

New Zealand Transport Agency

A deeper understanding of bikelash

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NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY
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Empathy



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Introduction

The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) desires a deeper understanding of bikelash and potential opportunities to mitigate it.

The New Zealand Transport Agency is currently dealing with an issue which can hinder the successful delivery of cycleway projects - bikelash. Bikelash is defined as the disproportionate negative reaction within communities to cycleway projects. NZTA seeks a deeper understanding of what causes bikelash and opportunities to combat it.

There's often a small number of people within communities who are strongly for cycleways, as well as those strongly against them. This leaves a large number of people in the middle whose opinions could be swayed either towards or away from supporting these cycleway projects. We decided to call these people swing voters.

**How might we better understand 'swing voters'? What drives their behaviours?
How might we best influence their attitudes in a positive manner towards cycleways?**

NZTA asked Empathy to help their communications team better understand the causes of bikelash. Empathy gathered insights from urban New Zealand communities and identified opportunities to help shape the design of NZTA's 2017/2018 communications plan, and the approach local councils take to cycleway projects. To solve this design challenge, Empathy used a human-centred design process.

A range of qualitative research activities informed Empathy's process. The people we spoke to inspired all opportunities and recommendations.

This report outlines Empathy's findings and introduces high-level recommendations for NZTA and local councils to explore.

The key market segment

You can't always stop bikelash, but you can reduce it.

Bikelash is a complex and challenging problem. It is especially difficult to address in New Zealand given the car-dominant culture that's so engrained in who we are as a nation. We believe the key to successfully implemented cycleways is with swing voters.

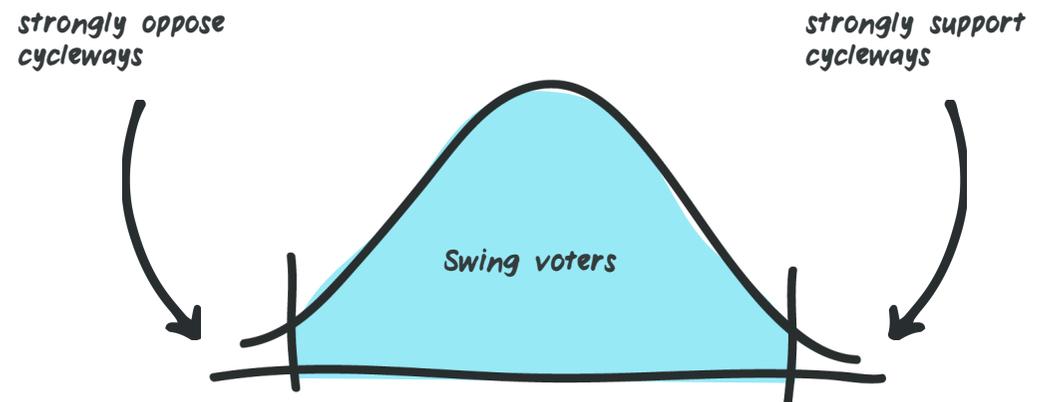
Swing voter support is essential to combat bikelash.

Some people are opposed to cycleways, no matter what. These are the people who are frequently fighting against local councils. Our research didn't focus on the strongly opposed.

We also steered away from the people at the other end of the spectrum - cycle advocates, who are already very supportive towards the need for cycleways.

We focused on people in the middle who don't have strong opinions about cycleways. These people aren't directly affected by a cycleway and could be swayed to either support or reject such projects.

We wanted to learn what drives these people to take action positively or negatively towards a cycleway.



Executive summary

Mitigating bikelash starts by focussing on building trust - not cycleways.

Research activities

To understand bikelash, it was critical for us to gather information from NZTA, current cycleway experts, and swing voters in the field. We connected with:

- The NZTA cycleway delivery team.
- Two local council cycleway project managers in Nelson and Christchurch.
- Six swing voters in Auckland.
- Six swing voters in Hamilton.
- Six swing voters in Tauranga.
- Six swing voters in Nelson.

Key insights

Fieldwork uncovered six key insights that shed light on why bikelash is happening in urban communities.

