

Infrastructure Committee

23 November 2023

Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [1]

Department: Property & Infrastructure

Title | Taitara: Frankton Track Surfacing

Purpose of the Report | Te Take mō te Pūroko

The purpose of this report is to (a) provide Committee members with the results of the 2023 Frankton Track Surfacing Trial, (b) present the advantages and disadvantages of a sealed or unsealed surface for the Frankton Track, and (c) seek the Committee's direction on the preferred surfacing treatment to be implemented by Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) officers.

Recommendation | Kā Tūtohuka

That the Infrastructure Committee:

1. **Note** the contents of this report; and
2. **Endorse** that, when QLDC undertakes works to install a new wastewater rising main along the Frankton Track, the surface of the Frankton Track be reinstated with crushed AP20 gravel and crusher dust; and
3. **Advise** whether the section of the Frankton Track between RP4.616 and RP4.227, where there is no footpath available on State Highway 6A, should be finished in Grade 4/6 chipseal to provide an uninterrupted sealed pathway between Frankton and Queenstown.

Prepared by:



Giulio Chapman-Olla
Project Manager
Property & Infrastructure
19 October 2023



Jesse Taylor
Investment Advisory Manager
Property & Infrastructure
19 October 2023

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Tony Avery
General Manager
Property & Infrastructure
25 October 2023

Context | Horopaki

Whakatipu Active Travel Network Single Stage Business Case

1. In 2019, the Way To Go partnership developed the Whakatipu Active Travel Network Single Stage Business Case (“the business case”).¹ The business case defined various routes to be upgraded or constructed in order to form an integrated, appealing, and safe active travel network within the Whakatipu Basin. The business case has been approved by Council.
2. The business case identified the need for a primary commuter route between Frankton and Queenstown. A range of alignments were analysed, with upgrades to the existing Frankton Track (“the Track”) favoured as the preferred option primarily due to the Track’s separation from the road and its connectivity to the established trail network. Upgrading the Track was also estimated to be the lowest cost option to construct. In accordance with Waka Kotahi’s specification for primary active travel routes, the business case envisaged the Track would be sealed. The intention to seal the track was also signalled via the Queenstown Integrated Transport Strategy and Town Centre Masterplan.

Alignment of Frankton Track active travel and wastewater conveyancing upgrades

3. In recent years, planning for increased wastewater conveyancing capacity between Queenstown and Frankton to cater for growing demand on the network has advanced. A new wastewater rising main is planned for construction along the Track, running in parallel to the existing wastewater gravity main.
4. Due to the synergies between the planned wastewater upgrades and active travel improvements along the Track, the two initiatives have been combined into a single project to leverage design, construction, and cost efficiencies (herewith referred to as “the project”). The project will deliver a new wastewater pipeline between the Cecil Road manhole and Frankton Beach wastewater pump station, widen the Track where possible, improve stormwater management arrangements, create pause-points for users, and provide way-finding signage.

Project timing, surfacing trial, and survey of user surfacing preferences

5. The project is currently in detailed design stage, with construction anticipated to commence in 2025.² A trench within the Track will be created for the wastewater pipeline; to inform surface reinstatement specifications, QLDC sought to engage with the Track’s users on their preferred surfacing treatment.
6. Between March and May 2023, QLDC conducted a surfacing trial and survey. The trial provided four different surfacing options for users to consider; three chipseal finishes as well as the unbound gravel status quo.

¹ Way to Go is a partnership of Queenstown Lakes District Council, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, and Otago Regional Council.

² Estimated construction timing is subject to securing necessary planning permissions. Construction may commence earlier or later depending on how long this process takes; 2025 represents a most likely programme.

7. Key reasons for conducting the trial:

- a) Previous engagement exercises regarding the surfacing treatment indicated the community did not have a clear preference for a sealed or unsealed surface. The trial provided an opportunity to see whether community interest and sentiment had shifted, and to give interested parties a tangible and genuine opportunity to influence the project's outcomes.
- b) To date, Waka Kotahi has not confirmed funding assistance for the project, and accordingly there is no associated funding requirement to seal the Track. On the basis that QLDC will fully fund the project, consideration needs to be given as to whether a sealed surface is a local expenditure priority.
- c) The performance of the trial surface will validate whether the existing surface (AP20 gravel and crusher dust) can be sealed effectively without upgrading the basecourse to a full roading standard; the performance results will influence how surfacing projects are designed across the network.³

Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

Survey results

8. QLDC received 1,232 responses to the surfacing trial survey:

- a) 1,179 respondents (96%) preferred an unsealed surface.
- b) 53 respondents (4%) preferred a sealed surface, favouring a grade 4/6 chipseal finish.
- c) Due to a mechanical failure and unfavourable weather conditions, a notable period of time elapsed between the survey's launch and installation of the trial surfaces. As a consequence, 1,109 respondents (90%) provided feedback before the contractor had laid the seal.

