

1. INTRODUCTION

Most cities have large urban parks for public recreation, or areas of open space on the urban fringe for tramping, bush walks and biking. Wellington has a unique access network, embedded within the city structure and Wellington Town Belt, running out through the suburbs to the Outer Green Belt and beyond into the rural hinterland.

The track network offers benefits for the entire community and caters for a wide range of interests and capabilities.

Environmental benefits

- Promotes community awareness and appreciation of the natural environment.
- Develops public understanding of the principles and value of conservation.
- Promotes walking, cycling and running as viable modes of transport.
- Enriches the experiences of visitors through education and interpretation.

Social benefits

- Contributes to the livability of the community and is part of the local culture.
- Facilitates community interaction and recreation.
- Health benefits.

Recreational benefits

- Opportunities for free, accessible recreational activity for a wide range of the community.
- Increased recreational opportunities for a wide range of the community.
- Opportunities for risk, adventure, remoteness and solitude.

Track users include walkers with limited mobility, wheelchair users, walkers who use tracks for recreation or to access a specific destination, walkers with dogs, family walkers with young children and pushchairs, walkers who want solitude and a natural environment, trampers, runners/joggers, mountain bikers, power prammers (mountain buggy users), family mountain bikers, commuters, tourists, environmental education users, horse riders, and recreational vehicle drivers. Each user group has slightly different requirements and expectations.

1.1 WHAT IS THE OPEN SPACE ACCESS NETWORK?

The open space access network is simply any route that runs through open space. It may be a specifically built road or track, may have evolved from use or have been adapted from a former farm track. The main categories of users are pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle users. This plan bases its classifications around these users.

There are many roads and vehicle tracks in Wellington which are a vital part of the access network and are maintained for reasons other than, or in addition to, recreation access (for example, access to utilities). There are also a number of paper roads

(legally a road but as yet unbuilt) which may have some future significance for access. Roads and vehicle tracks are considered within this plan as part of the access network, however the design and standards of roads and tracks is not included within this document because of the specialist requirements.

Open spaces are the outdoor places around us that have:

ecological values such as plants and animals and the habitats they live in;

recreational values that we appreciate and enjoy including formal and informal sport, and active and passive activities;

landscape values including patterns of landform, scenic beauty and sense of place;

natural heritage values inherent in places with cultural or historic significance.

1.2 HOW DO TRACKS FIT IN

Tracks are a significant part of the Council's *Recreation Strategy*. This plan has as a central theme that recreation and leisure opportunities should be available to people of all ages and abilities. Tracks have a key role in providing many different age groups with a wide variety of opportunities. The Council's open space strategy *Capital Spaces - Open Space Strategy for Wellington Te Whanganui-A-Tara* also refers to tracks as an important component of the city's suburban open space resource.

The key strategic outcomes which tracks meet are:

Outcome 7.1 – Recreation Opportunities

Wellington offers a diverse range and an abundance of quality recreation and leisure activities that are easily accessed and affordable.

Outcome 7.2 – Participation and Health

Increased participation in recreation and leisure activities enhances overall health and wellbeing.

Outcome 5.3 – Open Space Recreation

Wellington's open space, including the coastline, harbour, Town Belt and Outer Green Belt are accessible to all and provide a wide range of recreational opportunities that do not compromise environmental values.

Outcome 4.5 - Destination of Choice

Wellington is a growing destination of choice for international and domestic visitors.

Outcome 8.4 - Transport Sustainability

Transport solutions ensure the wise use of resources and cater for the long term needs of the community.

1.3 THE COUNCIL'S ROLE

The Council has an important role to play in providing a range of recreational opportunities and promoting public health. The access network provides opportunities for all ages, interests and abilities at minimal or no cost. Wellington City Council's *Recreation Strategy* discusses a growing body of research which suggests that by creating choices for transportation and recreation we can effectively address a number of issues confronting our society such as traffic congestion, air quality and other

quality of life issues. Building and supporting active living environments is one way to provide greater opportunities for routine physical activity. Well planned tracks are a great way of promoting active living.

The track network needs to be actively promoted by the city, and publicised to provide users with high quality, accessible information about the network. This will also involve monitoring of use and customer satisfaction by the Council.

1.4 OTHER PROVIDERS

There are a number of other track providers within the greater Wellington region. Some tracks lead onto or cross private land. The Council will continue to work with landowners to facilitate access and assist with managing tracks and their use.

It is important to ensure integration with neighbouring territorial authorities such as Hutt City and Porirua City Council and other providers such as the Department of Conservation and Greater Wellington Regional Council which provide tracks within and bordering the Wellington city district. Tracks which cross boundaries need to be continuous and consistent.

It is acknowledged that around Wellington, the community, with the Council's guidance, has had a huge involvement in track planning, building and maintenance. The Council will continue to support these initiatives and to work with the community to improve access.