

Cycling consultation review

Auckland Regional Transport Authority

Background

- Workshop hosted by ARTA Dec 2006
- A number of the obstacles to the Regional Cycle Network revolved around consultation.
- ARTA commissioned this study on behalf of the Regional Walking and Cycling Group
- Wanted to better understand how consultation is currently carried out in the region, and to identify opportunities for improvement.

Background

- Some issues around:
 - Inconsistency
 - Solution degradation
 - Damage to public relations
 - Community angst
 - Political will

Scope

- Eight projects were selected across the region
 1. Lake Road, North Shore
 2. Hurstmere Road, North Shore
 3. Mt Albert Road, Auckland
 4. Onehunga cycleway, Auckland
 5. Twin Streams, Waitakere
 6. Great South Road, Manukau
 7. Buckland Road, Manukau
 8. Broadlands Bridge, Rodney

Approach

- Mainly individual interviews
- 20 people across the projects, including staff, elected representatives and affected residents and business owners
- Also talked with Cycle Action Auckland
- Tried to interview the media, but couldn't find anyone interested in taking part



Key outcomes

- A review of the consultation practices across the region
- A set of guidelines on how to consult on cycling projects
- A formal “best practice” process for consultation within the transport team
- Some frequently asked questions and their responses

Summary of results

Overall

- On the whole the region consults fairly well on cycling projects
- However, there are some areas in which they could improve
- Five key improvements to the way councils consult:
 1. Start the consultation earlier in the process so local residents do not see the project as a *fait accompli*
 2. Be more consistent in the approach and techniques used
 3. Provide additional consultation resource and expertise to projects
 4. Involve decision-makers (particularly local politicians) earlier and seek their guidance and support in principle before continuing
 5. Work harder at the post-consultation communication



Recommendations

Recommendations

- New staff should be trained on consultation. Existing staff should attend a refresher course at least once a year. The focus of these sessions should be practical rather than theoretical
- If external agencies are used for consultation, they should conform to the internal process developed by your council. They should not be potential designers or implementers – it is better to have them completely independent and removed from the project
- All projects should have a consultation plan (and a clearly identified decision-statement)
- Consult on a problem, rather than a solution (where possible and appropriate)

Recommendations

- Set aside extra time in a project timeline to plan and conduct consultation properly
- Provide additional consultation resource to the transport team. This could be in the form of:
 - Further training for existing staff (in the form of coaching on specific projects)
 - The appointment of a consultation manager (or the creation of this role for an existing staff member). Best if organisation-wide
 - Development of a preferred supplier relationship with an external supplier where advice is readily available

Recommendations

- Review or develop guidelines in a number of areas:
 - At what level and with whom consultation should be carried out (use examples of successful case-studies)
 - What should form part of a consultation plan
 - What techniques to use during the consultation (with practical suggestions on how to organise them)
 - How and when elected representatives should be involved in the project
 - How to assess the results of consultation, and what to put in the consultation report (and to what depth the results should be analysed)
- Involve decision-makers as early as possible in a project. Get approval of the consultation plan. Encourage attendance at consultation events and get feedback on the consultation report

Recommendations

- Use electronic consultation more often
- Gather email addresses as standard practice on any submission form
- Standardise what is collected during consultation
- Use signs on location to inform passers-by and solicit their feedback
- Send letters of acknowledgement to all people who made submissions

Recommendations

- Communicate the decision to all stakeholders, not just those who made a submission
- Place the decision made on LIMs so that future purchasers of that property could see what is intended ***
- Review your consultation policies to bring them further in line with the LGA (2002) and IAP2 guidelines
- Work with other groups across the organisation to improve processes and communication within each council
- Review the delegated decision-making authorities (especially at community board level) then clarify and communicate

Suggested process

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Inform the consultation co-ordinator or manager of the project and seek their advice and input throughout the project's lifespan



Identify the decision to be made and how the public could contribute to it. Be clear on whether you are consulting on a solution or a problem, and the reasons why



Start identifying stakeholders, both external and internal



Assess budgets and the timeline as they will have an impact on the next stage



Draft a communication and consultation plan in conjunction with the communications team



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Suggested process

Assemble an internal team to work on the project. Include communications and administration staff, planners, implementers and managers. Get their input



Identify who is the decision-maker and ensure they are comfortable with the decision statement, level of public participation (IAP2 Spectrum) and techniques being considered



Finalise the process of identifying the stakeholders in the project



Finalise the communications and consultation plan following internal and decision-maker feedback



Implement the plan



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Suggested process

Once the consultation period is concluded, acknowledge all who participated in the process with a thank you letter



After decision, communicate to all affected parties (not just people who made submissions) what the decision was and how participation affected it



Identify the properties affected by the decision and place a statement on the LIM to this effect, with a likely implementation date



Implement the project



Remove the statement from the LIM



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