

THE NEW ZEALAND CYCLE TRAIL

Route Planning & Selection Guidelines

1.0 Purpose

These guidelines are for reference by local authorities, cycling groups and other interested stakeholders seeking to submit a proposal for a cycle route to be included in the New Zealand Cycle Trail (NZCT). The criteria outlined in these guidelines reflect the key considerations by which a route will be assessed.

2.0 Introduction

The NZCT project is a Government initiative led by the Ministry of Economic Development. It aims to generate lasting economic, social and environmental benefits for communities by developing a network of recommended cycling experiences throughout New Zealand.

The initial focus of the NZCT has been on developing a series of 'Great Rides' located around the country. These are premier rides, predominantly off road, that showcase the best of New Zealand, including our environment, iconic natural landscapes and our heritage and culture.

A longer term objective of the NZCT is to create an expanded network of rides, by progressively adding cycling routes that link the Great Rides, urban centres, transport hubs and other key tourist attractions throughout New Zealand.

This includes mapping and signposting existing roads and cycle paths and aims to encourage the cyclists away from busy state highways and arterial routes.

As well as enhancing New Zealand's reputation as a destination for cycle tourists, expanding the NZCT also aims to encourage cycling amongst all New Zealanders, including domestic tourists, recreational cyclists and those new to cycling.

Proposals are invited from local authorities, cycling groups and other interested stakeholders for cycle routes that meet the objectives of the NZCT and the criteria outlined in these guidelines.

3.0 NZCT Criteria

The NZCT's Network Expansion Project aims to encourage the development of a connected system of cycling routes throughout the country. In developing this network, the NZCT recognises the need for guiding principles, or criteria, to assist the planning and selection of routes to be included.

Cycle routes should aim to meet as many of the criteria outlined in these guidelines as possible (and practical). However, this does not mean that routes within the network will all be the same. Different routes will traverse a wide range of terrain and cater for a wide range of interests and abilities.

When selecting a potential cycle route for inclusion in the NZCT, it should be considered in its totality. It may be that portions of a route do not meet some criteria, but that when taken all together, they represent the best choice to achieve the aim of the route.

The planning and selection criteria for cycle routes that will make up the NZCT network include:

 Alignment with NZCT Objectives

-  Cyclist Safety
-  Logic & Directness
-  Appeal for Cyclists
-  Services & Accommodation
-  Integration with Existing Cycling Infrastructure
-  Stakeholder Commitment & Support

3.1 Alignment with NZCT Objectives

The primary objectives of the NZCT project are to:

- Deliver short and long-term economic benefits to regions;
- Enhance New Zealand's competitiveness as a cycle tourism destination;
- Maximise complementary benefits, e.g. for health, the environment, commuters and the events sector; and
- Engage local communities.

The longer term objective of the NZCT is to create a connected network of cycling routes throughout New Zealand that link to the Great Rides and that also cater for a wide range of cycling abilities and interests.

3.2 Cyclist Safety

Safety is a paramount consideration for on-road cycling routes. While no route that involves cyclists and motorists sharing the road can be completely safe, minimising the dangers and engendering a sense of security will have a positive impact on the popularity of any cycling route.

Safety is largely dependent on the volume and speed of traffic. Where traffic volume and speed is low, cyclists and motorists can share road space with no significant danger. Cycling conditions become increasingly unpleasant and dangerous as volume and speed increases.

Unsafe sections within a proposed route have the potential to render a route unacceptable to the NZCT, unless either an alternative route can be found to circumvent the hazardous section, or treatment is undertaken to mitigate the risk, such as lowering the speed limit or widening the shoulder.

The NZCT's *Cycle Trail Design Guide* provides advice on what is acceptable in terms of the on-road safety provisions required for cyclists, depending on traffic volume and speed. It also suggests strategies to mitigate the danger of pinch points and other on-road hazards.

Points to note:

- Cycle routes within the NZCT must meet the criteria outlined in the NZCT Design Guide, particularly as it relates to traffic volume, speed and the required shoulder width.
- Hazards along the route that do not meet the Design Guide criteria, such as pinch points, poor sight lines and busy road crossings should be documented, including any mitigation strategies in place (or proposed) to address them.
- Incorporate as much local knowledge as possible to enhance cyclist safety, such as, daily, weekly or seasonal traffic trends.

3.3 Logic & Directness

The cycle route must be reasonably direct in connecting key tourist attractions, transport hubs and towns and cities, and be intuitive and easy to follow. Cycle routes that connect with a Great Ride would be advantageous.