9. Many respondents provided commentary to support their surfacing preference.⁴ Analysis of the feedback has identified some key themes:

- a) 307 respondents (25%) shared concerns around general Council expenditure levels and/or priorities for expenditure.
- b) 179 respondents (15%) raised concerns around potential ice hazards during winter.
- c) 92 respondents (7%) preferred an unsealed surface underfoot when running.
- d) 73 respondents (6%) indicated that an unsealed surface was more suited to the natural environs, supporting users to feel a connection to nature.
- e) 57 respondents (5%) signalled the formation of a Jacks Point to Frankton active travel route should be given higher relative priority.⁵

³ A range of surfacing treatments (e.g. concrete, asphalt, chipseal, gravel) are used across the network, informed by the respective asset's proximity to urban areas, surrounding natural environs, topography, and propensity to freeze.

⁴ Similar themes were echoed via social media sentiment; however, comments made on social media have not been analysed or included in the results.

⁵ The Jacks Point to Frankton active travel route is to be funded and delivered by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.

Options

10. This report identifies and assesses the following reasonably practicable options for assessing the matter as required by section 77 of the Local Government Act 2002.

11. **Option 1 Reinstate the Frankton Track surface with crushed AP20 gravel and crusher dust**

Reinstatement of the Track with crushed AP20 gravel and crusher dust is estimated to cost approximately \$600k (based on the rates obtained in a recent comparable tender).

Advantages:

- Aesthetically suited to the surrounding natural environs, providing a more recreational-type experience for users and consistency with the balance of the Queenstown Trail's surfacing.
- No additional upfront capital expenditure required during a fiscally constrained period.
- Consistency with the majority of feedback received during the surfacing trial period.
- May deter some modalities and users, helping to manage overall usage volumes and the associated risk of user conflicts.
- Maintains the current speed environment.

Disadvantages:

- The Track will not meet the standards defined for a primary commuter route which are intended to provide a safe, accessible, and appealing alternative to vehicular travel. This may compromise the full realisation of benefits anticipated in the Whakatipu Active Travel Network business case.
- Does not provide a surface that is smooth and compatible with all modes of active travel, in particular limiting the accessibility and appeal for users with mobility impairments and commuters that do not use a trail/mountain bike.
- Relative to a sealed surface, an unsealed surface is more susceptible to scour and surface damage, resulting in more regular maintenance.
- An unsealed surface provides limited opportunity to introduce calming measures to assist in the safe management of speed and reduce the risk of user conflicts.
- Inconsistency with Council's approval of the Whakatipu Active Travel Network Single Stage business case which specifies a sealed surface for the Track; however, it is noted that the option to seal the Track in future remains available to Council.

Option 1 – possible scope addition

There is a section of State Highway 6A between RP4.616 and RP4.227 (roughly described as being between 764 Frankton Road and the Perkins Road intersection) that does not have a footpath; users are instead directed onto the Track which provides a connection between the two footpath terminals (Fig.1 and Fig. 2 refer). This section of the Track which serves as the alternative to the footpath could be sealed as a scope addition to Option 1, providing a complete alternative for users who prefer or require a sealed surface. Sealing this section of the Track is estimated to cost approximately \$35k (based on recent comparable tender rates).

Figure 1



Figure 2



12. Option 2 Reinstate the Frankton Track surface with a grade 4/6 chipseal

Reinstatement of the Track with a grade 4/6 chipseal is estimated to cost between \$1million (m) - \$1.3m (based on the rates obtained in a recent comparable tender), including a second coat seal which is usually applied within one year of the first coat seal. This represents an estimated net sealing cost of between \$400k - \$700k. The final cost of this option will be determined when the extent of basecourse preparation required is confirmed; the performance of the trial seal surfaces will be monitored until the project nears construction, at which point the appropriate basecourse standard will be selected. This option should assume the upper end of the estimated cost bracket for capital budgeting and decision-making purposes.

