



MEDIA RELEASE

Ruapehu District Council

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INCREASINGLY BUSY RURAL ROADS REQUIRES CYCLE AWARENESS STRATEGY

With Ruapehu becoming an increasingly popular mountain bike and cycling destination on the back of the development of its two national cycleway trails the Ruapehu District Council (RDC) is implementing a Cycle Awareness Strategy that aims to encourage the shared use of Ruapehu's rural roads in the safest possible environment.

RDC Team Leader Transport, Warren Furner, said that up until now most of Ruapehu's rural roads have had relatively low traffic volumes, however, with the completion and promotion of Ruapehu's two new cycle trails it is expected that the traffic volumes on our rural back roads will increase significantly.

"New Zealand's rural communities that have been lucky enough to be part of the New Zealand Cycleway 'Quick Start' programme that identified seven cycle trails for development are sharing in \$50 million of capital development in their District's," he said.

"Two 'Quick Start' cycle trails were identified for development within the Ruapehu District which has resulted in over \$2.5 million being expended within our communities, with another \$4 million expected to complete our trails over the next 18 months."

"Much of this work has occurred on off road trail construction and building structures, however, more recently existing rural road networks are being prepared to accommodate increases in both cyclists and motorists."

Mr Furner said that the Cycle Awareness Strategy campaign is based on a concept of 'sharing the network' and a series of messages will soon become common place as the Council encourages rural communities and visiting cyclists to 'Share Our Roads with Care, Common Sense and Courtesy'."

"As well as visitor information and awareness messages, Ruapehu locals will be encouraged to develop an awareness that their traditionally quiet rural roads, used only by a few, will now become increasingly used by more visitors," he said.

"The informative campaign has begun with orientation signs being installed over the entire length of Ruatiti Road to the Mangapurua Cycle Trail as part of Ruapehu - Whanganui from the Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail funded works."

"Signs are now being prepared for the Retaruke Valley roads, Hikumutu Road and the new Cycle Trail expansion project roads including the SH 43 Forgotten World Highway to New Plymouth and Ongarue Back Road linking Pureora forest with Taumarunui."

Mr Furner noted that there will always be an increased risk associated with the increased use of our roads and our growing economy.

"Much thought has also been given to finding the right balance where signs and interpretation material has the potential to disrupt our rural landscapes and wilderness settings."

"The National Cycle Trail Signs and Branding Guidelines have been prepared to assist our team find the right balance."

Mr Furner added that next summer will see the first full season of cycle trail access over the newly completed routes.

"Ruapehu communities are set to make the most of the commercial opportunities that the cycle trails offer," he said.

"Ruapehu's cycle trails provide another fantastic opportunity for visitors to the District to experience the best of rural life and landscapes New Zealand has to offer."

"Along with a close association with our people and places we intend to deliver a 100% pure experience."

DAVID HAMMOND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CJH : PRW