



Destination KRL Submission to Wellington City Council

Re: Kilbirnie Connections Proposals

Who is making this submission?

This submission is made on behalf of Destination KRL (KRL Business Association Incorporated), representing the business interests of Kilbirnie, Rongotai, & Lyall Bay.

What does this submission seek?

1. Cycle ways not to be introduced on Onepu Road, due to the negative impact on local businesses.
2. Cycle ways to be planned and introduced on lanes completely separate to the road in Kilbirnie, Rongotai and Lyall Bay, given the flat topography and alternative routes available.
3. If the proposed Kilbirnie Connections plans proceed, clear safety warning signs are installed for all cycle lane and road users, especially at the northern end of Onepu Road.
4. Tree-planting along Onepu Road and other KRL areas is needed to assist with wind mitigation.
5. Public transport services in Kilbirnie, Rongotai and Lyall Bay need immediate improvement.

Is an Oral Submission to WCC requested?

Yes.

Purpose of Destination KRL

Destination KRL represents business owners and operators in Kilbirnie, Rongotai and Lyall Bay, including the interests of our customers and clients, most of whom travel to our area from elsewhere in Wellington. Our purpose is to promote profitable and successful businesses that are well-supported by both the local population and visitors from wider Wellington. Our aim is to create a unique, strong and vibrant community that fosters new development and embraces change. It's a place where we want people to aspire to work, live and play. It's the place our future generations will want to be a part of, a place that sets an international benchmark for achieving balanced living in a 21st century city fringe suburb.

Destination KRL embraces planning for potential population growth in Wellington over the next 30 years, including resident population growth in Kilbirnie, Rongotai and Lyall Bay. The intensification of housing required to house this population increase, combined with Let's Get Wellington Moving's bus rapid transport plans for Wellington's eastern suburbs including a major transport hub in Kilbirnie, create great opportunities for our three suburbs. We embrace a growing area with new and improved transport options to help our people move easily around KRL, as well as to and from other areas of Wellington. We understand the need to reduce carbon emissions and live as sustainably as possible.

Our Topography lends itself to multi-modal transport

One of the many advantages of transiting around Kilbirnie, Rongotai and Lyall Bay is the flat topography. This lends itself to walkability and increased use of cycling, e-bikes and e-scooters in addition to car travel. We know from studies of other cities that have successfully developed increased transport options (walking, cycling, public transport), visitation to town centres and turnover generally improves with increased transit options, as long as it is planned and implemented in the right way.

We are familiar with the various design options WCC considered in formulating the proposed Kilbirnie Connections plans. We understand that with all modes of transport including walking and cycling, people will choose the route that offers the quickest and most direct route. Successful towns and cities don't happen by chance but as a result of good planning based on long-term vision and co-ordinated implementation. Based on overseas experience, KRL is the perfect place for a network of integrated walkways and cycle ways completely separate from our roads. We know alternate modes of transport can be incredibly successful in KRL if they are carefully planned for. Proposing separated cycle ways on the side of existing roads is a short-term plan that does not plan for long-term success, and negatively impacts on KRL's businesses, residents, and visitors to our area.

How Important are Business Interests to WCC in this proposal?

Destination KRL has provided feedback many times to WCC over the last two years advising our opposition to the introduction of cycle ways on existing roads, due to the negative impact on local businesses from loss of vicinity car parks and increased safety concerns. BIDs have been formed by WCC to improve local business. As per WCC's website outline on BIDs, BID businesses "decide and direct what they want in their area. Businesses are represented and have a voice in issues affecting their trading area".

Destination KRL as a WCC BID does not believe WCC has meaningfully listened to the KRL business community in the proposed Kilbirnie Connections plans given the negative impact on local businesses from the proposed street, car park and footpath changes.

Business Impact from loss of Car Parks

Destination KRL exists to ensure the ongoing business success in Kilbirnie, Rongotai and Lyall Bay. The combined negative effects of the Covid-19 epidemic, rising cost of doing business, current economic headwinds and the threat of recession all pose an existential threat for our commercial members. We are wary and oppose any further actions that may impact on the commercial viability of our member businesses. We have seen the introduction of cycle ways in many cities including Wellington has negatively impacted the viability of many businesses due to the removal of car parks denying close proximity of car parking to businesses.

We have a very high proportion of inbound retail visitors to the KRL area accessing by car our large grocery stores and Chemist Warehouse in Kilbirnie, and the 'big-box' retail outlets in the Rongotai retail park. Ongoing accessibility by customers using private vehicles to these businesses is vital. The overwhelming feedback we have received from Destination KRL members is their concern of losing car parks next to or close to their business as part of the proposed Kilbirnie Connections road changes. This is particularly the case at the north end of Onepu Road between Rongotai Road and Coutts Street and for the smaller businesses further south on Onepu Road. Losing car parks off Onepu Road will have a major impact on these businesses.

Our preferred option is cycle lanes are completely separate from the road. Our flat land provides alternatives to cycle lanes on roads and these should be considered as the optimal long term end-goal to strive for. We anticipate cycle and scooter use will increase at a greater rate than other parts of Wellington due to our flat topography. The immediate goal of WCC in introducing alternate travel options should be to introduce and further develop the length and use of off-street cycle lanes in Kilbirnie, Rongotai and Lyall Bay including the Leonie Gill Pathway so they provide a compelling alternative to cycling on road cycle lanes. They need to be multi-user friendly and connect with purposeful locations and destinations; retail areas, schools, and recreation sites.

Let's Get Wellington Moving's plan to include Kilbirnie as a major interchange hub for the eastern suburbs' bus rapid transport route heightens the need to plan for cycle lanes separate to roads, given the expected increase in people using bikes to commute to and from home to the the BRT hub in Kilbirnie.

Safety Needs to be Paramount

If WCC proceeds with the proposed street, car park and footpath changes proposed in Kilbirnie Connections, safety needs to be paramount. The introduction of the separated cycle lanes on both the east and west sides of the northern end of Onepu Road raises major safety concerns for turning traffic. This is an area of very high car, truck and bus traffic turning on and off this section of Onepu Road from both sides of the street. E-bikes now enable cyclists to travel much faster than people have been used to in the past. Clear 'slow speed area' warning signs are needed for crossing traffic in this area, warning both cycle lane users as well as motorists.

The intersections of Tacy & Kemp Streets, Salek & Coutts Streets, and Tirangi Road & Coutts Street have high numbers of large vehicles turning which need more space in the interests of safety.

Weather Mitigation

On top of Wellington's 'variable' weather, Kilbirnie, Rongotai and Lyall Bay are high wind zones which is not conducive to cycling. If this proposal proceeds as is, trees should be planted on the footpaths alongside the cycle lanes, as per Te Whiti Street to reduce the impact of wind on cyclists, assist with storm water run-off, and help beautify the area.

Alternate Transport Options Need to be Improved

A goal of the Kilbirnie Connections proposal is more people making more trips in fewer vehicles. If public transport is being proposed as a viable alternative to private car use it needs to be fast and reliable. Currently the public bus transport available to people travelling to, from and around KRL is neither. In May 2019 Metlink made a presentation to the Kilbirnie, Rongotai & Lyall Bay Residents Association acknowledging there were ongoing problems with late and cancelled services, and these issues would be addressed by the end of 2019. It is now four years later and these major issues preventing more uptake of public transit persist. For business success we need a fast and reliable public transport service that makes travelling to and from Kilbirnie a pleasure, not an ordeal. This needs WCC and Greater Wellington's heightened attention given the lack of progress over the last four years.

Thank you,

Steve Walters,
General Manager, Destination KRL
29 March 2023