

1 May 2014

BIKE TAUPŌ SUBMISSION ON THE TAUPO DISTRICT ANNUAL PLAN 2014/2015

Please find attached a submission from Bike Taupo on the Annual Plan

Please note that representatives from Bike Taupo would like to speak to this submission in Taupo. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Annual Plan, and we look forward to presenting it in Taupō in person.

Yours Sincerely



Rowan Sapsford

Bike Taupo Chairman

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BIKE TAUPO SUBMISSION TO THE TAUPŌ DISTRICT DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2014-15

Introduction:

Bike Taupō is a cycle advocacy group which provides the Taupō community with a voice for cycling. The organization was formalised in 2002 and currently has approximately 2000 members.

To date Bike Taupō has helped create a cycling culture within the district through constructing and maintaining nearly 200km off road tracks, partaking in continuous dialogue with regulatory authorities; promoting cycling and cycle safety and playing an active part in Taupō's growing cycling community.

Cycling is an important part of the Taupō economy. Bike Taupo alone has an asset base worth approximately \$3 million dollars, making Bike Taupo a significant investor in the local community. A survey undertaken in 2012 as part of an economic assessment of cycling in the District, and targeted at those who cycle in Taupō identified that on average each cycling visitor will spend \$1,250 in Taupō on each visit.

One of the resounding responses that was received in this survey when asked what could be included, was safety. Bike Taupō is also very concerned about the safety of cyclists in the Taupō District. This concern is not just limited to road cyclists using our rural roads, but also cyclists in town. If Taupō gets a reputation as an unsafe place to ride it could result in significant economic impacts, not to mention the actual physical harm to residents and visitors. A recent economic assessment of the value of cycling to Taupō, put it at least \$11 million dollars per annum.

Taupo is now an internationally recognised riding destination. In 2012, Taupo received silver level Ride Centre status from the International Mountain Bike Association. Taupo is one of only five silver level ride centers globally and the only one in the Southern hemisphere.

Bike Taupō believes that the safety of all of our road users is an important matter and has been advocating to TDC for nearly ten years on this point. Bike Taupō is disappointed that TDC appears to take a back seat on this issue and let our organization and other groups and individuals take the lead on cycle safety in the District. We note that the TDC website states that *“The Transportation team has the lead role in the delivery of a road safety programme and the walking and cycling network action plan”*. We have seen little evidence of this leadership of late. We would like to see TDC take a more active role in looking after the safety of cyclists and other road users in the District. A similar point was raised in our last submission but we have seen little action in the intervening period.

Economic Development – Destination Great lake Taupō Funding

Bike Taupō supports the continued funding of Destination Great Lake Taupō (DGLT). DGLT provides a very valuable service and brings a lot of people to our District. DGLT has promoted Taupō as a cycling destination which mean more people ride our trails and support local cycling based industries.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Vanessa Freeman and the DGLT team for the proactive and collaborative approach to marketing Taupo as a Cycling Destination. Bike Taupō will continue to work with DGLT and support their work in 2014 and 2015.

Transport - Cycling Strategy

Bike Taupō notes that there is an increase in the annual expenditure on implementing the cycle strategy. Bike Taupō requests more information on what this expenditure is made up of, i.e. what parts of the strategy are being implemented through this spending? The request for this information is two fold. Firstly Bike Taupō wants to ensure that this money is being spent effectively and with relevance, and secondly Bike Taupō would like to work with TDC on how this spending is prioritised and allocated. Collectively Bike Taupō has a representation and access to information that means that we are able to work with TDC on such matter in a proactive and informed matter.

Transport - Cycling Culture

Bike Taupō would like to see priority spending on making the urban areas of the Taupō District safer for cyclists. This includes signage, cycle lanes, better road sweeping, growing easy cycling opportunities (such as the lions walk) information for road users on sharing the road and working with Bike Taupō and other groups to get more people on Bikes. BT would like to see more recreational and commuter cyclists in Taupō Town and strengthen the cycling culture in Taupō to reflect the fact that Taupo is now a world class cycling destination. It is this cycling culture which adds to Taupō as a destination for visitors and as a base for a lot of the events which are held in Taupō. A stronger cycling culture and better cycling infrastructure would also mean that the profile of cycling in Taupō would be greater which would has the potential to reduce accidents.

