

10. 04. 2008

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
AKAROA/WAIREWA COMMUNITY BOARD
20 MARCH 2008 (NO. 1)

PART A - MATTERS REQUIRING A COUNCIL DECISION

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

General Manager responsible:	City Environment General Manager DDI 941 8656
Officer responsible:	Asset and Planning Unit Manager
Author:	Michael Ferigo, Transport Planner

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Board on some progress made in gathering assessment information on the Rail Trail route options into Little River township and for the Board to re confirm or alter its September 2007 decisions for recommendation to the Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. This report is responding to the Council's 19 July 2007 resolutions calling for a further report before November to Council to assist it in confirming the immediate option to implement and identify a preferred long term option. As part of this process the input of a part 'A' recommendation from the Akaroa Community Board is needed rather than the part 'C' provided from the Community Board's September 2007 meeting recommendations.
3. The Council's preferred long term option for the Rail Trail will then be progressed into the public consultation phase subject to the project gaining capital budget within the 2009 – 2019 LTCCP. The Council's immediate option, resolved 19th July 2007, will be actioned directly following the Council's consideration of a further report unless a resolution determines another course of action.
4. Since the September 2007 report further information is available on construction issues with rough order cost attached (public excluded).
5. The details of the two most feasible long term options and the immediate options are described briefly and the significant or potentially significant issues are noted.
6. A report was presented to the Board's 26 September 2007 meeting at which the Board **decided:**

“(a) Having considered all of the options, to support a short and long term solution for the final section of the Christchurch-Little River Rail Trail, along the eastern side of State Highway 75 (SH 75):

(i) Short Term - the Rail Trail pathway is constructed on the east side of SH 75 following the highway from the existing end point of the Rail Trail path to a point where the river veers east away from the highway, at which point the pathway would follow the riverside to intersect with Wairewa Pa Road, and that Transit New Zealand be requested to employ some traffic calming measures on State Highway 75, from the southern side of the Little River Hotel.

(ii) Long Term - the Rail Trail pathway is constructed on the east side of SH75 following the highway from the existing end point of the Rail Trail path to a point where the river veers east away from the highway, at which point the pathway would follow the riverside to intersect with Wairewa Pa Road. A corridor for public access to then be secured with land owners, and a Rail Trail pathway constructed along a strip of land on the east side of SH 75. This would extend south from a point near the Little River Historic Railway Station, parallel to SH 75 to a midway point where it veers east to alongside the river and follows this to Wairewa Pa Road.

(b) To request that the Chairman be granted permission to speak to the Council in support of this resolution. The Board also supported the concept of an avenue approach to the township or some type of special landscaping, to delineate the Rail Trail from the highway.”

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. The public consultation stage will not be initiated until capital funding is identified. Any capital costs to Council for any long term route will be submitted and considered 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 a long term option for the Little River township section of the Rail Trail is not currently included in the 2006/16 LTCCP. It should be noted that it is probable that this section of the Rail Trail may not attract Land Transport New Zealand subsidies due to its primarily recreational nature.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

9. There are considered to be no legal implications however, dependent on options selected, some resource consent and 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 Council's 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:

- (a) The immediate option for providing for Rail Trail users nearing Little River is developing a temporary rudimentary pathway on the eastern side of State Highway 75 and alongside the river, as illustrated in the map attached 'Immediate Options 2 Staff Recommendation'.
- (b) The preferred Rail Trail long term option for consultation is to provide an underpass to the western side of the State Highway 75 and a pathway developed over private properties either on the rail corridor, or as near as possible, to link to Barclays Road and then over Council land to the Historic Railway Station as illustrated in the attached Map 'Long term options 2 – Staff Recommendation'.
- (c) The Council resolution for the immediate option to be developed on the western side of State Highway 75, resolved on 19 July 2007 per (b) (ii) below, be rescinded.

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BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board still supported a long term option for the completion of the railtrail into Little River, that would see the trail remain on the eastern side of the state highway, before following the river and then entering the township, again along the eastern side of the highway (Long Term Option 1). The Board supported that option for the following reasons:

- Known community support for that option.
- Support from the Wairewa Runanga which has management over this section of the trail.
- It would bring cyclists into Little River through the "front door".
- The route has the potential to be more scenically attractive.
- The option provided opportunities to upgrade and landscape the trail alongside the river, which could also be used as part of a walking loop around the township.
- People's aversion to riding underground.

The Board felt that this section of the railtrail was more to do with the quality of the experience, rather than complete historical accuracy. If the trail was to continue along the designated rail corridor, it would mean that riders would have to travel underground, to safely traverse the road, and would then be entering the rear of the township.

The Transit New Zealand representative at the Board meeting had indicated that an underpass would more than likely require pumping at times to dispose of stormwater.

BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That the immediate option for providing for Rail Trail users nearing Little River is developing a temporary rudimentary pathway on the eastern side of State Highway 75 and alongside the river, as illustrated in the map attached 'Immediate Options 2 Staff Recommendation'.
- (b) That the preferred Rail Trail long term option for consultation is for the pathway to be constructed on the east side of State Highway 75 following the highway from the existing end point of the Rail Trail path to a point where the river veers east away from the highway at which point the pathway would follow the riverside to intersect with Wairewa Pa Road. It would extend from Wairewa Pa Road north until it veers towards State Highway 75 then run parallel to the highway to a point approximately opposite to the Little River Historic Railway Station where a level crossing is provided as illustrated on the attached map as Long Term Option 1 – Akaroa/Wairewa Community Board supported.
- (c) That the Council resolution for the immediate option to be developed on the western side of State Highway 75, resolved on 19 July 2007 per (b) (ii) below, be rescinded.

BACKGROUND

16. A staff report and feasibility study on the Rail Trail was presented at the Council's 19 July 2007 meeting to gain its view on a preferred short and long term option. The Akaroa-Wairewa Board considered the report prior to the Council and 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 Board's considerations were included, alongside the Little River Rail Trail report in the Council's agenda on 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.

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- (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 April 2007 commissioned feasibility study recommended immediate improvements for giving Rail Trail users access into Little River - refer to section 4 of the study - these were:
- Arrange Rail Trail shared pathway access along the length of the rail embankment on property 4165 Christchurch to Akaroa Road.
 - Install Rail Trail markers.
 - Utilise the existing footpath between Morrisons and Barclays Road and possibly mark a cycle lane for north bound cyclists.
18. The Asset and Network Planning Manager met with staff from Transit New Zealand over a series of issues in response to the Council's 19 July 2007 resolution (ii) above. The details from the meeting are included in this report.
19. Discussions with the owners of land that potential routes may cross have progressed and the details are reported within the relevant route options.
20. The Board also requested that staff consult further with stakeholders towards identifying better immediate term options and to report back. This was progressed and the information included into this report.
21. The rough order costs for the whole project that includes estimated values for gaining access to private properties are reported in the public excluded section. The underpass rough order costs have been decreased based on more supplier costings since last reporting to the Board in May 2007.
22. It should be noted that this project may not attract Land Transport New Zealand subsidies due to the primarily recreational nature of this section of the Rail Trail.
23. This report should be read in conjunction with the attached board report 27 May 2007 and the Rail Trail feasibility study April 2007 attached.

THE OBJECTIVES

24. In 2003, the Christchurch - Little River Rail Trail 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 general 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 Rail Trail - 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 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.

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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 State Highway 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 State Highway 75 is seen as feasible by the Runanga but its preference is for the trail to remain on the eastern side of State Highway 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 State Highway 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. Immediate 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 State Highway 75 to access the western options. The Trust recognises that the existing trail crossing point on State Highway 75 meets Transit NZ's crossing requirements and whilst it wants a better crossing (such as an underpass) in the long term, the immediate term existing level crossing is acceptable to it.

THE OPTIONS

31. The most feasible Rail Trail route options (two immediate and two long term) to date are discussed below and should be read in conjunction with the associated attached maps. The wider range of earlier options that have since been set aside have been identified and described within earlier reports to the Council and Community Board.
32. The Council in July 2007 resolved an immediate option for the Rail Trail but added resolutions that were linked, requiring staff to investigate and report back prior to November 2007. The staff report to the Council at its last meeting of 2007 was held over by the Council.
33. The staff recommendation on the immediate option has changed from the 19 July 2007 report to Council because of new information. There still exists a need to improve the existing situation where the Rail Trail has users coming out onto the State Highway 75 in a 100 kph area with no paths provided other than sharing the carriageway with motor vehicles. Staff are monitoring the usage rates of the Rail Trail at various points and it is expected that as the Rail Trail sections link up the user numbers will continue to climb, currently the most usage is in weekends when there are, excluding organised events, over sixty users per day.
34. Any securing of access corridors required through private properties will be sought via way of legal easements rather than purchase.
35. No legal surveys have been undertaken on the routes. The land boundaries have been deduced from existing generic mapping data that will need to be confirmed at a later stage should those options be pursued.

Options Reference:

Immediate Option 1 – Christchurch City Council Resolution July 2007

- (a) This option uses the western route across a private property to Morrisons Road. This option would provide a pathway link that follows the rail trail but still consists of a level crossing of State Highway 75 in a 100 kph area. The land over which this option passes mainly includes rural but also includes a section within a small settlement zone. The small settlement zone will require a resource consent to be gained and indications are that this will be challenged by some Little River township residents. Whilst it is believed likely that the Council will be successful in gaining the consent the time taken to achieve this may be considerably significant relative to what is trying to be achieved in the immediate term.

