

Making Island Bay streets safer

Public interest in Wellington's growing network of bike lanes has always been high. As a new type of infrastructure for Wellington City, the crucial questions have always been how well will they be used, are they value for money, and most importantly of all - are they safe.

As more lanes are rolled out across the city, we can answer these questions with precise and increasingly real time data. One data source is Waka Kotahi NZTA's Crash Analytics System (CAS), which is used by Council staff to monitor the ongoing safety of city roads – including bike lanes.



Children riding bikes along a Kilbirnie bike lane

Between 2016 and 2022, CAS data shows:

- 12 people on bikes were involved in crashes along The Parade
- Over half of them occurred where there was no bike lane, at the shopping area and at intersections.
- Since 2022 when a range of safety improvements were made, there has been only a single non-injury crash reported through CAS.

The Island Bay bike lane was the first kerbside bike lane built in Wellington. The original low-cost design put car parking between the bike lane and the traffic lane. After the lane was installed in 2014 several problems were identified. One of these was that a focus on keeping as much parking as possible in line with resident requests was obstructing sightlines around driveways and side streets, which was contributing to bike crashes.

In 2016, a new design was approved by the Council following a co-design process with the community, but the eventual design came in at double the budget and was never built.

Between 2016 and 2022, CAS data shows 12 crashes involving cars and bikes along this stretch of road, although over half of them occurred at the shopping area and at intersections where there was no bike lane. In 2022, we installed a range of lower cost safety improvements that included removing parking which was blocking sightlines around driveways and side streets, installing concrete separators, and installing bike

paths through the shopping centre that are part of the upgrade under way now. Since 2022, there has been only a single non-injury crash reported through CAS.

We already know that Wellington City's bike lane programme is producing some of the cheapest transport infrastructure around. By working within the existing road space, using fast to install materials, and adaptable designs on some routes, we can keep costs low, while using real time feedback to adapt and improve as we go. The expected cost of the bike network is less than one per cent of the City Council's operational budget over the next 10 years (0.99%). To put this in perspective, nearly a third (29%) of the entire City Council budget over the same period is going towards water-related costs.

It was always planned that the bike connection in Island Bay would form part of a connection from the south coast to the city. By the end of the year that will be a reality. The Island Bay bike lanes will be connected with the rest of Wellington's bike network, and we'll start to see data on how many people use the completed route.

Results from already finished routes, such as the city to Botanic Garden route, and the Newtown to city route show that numbers of people using these routes have increased significantly, and so has safety for people on bikes.

Data also shows that it's not only people on bikes benefiting from the street changes. The completed routes are also providing benefits for pedestrians by attracting e-scooters off footpaths, and incorporating new and improved road crossings. We're seeing more children and women using bikes and scooters along the routes, and an increase in bus passengers as well. On uphill routes, people driving are also less likely to be held up behind people on bikes.

Goals of the city's bike network programme include increasing low carbon journeys, improving real and perceived user safety, increasing the diversity of people biking and using other forms of micromobility. It's early days, but according to the evidence, these goals are being achieved.