Meandering routes that add kilometres to the journey with no real incentive will most likely be ignored by cyclists in favour of a more direct route. However, the most direct routes often use busy roads that are unpleasant or dangerous to ride. Route planners should seek to find a balance.

If a cycling route is intended to be generally used for recreational purposes (i.e. the enjoyment of the ride itself) the attractiveness of the route, the location of cafes and picnic spots, its low traffic volume and the avoidance of unpleasantly steep hills will be more important criteria than logic and directness.

Points to note:

- Plan cycle routes that provide access into regions or destinations that will logically appeal to the typical cycle tourist and that connect tourist attractions, urban centres and transport hubs.
- Look for a reasonably direct route that will not be too challenging to the typical cycle tourist and one that avoids busy roads and intersections wherever possible.

3.4 Appeal for Cyclists

The NZCT aims to appeal to a wide range of cycling abilities and interests – attracting cycle tourists to the region and encouraging locals that cycling can be a lot of fun, as well as safe, convenient and healthy!

Key considerations in determining how attractive a route is to actually cycle include the scenery and general landscape, its freedom from traffic, the type and quality of road surface and the gradient.

Ideally, there should be a point of interest located at least every 20km along the route, such as a park, café, lookout or other attraction. It may be that the landscape along the route itself holds plenty of appeal for cyclists.

The type and length of the cycle route is also important. Is it a linear route (from point A to point B), a circular route (a loop) or a multi-trip route (hub and spoke). For cycle tourists, the distance to or between accommodation providers will largely dictate the minimum distance they would need to ride in one day (40-80km). Long straight monotonous stretches of roads are not appealing to cyclists and should be avoided wherever possible.

The NZCT aims to provide cycling access into regions or destinations that have a high tourism appeal, as well as linking key tourist attractions, such as the Great Rides, with nearby urban centres or transport hubs.

Points to note:

- The type of scenery, the historical or cultural points of interest and the tourist attractions located along the route, or in the immediate vicinity can enhance or detract from its appeal to cyclists.
- When planning a route, consider the minimum distance the cyclist must travel on any one day between accommodation providers .
- The 'comfort factor' of cycling the route i.e. traffic volume and speed, road surface and gradient will strongly influence the level of local use as well as use by international cycle tourists.

3.5 Services & Accommodation

The quality and availability of services along a route will significantly influence the wider cycling experience. This includes access to essential services, such as drinking water, toilets, convenience stores and basic accommodation – as well as the 'nice-to-haves', such as cafes, tourist attractions and a choice of accommodation options.

Where a cycle route involves longer than desirable sections between towns and/or service providers, establishing picnic areas at points along the route where cyclists would be most inclined to stop, such as a lookout, could be the next best option. Places to shelter during bad weather may be appropriate on more remote or exposed cycle routes.

Route planners should also consider how to cater for cyclists at the various points of interest and/or rest stops along the way. For example, where can cyclists park their bikes, or safely store them (if required) while they explore the town, shop, or visit a local tourist attraction?

Points to note:

- The number and quality of accommodation and other services located along a cycle route will influence the type of cyclist it attracts. For example, a remote wilderness route offers a distinctly different cycling experience to a route that travels through vineyards, numerous small towns and past country cafes
- The location, type and frequency of obvious rest stops for a typical cycle tourist along a route, such as picnic areas, cafes and townships (and access to drinking water and toilet facilities) is an important consideration.
- Consider how cycle-friendly the towns and businesses located along the route are and what might assist them to become more so.

3.6 Integration with Existing Cycling Infrastructure

The level of cycling infrastructure that may already exist along a route will vary and is largely dependent on the type of environment and the cycling demand. However, being able to provide a sense of continuity in the design, standard and signage of a route will enhance the cycling experience.

In rural environments, where the traffic volume is low and the demand to cater for cyclists is not strong, there are often no specific provisions for cycling.

The higher volume of both traffic and cyclists that co-exist in urban environments encourages a variety of cycling infrastructure, including both on-road and off-road cycling provisions such as cycle lanes and shared use paths. This can be most evident along key commuter routes into a city centre, for example.

When planning a cycle route, look to integrate it with existing (or planned) cycling infrastructure wherever possible, to provide for a seamless and coherent cycling experience. This is especially relevant in managing the cyclist's transition from quiet country roads into or through a more urban environment along the route.

Signage of cycle routes that make up the network will be in accordance with guidelines provided by the NZCT.

Points to note:

- Providing a sense of continuity in the design, standard and signage along a cycle route will enhance the cycling experience.
- Where possible and practical, a cycle route should make use of existing and planned cycling infrastructure, including both on-road and off-road facilities and off-road shared use paths and trails that are suitable for road bikes.