Advantages:

- An accessible, purpose-designed primary active travel route will be established between Frankton and Queenstown, supporting the realisation of benefits identified in the Whakatipu Active Travel Network business case, and generally facilitating QLDC's desire to deliver genuine and attractive alternatives to vehicular travel.

- Provides a smooth and clean surface that is compatible with all active travel modalities (greatest equity of access). Of note, this option promotes QLDC's Policy Statement that 'QLDC will respond to the needs of disabled people living in and visiting our district, with a focus on removing barriers to their full participation in our community'.⁶
- A sealed surface is more resilient to scour and moisture ingress, reducing the amount of regular maintenance required relative to an unsealed surface.
- Enables more effective use of calming measures (e.g. separation lines, surface texture) to manage the safety risks associated with higher speed modalities (e.g. e-bikes) and user conflicts as utilisation of the Track increases with population and visitor growth.
- Completing the work as part of the project represents the most cost-effective and least-disruptive time to seal the Track.
- Consistent with Council's approval of the Whakatipu Active Travel Network business case which specifies a sealed surface for the Track.

Disadvantages:

- Inconsistency with the majority of feedback received during the surfacing trial period.
- Requires more upfront capital when compared to reinstatement to an unsealed surface.
- The smooth surface may contribute to an increased speed environment along the Track; however, it should be noted that the sealed surface also provides for calming measures to mitigate increased speed risks.
- If increased icing is experienced in winter, an anti-icing regime (Calcium Magnesium Acetate) will need to be introduced.
- Will deliver a more 'urban feel' when compared to an unsealed surface; however, relative to other surfacing treatments such as asphalt and concrete, chipseal offers a natural aesthetic that blends well with the surrounding environs.

13. **This report recommends Option 1** for addressing the matter because it gives regard to the feedback received through the surfacing trial, does not increase the demand for capital expenditure during a fiscally constrained period, and maintains the option to seal the Track in future if required.

⁶ [QLDC Disability Policy \(2018\)](#)

Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki

Significance and Engagement | Te Whakamahi I kā Whakaaro Hiraka

14. This matter is of low significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.
- The cost and level of service impacts of the recommended option are relatively low and will not compromise QLDC's ability to deliver core functions, meet service levels, or fulfil previously resolved commitments.
 - Although a decision to not seal the Track may be considered inconsistent with Council's approval of the Whakatipu Active Travel Network business case, the recommended option does not preclude full sealing of the Track at a later date.
 - Irrespective of the surfacing treatment, the project will deliver a range of active travel enhancements (e.g. widening, pause points) that are consistent with QLDC's aspirations for a safe and desirable active travel network.
15. The persons who are directly affected by, or interested in, this matter are current and potential users of the Frankton Track. The persons who are indirectly affected by, or interested in, this matter are Whakatipu residents and ratepayers due to the funding arrangements for the project.
16. Extensive engagement on the matter of sealing the Track and wider active travel network has occurred. Engagements of note include:
- 2019 Whakatipu Way to Go: the community was asked if there were specific tracks that should be sealed in asphalt or gravel. The summary of feedback indicated that lakeside trails should remain unsealed, while commuter routes should be sealed. The Track is both a lakeside trail and a commuter route.
 - 2021 Whakatipu Active Travel Network pre-implementation engagement: the community was asked specifically whether sealing the Track would make them more likely to use it for commuting. Feedback was split relatively evenly between those in favour of sealing, those against, and those that were neutral on the matter.
 - 2023 Frankton Track Surfacing Trial: four physical surfacing options were provided on the Track with associated signage and QR codes. Users were asked to provide feedback via QLDC's Let's Talk platform. The results of this survey are discussed earlier in this Report.

Māori Consultation | Iwi Rūnaka

17. QLDC has been in regular consultation with iwi (via Aukaha and Te Ao Marama Inc) regarding this project and the wider Whakatipu Active Travel Network. No concerns or comments have been raised regarding the surfacing treatment of the Track.

