



Stacey Hitchcock
Transport Group
Dunedin City Council
Dunedin 9054

20 April 2021

Re: Waihola to Dunedin Heartland Ride

Thank you for giving Spokes Dunedin the opportunity to comment on the Dunedin City Council's application for a "Heartland Ride" designation route from Waihola to Dunedin. While Spokes Dunedin is delighted to see the Council working to create a southern access cycling route, we cannot support what is proposed in your application in its current form.

Spokes Dunedin does not believe that your proposal represents a safe, realistic or viable cycling route worthy of any special designation and any such branding would, in our opinion, create unrealistic expectations for any cyclist unfamiliar with the area. Having said that, Spokes Dunedin would strongly encourage the Transport Group to re-visit this application, using it as a base to create a practical plan for a more viable, safe and attractive option.

In developing this application, you are obviously already aware of the three significant factors Spokes Dunedin has identified, which highlight the need for greatly improved southern access:

- Cycling participation is steadily increasing in the area, particularly with the recent introduction of long-range capable e-bikes, and this growth will lead to increasing numbers of local and visiting cyclists using the southern approach to our city.
- Our surrounding territorial neighbours are close to completing significant, purpose-built off-road cycling and walking trails, providing a complete link from Cromwell to Milton, with a further link proposed from Crowell to the extensive Queenstown network already in action. We expect these developments will encourage an increase in cycling visitors through our city as they attempt to traverse from these southern networks to the newly completed and largely off-road 300km Alps2Ocean in North Otago.
- As tourism progressively re-starts over the next few years, it is expected that growth will be impacted by the Government's newly announced environmental

framework for tourism, a framework which will strongly favour low-impact tourism such as cycling. Sport NZ's change in focus to now support active participation is also likely to have a long-term positive impact.

Recognising the importance of this access – and any yet to be considered route to the north of Dunedin – Spokes Dunedin is disappointed to see that this proposal appears to be little more than a branding exercise, using existing, inappropriate roads to create the perception of a cycle trail. Your submission claims that, “[t]his route follows the existing, well used Dunedin Southern Cycle Route to Mosgiel then quiet country roads to Waihola via Outram and links to the Clutha Gold Trail”, and we believe this assertion is misleading, as it gives the impression that this proposal links the Clutha Gold Trail and Dunedin City with a cycle-route when that is simply not correct. All this proposal does is identify roads a cyclist may use to avoid parts of the State Highway network.

Specifically, Spokes Dunedin is concerned that:

- The current Southern Dunedin Cycle Route, as presently designated, is not of the standard needed and should not be considered an acceptable cycle route until the long planned and awaited Tunnels Trail is completed. We understand that a \$28m cost for this project has been identified, but the work does not appear to be programmed in the 2021-31 ten-year plan. A recent Spokes Dunedin committee ride along that route on a pleasant Sunday highlighted the inappropriateness of what is currently available. In over two hours on the route, we encountered only three other cyclists and all those who were in Mosgiel had arrived there using an alternative route. Our investigation also encountered many examples of missing or misleading signage that caused us – as Dunedin locals – confusion as to what route to follow. In addition, there was no actual cycleway, only signage, and the expectation that cyclists share sections of narrow pavement with pedestrians.
- The Heartland Waihola submission identifies the need for two crossing points for SH1 and the need to cross the Taieri River on SH 87 and, while signage is proposed, this is unlikely to make the route safe or acceptable for tourists or families who will be attracted to the opportunity to continue their Clutha Gold experience through to Dunedin.
- The proposal claims that the majority of the route will be along quiet country roads, when it will in fact be along narrow, and often gravel roads, traversing far from the direct route needed to get from Milton to Dunedin. From your documentation we infer that you simply propose to use the existing roads, with no new cycle pathways, and, while traffic counts may be low on many of these roads, the combination of agriculturally based transport and laden cyclists on these roads could not be recommended.

We do appreciate that this response is quite critical for your submission, but we are genuinely concerned that Dunedin is falling further and further behind in the provision of transport services that are other than motor vehicle based. Regrettably, your proposal reinforces Spokes Dunedin's perception of just how far behind our neighbours we are in Dunedin City. While our neighbouring local authorities are completing hundreds of kilometres of purpose-built cycle paths and are enjoying the benefits, we are simply re-branding inappropriate existing roads and adding limited signage in an attempt to replicate their success.

At the very time in history when we must be developing effective plans to mode-shift away from vehicle transport if we are to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, as promised by our city councillors, our Council continues to focus on fossil fuel-based transport in its planning. For example, the Ten-Year Plan identifies six projects totally \$52m *“to get people moving safely and easily round our city”* and of that, \$44.5m is to be spent on automobile transport and only \$7.5m on non-motorised options for pedestrians and cyclists.

Given our joint interest in the need for a southern access to our city, can we conclude our response with an offer to work with the DCC’s Transport Group to investigate options for a safer and more realistic route? We are more than happy to meet with you to discuss our comments in more detail, create a small focus group to workshop alternative proposals, or even provide a representative range of cyclists to field-test any options Spokes Dunedin or your Transport Group agrees are worth further investigation. We would also welcome an opportunity to provide more detailed comments on the improvements needed to the current Southern Cycle Route, for which we await the construction of a purpose-built cycleway.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to working with you to develop effective, non-fossil fuel dependant links between Dunedin and our neighbours to the South.

Yours sincerely,



Katharine Cresswell Riol – Chairperson, Spokes Dunedin



Dr. Devonia Kruimer – Secretary, Spokes Dunedin



Jon Dean – Treasurer, Spokes Dunedin



Lindsay Smith – Board Member, Spokes Dunedin