45km long trail from Hornby to Little River is now open. The first section to be completed, a 20km stretch of the trail between Motukarara and Catons Bay, near Little River opened in May 2006. This section of the Railtrail runs on the old preserved railway embankment and includes a recently developed car park area and toilet facilities.
6. The second section between Prebbleton and Lincoln (7km) opened in November 2006. This section is an off-road track adjacent to the old railway line that runs alongside Birchs Road.
7. The other sections of the trail are being actively progressed towards implementation, to achieve the objective of a continuous facility between Christchurch and Little River. The Christchurch City Council has been very supportive in its approach to the Trail and recognised the potential benefits to the local and wider community in establishing such a drawcard facility for Christchurch.
8. The Christchurch City Council in response to a report in September 2002 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.
9. The resolutions related to the 'then' Christchurch City area prior to the integration of Banks Peninsula and the funds within the capital cycleways budget (\$580 000) are only identified for developing a connection from the Hornby area.
10. This report considers the section of the Trail from the end of its development alongside the State Highway near the Little River Hotel to the proposed terminus at the Little River Historic Train Station - totalling just over one kilometre. The detail of various route options for the Trail are included within the Traffic Feasibility Study attached.

11. The report divides the recommendations into immediate, short term and long term options. Members will be aware that the Trail is currently operative and its development finishes in a 100 kph posted area of the State Highway with no pathway provision into Little River. The Banks Peninsula Council whilst recognising the Trail in its 2005/06 Walking and Cycling Strategy and Strategic Plans had no capital funds identified to assist the Trail when it integrated with the City.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. The work associated with the consultation and adoption of a preferred route can be accommodated within existing budgets, however the rough order of costs for the preferred route is \$250,000 - \$300,000. This means that the project will need to be submitted as part of the 2009/19 LTCCP review for inclusion in the future capital programme.

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

13. The funding for the completion of the Little River Cycle trail at Little River is not included in the 2006/16 LTCCP

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

14. There are considered to be no legal implications.

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

15. As above.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

16. As above.

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

17. As above.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

18. This aligns with the Council's Walking and Cycling Strategy and Strategic Plan for Banks Peninsula.

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

19. As above.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

20. Consultation with significant stakeholders and interested parties has been initiated, subsequent public consultation to be entered into per the capital project standard process.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

21. It is recommended that the Community Board :
 - (a) Support the recommendations within the attached feasibility report for the immediate actions to be progressed.
 - (b) Support the report's preferred trail route in principle (from its current termination approximately 200 metres north of the Little River Hotel, on the eastern side of the State Highway corridor to a crossing point near Barclays Road intersection and along Barclays Road corridor and travelling over the Council owned land that links it to the Little River Historic Rail Station).
 - (c) Recommend to the Council that it include this project in the 09/19 LTCCP.

BACKGROUND (THE ISSUES)

22. Whilst the CLRRT Trust has an over-arching interest in the project and is for the majority of the trail the prime driver in managing the development, certain sections of the trail have other parties taking primary responsibility for the trail's development. One such section is Birdlings Flat towards Little River where the Wairewa Runanga is heading the development over DOC land as part of its wider plans for the area. The Runanga's formal interest in the Trail has taken the Trail development to approximately 200m on the north side of the Little River Hotel. From here the route options for the Trail lead within Transit NZ and/or Council land to a large degree. Hence the Council is managing the section into Little River to the logical terminus of the Historic Little River Rail Station.
23. This area was under the control of the Banks Peninsula District Council (BPDC) up until the inclusion of Banks Peninsula in Christchurch City in 2006. The BPDC recognised the project within its Walking and Cycling Strategy and Strategic Plan which identified within its 'top ten' projects, a graded separation crossing for the Rail Trail near Little River. However, the former BPDC didn't allocate any funding to this in the short time remaining prior to its integration with the City. Hence the CCC has 'inherited' this section with no identified funding.
24. The sections of completed trail are being walked and cycled now by many people. Counts on the Motukarara section between June and October 2006 showed that over 300 people were regularly cycling the trail each week – the large majority using the weekends to enjoy the Trail.
25. Currently, walkers and cyclists using the trail reach the end of the trail at a point approximately 1 kilometre from the middle of the township, despite which many users continue to complete their trip into the township via the roading corridor, about half a kilometre of which is located in a 100kph zone with no cycle or walking facilities. This situation is considered very undesirable based on the safety risks and an immediate alternative short term route is being suggested until budgets and planning allow the preferred solution to be implemented.
26. This report looks at the options for developing the Trail from the point it is developed up to now i.e. approximately 200 metres on the northern side of the Little River Hotel on the eastern side of the State Highway into the township to finish at the historic train station. It advises on the safety issues needing to be addressed immediately in relation to current usage. It also identifies future options and considers the associated significant issues of each option. The report concludes with a recommended preferred route that will be progressed to use for the consultation process.

