



Cycle Aware Wellington

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Rimutaka Railway: application for concession

Submission to GWRC Social and Cultural Wellbeing Committee 23 November 2011 on behalf of Cycle Aware Wellington Inc (CAW) which represents the interests of cyclists in the Wellington Region.

Rimutaka Rail Trail as a cycling facility:

- The steady gradient (maximum 2.5%) and wide track makes it one of the few rides in the Wellington Region that is suitable for families and beginner cyclists.
- Together with the Great Harbour Way and the Hutt Rail Trail, it provides a cycle touring connection from Wellington to the Wairarapa that is likely to form part of a future Nga Haerenga/NZ Cycle Trails route and is far preferable to the higher and busier Rimutaka Hill Road. It is also a key part of the popular Big Coast cycling event.
- Many cyclists enjoy the heritage aspects of the route such as cycling through the tunnels and viewing machinery.
- The Rimutaka Rail Trail is extremely popular, with approximately 40 000 visitors per year, growing at 13% per year.

Bicycling implications of the proposal:

- It would be very difficult for cyclists to share the rail route with trains: apart from the limited space in tunnels in cuttings, it is hazardous to ride parallel to rail tracks, and difficult to ride on ballast and sleepers.
- The proposed alternative walkway would not be suitable for cycling: at 2m it is too narrow for cyclists to pass comfortably, and the 12.5% gradient required to get around tunnels and cuttings is more than the IMBA recommendation for cycle path gradient, and 5 times the existing gradient.
- The estimated costs seem low: the \$13M quoted for the project as a whole is about the same that has been estimated for reinstating the 1km cycle path between Petone and Horokiwi. The walkway plan quotes 150/metre for construction; the 1.6km Nelson - Richmond cycle path cost \$700 000 or over \$400/metre, in much less challenging terrain. The proposed walkway will be sidling on steep hillsides for much of the distance, making it expensive to construct.
- **We conclude that reinstatement of the railway would change the experience of cycling the route completely, and make it impractical for beginners and cycletourists, if not all cyclists.**

Other issues raised by CAW members:

- The route is now public space. The proposal will turn the rail trail into a privately controlled space.
- It is risky to run coal fired engines, which historically caused frequent scrub fires, through a forestry plantation.

- The area is now a forest park, and non-motorised recreation is the most appropriate use of the area.
- The current proposal is only to reinstate the conventional railway line that connected with Rimutaka Incline fell railway, not the historic Rimutaka Incline itself.



The Rimutaka trail from the perspective of an 11 year old cyclist:

“A while ago, I went on a cycling trip with my family to the Rimutaka Rail Trail. It was awesome. Of course the bike ride was brilliant, but the tunnels were what made it special. Just the thrill of zooming through, the only light coming from your bike light is great. Please don't take away the tunnels!”