Bike Taupō's 'Kids Bike Taupō initiative is proving effective with many children in numerous schools taking part. This initiative is growing the cycling base in Taupo meaning that in the future there will potentially be an increase in the number of commuter and leisure cyclists on the streets. Bike Taupō urges TDC to look at what has been done in centers such as Hastings and New Plymouth to see the kind of cycling based improvements that have been made and how these could be made in Taupō. Bike Taupō sees this as a priority for TDC if it wants the District to continue to have cycling as one of its defining activities.

On this basis, Bike Taupo submits that a review of the Councils' Walking and Cycling strategy is in order. Taupo District Council's Walking and Cycling Strategy was adopted in February 2010 and had a focus of making Taupo a cycling friendly District. Since 2010, Taupo has grown significantly as a cycling destination, the current plan does not reflect this and it is questionable whether or not the urban areas are cycle friendly, or whether the targets of the existing strategy have been met or are being monitored. Given the importance of cycling to Taupo, it is our preference that a specific cycling strategy is developed and is drafted to reflect the importance of cycling to the District. Bike Taupo is happy to work with the Council on the revision of this plan and recognises that it has a part to play in making this new strategy work.

Transport - Poihipi Road

Bike Taupō would like to thank TDC for the sections of Poihipi Road that were widened this year. Council staff made the point to us that this was done specifically for Cyclists, but I am sure that there was benefit for other road users who are now using those stretches of road that are safer as a result. In our submission last year Bike Taupō submitted that we would like to see at least \$100k per annum spent on an annual basis beyond 2014 to widen Poihipi Road. This would enable the stretch of Poihipi Road between State Highway 1 and Whangamata Road to be widened so that there are good shoulders for the many cyclists to use this road, and use it safely. Bike Taupō has been advocating TDC on this for nearly ten years and wants to reiterate its observations that the current use (numbers of traffic and type) of Poihipi Road is far greater than what it was designed and built for many years ago.

In making this point, it is important to note that Bike Taupō is an active initiator of the Taupō Road Users Group that is focused on making our rural roads safer for cyclists. This is a collaborative group of which TDC is a member, as well as other road users, including trucking companies, the police and the wider cycling fraternity. Bike Taupō feels that it is important to make this point, as we are not an organisation who sits on our hands and waits for others to resolve matters.

Bike Taupō Funding

Finally, Bike Taupō supports a continuation of the level of funding that Bike Taupō receives from Taupō District Council on an annual basis. This funding is put to good use in the continued development of our world renowned mountain bike trails, our maps and website which assist people to ride in Taupō. The new funding for Kids Bike Taupō has already enabled many

children to learn how to ride bikes in local schools. In the last 12 months the Kids Bike Taupō programme has had **5,000 kids** on bikes from schools in Taupō, Waitahanui, Turangi, Mangakino, Whakamaru and Mokai.

Spa Park to Five Mile Bay Shared Path

Bike Taupō would like to take this opportunity to congratulate TDC for the work that they have done on the shared path between Five Mile Bay and Spa Park. This is a significant asset to the region and provides for an easy grade pathway for cyclists and walkers alike. Bike taupo would like to work with TDC to upgrade the section from the Amphitheatre to Spa park. Bike Taupō is happy to work with the Council in such work and has applied for funding to upgrade the section beneath the Taupō Bungy to make it more accessible to more people. Bike Taupō would like to raise the concept of the construction of a walking and cycling over bridge on the southern side of the Control Gates Bridge to allow walkers and cyclists safe access across the busy road. Such a bridge could be a feature for Taupō and acts as a gateway that could incorporate design elements that show case Taupō as a world class cycling destination.

Financial support for New Mountain Biking Event

The Taupō Mountain Bike Club, with the support of Bike Taupō are planning a new event called the Crater's Multi lap Extravaganza. The event is based on the Day Night Thriller, which was historically was the largest MTB event in the Southern Hemisphere attracting circa 3000 riders. Event Promotions, who ran this event have moved the event to Tokoroa. The Taupō MTB club has the intention to freshen & give the event a new lease of life by way of

- Change the venue from Spa Park to the Craters MTB park
- Market & Brand Craters as a tourism destination
- Use a Secondary Schools championship event
- Market as a corporate teams event/ challenge
- Have the Shuttle operators, Crater's tourism park members, accommodation providers & local bike shops, promoting their businesses by way of stalls at event HQ
- Using the event to showcase Taupō as NZs premium Mountain Biking destination.

In addition the event will be run by the local club meaning any profits go back into mountain biking (including youth development programmes) in Taupō and into the maintenance and enhancement of our mountain biking assets.

Bike Taupō submits that TDC grants \$10,000 per years for 3 years for the establishment of this event by the Taupō Mountain Bike Club.