1. **Majority rules** - People don't agree with decisions that negatively impact the majority.
2. **Perceptions override reality** - An individual's perceived reality has a higher weighting than any information you tell them is true.
3. **Personal connection drives action** - People get involved because they have a connection to something or someone they care about.
4. **It's bigger than cycling or cyclists** - Focusing on cycling or cyclists is seen as giving priority to one group over another.
5. **Not connected, not engaged** - To build positive engagement, you need to foster personal connection.
6. **Without trust, you have nothing** - Lack of trust is at the heart of all community backlash. You won't get very far without it.

Key opportunities

Swing voters' pain-points and frustrations can be accounted for in one word, untrusting. We have identified three key ingredients for NZTA and councils to best mitigate bikelash. They centre on fostering trust in the community and strengthening reputations.

- **Put the community at the heart of what you do** - Stay focused on serving and listening to all people in the community. It's about showing you care for them.
- **Be transparent** - Increased transparency gives swing voters confidence in your expertise and your ability to make the best decisions for their community.
- **Build positive momentum for the future** - The best way to weather the storms is to have a well established and deeply trusted reputation.

What we did

Our process

We led a qualitative insight project aimed at deeply understanding swing voters to help inform NZTA's communications plan on how to best reduce bikelash.

Understand the business context

We started by getting to know the New Zealand Transport Agency – their journey, current situation and goals. We also got to learn from NZTA and other experts about their viewpoints on community bikelash.

To do this, we:

- attended a NZTA business context workshop and follow-up sessions
- spoke with another external organisation who is researching bikelash
- reviewed various internal and external documents supplied by NZTA.

To round out our understanding of bikelash, we continued our background research and learned about the global and New Zealand context.

This included:

- having conversations with subject matter experts within Empathy
- undertaking desk research
- having conversations with local council project managers who have worked on cycleway projects.

Gain empathy

Once we understood the context, we set out to understand NZTA's target audience - swing voters.

We know people's wants, beliefs, barriers, and behaviours all shape the way they engage with cycleway projects. A range of qualitative research methods helped us uncover these insights. These methods included visiting people in their homes, communities, and many in-depth conversations. Details of our research activities are on the next page.

We analysed our fieldwork learnings and isolated important themes and patterns relating to the causes of bikelash. Checking these themes against what NZTA already knew about bikelash ensured that we got a thorough picture of a range of views.

Create strategic recommendations

Finally we brought all this together to create strategic recommendations valuable to both NZTA and local councils. These recommendations are intended to provide high-level principles and understanding that help inform specific actions. They are not meant to be detailed directions or specific action steps. However, we anticipate specific implementation plans for initiatives will be based on these identified recommendations.

Research activities

What we did

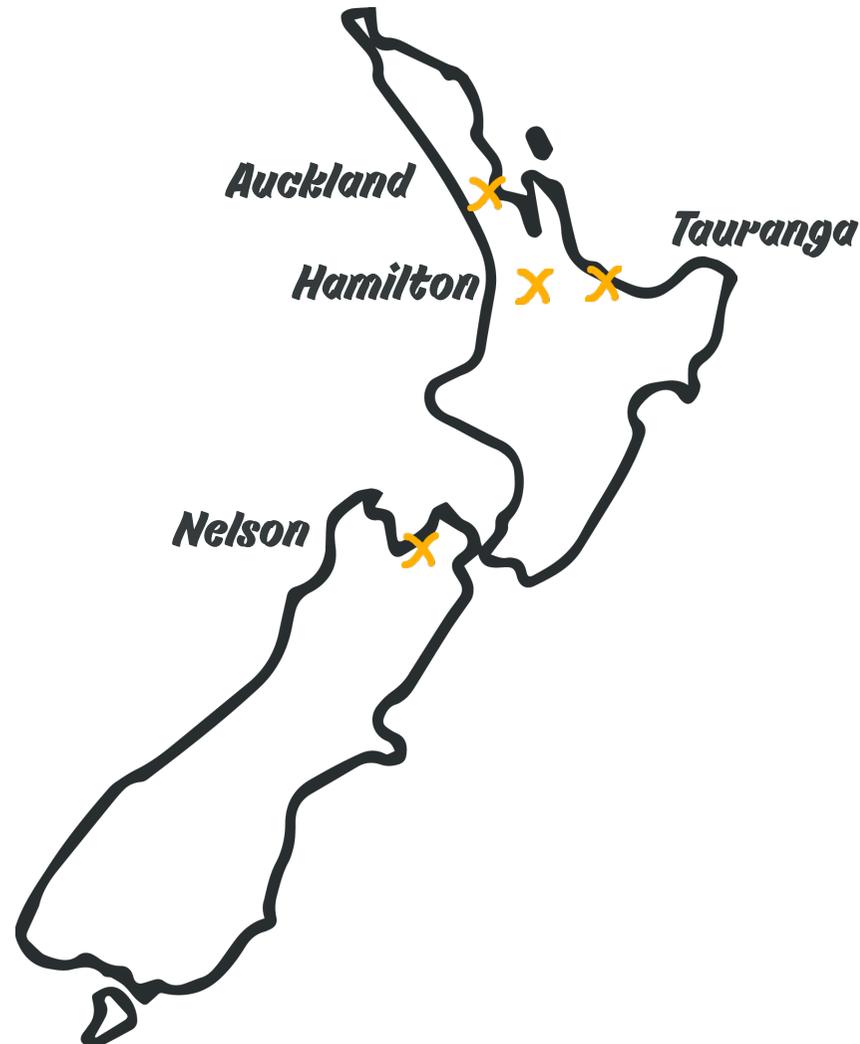
Before we met with people, we crafted field and conversation guides to help us fully understand what information we wanted to gather.

