Submission to DCC re 2023 Annual Plan and cycleway development.

The Dunedin Tunnels Trail Trust is pleased to see the Tunnel Trail design plans currently being developed, and look forward to the completed designs being submitted to Waka Kotahi for funding by mid-year.

We want to thank the Council and staff for all the work to date and are pleased to see the trail plans taking shape. As a partner in this project, the Trust is looking forward to continuing our involvement, and linking in Community involvement as and when we can.

We are also pleased to see tenders being called for repairs to the Chain Hills tunnel and are keen to develop this as part of a temporary loop walkway until the full trail can be opened. As part of the development of this area we again urge the Council to retain ownership of the Gladstone Rd property in order to fully develop both the tunnels trail and property into a larger community resource.

To recap, there are currently ***no*** *safe or accessible routes* connecting to the Southern Suburbs of Dunedin. There are ***no*** *safe/off road and accessible riding or walking options* for transport, recreation and wellbeing and increasingly as travel routes for cycling and walking tourists. The current harbour cycleways service a population of approximately 8000 people. The Tunnels trail will service 24,000 people yet has been continually delayed and de-prioritised. The tunnels trail ticks all the criteria for implementing Climate Change initiatives, Active Transport initiatives, better health outcomes, increased recreation for the people of Dunedin, and increasing tourism potential for visitors to the city. By using the two former and now disused rail tunnels, we are creating a more or less horizontal route with minor elevation differences between Mosgiel and Dunedin. The tunnels were built in the 1870’s and will be of unique interest to the public traversing the route.

As the cycleway network around Otago develops and expands, bringing with it tourism and the all-important local community benefits, both economically and health-wise, Dunedin has remained isolated. We need to be able to connect with the rest of Otago as soon as possible, and for the city to also reap the fiscal and non-fiscal benefits that these Share Path Cycleways have brought.

As part of that, the Trust wishes to strongly support the Dunedin Tracks Network Trust and Taieri Trails Group to get the off-road Mosgiel to Waihola trail developed. The current suggestion for cyclists to follow a road-based route is unsafe for individual cyclists and completely unsuitable for family or cycle groups.

In summary, we

* Acknowledge and thank the Council for the efforts to date;
* We ask that this project not been seen as a primarily Waka Kotahi-funded transportation infrastructure (roading) project but obtain funding resources from ORC, MBIE, NZ Cycleway, as well as NZTA, especially with the potential loss of focus on South Island projects and increased risk of a single funding source.
* We ask that the Gladstone Rd property ownership be retained by the Council and made available for development as a Community resource and as an adjunct to the Trail.

The tunnels trail is Dunedin's internal transport corridor between the coast and the Plain, as well as our link to the wider Otago cycleway network.

We do wish to speak on behalf of our submission.

Regards,

Gerard Hyland, on behalf of Dunedin Tunnels Trail Trust:

John Beekhuis, Jane Bruce, Gerard Hyland, Brent Irving, Clare Noakes, Kate Wilson