



Peer Review of:

Eastern Bays Shared Path Recreation
Assessment, prepared by Rob Greenaway
and Associates for Hutt City Council,
January 2019

For: GREATER WELLINGTON REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Pane Matua Taiao



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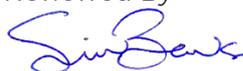
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Document History and Status

Revision	Date	Author	Reviewed by	Status
1	13/5/19	Catherine Hamilton	Simon Banks	Draft for comment
2	15/5/19	Catherine Hamilton	Simon Banks	Final

Revision Details

Revision	Details

1 Brief

WSP Opus has been briefed by Greater Wellington Regional Council to provide a peer review of the Assessment of Recreation Effects associated with the proposed Eastern Bays Shared Path.

The requested scope for the review, as outlined by Greater Wellington Regional Council in their email dated 24 April 2019 to the author of this memo, states:

*Please provide any review comments by way of **review memo**:*

1. Where you **agree** with the assessment/conclusions drawn by the applicant's experts on a relevant matter, concluding statements confirming you agree/are comfortable with the assessment are all that are required.
2. If you **disagree** with elements of an assessment, an assessment in its entirety, or require further information to complete your assessment please outline clearly in your review memo:
 - why you disagree with the expert assessment and/or the conclusions drawn by the expert
 - what further information you require and the format in which you would like this further information to be provided
 - any conditions of consent or suggestions which could further manage, remedy, or mitigate an actual or potential environmental effect
 - any other comments or concerns which you may have that you feel are relevant to consideration of the proposal

2 Documents Reviewed

This review focussed on the Eastern Bays Shared Path Recreation Assessment, prepared for Hutt City Council by Rob Greenaway and Associates, January 2019.

Additional documents considered were:

- Eastern Bays Shared Path Resource Consent Applications and Assessment of Effects on the Environment, Prepared for Hutt City Council by Stantec NZ Ltd, April 2019 (the 'AEE')
- Eastern Bays Shared Path Alternatives Assessment, Prepared for Hutt City Council by Stantec, March 2018 (Appendix G to the AEE)
- Eastern Bays Shared Path Design Features and Construction Methodology, Prepared for Hutt City Council by Stantec, January 2019 (Appendix J to the AEE)
- Eastern Bays Shared Path DBC, Preliminary Design Plans 80509137-01-001-C220 to 80509137-01-001-C242 incl, REV J: For Consent, Prepared for Hutt City Council by Stantec NZ Ltd, August 2018
- Simulated views of proposed path, Prepared for Hutt City Council by Stantec NZ Ltd and Drakeford Williams Ltd, August 2017

3 Application Description

The Eastern Bays Shared Path is a proposal by Hutt City Council to construct a 4.4 km Shared Path along Marine Drive in two sections, between Point Howard and Eastbourne. There is a current lack of dedicated cycling and walking facilities along the tightly constrained Marine Drive, which runs directly alongside the Coastal Marine Area (CMA) of Wellington Harbour.

To facilitate the shared path, the proposal also includes the widening of Marine Drive and replacement of a number of coastal structures, upon which the shared path will be constructed. Beach nourishment is proposed at Point Howard, Lowry Bay and York Bay. A range of resource consents are required to authorise the proposal under the Regional Coastal Plan for the Wellington Region, and the City of Lower Hutt District Plan.

The Assessment of Effects on the Environment (AEE) for the proposal is supported by the Recreation Assessment prepared by Rob Greenaway and Associates (January 2019), attached as Appendix K of the AEE. With proposed mitigation taken into account, the AEE concludes that the overall effects of the shared path on amenity effects and recreation range from none to less than minor. The effects of the proposal are considered in the context of the increasing impact of climate change on the shoreline and coastal resilience throughout the proposal area.

4 Recreation Assessment Summary

The Recreation Assessment (Greenaway and Associates, 2019) considers the positive and adverse effects of the proposal on local and regional recreation amenity. It gives consideration to both maximising the recreation amenity benefits of the shared path and minimising its potential adverse effects on existing recreation values, particularly those associated with beach activities and use of the rocky coastline. The Assessment's key findings are summarised below:

- **Path width** - a 3.5m wide path is the preferred minimum width, with short sections of 2.5m width to limit the loss of beach width and associated effects.
- **Recreation Setting** - the existing environment is mostly of local recreation value, used by local residents for swimming, small boat launching, walking and dog walking, shellfish gathering, snorkelling and fishing. There are small areas of regional recreation value at Point Howard Beach, Ferry Road Headland, and Lowry Bay.
- **Project Benefits** - walking and cycling activity are fundamental to social wellbeing, but activity in the project area is significantly impeded by the current condition of Marine Drive. The proposal would address this and is consistent with long-term recreation strategies.
- **Project Effects** - the proposal will result in the reduction of shoreline and beach width in some areas, which will affect existing recreational use of the beach and coastal areas. Beach nourishment is proposed as mitigation for the loss of dry sand areas at the popular recreation destinations of Point Howard, Lowry Bay and York Bay. Reduced path width is proposed in sensitive locations to minimise loss of beach width.
- **Policy Compliance** - there is clear alignment between the proposal and the requirements of the statutory planning policy framework to maintain and enhance access to and along the CMA, and recognition of the CMA as an important place for recreation.

Generally, the assessment in the Report does not rely on the benefits of the shared path as a mitigation for its effects on local beach amenity and recreational value. However, for Sorrento Bay, Mahina Bay, Sunshine Bay it is stated that loss of beach area is balanced by the benefits from the path (p9). The report makes it clear that, in the author's opinion, the likely scale of use of the shared path, and the resulting local, regional and national benefits, far outweigh the local and regional adverse effects.

5 Methodology for Peer Review

A site visit was undertaken by the writer on 2 May 2019 to familiarize herself with the location of the proposal and its surrounding context. The entire route was travelled, and observations made as to the likely recreation effects of the proposal.

A desktop examination of relevant documents was undertaken to understand the proposal and its likely recreation effects. Documents were reviewed with reference to Recreation Aotearoa (previously New Zealand Recreation Association) industry standards and relevant policy and research on active transport. Furthermore, the review draws on the authors own 25 years' experience in recreation design and planning.

Specifically, consideration was given to whether the Recreation Assessment adequately assesses the expected recreation effects of the proposal to create a shared path, taking into account the following relevant criteria;

- **User Experience - Comfort**
 - The effectiveness of the design (infrastructure, surface treatments, geometry, and alignment) in offering a comfortable, pleasant user experience
 - Refuges - the ability for people to stop at frequent intervals and be outside of the line of movement
 - Environmental comfort - shade and shelter
- **User Experience - Enjoyment**
 - The ability to connect with the natural landscape and marine environment (biophilia) through sensory experiences (sounds/views/smell/touch)
 - Provision of supporting facilities
- **Health Benefits**
 - The extent to which the proposal is predicted to contribute to health and wellbeing outcomes for users
- **Equity/Access**
 - The ability for people of all ages and abilities to easily share the path with other modes - e.g. fast cyclists, slow amblers, mobility assisted (wheelchairs, mobility scooters)
 - Meets accessibility standards
 - lack of physical barriers
 - lack of perceived barriers
 - Opportunities to experience either the full route or smaller sections within the route (requires frequent stopping points and access on and off the route)
- **Safety**
 - CPTED, (Crime Prevention through environmental design)
 - IPTED (Injury Prevention through environmental design)
 - Lighting
 - Protection from moving vehicles
 - Protection from falling
- **Connectivity**
 - Connections to adjacent recreation spaces
 - Connections to and from the route from the surrounding neighbourhoods
- **Trade Offs**
 - Benefits, losses, mitigation

6 Comments

1.1 Methodology

In my opinion, the methodology generally represents best practice for the assessment of recreation effects. It follows a clear and systematic process of field work, community engagement, desktop assessment of the relevant policy and statutory framework, evaluation of the proposal, assessment of the likely adverse impacts on recreation values, and consideration of avoidance and mitigation.

The report focuses on the recreation, health and wellbeing benefits of providing the shared path. It identifies the potential adverse effects from intrusion of the shared path into the coastal edge. Mitigation is proposed by way of beach nourishment where the more popular sandy beaches and rocky edges are impinged upon.

Concerns: The overall health and wellbeing benefits of the proposed path are well argued at a principal level, but the ability of the site-specific design to facilitate a high-quality recreation experience is not well covered. This, in my opinion, is a gap in the assessment and warrants deeper consideration.

Further assessment could be given to path widths, alignment, refuges and their frequency and locations, access on and off all or parts of the route, as well as other comfort and safety factors. Where I recommended that further information is provided by the author, these matters are collated under section 7 of this review.