Empathy spoke to 24 people across four of New Zealand's urban communities: Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, and Nelson.

We undertook:

- 12 two hour one-to-one deep-dive conversations (three in each location)
- 12 one hour one-to-one conversations (three in each location)

To round out our understanding, and to learn from local councils' experiences, we spoke to two local council project managers. One from Christchurch, the other from Nelson.



Research activities

To ensure we spoke to a wide range of swing voters, we set specific recruitment criteria.

We recruited a diverse set of participants to ensure well-rounded exposure.

We recruited 24 swing voters to gather a broad range of perspectives from the community.

We sought people who made various transportation choices for a variety of reasons. We recruited people who were engaged within their communities at all sorts of levels. We wanted people who were both likely and not likely to become engaged. We avoided talking to people who claimed to be 'highly likely' to get involved in a community issue, as they are unlikely to be swing voters.

We spoke to people from all sorts of life stages, who would have varying perspectives on the changes around them.

We gathered stories about how people live, travel, and get involved in their local communities. We focused on big community changes people have witnessed, to uncover emotional and belief systems.

Participant mix:

Transport methods (the ways swing voters get around in a typical week):

- 7 x pushbike
- 9 x car only
- 8 x car plus alternative mode

Community involvement levels (how likely would a swing voter get involved in their community):

- 8 x likely
- 7 x maybe
- 9 x not likely

Life stages:

- 6 x no kids
- 6 x with kids
- 12 x empty nesters/retirees

Key insights

From our initial research, we discovered insights that underpin the essence of what causes bikelash among swing voters.

KEY INSIGHT 1:

Majority rules

People don't agree with decisions that negatively impact the majority.

The majority of people don't identify as cyclists.

In New Zealand, the car is by far the most popular travel mode. Therefore, vehicle drivers are widely understood to be the majority of road users. We also discovered that people believed cyclists on the road were a very small minority.

When a road change takes away road space, carparks, or forces drivers to be more cautious, many people become upset over these changes they feel were being forced on them. If these changes were described as being 'for bikers', people saw this as a council decision with a higher value on what is best for the minority, bikers, and a decision going against the majority, drivers.

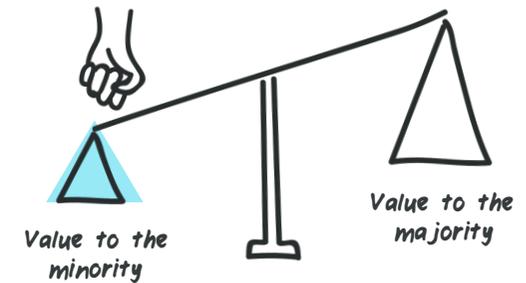
There is a widely accepted belief system shared by swing voters that the democratic process (most votes wins) is the way the world should operate. When their local council's decisions go against the majority of

opinions, they feel outraged that council would act in such an unjust manner. They believe if most people vote 'no' to a cycleway, the council shouldn't do it. Decisions need to align with the values and principles of community, which is democratic fairness.

One swing voter explained how she voted against a council proposal on an online Facebook survey. She wanted to see the results and hoped that "if most people didn't support the change, then the council shouldn't go ahead."

