

New Zealand Cycleway – Questions and Answers



1. What is the vision of the New Zealand Cycleway?

Vision:

“To generate lasting economic, social and environmental benefits for our communities through a network of world-class cycling experiences”

2. How did you decide which tracks should become ‘Quick Starts’?

Following the Jobs Summit, Government announced \$50m to create a series of ‘Great Rides’ throughout New Zealand.

In order to be able to begin construction as quickly as possible, in time for the summer construction season, a Quick Start programme was implemented.

1. The Ministry of Tourism worked to establish relationships with a number of councils throughout New Zealand as well as key government agencies such as the Department of Conservation (Doc) and New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA).
2. Where appropriate, councils were asked to group together and work together as clusters, and put forward their ideas for tracks that were possible to begin work on this summer.
3. Three clusters formed in early June:
 - Northland,
 - Central and Eastern North Island, and
 - the south of the South Island

Subsequently a West Coast cluster has also been established.

4. Councils wrote to the Prime Minister pledging to work together and they recommended particular tracks or sections of tracks they wanted to receive support for. In total, seven of these tracks have been chosen for the Quick Start initiative, - four nominated by councils and three from DoC.
5. The Ministry of Tourism will now arrange and co-fund robust feasibility studies and, once these are available, assess the merits and viability of the council nominated projects. The outcomes of the feasibility studies will determine which tracks will be provided with funding for construction to commence this summer.

Factors that were considered, on tracks nominated by councils, to identify the individual projects included:

- The potential for social and economic impact (creating jobs in areas of most need)
- The track's situation in relation to areas that have existing tourism attractions/attributes and can capitalise on existing tourist flows (existing major tourism centres or population bases)
- Whether the proposed track could take advantage of existing tourism infrastructure (found in tourism centres/hubs e.g. visitor centres, public toilet facilities etc)
- Location accessibility including proximity to airports and major tourist and transport routes
- There is substantial local government commitment
- There has been sufficient preliminary work done to support a feasibility study
- The grading of the final product (e.g. a moderately easy scenic ride accessible to the general public vs. a challenging ride recommended for an experienced mountain biker)
- Whether the final product would require an overnight or multi-night stay - these are known to deliver a high level of economic impact (i.e. rail trails)
- Existing infrastructure that the trail can be built on (i.e. an old railway embankment, a flood stop bank or little used flat country road)
- Any already known land or engineering issues around it (e.g. private property, subject to a Treaty claim, would require a substantial bridge to be built etc)

3. How much will it cost to fund these feasibility studies?

We expect each of the feasibility studies to cost in the vicinity of \$100,000 to \$200,000 each to undertake thoroughly. However, we can achieve economies of scale by developing a common framework that can be made available to the different tracks moving forward.

4. What were the complexities involved in identifying potential tracks?

The tracks are essentially long term infrastructure that needs to be owned and operated by local communities. There are a large number of engineering, business, land access and resource management issues to address and these can take several months and often years.

Many of the proposed tracks, once completed, will span across territorial boundaries. It was important to establish the working relationships amongst the clusters of councils to ensure that a solid foundation existed to take potential jobs forward.

It is important to note that the Quick Start tracks are not the only potential tracks that we are aware of. We have also received a number of promising proposals from other regions and, alongside the Quick Start work, substantial

effort is also going into the establishment of a proposal and assessment framework for the remaining fund.

We recognise that a number of councils and regions are working on funding proposals and awaiting the release of this criteria. This is currently expected to be made available by the end of September.

5. How many of the Quick Start tracks do you think will actually happen?

We are confident that the three DoC tracks and the Waikato Rail Trail track will be well positioned to commence construction this summer as these are upgrades or extensions to existing tracks. The other three require more detailed feasibility work that will be carried out in the coming months.

Whilst, given the current economic climate, it is important to get tracks underway and start generating the immediate benefits associated with them, it is just as important to ensure that the tracks being constructed will be viable and well positioned to be successful in the long term.

6. When will construction begin on the first tracks?

We hope to make use of the 2009/10 summer construction season. Some work on track sections could begin as early as November/December.

7. How many jobs will these tracks create?

Based on estimates from the regional partners, in the short-term, construction jobs would could number in the hundreds. For each of the seven Quick Start tracks we estimate up to 40 people per track being employed. Therefore around 280 people are likely to be involved in construction. However, we and the regional partners will be in a much better position to know once feasibility studies have been completed.

In the longer term however, many more jobs would be created as supporting businesses are developed. In the case of the rail-trail style projects, for example, we know that the Otago Central Rail Trail supports the equivalent of 75 FTEs per annum.