1.2 Maintaining Existing Dry Beach Areas

The assessment concludes that the loss of dry beach areas can be mitigated by nourishment and that this is likely to maintain the available dry beach space for recreation use. It is not clear, however, if the proposed new infrastructure and changes to the beach profile will alter coastal morphology, potentially leading to increased erosion and loss of the dry beach area - effectively counteracting such mitigation.

The assessment also states that “the proposal is not a solution to the inevitable adjustment of beach profiles and the accessibility of shoreline rock pools and shore-based fishing spots resulting from climate change” (Part 1.1. p5)

I **agree** that the proposed locations for beach nourishment are logical in terms of retaining high-tide dry beach areas in popular locations, and therefore access to the coastal edge.

I **do not agree** that the assessment can rely upon beach nourishment to offset intrusion into the coastal environment. This is because it is not evident that beach nourishment will be sustained.

I recommend that the applicant provides **further information** to address the above.

1.3 Path Width

The report identifies that a 3.5m wide path is the preferred minimum width based on national and international best practice standards and that “short sections of 2.5m wide path are proposed to limit adverse effects on coastal ecological values and loss of beach width (lengths of 50m in Sorrento Bay, 140m in Mahina Bay, and 150m in Sunshine Bay).

International best practice - Fowler et.al (2010), consider 2.5m as the minimum width for a shared path in a relatively low use setting, and 3.0m where interactions between cyclists and walkers increase. An additional 0.5 m should be added to each edge if the path is bounded continuously or has fall hazards on either side. An additional 0.5 m should be added if during the critical design

hour the path is serving both a commuting function and has significant numbers of child cyclists, such as would occur if the path is near a school.

It is noted by this writer that best practice (Auckland Transport) recommends a maximum length of 10m for a reduction in path width to 2.5m, to stay within the tolerance of cyclists for passing. As the volumes of cyclists and pedestrians using shared paths increases the number of delayed passings for cyclists also increases. There is usually a reduction in the level of service and safety for all shared path users when this situation occurs

The benefits of the coastal path at New Plymouth are quoted. A similar coastal path at Westhaven in Auckland provides high recreation amenity. Both of these paths are wider than 2.5m, despite not being constrained on both sides in the way that the Eastern Bays Shared path will be.

I **do not agree** that 2.5m is an acceptable width in this physical setting for reasons of safety and comfort. Given the path is tightly constrained between a busy road with poor sight lines, and a drop off into the coastal marine area, the minimum width should, in my view, be 3.5m along the entire length of the path. In addition, the proposed transitions from 3.5m to 2.5m often occur abruptly and/or on tight bends, further compounding issues of safety and comfort.

Although the assessment states that 3.5m wide is the preferred width, it does not discuss the implications of going below the accepted level of service (LOS) by reducing the path to 2.5m, nor does it provide any mitigation or alternatives for this.

I also **do not agree** that ecological values are a matter for a recreation assessment.

I recommend that the applicant provides **further information** to address the above.

1.4 Refuges

The report makes no comment about the lack of refuge/pause points built into the design. Refuges/pause areas are provided only where existing widened areas are available along the route. It is considered best practice to provide regular refuges at frequent intervals to allow multi-modal users, some of whom will be slow and frail, to take regular breaks outside of the line of movement. Refuges also provide for gathering and enjoyment of the coastal setting.

I recommend that the applicant provides **further information** to address the above.

1.5 Increased Activity

The report does not comment on the potential impacts of increased activity - which a successful shared path will facilitate - on existing user experience. Part of the endearing experience of this complex coastal edge is the ability to sit quietly and take in the views, sounds and smells. The path, if it meets its own active transport objectives, will become a busy and potentially crowded route - especially in the narrower (2.5m) areas where beach intrusion is to be minimised. What are the potential adverse effects of this increased activity (potentially 200 more users per day) on the relaxed, quite enjoyment of the coastal edge spaces?

I recommend that the applicant provides **further information** to address the above.

1.6 Review of Effects per Coastal Section

1.6.1 Point Howard / Point Howard Beach

This is a popular beach area with carparking, toilets, higher recreation attraction, formalised road crossing, and change facilities. It can be anticipated that this beach will become more popular with the development of the shared path increasing access. The path itself has a high potential to become congested due to this concentration of activity. Higher potential for delayed passing and

reaching the upper limit for cyclist's tolerance for being delayed. Poor transition from 3.5m to 2.5m width at crossing point (CH700) - abrupt rather than funnelled.

Concerns: reduction to 2.5m path width is likely to reduce safety and comfort for users in this section.