Communities are more accepting of decisions that support the majority of its members. If the decisions negatively affect the majority, i.e. drivers, for the benefit of a minority, i.e. cyclists, these are perceived as unjust and wrong. To them, it can feel like their councils are leaning on the scales of fairness in the minority's favour.

local councils



"If decisions go against the majority, it's like we live in a dictatorship. We live in a democracy"

"If they (council) cut a third of our carparks it would be annoying when the majority are car drivers"

"Roads are for cars. That's why they were created"

"It's giving one group more power than the other, it's not catering to demand (cycleway taking away carparks)"

"If my idea is similar to the majority of the community, the council should change their plan because it's what the community would like"

"The majority rules. There are more people driving than on bikes so why take away people's driving time to give the bikers a path"

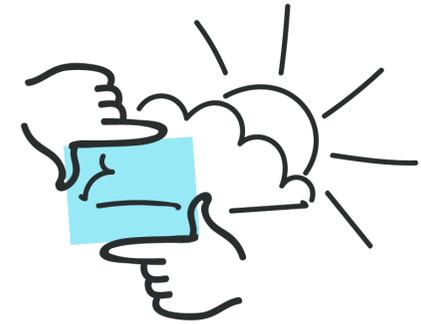
"Majority rules, that's how life goes. Whoever gets the most votes wins"

"If it detrimentally affected more people than what it provided a benefit for, I wouldn't be happy about it"

KEY INSIGHT 2:

Perception overrides reality

An individual's perceived reality has a higher weighting than any information you tell them is true.



Cycling is not perceived to be popular enough to justify a change in roading.

Information and facts on cycling popularity and benefits won't always work to convince swing voters that cycleways are a worthy investment, especially if their perceived experiences don't match up.

One man we spoke with said he didn't believe the statistics that said cycling was growing in popularity. He told us about his workplace of 200 employees. He said for the last 15 years, the same three people have only ever been the ones to cycle to work. "For me, that sample size is a smaller realisation of what reality is. Regardless of what statistics say, this is a real example."

People talked about how few cyclists they see on the roads. Their perception is cycling is not a popular mode of transportation. This makes it hard for them to see the value in a cycleway, given it would only benefit a few people, i.e. cyclists, and potentially

disrupt many others. When facts are shared that don't match people's day-to-day experiences, they struggle to see the validity in those 'facts'.

They must see the benefit for themselves in order to believe it

We uncovered swing voters' need to see for themselves that cycling is becoming more popular and cycleways do bring value to their local communities. In some areas, where full cycle networks are in place, people spoke about how great those cycleways were and how widely used they were. They saw the value, therefore they believed it.

Previous experience can either make or break an opportunity.

People's past experiences largely determine how they assume a change will affect them in the future. This

has a large impact on whether they positively or negatively respond to any a new proposals.

Another man we spoke with, an artist who sold his work in a CBD store, saw a dramatic drop in customers when a nearby road was closed for roadworks. He told us about his local council's proposal to turn that same street into a pedestrian-only zone. Because of his previous experience with the road closures, despite councils saying otherwise, he was convinced the loss in car customers would drop his sales indefinitely. He strongly opposed the council's plan. "If my business is unviable, then my town loses a piece of its artist perception."

"I don't believe (cyclists are growing in popularity) for a second. You just have to look outside & see the cyclists"

***"People are like sheep here,
everyone uses a car"***

***"The cycleway to Rabbit
Island & walkways are
beautiful...it's good as
everyone can get around"***

***"There are real stats and
then there are actual stats
in the real world"***

***"I'd put more cycleways in
because I've experienced the
one in town"***

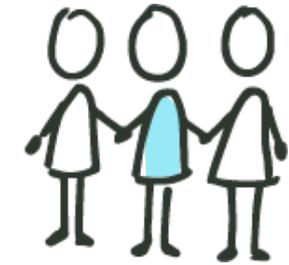
***"If it was something I could
see was being utilised and a
benefit for the majority,
then I wouldn't mind so
much"***

***"A small number of cyclists
to take away carparks. Not
the best use of the road"***

KEY INSIGHT 3:

Personal connection drives action

People get involved because they have a connection to something or someone they care about.



You can't separate a person from their family, business, or community.

