



Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust AGM
11 October 2021
Chair Report to 30 June 2021

The Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust priorities for the 2020/21 year have been:

- Continuing to connect up and extend the Great Taste Trail, with the completion and opening of the section of trail from Kohatu to Tapawera, and planning for Tapawera to Ngatimoti sections
- Connecting the GTT at Nelson airport to Tahunanui beach
- Coppermine Trail maintenance
- Submissions to NCC and TDC on cycle related matters
- Engagement with NRDA on their Destination Management Plan, and Food and Beverage and Arts Tourism Strategies
- Appointment of a new Trail Manager with Josh Aldridge's departure to Auckland
- Proactive maintenance and upgrading of sections of the Great Taste Trail
- Review of the GTT "experience" and what we can do to enhance it

Trail construction & maintenance

Great Taste Trail

Off-road trail from Kohatu to Tapawera was completed and this section of trail opened to the public in November. This construction was supported by funding from Tasman District Council, and the Ministry of Business, Employment and Innovation (MBIE) Great Rides Fund. A big thank you to landowners who have allowed access for the trail on this section, and to Wenham Construction for another excellent job on construction. This completes 68km of continuous trail from Nelson to Tapawera.

At the other end of the Great Taste Trail, we are still working with Nelson City Council on the extension of a side trail from the Airport to Tahunanui, with work begun on an off-road section on Bolt Rd and a route agreed from there across Nelson Golf Club land to Parkers Rd, to connect with the trail along the beachfront to Tahunanui.

We have also provided input to Waka Kotahi/NZTA and WSP on plans for upgrade of the trail that forms part of the GTT along the Waimea Estuary beside Whakatu Drive.

This year has also seen some significant work on trail resurfacing. Tunnel Rd from Highway 6 through to Spooners Tunnel has been resurfaced. Funding support from OneFortyOne Forestry in addition to MBIE MGR funding meant we could resurface the full shared road section. A new system for rejuvenating the trail surface has been successfully trialled on the trail beside Harley Rd and we have submitted a funding application to MBIE for an upgrade of the trail from Harley Rd to the shade sail at the top of Tasman View Rd.

A warm and wet spring and early summer in 2020 resulted in weed growth along some sections of the trail getting out of control. We have now instituted a more proactive approach to mowing and weed control of the trail sections that the Trust maintains, that should provide better weed control in future.

Coppermine Trail

With the trail from Coppermine Saddle down to the Maitai Valley upgrade completed last year, we are already seeing some deterioration due to heavy rains and higher use levels, including e-bikes. We are considering possible cost effective solutions to ongoing maintenance. The slip above the pipeline section of the track continues to be active, requiring ongoing monitoring and periodic closures following heavy rain events.

Construction funding

The support from Central Government and from both Tasman District and Nelson City Councils has been essential to the development for the two Great Rides. The central government funds made available this year to support Trail Management positions and maintenance for all the Great Rides for at least a three year period is a great support for keeping the trails to “Great Ride” standard.

Support from a range of other individuals and organisations is also important, with a mix of donations, mate’s rates and volunteer labour enabling central and local government funding to go further. It is estimated that around 1700 volunteer hours were contributed to the Trust and in maintenance/construction work during 2020/21. We gave a fee-free year to around 80 Official Partners and Business Supporters in consideration of the impacts of Covid 19 on many businesses. Fortunately the Trust reserves were sufficient to cover the costs of an Administrator to provide support for volunteer Trustees, trail promotion and other operational costs for the year.

Trail usage

The GTT and Coppermine are proving significant community and visitor assets. MBIE this year released an independent evaluation of NZ Great Rides user numbers (Evaluation of NZ Cycle Trail Counter Analysis, J Kennett and M Northcote, 2020). The report estimated that 267,218 trips (cycles and pedestrians) were undertaken on the GTT, and 7,490 on the Coppermine Trail, in the year to 28 February 2020. (These estimates apply a correction factor, dependent on the specifics of each trail, for return trips and passes of more than one trail counter on any one trip). The feasibility study completed in 2010, prior to the original application for Great Rides funding, anticipated 10,000 - 18,000 trail users for the Coppermine and 40,000 to 65,000 for the GTT per annum.

The community value of the Trails was again demonstrated over the latest Level 4 & 3 lockdown periods with the Great Taste Trail in particular showing peaks in usage on sections close to urban centres.

Trail promotion and visitor experience

The Trust’s main promotion focus is on providing information through our web site (www.heartofbiking.org.nz) and trail brochures on the “tastes” of Nelson-Tasman accessible on the GTT, and the uniqueness of the Coppermine Trail. We also profile Official Partner Businesses and the services they provide, and the website has links to information on other cycling opportunities in the region.