Immediate Actions

27. There is an immediate need to develop a link into the township to improve the safety for trail users who naturally want to conclude their trail trip at Little River. It is recommended that this be achieved by arranging temporary public access over one property that sits between the Trail at a crossing point on the State Highway approximately 200 metres north of the Little River Hotel and Morrisons Road. The property concerned is No#4165 on the Christchurch to Akaroa State Highway and is just over 500 metres in length.
28. The owners of the property are positive about the possibility of the Trail travelling through their property as a temporary or as a permanent option. The owners are progressing planning requirements to develop a complementary use, by providing on-site accommodation for travellers. Staff from the Property Unit are ready to progress negotiations with the owners to develop the Trail on the property as a temporary measure in line with the recommendations in this report. Planning advice suggests that resource consent would be required for the trail to traverse the property. Such consent will take between three to six months to progress.
29. This option will also require some Council funding to add a surface treatment to the existing railway corridor along the length of the property and a cattle stop/ gate at each end. Any Council expenditure will need some agreement with the owners on security of the tenure of temporary public access over the property until the preferred route option is implemented.
30. From the end of the property at Morrisons Road the Trail walkers and cyclists (walking their bikes) will utilise an existing footpath between Morrisons Road and Barclays Road intersections with the State Highway, thus avoiding the need for cyclists to use the busy carriageway. The footpath which is 1.6 metre wide should be used as an interim measure in the short term, subject to Council adoption of the preferred route.

31. Finally, from the intersection of Barclays Road and the State Highway it is recommended that in the immediate term the Trail track up Barclays Road to the Council owned land that leads up to the Little River Historic Rail Station. This is largely via a gravel road that for the most part will soon be closed off to motor vehicles.
32. It is also recommended that this route be signposted to ensure that tourists and all visitors use the safest available route.
33. Staff will endeavour to identify funds for this immediate work, which is expected to cost between \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Short Term Options

34. The short term actions recommended in the attached report are dependent on what the Council chooses as the long term option for the Trail. The short term options mainly relate to upgrading the immediate measures of which some or all will be required depending on which route is continued with as the preferred option.

Long term Options – Preferred Trail Route

35. Whilst these have been titled 'Long Term' it is the staff's intention once a preferred option has been adopted to progress this Trail in line with the Council's priority for such off road shared pathways and to reflect its strong support for the CLRRT.
36. The long term options of developing a link from the Trail's current finish, to the Little River Historic Rail Station are detailed within the attached consultant's report. The report's planning has been progressed in consultation with a number of the main stakeholders or interested parties.
37. It should be recognised that there are a number of significant factors that may need to be progressed following any Council decision on a preferred option. Some of the factors such as possible resource consents and negotiations with land owners could dictate significant changes to the project. However, it is important at this stage to gain direction from the Council on which option is the preferred one to progress with public consultation and reporting back.
38. The issue of the Trail having a graded separation crossing of the State Highway, i.e. an underpass as noted in the Bank Peninsula Walking and Cycling Strategy has been considered. Transit NZ considers the ground levels and drainage as significant factors in not supporting this option. The rough order costs estimate of an underpass which would be operable in this environment is \$500,000.
39. Essentially, without an underpass, the options presented split into crossing the State Highway in a 100 kph zone or in the 70 kph zone within the township. It should be noted that there is a current initiative to reduce the town's 70 kph zone to 60 kph. The possibility of reducing the 100 kph zone in the vicinity of where the trail currently ends was raised with staff from Transit NZ who indicated they are not in favour of any reduction of the speed limit in this area.

THE OBJECTIVES

40. To ensure there is a safe and attractive trail facility and terminus for walkers and cyclists provided in the destination section of the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail.

THE OPTIONS

41. (a) The trail crosses the State Highway 200m north of the Little River Hotel in the 100 kph zone and travels along the historic rail corridor (on private property) to Morrisons Road where it tracks back to the State Highway corridor for a 'dog leg' around to Barclays Road. From here it travels up Barclays Road to the Council owned land at the back of the properties fronting the State Highway, thus linking to the Little River Historic Rail Station.
- (b) The trail crosses the State Highway 200m north of the Little River Hotel in the 100 kph zone and travels along the historic rail corridor (on private property) to Morrisons Road where it tracks back to the State Highway corridor for a 'dog leg' around to Barclays Road. From here it travels up the State Highway corridor to track through the car park to the Little River Historic Rail Station.