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**Immediate Option 2 –
Staff Recommended 2008 and supported by the Akaroa/Wairewa Community Board.**

- (a) This option involves developing a temporary rudimentary pathway on the eastern side of State Highway 75 and alongside the river as illustrated in the attached map 'Immediate Option 2 – Staff Recommendation'.
- (b) Transit New Zealand is now amenable in principle to (subject to acceptable design plans) allowing a temporary rudimentary unsealed pathway to be developed within its road corridor on the eastern side of State Highway 75. This will extend along the existing pathway to link to a legal road reserve that will then allow the pathway to follow the river bank to Wairewa Pa Road.
- (c) As an immediate option this will allow people using the Rail Trail to cross near an intersection within the towns 70 kph environment rather than crossing and then riding on the 100 kph State Highway carriageway into Little River Township.
- (d) Now that it is possible for a rudimentary temporary pathway (acceptable to Transit) to be used, the pathway can be narrower in critical parts than previously considered and this will minimise the likelihood of needing to remove any trees and associated potential resource consents and costs. Both the standard resource consent for works near a waterway and any additional resource consents are expected to be gained following due processes. However it is likely that these may not be required for the immediate temporary option with its minimal impact on the environment and rudimentary nature of the path. The land over which this option passes is all zoned rural.
 - (i) If this pathway option is eventually implemented as a long term option Transit NZ will then require the path to be sealed and separation features between the pathway and the State Highway 75 carriageway. This is to reduce the number of Rail Trail users that would instead use the road.
 - (ii) If this pathway option isn't selected as the long term option Transit NZ may determine that the rudimentary pathway section on its part of the road corridor (section alongside State Highway 75) is removed once the new long term option becomes operational.

Long Term Option 1 - Akaroa Wairewa Community Board supported

- (a) The Rail Trail pathway is constructed on the east side of State Highway 75 following the highway from the existing end point of the Rail Trail 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 road reserve land. Fencing will probably be required between the pathway and the adjoining private property where the Rail Trail diverges from State Highway 75 up to the point that it reaches Wairewa Pa Road.
- (c) The most 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 Rail Trail.
- (d) A corridor for public access would be secured with land owners for the Rail Trail to be constructed along a 5 metre wide strip of land to the east of State Highway 75. It would extend from Wairewa Pa Road north until it veers towards the SH 75 then runs parallel to the highway to a point approximately opposite to the Little River Historic Rail Station where a level crossing is provided.
- (e) The land owners whose land this option proposes to traverse have given support in principle to negotiating for an access way. (8 properties – 4 property owners)

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ISSUES:

- (i) Transit New Zealand whilst favourable to the concept of using its roading corridor will confirm this subject to an acceptable detailed scheme plan. It has advised that it wants an emphasis on separation between the Rail Trail and the highway carriageway. This may require retaining work to achieve the separation widths or levels for the pathway. However it will consider the overall benefits of an immediate and interim pathway taking into account current resources.
- (ii) Resource Consents will be needed for the section of the Rail Trail alongside the river.
- (iii) There are a number of drainage issues such as replacing an old culvert with piping to traversing ditches in the section north of Wairewa Pa Road.

Long Term Option 2 - Staff Recommended

- (a) The Rail Trail is progressed through a constructed underpass of SH 75 in the northern area alongside or near the existing culvert crossing, just north of the Little River Hotel and continues north for 300 metres along the western side of the highway.
- (b) The Rail Trail then progresses north along the historic railway embankment for the length of a private property approximately 500 metres to Morrisons Road. By using the rail embankment only a surface treatment is require for the pathway development along with a stock gate at each end of the property. The property owners are very positive about negotiating with the Council as the Rail Trail will complement their property plans for visitor facilities and they are active volunteers with the Rail Trail Trust.
- (c) From here it crosses Morrisons Road to where a land corridor will be developed through two private properties to link the path directly from Morrisons Road to Barclays Road at a point opposite the Council owned land on the northern side of Barclays Road. The proposed concept alignment will allow regaining alignment onto or very near to the historic railway line north of Barclays Road.
- (d) This link will involve securing an access corridor approximately 4 to 5 metres wide with the owners of the two properties - both are agreeable to considering this option subject to successful negotiations.
- (e) The Rail Trail would then be developed from Barclays Road north to the Little River Historic Railway Station following closely the historic railway. This section is on Council owned land managed by Greenspace Unit and for the majority has been recently closed to motor vehicle traffic. Greenspace is favourable to the increase pedestrian and cycle use of this reserve.
- (f) Careful design that recognises the historical values will be particularly needed in the area near the Historic Rail Station.

