

To The Chair and Members of the Nelson City Council Works and Infrastructure Committee  
From Friends of the Maitai  
Date Public Forum on 5 May 2015  
Subject Maitai Shared Pathway Project : Collingwood Street to Nile Street

This is a short public forum presentation on the Maitai Shared Pathway Project from Collingwood Street to Nile Street in the form of an open letter, by Friends of the Maitai.

Summary : We urge the Council to put the draft plans out to public consultation in the City Library and the Nelson Mail so that everyone knows what is proposed before the excavators arrive; no surprises.

=====

Before the Works and Infrastructure Committee meeting on Thursday 12 February, we became aware that there was likely to be a significant report on this project presented to that meeting. We had concerns about the project, but none of our members who had been directly involved with the project until then were able to attend the public forum on that day, so we raised our concerns with you via email. This short presentation today is to thank you in person for deciding to remove that item from the agenda in February while more work was done, and to tell you about our experiences of the project since then.

As we said in our email in February, we have two major concerns with the project :

- 1) The project has had very little consultation and has not been made clearly visible to the public. We were made aware of the detailed designs in December last year. At that time we were told that the first section from Collingwood Street to Bridge Street was already closed to consultation and complete apart from construction, and were only invited to give feedback on the second section from Bridge Street to Nile Street. In working on our feedback, we became aware that there were residents in the first section from Collingwood Street to Bridge Street, that has been referred to as "complete", that had not heard about the work being done on the project, and that almost no-one in the eastern area of the city most directly affected had heard anything of the proposed changes. When shown the detailed designs, most people saw problems that needed to be resolved, and were very surprised and concerned that the project had reached detailed designs without being discussed publically.
- 2) The project has changed completely from the objective given in the Annual Plan, which was stated as "The project is to widen the Maitai riverside path to a minimum of 2.5m wide, with wider sections in busy areas". The Annual Plan objective is very reasonable, because it represents an extension of the path width used between Trafalgar Street and Collingwood Street further up the valley, and it fits with the walking and cycling objectives in the ten year plan. For most people, we believe, this objective signals that the existing pathway at about 1.4m will change to 2.5m, with wider sections in busy areas such as near Riverside pool. At the detailed design level this has been interpreted in a completely different way. The detailed design in December shows a very short length of pathway at 2.5m near Nile Street, and the rest is a combined walk+bike width of 3m or 3.5m or 4m wide. This is a very large change, in many places excessive and completely out of scale with the natural beauty of the area, removes 23 trees, creates a completely separate non-shared cycleway that may or may not be practical or useful, and changes half of Domett Street to one-way. All this under the heading of "widen the riverside path".

After the meeting in February, we were told that the project was placed on hold while staff conducted further consultation and developed a new report. As far as we are aware, neither the further consultation or the new report have happened yet. We were also told that a workshop for all councillors was planned for 28 April in the Council Chamber, and that this was "public excluded" so we would not be able to hear the presentations given, even as observers. After 28 April we were told that the workshop was cancelled at the last minute as Council wished to hear the submissions on the Long Term Plan on this matter prior to holding the workshop. This confused us, because there is no mention of the project in the LTP. We are finding that the project is mostly invisible, and therefore difficult to observe and comment on.

That brings us to this meeting in early May. We are very aware that many people in the community, and the Council, are focussed on the problems that can occur on shared pathways in different parts of Nelson. These raise some difficult issues to be balanced. We believe that any development of the Maitai Shared Pathway between Collingwood Street and Nile Street is a particularly difficult problem, because it involves a shared pathway in a very busy and very beautiful area of riverside park running through the central city, and any mistake made may cause significant damage to a very important and much-loved area. We have seen the draft plans and been very concerned by them. We urge the Council to put the draft plans out to public consultation in the City Library and the Nelson Mail, so that the project can be seen by all the people who live near the area and all the people who travel through it, not just some of the local residents who live very near the riverside path. We believe it is vitally important that changes in an area like this happen in a clear and transparent and open way.

This will mean a pause, but it will help to meet Council objectives, such as providing a leading lifestyle and maintaining our natural environment, and we are certain that the final result will be much better and stronger for it.

David Ayre  
dayre@clear.net.nz  
03-545-6169

Tom Kennedy  
tnak@xtra.co.nz  
03-548-8467

On behalf of Friends of the Maitai