We discovered that swing voters can be very passionate and deeply connected people. We met one woman who grew up in West Auckland. For her, a change affecting West Auckland felt as though it was strongly affecting her personally. Explaining this to us she said, “[West Auckland] is a part of me in that respect.” She saw the change as a personal attack against her, not just her community.

For a single mother in Hamilton, a change in the bus schedule for her 11 year old son meant her whole day would be ruined. In her mind, a small change affecting her family's world had a dramatic impact on her personally. The two things were inseparable to her.

This realisation lead us to understand that in many cases, swing voters are their family / business / community is them. In their minds, they are the same thing.

“If you're community is feeling safe, you're feeling safe”

People engage to protect something.

When analysing people who made choices to participate or voice their opinion on a community change, they often had one thing in common. People were protecting something they were personally connected to, and cared about.

It's more than losing a carpark.

In our readings, we learned that people often bikelashed to fight for things like carparks, road space, or the feeling of safety on the road.

Deeper conversations taught us people are often masking a much deeper loss. A lost carpark was

representative of something much more personal, like their business or the social life of a lonely grandmother. These people were not really fighting for a carpark.

Ultimately, people feel as though taking away something as simple as a carpark actually feels like losing a part of their life.

Councils may think they are taking away a carpark for cyclist safety, but the perceived reality to the swing voter is that council is prioritising a cyclist's safety over 'my life'.

"If it affects the people you care about... then you've got to worry about it"

"Only if it affects me and my family would I complain"

"If it was coming through my property, I would definitely want to be more active"

"It was impacting people I know, so it was important to me. It's about empathy"

"If we are not doing the best by our community, then our value of our community will diminish over time"

"I will get involved in things if it affects the broader community"

KEY INSIGHT 4:

It's bigger than cycling or cyclists

Focusing on cycling or cyclists is seen as giving priority to one group over another.



Cyclists are perceived as the minority

As we talked to swing voters, we learned that when NZTA and local councils focus on serving one group, they are automatically alienating the other. This only increases the rift between cyclists and non-cyclists, which increases the amount of bikelash. To make things worse, when councils seem to side with pro-cyclists, they are seen to be ignoring the majority.

While it's important to serve cyclists, people need to see it is not just this minority that is being served by a change.

People often identify with multiple transportation methods

In the field, we spoke to people who identified as cyclists, but frequently drove a car. We also spoke with many car drivers who cycled from time to time.

Labelling people according to a method of transport is actually fuelling the divide. We heard people speaking about how cycle lanes were for cyclists and therefore not for them. It's important that communications don't widen the cyclist vs non-cyclist gap.

One man from Hamilton was very against cycle lanes on streets. He did not perceive them to be for him, but against him as a driver. Yet, he was an avid mountain biker, and even told us how he used to commute to work most days by bike. Like many others, he was a cyclist, but didn't see himself as one.

Safety for cyclists doesn't always work

Swing voters who primarily drove cars told us the "safety for the cyclist" messaging they always heard was a frustrating argument. They felt councils were giving priority to a cyclist's safety over their safety. Drivers often felt less safe with the addition of cycle lanes. Their roads were narrowed. They have to be very cautious now when opening a door, or feel anxiety as they are forced to drive around cyclists. Increasing safety for cyclists is often perceived as decreasing the safety of drivers. What makes things even more frustrating is that cyclists are the perceived minority.

Safety can be used as an argument on both sides. Thus, it can fall on deaf ears and sometimes even make the conflict worse.

"I don't like them (cycle lanes), I think it increases the probability of road accidents for cars"

"They will do more and more things to make it safer for the cyclist not the driver"

"I walk to the shops, bike to work and drive to see friends and to get to further places"

"Bike lanes - you have to be more careful about driving. I don't like that"

"In Europe everyone uses bikes and everyone is aware of them. Here, cyclists aren't really thought of"

KEY INSIGHT 5:

Not connected, not engaged

To build positive engagement, you need to foster personal connection.



People don't engage when there's nothing personal to connect to or protect

We know that people become engaged when they have something personal to connect to and protect. The opposite of this is also true. People who are not engaged never did so because they did not feel the need to protect anything.

One man put in a submission online against a water treatment plant being built over some houses in his community. He would not have been personally affected by this change, but spoke up nonetheless because it affected something he was connected to. We asked him if he would have become engaged if the same thing happened in his neighbouring community. He responded with, "probably not."

The only way to get people positively engaged is to give them a personal connection to grab hold of and protect.