But this is just the start and there is a much bigger picture. Cycle tourism is a brand new opportunity which we can really grab on to. Once we have the infrastructure in place and a collective brand, we can market this new product. Not only will this potentially attract more international tourists, but it will also encourage even more Kiwis to get out and explore their own backyard the way the Otago Rail Trail has done so successfully with just under 90% of OCRT riders being domestic tourists.

8. Will you be working with the Mayors for Jobs Taskforce?

Yes. An action plan recently agreed with the government, the Mayors for Jobs Taskforce agreed to work to advise the government of existing plans for cycleways in their regions and to help in assessing the job creation and other economic benefits from such projects.

The Joint Action Plan agreed between the government and the Mayors for Jobs Taskforce commits both parties to work in collaboration with officials to:

- advise government of existing local proposals for cycleways and how these might be brought forward and/or connected
- identify and match local labour and skills required to implement the cycleway initiative i.e. people to build and maintain tracks
- identify and support commercial activity that could be enhanced around cycleways.

9. What happens next?

We complete the feasibility and other work necessary to determine whether to support these projects. As previously mentioned, a proposal and assessment framework will be available to regions by the end of September.

10. What will the tracks be constructed of? Concrete, tar seal?

None of the seven possible tracks will be sealed. At this stage exact track surfaces have not been finalised.

11. How many international tourists do you think these tracks will attract?

We are currently undertaking market research in this area to assess demand. We have the opportunity to build the right product and if we promote it effectively, we're confident the 'Great Rides' can be as successful as the 'Great Walks'.

12. How many cycleway concepts did you receive?

We have received about 20 concepts that we would call 'substantial'. Beyond this there have been dozens of ideas sent ranging from a brief email to more detailed papers. To date we have only asked for overviews whilst the proposal and assessment framework is developed, and the market research carried out.

13. Will these tracks fit under one brand?

The tracks will be linked together by an overarching brand which will allow for a regional identity to be incorporated into it. Over time, the intention is to make physical links between them where possible, practical and desirable.

14. What about tracks already in place – can these receive funding for signage etc?

We recognise that there are already a number of existing great tracks out there. A piece of work looking at the feasibility assisting existing tracks with signage etc will be undertaken in the future, once the overall brand has been established.

15. Will local labour be used to construct the tracks?

Our preference is that local labour is used and this is also the preference of the Majors for Jobs Taskforce. However, this will ultimately come down to

practical issues such as whether the required skills and expertise are available locally.

16. Does the Otago Central Rail Trail support this project? Aren't you creating competition for them?

Firstly, we would like to state what a fantastic job the Otago Central Rail Trail has done in regard to really raising the profile of cycle tourism in New Zealand.

We believe that the New Zealand Cycleway is highly complementary to the OCRT. By creating additional tracks, and collectively marketing cycle tourism in New Zealand, we can grow the market, and therefore benefit the Otago Rail Trail.

17. How long will the tracks take to construct?

The construction time is often not the constraint. Issues such as deciding the route options, agreeing the governance and business models all take time. The objective is to start this construction season. It is likely that construction will take a number of years and we won't know properly until feasibility work has been undertaken and considered. Some tracks have an impetus to be completed sooner.

18. Who is going to pay to maintain these tracks if they're built? Will it be taxpayers?

Maintenance would be undertaken by the final owners in the regions and by DoC, where tracks are on the conservation estate.

19. What type of cyclist will the tracks attract? (families/mountain bikers.....)

We are currently undertaking market research into cycle tourism. We expect a report by mid August that will help us to understand the different potential market segments and exactly what they're looking for.

Broadly speaking however, we envisage that to achieve the objective of high economic impact, preference will be given to tracks that generate overnight or multi-night stays. There will be an emphasis on the beginner to intermediate rider, not discounting that there may need to be options for the more advanced.

20. How many cyclists are going to use these tracks?

We know that 10,000 people per year ride the Otago Rail Trail. This gives us a ball park figure to work with. However, it will depend on where they are located, how well they are marketed, and what market segments we target.

21. Have Maori/iwi been consulted?

Yes, but only as part of a case by case basis as part of progressing individual opportunities. Feasibility studies will include consultation with iwi where appropriate.

22. After you get the results of the feasibility studies for the 'Quick Starts', how will you decide which tracks to fund?

We will have criteria similar to that used to identify the opportunities in the first instance (see question 2). The results of the market research will also factor into the decision making.

23. My region has a really great proposal but it is not one of the Quick Starts. What should we do with it?

It is important to remember that only \$9m has been allocated to the Quick Starts, and there is still \$41m in the fund over the next three years. We would encourage you to spend the next few months working on developing as compelling a business case as you can for your track, including gathering regional support for your proposal, whilst awaiting the release of the assessment framework from the Ministry at the end of September.