1.6.2 Sorrento Bay

Concerns: Reduction of path width on safe bend - adverse effects on actual and perceived safety and user comfort. Outcrop provides important refuge/pause point for users to stop outside of the flow of movement (see sections 1.3 and 1.4 above).

I recommend that the applicant provides **further information** to address the above.

1.6.3 Lowry Bay

Boat shed (CH.1160) provide important refuge/pause point. Opportunity to configure space to create quality refuge at headland location. Opportunity to rebuild deck structure at CH. 1540 to facilitate gathering.

Concerns: Path narrows to 2.5m through tight bend, likely to reduce safety and comfort for users (see sections 1.3 and 1.4 above).

1.6.4 Whiorau Reserve

Concerns: Southern end of reserve - transition from path within reserve to shoulder creates potentially dangerous environment for path users due to road bend and proposed path alignment.

1.6.5 Mahina Bay

Concerns: Long section of 2.5m wide path. Likely recreation effects (see section 1.3 above).

1.6.6 Sunshine Bay

Concerns: Long section of 2.5m wide path. Likely recreation effects (see section 1.3 above).

1.7 Review of Alternatives Assessment and Design Features

I **agree** with the conclusions of the MCA that the seaward side option is the preferred option from a recreation values point of view.

I **agree** that the general alignment of Option D is the preferred one.

The report concludes that the path width of 2.5m is not ideal as it does not meet best practice and accepted Levels of Service for shared paths. The report states, however, that there are overseas examples and standards where 2.5m wide is acceptable.

I **do not agree** that the 2.5m wide examples are applicable where the shared path is tightly constrained on both sides (i.e. active lane almost continuously along the road side and drop off into CMA on the seaward side). I also would expect the design to conform with accepted national Levels of Service.

The Alternatives Assessment argues that 2.5m is a compromise in order to protect coastal marine values relating to resilience, protecting infrastructure, and managing coastal values in the face of climate change and sea level rise. From a recreation point of view, it is not clear that this

compromise results in an acceptable solution. Of greatest concern is the significant length of 2.5m wide sections (>150m). As noted under section 1.3 above, accepted best practice (Auckland Transport) recommends no more than 10m continuous length for a reduction to 2.5m.

I recommend that the applicant provides **further information** to address the above.

7 Further Information

To ensure proper consideration of the recreation effects of the proposal, and to address the matters raised in this review, we recommend that further information is requested as follows:

- a) **Maintaining Existing Dry Beach Areas** - the applicant provides further information on the likely alteration to coastal morphology as a result of the proposal impacts and climate change, and the effects of these predicted impacts on recreation values (see section 1.2 above).
- b) **Path Width** - the applicant provides further information with case studies and commentary on 2.5m wide pathways with similar constraints to the Eastern Bays shared path, to more accurately examine the likely impacts on user safety and comfort. The author should discount any consideration of ecological effects in drawing conclusions on recreation impacts. (see section 1.3 and 1.7 above).
- c) **Refuges** - the applicant provides further information on refuges and their distribution along the route to provide for high levels of service (see section 1.4 above).
- d) **Increased Activity** - the applicant provides more further information on the potential diminished enjoyment of the coastal landscape that may result from busyness and crowding (see section 1.5 above).
- e) **Sorrento Bay** - the applicant provides further information on the effects of the reduction in the volume of space at Sorrento Bay (see section 1.6.2 above).

8 Suggested Conditions of Consent

The following suggestions are made which could further manage, remedy, or mitigate an actual or potential environmental effect on recreation values. If Council are satisfied with the further information provided, these could form the basis of conditions of consent.

- a) Identify locations and design standards for refuges along the route to provide for the safety, comfort and enjoyment of recreation users.
- b) Route to maintain a continuous minimum width of 3.5m.
- c) Coping on top of sea wall to be widened to 350mm to create a visual signal to maintain clearance from the drop off, and to act as a seating edge.

9 Conclusions

The benefits to community and personal wellbeing, and tourism and recreation participation are clearly argued. What is not clear is whether these benefits accrue on a path that is designed to a lower LOS than is recommended best practice. That is, where the path is reduced to 2.5m, lacks adequate refuges/pause points and has potential impacts of intrusion into existing quiet enjoyment of the coastal environment.

Further information on the likely effects of the path where it does not meet accepted levels of service would assist in assessing the likely impacts of the proposal on recreation values and would provide a basis for further consideration of mitigation.



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