"I didn't get involved because it didn't affect my life I guess"

"If it didn't really affect me personally then I probably wouldn't (get involved). I've got other things to focus on"

"I have no interest in my day to sit down and talk about roading"

"I'm quite happy with the way things are. I'm busy, I don't have spare time. I have issues of my own family"

"I don't feel I'm informed enough to make the right decision, but interested enough to study & watch it"

KEY INSIGHT 6:

Without trust, you have nothing

Lack of trust is at the heart of all community bikelash. You won't get very far without it.



Trust is earned, not automatically given

As we dug deep into the reasons behind swing voters actions or inactions, we saw trust was usually at the centre of it all. We learned that people would stand up and become involved because they didn't trust the council had come to the best decision. These people felt there must be a better way to solve this problem.

"My friend calls herself the 'anti-corruption watchdog'. She is how I know (councils) try to do things not so transparent and behind closed doors if they can"

People need to see and understand the bigger picture in order to trust you

One of the biggest barriers to trusting NZTA or local councils was a lack of understanding as to why things were being done.

We spoke with a man who had a new cycle lane put in 150 meters from his home last month. He said, "It was badly thought out with no consultation." He wasn't sure what it was for, or why it was put in. "It doesn't go anywhere, so it can't be for commuting." He was confused and felt like "it was designed in another country".

Although his statements are not fact, his perceptions are what matters most. The biggest reason he doesn't trust NZTA or the local councils is because he doesn't understand why things happen or the bigger picture.

People often don't trust councils' design process or solutions

Some swing voters distrust the reasons you are building a cycleway, and they don't understand how you came up with a particular design solution. You may be able to convince people the cycleway is needed, but getting them to believe your solution is the best solution is more difficult.

There are many examples in peoples' heads of 'what were they thinking?' cycle lanes. These cycle lanes are creating distrust and damage to local council reputations.

"I'm not saying I'm against cycleways. It's just NZTA have a poor history of planning"

"I think the planning was lacking, and a bunch of foresight"

"There needs to be dedicated cycleways...mixed cycleways aren't a good move (pedestrians and cyclists)"

"They (council) need to acknowledge us in some way, make some sort of effort"

"You can't back something if you haven't got the info to make an informed decision"

"Cycleways used to be on the footpath - half cycleway, half footpath...It was safer"

Recommendations

There is an incredible opportunity to mitigate bikelash by focusing efforts on establishing trust.

RECOMMENDATION OVERVIEW:

Three key ingredients to establishing trust

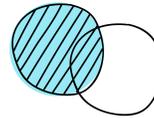
From our insights we've uncovered three key components to establishing trust with swing voters across New Zealand.



Put the community at the heart of what you do

Swing voters are deeply connected to their communities, friends, and family. The decisions swing voters make are from the heart. NZTA and local councils need to connect emotionally with these voters if they are going to win their vote of confidence and trust.

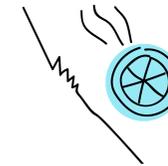
What you do is important, but how it is done is just as important when trying to build trust. Building trust is about building and displaying empathy to those in the community. It is about genuinely caring for those you serve and earning their trust.



Be transparent in smart ways

Many swing voters don't trust local councils or NZTA to design the best cycleways because swing voters have very limited views of how and why decisions are being made.

This lack of understanding can be avoided by ensuring transparency throughout the implementation process. This does not mean you let the community dictate everything you do. You are the ones with the urban planning expertise. This just means you showcase why you have made the best choice and why they should trust your opinion.



Build positive momentum for the future

The best defence against bikelash is a good offence. Be proactive about gathering positive cycleway and active mobility support in communities. If there is momentum and trust, the occasional bikelash speed bump won't derail your overall community efforts.

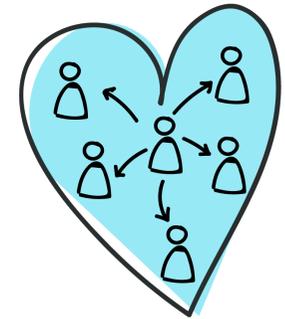
Put large amounts of energy into strategy and marketing. The best source of marketing is creating cycleways that people love and talk about. Not every project can be filled with loveable extras like family friendly artwork, free bike maintenance stations, and spectacular views. But do make sure there are some loveable extras that are also continuously marketed and celebrated by the entire community.