Risk and Mitigations | Kā Raru Tūpono me kā Whakamaurutaka

18. This matter relates to the Strategic/Political/Reputation risk category. It is associated with RISK10005 Ineffective planning for community services or facilities and RISK10006 Ineffective

planning for property and infrastructure within the QLDC Risk Register. These risks have been assessed as having a moderate residual risk rating.

19. The approval of the recommended option will support the Council by allowing us to retain the risk at its current level. This shall be achieved by This is because, even without a sealed surface, the project will deliver many active travel orientated improvements to the Track, and does not preclude the sealing of the Track in future.

Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

20. The project (referred to in planning documents as ‘CBD to Frankton Conveyance (WW)’ has an approved adjusted budget of \$35.72m. Based on the most recent cost estimates produced for the project, the approved budget is expected to be sufficient to meet the costs associated with all of the options presented in this report. No material increase in operating expenditure is anticipated beyond what is already provisioned to maintain the Track in its current state.

Council Effects and Views | Kā Whakaaweawe me kā Tirohaka a te Kaunihera

21. The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:
- a) **2021-2031 Ten Year Plan.** This Plan acknowledges ‘active travel is an important part of an accessible and safe [transport] network’, identifies connectivity between Frankton and Queenstown as a key priority for active transport over the ten-year period, and included funding for the following:
 - Detailed design of routes within the Whakatipu Active Travel Network QLDC has responsibility for providing in accordance with the business case.
 - Increased wastewater conveyancing capacity between Queenstown and Frankton (i.e. the project that requires reinstatement of the Frankton Track, and will deliver improvements to the Track through the likes of widening, pause points, and stormwater management upgrades).
 - b) Council has previously provided support for the development of the Whakatipu Active Travel Network through the following key documents:
 - **Whakatipu Active Travel Network Single Stage Business Case.** This Way To Go business case defines the preferred routes, funding, and implementation arrangements for the Whakatipu Active Travel Network, including the Frankton Track as a primary commuter route.
 - **Queenstown Town Centre Masterplan and Integrated Transport Programme Business Case.** These documents define an interdependent, long-term investment programme for the optimisation of the Queenstown to Frankton transport network, and include the intention to develop the Whakatipu Active Travel Network in accordance with the Whakatipu Active Travel Network Single Stage Business Case.

- **‘Better Ways To Go’ Mode Shift Plan.** This Plan puts emphasis on completing and enhancing existing active travel routes, providing new routes, and integrating those routes with Queenstown Trails’ growing network.
 - c) **Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-2025.** This Plan identifies the provision of active travel assets as a contributory action for achieving the outcome that ‘our transport system is low emission and better connected’. The Climate and Biodiversity Plan also identifies that QLDC will ‘minimise the embodied carbon in the design and construction of QLDC buildings and infrastructure’. Although not quantified, it is expected that a chipseal surface will have much higher embodied carbon than a crushed gravel surface. This is because the chipseal surface requires both gravel and bitumen, the latter of which is tanked into New Zealand from Asia.
 - d) **Disability Policy 2018.** This Policy recognises that there are barriers ‘that make it difficult – or sometimes impossible – for disabled people to fully participate in life’. The Policy recognises physical and architectural elements as one type of barrier that exists, and sets out a Policy Statement that QLDC ‘will respond to the needs of disabled people living and visiting our district with a focus on removing barriers to their full participation in the community’. The options discussed in this Report identify that a sealed surface provides greater equity of access to all potential users of the Track.
22. The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the above noted policies on the basis that the project, irrespective of surfacing treatment, will deliver active travel improvements to the Track. While reinstatement with a gravel surface does not fully realise the benefits anticipated in the above noted strategies and policies, the option to seal the Track in future is retained.

Local Government Act 2002 Purpose Provisions | Te Whakatureture 2002 o te Kāwanataka ā-Kiaka

23. The recommended option:

Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2022 states the purpose of local government is (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities and (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future. The Track’s potential surfacing treatment has been extensively consulted on with the community. The recommended surfacing treatment gives regard to the community’s feedback on the matter without precluding the decision to seal by a future Council. It also reflects the lowest cost reinstatement option, reflecting the broader cost pressures presently being experienced by Council and within the community. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act.

24. The recommended option:

- a) can be implemented through current funding under the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan,
- b) is consistent with the Council's plans and policies, and
- c) would not significantly alter the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.