Issues:

- (i) Council will need the continued involvement and agreement of Transit to the underpass of SH 75. The underpass is considered viable but technically difficult and will require detailed surveys to be commissioned to better determine the actual level of difficulty if chosen to be pursued .
- (ii) Planning staff from Environmental Policy and Approvals advise that resource consent is needed to develop the Rail Trail within the small settlement zone – this may take some time to gain, with application, notification and hearings. However this time factor isn't significant as it will be allowed for within the progression of long term plans.
- (iii) There is likely to be some need to reposition one residential septic tank in providing a relatively direct link in the Morrisons to Barclay Roads section. Some fencing and landscaping will also be required and is allowed for in the rough order costings.

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DISCUSSION

Immediate Term Options

- (a) The Immediate Term option 1 put forward as a staff recommendation to Council in July 2007 was adopted but with added resolutions that were linked, requiring staff to investigate and report back to the Council prior to November 2007. As a result of new information the staff recommendation for the immediate term option differs from that in the July 2007 report to Council. The Immediate Term option 1 will require a resource consent that is very likely to be opposed by some residents in the immediate area. Whilst staff consider the Council will probably be successful in gaining the consent the length of time to progress the hearing/s will potentially add a relatively significant period of time that makes it's desirability as the best option significantly reduced.
- (b) The alternative 'Immediate Term Option 2', described in this report looks to now be more feasible than it did in July 2007 and also the most expedient to improve the current situation. Following new information gathered and ongoing discussions with stakeholders it appears that this option may now be able to be implemented directly and will provide significantly improved and safer conditions for Rail Trail users over the short term than what exists now. It is for these reasons that staff recommend to Council that it adopt this line of action in the immediate term to create a safer environment for the current Rail Trail users.

Long Term Options

- (a) From all of the potential combination of long term options in the past reports staff have now focussed on the two most seemingly feasible Rail Trail options for consideration of Council. Both are considered to be functional, relatively safe and able to provide a level of service that would complement the overall Rail Trail experience. However the recommended Long Term Option 2 provides a higher level of service than the other, it would add more to the overall aesthetics and integrity of the Rail Trail experience for users and it is also safer, but requires more investment.
- (b) The recommended Long Term Option 2 provides a very safe State Highway 75 grade separated crossing that is appropriate to the current group usage and type of Rail Trail users. A recent Rail Trail user survey indicated almost a quarter of the people using the Rail Trail are families with children with a wide spread of ages across all users from the young to the elderly. From all the people using the Rail Trail the survey also indicated that the most valued feature of the Rail Trail is that it is safe / Off Road.
- (c) Whilst several residents in the immediate area have objected to the Long Term Option 2 it needs full public consultation to establish the actual level of local and wider community support or otherwise for the option. The public consultation phase will be undertaken at a time relative to the year that funding is eventually identified within. Funding for any long term option still needs to be identified within the Council's LTCCP capital budget.
- (d) Transit NZ accepts, in principle, the concept of an underpass and would potentially consider a financial contribution towards it, subject to Land Transport New Zealand funding acceptance and Transit's acceptance of the design. Transit would then take responsibility for the structural maintenance but would expect the Council to undertake any day to day operational maintenance needed.
- (e) With the underpass crossing of State Highway 75 it then allows the Rail Trail to be located directly on a significant section of the historic railway line embankment which keeps to the theme of the trail and provides a robust foundation with little surface treatment needed to make the trail operative.
- (f) Where the proposed Rail Trail travels over private land (3 properties – 3 Owners) currently all owners are willing to negotiate with Council over securing access.
- (g) From Barclays Road directly to the Historic Rail Station the proposed option uses Council owned land and provides direct access with little to no conflict with motor vehicle parking and manoeuvring areas whilst retaining the theme of the Rail Trail.

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- (h) The Rail Trail will require gaining resource consent in the small settlement zone section of the trail. Advice to date is that an independent notification and hearing process will be required for the consent and this will be separate and likely to be subsequent to the Council's public consultation phase processes.
- (i) The recommended Long Term Option is considered to provide for any growth in the Rail Trail usage with easy crossing of the highway in groups and significantly less potential conflict with the main motor vehicle parking and manoeuvring areas in the town.
- (j) Both long term options are acceptable to both the Christchurch to Little River Rail Trail Trust and the Wairewa Runanga. The Wairewa Runanga prefers the Long Term Option 1 whereas the Trust is more supportive of the recommended Long Term Option 2.
- (k) The recommended Long Term Option 2 is therefore considered to add the most to the Rail Trail experience now and potentially in the future should user growth jump such as when the Rail Trail is completed into Christchurch and expanded into the Peninsula. It is also the safest option in regard to the State Highway crossing and is therefore recommended to progress to public consultation.