Before you can establish trust, it is essential to reflect and evaluate the level of trust the community has in you.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Put the community at the heart of what you do

Stay focused on serving and listening to all people in the community. It's about showing you care for them.



Relevant key insights

This recommendation is based on the following key insights:

- **Majority rules** - swing voters need to believe you are caring for all citizens.
- **Perception overrides reality** - if swing voters don't see or hear of you doing right by the community, then it doesn't count.
- **Personal connection drives action** - connections on the ground will get people to feel connected to the cause.
- **It's bigger than cycling or cyclists** - changes can't just be about cyclists if you want to get swing voters on your side.
- **Without trust, you have nothing** - be accountable, do as you say.

Focus on the heart

Swing voters are deeply connected to their communities, families and businesses. To get them to trust you, you will have to show them you truly care about them as individuals and have their best interests at heart.

Most of these people don't identify as cyclists, even though they might ride from time to time. You have to appeal to the values beyond cycling in order to reach them.

Recognise the pain being caused by changes, eg a loss of a carpark, and have empathy for those affected. This is not just important for the individual, but for the broader community. It shows to everyone

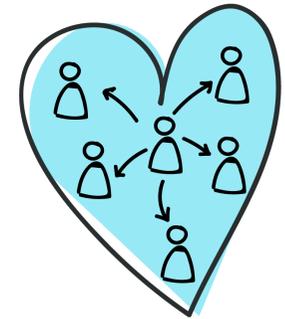
that you feel for those affected and have a heart for the community, not just the cycling agenda.

Personal connections are essential to connecting people's hearts to your cause. This is about tapping into things that swing voters are already connected too, like community leaders, schools, community centres, popular community events, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

How to put the community at the heart

Here are some essential guidelines to consider as you design opportunities to put the community at the heart of your actions.



Design principles

As you design opportunities, we recommend adhering to these design principles:

- **Bring fun and excitement** - take advantage of opportunities to bring fun and excitement to the community and therefore to your reputation. Consider ideas like social media competitions for all road users to participate in, and celebrating active mobility in the community, eg #winterbiker.
 - **Genuinely listen and take action** - listen to what your community has to say and show how their feedback has been taken into account. This will help illustrate how much you value the residents of your community and care about them as people.
 - **Help community members whenever you can** - take advantage of opportunities to help
- people in your community and showcase you really care for them. Recognise you're dealing with very human issues and do the right thing by those people when you can, eg offer alternative value to those negatively affected by your work.
- **Right people for the right moments** - ensure you have the appropriate people in place for engagement moments, even if they are external. These people need to appropriately gain trust and respect from the community with heartfelt actions and words.
 - **One organisation, one message** - agree upon a message to communicate to the community, then ensure you are sharing one message and a clear vision. Everyone, from the project manager, to the roads crew share the same message.
- **Meet the community where they are** - go to them where they are, eg schools, community groups, clubs, retirement villages. Meet them on their turf. Use various media channels eg Instagram, Google Adwords, to reach different segments of your market. Consider hitting the road on a tandem bike and giving people in your community rides to work — attach GoPros, and make a professional video you can share.

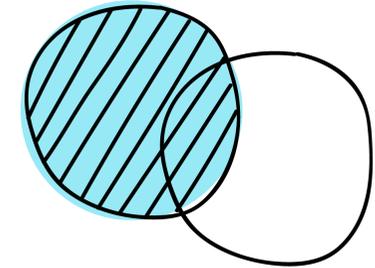
Things to watch out for

- **Don't allow the community to design the cycleway for you** - they are your priority, but there must be a balance. You are still the experts and have the biggest role to play. Earn their trust to operate. Don't let them do your job for you.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Be transparent

Increased transparency gives swing voters confidence in your expertise and your ability to make the best decisions for their community.



Relevant key insights

This recommendation is based on the following key insights:

- **Without trust, you have nothing** - trust won't happen without giving people reasons to believe in you.
- **Perception overrides reality** - making a great decision won't count if the community doesn't know it, see it, or understand why.
- **It's bigger than cycling or cyclists** - if you say it is best for all, you need to prove it.

Transparency fosters trust

For the community to trust you to do a job, they have to see and believe you can do it in the best way possible. You have great teams thoughtfully executing cycleway plans. Being transparent about your teams' professionalism and design qualifications is an easy way to build trust with your community.

