

Ōrākei Local Board feedback on Glen Innes Cycleways

Introduction:

The Ōrākei Local Board generally supports the provision of infrastructure for safer cycling to our parks, sportsfields schools, and other amenities.

It is good to see a link up with existing cycleways and the closing of gaps in the network; however, the Board has serious concerns that the Ōrākei Local Board Paths (nee Greenways) Plan has not been considered as the basis for the sections in the Ōrākei Local Board area.

Local Board Paths Plan:

At earlier workshops on the proposals, the Ōrākei Local Board enquired whether the Paths Plan had been considered and was advised that it had not. At those workshops the Board firmly requested AT consider the Paths Plan and AT gave its assurance at that time that the Plan would be given due consideration. There had been no feedback to the Board since from AT and it appears that the Paths Plan has been ignored. Given the Ōrākei Paths Plan has had public consultation as well as expert planning, it seems ill-considered to ignore this plan and provide a layout that fails to recognize the potential provision of walking/cycling routes through green spaces that physically remove pedestrians and cyclists from the roadway. It also results in the unnecessary provision of duplicate routes.

The Board has a strong preference for the link through Colin Maiden Park rather than the AT proposed paths along the entirety of Morrin Road and Merton Road, and asks that AT provide a rationale as to why provision of this link has not been considered as a viable and less costly alternative. The Board is actively working on providing the missing link through Colin Maiden Park. This link will provide an off-road cycle path that keeps cars and cyclists separated while providing a safe and scenic cycle through Colin Maiden Park. The Board sees it as optimal to have cyclists away from the road network where possible, as this provides all users with safer travel options. Consideration of the Ōrākei Paths Plan contemporaneously with the planning of this project would have identified this route as a premium option for cyclists.

Cost:

The Board supports in principle the provision of safer commuting and travel options for walking and cycling in the area. However, it is also mindful of the sometimes enormous costs involved in provision of amenities to achieve desired outcomes, particularly for cycling. It provides its feedback noting that there is a lack of information available to assess both the likely uptake in cycling numbers this proposed project will generate, and the likely on-flow effects on traffic movement to and from the suburb of Stonefields. It questions whether at this stage, or in the near future a demand for cycling infrastructure exists in that area that justifies the spend of ratepayer funds on a project of this magnitude.

Parking Removal:

The Board is concerned about the 'clean sweep' approach to parking removal in most of the layouts. These roads have wide carriageways with generous berms. It is the Board's view

that where parking can be retained while simultaneously providing a safe facility for cycling, it should be. The removal of parking simply for the sake of it is unacceptable.

Glen Innes Town Centre:

The Board supports the focus of the project being on connections to the G.I town centre – particularly the train station and beginning of the GI2T Shared Path.

Intersections:

Improvements for the major intersections are supported by the Board. However, it understands that detailed designs for those intersections have only recently been released on the AT website. This came to the Board's knowledge by chance the night prior to feedback deadline, and Board members have not had an opportunity to either examine those plans in detail and to formulate an informed response on those design details. It is the Board's view that those detailed designs should have been brought to the attention of the Board for comment. For that reason the Board does not support the designs at this stage, and requests AT provide sufficient information at a workshop with the Board with an opportunity for input prior to any sign off.

Cycleway width:

The width of protected cycleways is confusing – are they 1.5 or 1.8m? The graphics on the consultation material are not consistent, and some cycleways look extremely narrow while others appear very generous.

Separators:

The separators look insubstantial and easily driven over by cars – definitely not safe enough to protect cyclist from poor driver behaviour.

Sufficient door buffer space is needed beside parked vehicles adjacent to the cycleways and it is unclear whether this has been provided.

Replanting of Removed Trees:

Replacement trees where replanting is to occur – the Board does not want to see species with problematic root systems planted whether or not they are native. It is vital that the planting chosen will not create maintenance issues and disrupt pathway surfaces in the future.

Stonefields Ave – Traffic Lane/ Slip Lane Removal:

Despite the Board disagreeing with the route here, the board is also concerned by the proposal to remove a traffic lane from both sides of the road in Stonefields Ave. The Stonefields development has the unique feature of being constructed from a former quarry. It is a geographically contained community that is extremely well serviced by a commercial activity zone providing necessary services, cafes, restaurants, hairdressers etc. One of the benefits of living in Stonefields for its residents is their accessibility to those amenities on foot. If and when they do leave their suburb by car it is probably because the vehicle is necessary for the trip. It is unlikely that the radical changes to the roadway by removing a lane of traffic will have any discernible benefit for the residents of this suburb. To the contrary, they are likely to see traffic congestion and long wait times at intersections as a

result. Stonefields Ave is the sole main road which vehicles must use to enter or leave this neighbourhood.

The population of Stonefields continues to grow rapidly due to the nature of the high density housing and apartments coming onto the market as building work in the suburb continues at pace. The reduction in the number of traffic lanes on this important arterial route is therefore short-sighted. Cycling and walking as a mode of transport is laudable but the reality is that where vehicles have no other means of ingress or egress to an area, nor ever likely to given the geographic/topographic limitations here, squeezing a rapidly growing number of vehicles into one lane will inevitably lead to traffic congestion at some stage in the future. For this reason the Board also objects to the removal of the slip lane out of Stonefields Ave into College Rd.

The roads in the area immediately adjacent to the Stonefields development, including Stonefields Ave appear in excellent condition. Spending huge amounts of ratepayer money on the reduction of existing roadway where there is no demonstrable need to for the accommodation of cyclists is unjustifiable.

Parking Removal in Line Road:

The Board notes that there is a funeral home business in Line Road. At times the need for parking in this stretch of roadway is extreme with existing facility often already stretched to the limit. Its removal would have profound effect on this business and needs to be taken into consideration.

Parking Removal in Merton Rd:

Again there are times when sporting events in Colin Maiden Park are so well attended there is a huge demand for parking on Merton Rd. As more facilities are provided within the Park that demand will continue to grow into the future. Removal of any parking around this facility needs to be very carefully considered.

Connection to GI2TP:

The Board supports the improved connection to the entrance of the GI2TP but notes the requirement for a safer/better cross-point for westbound cyclists across Merton Rd.

Underpass to Railway:

The Board questions the safety aspects of continuing the cycleway through the underpass to the Glen Innes station given the 90 degree turns coupled with the amount of pedestrian traffic accessing entrances to the Glen Innes Railway station. The state of this underpass is currently extremely poor, and it definitely needs upgrading. However, whether that upgrading should be to the extent of a designated cycleway should be seriously considered given the cost implications.

Conclusion:

It is the Board's view that the desired outcomes for the proposed cycleways can be better achieved by optimising those existing pathways identified in the Paths Plan, and Auckland Transport's lack of reference to that Plan will result in duplication and unnecessary expense in delivery of this project.