3.7 Stakeholder Commitment & Support

The aim of the NZCT is to not just provide a good cycling route, but to also provide a good cycling experience. Achieving this will require the support of a range of stakeholders across the communities through which the cyclist will travel.

The support and involvement of local cyclists and cycling advocacy groups (where they exist) such as the Cycling Advocates Network, can help to quickly identify the most patronised cycle routes in a region (which are also likely to be the most cycle friendly) as well as routes to avoid or alternative routes around pinch points and other hazards.

As well as being a local authority, every city and district council is also a Road Controlling Authority (RCA) and the New Zealand Transport Agency is the RCA for state highways. RCA's have direct responsibility for maintaining the roads and are key decision-makers regarding any roading improvements or on-road cycling infrastructure that may be required. Many cycle routes will pass through more than one district or region and involve more than one RCA. All proposed cycle routes will require the support of all the relevant RCA(s).

Raising awareness among the residents and businesses located along the cycle route (particularly in more remote areas) and gaining their support will do much to enhance the broader cycling experience for tourists and locals alike.

Points to note:

- Get local cycle enthusiasts involved in the planning and selection of cycling routes.
- Support and commitment from those entities responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the cycle route itself is essential.
- The level of buy-in from the communities through which the cycle route passes can enhance or detract from the broader cycling experience.

4.0 Submitting a Cycle Route for Consideration

Cycle route proposals should be submitted using the NZCT Application Form, available on the NZCT website. Reference to these guidelines and the NZCT's *Cycle Trail Design Guide* will be essential to completing the application form.

Note also that maps attached with the application should be of sufficiently large scale (1:250,000) that the entire route is shown on one A3 sheet. Additional maps may be provided to show key parts of the route in greater detail, such as urban areas. (Short routes of less than 50kms may be accommodated on an A4 sheet.)

4.1 NZCT Contact Details

Please contact the NZCT team (contact details below) if you would like to discuss your proposal or if you have any questions. Proposals can be submitted, in hard and/or electronic form, to:

New Zealand Cycle Trail
Network Expansion Project
Ministry of Economic Development
33 Bowen Street
PO Box 1473
Wellington 6140

Email: nzct@med.govt.nz (enter "Network Expansion Project" in the subject heading)

5.0 Assessing Cycle Route Proposals

Following receipt of a proposal, the NZCT team will make contact with the applicant to discuss the cycle route and if required, arrange a site visit. Each proposal will be assessed on its own merit and how well it aligns with the criteria outlined within these guidelines – this is not a competitive process.

5.1 NZCT Executive Review Group

An Executive Review Group (ERG) comprising senior Government officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and the New Zealand Transport Authority has been established, tasked with reviewing and approving recommendations made by the NZCT Network Expansion Project Team, for cycle routes to be included in the NZCT.

Final approval of cycle routes for inclusion in the NZCT is at the discretion of the ERG.

5.2 Approved NZCT Cycle Routes

Cycle routes that are approved for inclusion in the NZCT will be branded and signposted in accordance with NZCT guidelines.

A partnership agreement will be signed by the NZCT and the relevant Road Controlling Authorities or route owners, who will be responsible for the signage, as well as the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of the cycle route, to ensure it continues to meet the standard required of the NZCT.

While the Great Rides are the flagship of the NZCT in terms of attracting international tourists, the wider network of cycle routes will also play a key role in catering for a wider range of cycling interests and abilities. The NZCT aims to encourage cyclists to experience 'heartland New Zealand', spending more time (and money) in the regions they visit as they travel the country.

The NZCT will be marketed and promoted both domestically and internationally as it seeks to enhance New Zealand's reputation as a tourist destination, with particular appeal to cyclists.

References:

New Zealand Cycle Trail website: www.nzcycletrail.com

The following documents are available to download from the NZCT website:

Cycle Trail Design Guide, prepared for the Ministry of Economic Development by Via Strada Limited, August 2011 (second edition).

New Zealand Cycle Trail Grading Guidelines, Ministry of Economic Development, May 2011.

Other useful references:

Cycle Network and Route Planning Guide, Land Transport Safety Authority, 2004.

Document Control

Revision History:

Version	Date	Author	Description of changes
1.0	11 May 2011	NZCT Network Expansion Project Team	Final Draft
2.0	29 July 2011	NZCT Network Expansion Project Team	Revised for Launch
3.0	09 Sept 2011	NZCT Network Expansion Project Team	Updated Version