42. (a) The trail crosses the State Highway 200m north of the Little River Hotel in the 100 kph zone and travels north along the State Highway corridor on the western side to Barclays Road intersection where it can continue to travel up the State Highway corridor, through the car park to finish at the Little River Historic Rail Station.
- (b) The trail crosses the State Highway 200m north of the Little River Hotel in the 100 kph zone and travels north along the State Highway corridor on the western side to Barclays Road intersection where it runs up Barclays Road corridor to the Council owned land and follows this to the Little River Historic Rail Station.
43. The trail crosses the State Highway 200m north of the Little River Hotel in the 100 kph zone and travels along the historic rail corridor (on private property) to Morrisons Road where it crosses the road and travels through the (private) properties between Morrisons and Barclays Roads where it then tracks across Barclays Road to the Council owned land that links it to the Little River Historic Rail Station.
44. The Trail stays on the eastern side of the State Highway, tracking along its corridor until it reaches a point opposite Barclays Road:-
 - (a) Where a crossing point is developed within the 70 kph zone. From here it tracks up Barclays Road corridor and into the Council owned property that allows it to link up to the Historic Rail Station.
 - (b) Where a crossing point is developed within the 70 kph zone. From here it continues up the western side of the State Highway on a protected two way pathway to track through the car park to the Little River Historic Rail Station.
 - (c) The trail continues up the Eastern side of the State Highway to a point opposite the Little River Historic Rail Station car park where a crossing is developed.

THE PREFERRED OPTION

45. The preferred option '44(a)' stays on the eastern side of the State Highway, tracking along its corridor until it reaches a point near Barclays Road where a crossing point is developed within the 70 kph zone. From here it tracks up Barclays Road corridor and into the Council owned property that allows it to link up to the Little River Historic Rail Station.
46. The crossing of the State Highway in a 100 kph zone has been developed to meet the required design for safety levels however this still creates a potential risk that the preferred option can avoid by crossing in a 70 kph (future possibly 60 kph) zone. The recommended option stays on the eastern side of the State Highway until it crosses near Barclays Road. It is proposed that it then travel up Barclays Road corridor to take advantage of the opportunity to use the Council owned land to track to the Historic Rail Station thus avoiding tracking through the township on either side of the State Highway with busy driveways, car parks, significant drainage costs and or construction costs. This option will maximise the amenity value and keep relatively high levels of safety for the Trail walkers and cyclists.
47. The immediate actions could take up to six months to achieve a useable alternative route for the Trail owing to the need to gain resource consent. However, the long term preferred option whilst achievable in principle still needs assessment work and funding needs to be identified. It may take up to two years to have the long term option operable, if in the next few months this is considered able to be significantly reduced the benefits of continuing to pursue the immediate actions would need to be re assessed.
48. The rough order costs for the preferred option are in the range of \$250,000 to \$300,000. This funding is not identified in Council budgets and as such if progressed will need to be included within the next Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) review for 2009 – 2019 process.

COMMUNITY BOARD CONSIDERATION

There were 12 members of the public present at the meeting to listen to the debate on this report. The Chairman had indicated that he would allow the public to table and/or read information which may be relevant to this issue.

Staff outlined the eight options which the Board had to consider when deliberating on which route should be constructed for the final section of the Christchurch-Little River Rail Trail. Because no funding was available for this section to be constructed, staff asked that the Board indicate its preferred option for both a long term, and short term route. It was pointed out that there were other matters such as resource consents, landowner permission, drainage issues and boundary confirmation that would affect the establishment of both routes.

Mr Mike Herlihy then tabled, and read, a prepared statement to the Board on behalf of residents of Morrisons and Barclays Roads. Mr Alan Wooster explained that he had been contracted by the Wairewa Runanga, which had the authority from the Department of Conservation to form the rail trail corridor from Birdlings Flat to the Little River Hotel. He reported that the runanga was happy to allow the Community Board, as representatives of the local community, to decide on this final section.

There was considerable debate on this report with members generally agreeing that both the rail trail users and the local community needed to be considered when making the final decision. The safety of cyclists, road users and the community was seen as paramount in reaching a decision on which option to pursue.

Members also noted that the completion of the rail trail provided an opportunity to take a holistic approach to the traffic calming and reduced speed restriction measures planned for Little River.

The Board also discussed an interim option to be used until the funding was available for the long term option. Staff pointed out to members that the long term option could not be implemented until funding for it was approved and it was included on the Capital Programme. Members of the public in attendance were concerned that a short term option may be implemented but may then grow to be the final option.

The Board acknowledged that staff needed to know what was preferred as an option in the short term. Members agreed that again this should be the safest option for all concerned. It was noted that the Board had already received reports of several "near-misses" when cyclists crossing the highway at the current site had nearly been hit by vehicles.

The Board **resolved** to ask staff to consult with Transit New Zealand, the Christchurch-Little River Rail Trail Trust and other stakeholders to investigate the safest short term option for the final section of the rail trail, and that staff then report back to the Board.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION

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.