This year we have replaced the GTT signage at community locations along the trail with interpretation presenting more on the diversity of “tastes” of each area. We have also installed new distance signage on the Coppermine Trail that is in keeping with the new trail branding.

This was the seventh year of the Trust’s arrangement with Nelson Regional Development Agency (NRDA) to put resources into cycle trail related destination marketing. It is exciting to see cycling and the Great Taste Trail featuring in the new NRDA Destination Management Plan, and in the Food and Beverage and Arts Tourism Strategies developed this year. Stakeholders in both these sectors identified the GTT as an opportunity to promote and tell their sector’s stories in the region.

We receive regular feedback from operators and users on the GTT that the section of trail around the Waimea Estuary from Richmond to Landsdowne Rd could be enhanced for a better experience of this internationally significant wetland. We contracted the development of a Trail Enhancement Concept Plan from Aitken Taylor. Jasmine Foxlee will be working as Project Manager over the next 6 months, engaging with Tasman District Council, businesses, iwi and environmental groups around the estuary to implement ideas from the Concept Plan.

Communications to the public and partners have included Official Partner updates, press releases and publicity in hard copy and social media.

Other activities

Maungatapu Track - Potential routes have been developed and provided to Nelson City Council for a Maungatapu Cycle Trail along a similar route to the Maungatapu Track, and for a trail from Maungatapu Saddle to connect with the downhill trail from Coppermine Saddle. These provide exciting options for an improved cycle route from Marlborough to Nelson, and extension of the Coppermine Trail.

Heartland Rides – These are linking on-road scenic routes across NZ and between the Great Rides, designated by Waka Kotahi. The Tadmores Saddle Rd from Tapawera to Highway 6, then via the Gowan Valley, Lake Rotoroa and the Braeburn Track to Murchison was designated a Heartland Ride following the completion of the GTT trail between Kohatu and Tapawera. We have provide Waka Kotahi with a potential cycle trail route that follows the old railway reserve from Glenhope to the Gowan Valley and would take cyclists off the highway.

New Zealand Cycle Trails Inc (NZCT) - a stand-alone national agency for the 22 “NZ Great Rides “ was established in 2013. TDC and NCC are NZCT members for the GTT and the Coppermine Trail, respectively. The Trust provides an additional contact for NZCT for both rides, and attends NZCT AGMs and the NZCT annual Forum. NZCT has been instrumental in continued central government funding for the Great Rides and for advocacy and promotion of the Great Ride network.

Trail surveys - There is a link to an NZCT survey on the website that we encourage trail users to complete. NZCT/MBIE have set a target of 300 surveys per annum for continued eligibility for central government funding.

351 people completed the on-line GTT survey over the 12 month period to 30 June 2021, with an average satisfaction score of 8.7/10. 25% were visitors who spent an average of 6.5 nights in the region, 4.5% were walkers/runners, 63% were aged over 50, 35% (21% 2019/20) were riding e-bikes. The Coppermine statistics were 172 surveys completed, satisfaction score 8.9, 21% visitors staying for an average of 3.2 nights, 2.9% walkers/runners, 37% aged over 50, and 19.7% (15% 2019/20) on e-bikes. We will be giving more focus to getting surveys for Coppermine this year.

Administration – Thank you to our Trust Administrators - Gillian Rowe for the first part of the year and now Elizabeth Bean. Their support is essential to our effective operation as a volunteer Trust.

Financials

The Trust is in a sound financial position, with cash reserves at 30 June 2020 of \$607,065 and net assets of \$772,880. This enables an operating buffer, with the balance of funds raised for and committed to construction costs for the completion of the GTT, trail renewal and other priority cycle projects.

Trustees

We were joined during the year by new Trustees Matthew Kidson, Lew Metcalfe and Tim Kelly, with a resignation from Andrew McDonald.

Thank you to all the Trustees who contribute volunteer time to developing a wonderful community and visitor resource for the Nelson-Tasman region.

Trail Manager

Josh Aldridge left us at the end of 2020 for a move to Auckland after more than three years in the role. He did a superb job managing a range of construction and maintenance projects on both the Great Rides, and representing the Trust and the trails more broadly. We were fortunate to replace Josh with Nick Ross, a keen biker with experience as a Project Manager for Fulton Hogan. Thank you to Josh and Nick, and to Steve Johnstone who oversees maintenance on the GTT.

Gillian Wratt

Chair

Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust

4th October 2021