Show how you are working. Show how you are listening. Show why you should be trusted.

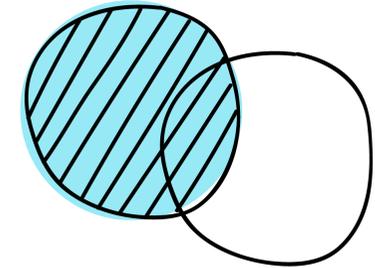
Showcasing how your decisions are made is just as important as the decisions you reach.

Balance is needed. You want to share enough detail of the process to assure people they are in good hands and their money is not being wasted, but you can't bog them down with needless information.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

How to be transparent

Here are some essential guidelines to consider as you incorporate more transparency into your daily actions.



Design principles

As you design opportunities, we recommend adhering to these design principles:

- **Communicate the 'why' constantly** - in all moments, communicate the vision and the reasons behind your actions. This ensures people are kept in the loop and can begin to trust your logical reasoning.
- **Clarify ambiguity** - be extra clear about ambiguous words and what they mean, eg co-design or collaboration. This helps the community know what to expect.
- **Balance the level of transparency** - choose the right balance between transparency and detail when showing your processes. You are the experts and need to be perceived as such, but people need to know enough to trust your decisions.
- **Showcase your expertise** - don't shy away from displaying how well you can do your jobs. Just like in a job interview, you want to prove to people you are worthy of the role, while staying humble and open to other opinions.
- **Acknowledge weaknesses and show improvements** - be honest and acknowledge areas you have been weak on in the past. Then show how you are fixing those problems. The human touch of honesty, when accompanied with strategic plans of action is essential to establishing trust.
- **Prototype often for yourself and your community** - prototyping is a great way to be transparent and bring people on the journey.
- **Communicate changes as they come up** - be sure to communicate clearly any design or implementation changes. Be proud of the changes you make to better serve the community.

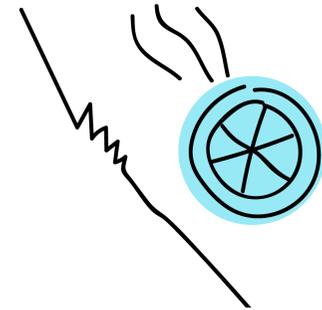
Things to watch out for

- **Don't over-promise** - not delivering on your promises will be worse than not making a promise. This is the fastest way to lose trust in a community.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Build positive momentum for the future

The best way to weather the storms is to have a well established and deeply trusted reputation.



Relevant key insights

This recommendation is based on the following key insights:

- **Majority rules** - the majority need to be excited about the future of their community, not just cyclists.
- **Perception overrides reality** - show the perception of cycling as popular, and people's realities will begin to change.
- **Personal connection drives action** - the more personal and emotional connections you can make, the faster your movement will grow.
- **It's bigger than cycling or cyclists** - momentum comes from the majority. Cyclists are not the majority, so they shouldn't be the sole focus.
- **Not connected, not engaged** - most swing voters are not engaged because they are not connected. You will need to find ways to connect swing voters to your cause.

- **Without trust, you have nothing** - getting swing voters to have a strongly positive view of NZTA or local councils before a cycle lane is put in is the best defence for bikelash.

Creating the future you want starts with the decisions you make today

The key to long term success is building positive momentum built on trust within the community. This is done before a cycle lane is constructed. Building positive momentum is about being loud about the things you do or have done well. Does everyone love one of the cycle lanes you have put in? Make sure the entire community knows it. The more projects in a community that are designed and implemented well, the better your reputation will become for doing your job with excellence. People can forgive small blunders if you have established a meaningful reputation for greatness.

Another way to build positive momentum is by tapping into the negative aspects of life without cycleways. People are driven to action more easily if they feel they are losing something than if they are gaining something. One way of doing this might be to communicate to people that they deserve the right to choose between many transportation options. Cycling, among a variety of other transportation options could become a right worth protecting, not just a nice to have.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

How to build positive momentum for the future

Here are some essential guidelines to consider as you discover new ways to build positive momentum around cycling and your trusted reputation for the future.

Design principles

As you design opportunities, we recommend adhering to these design principles:

- **Prioritise creating 'marketable' products -**
The most celebrated cycleways we heard about that created meaningful experiences and shared memories, eg Auckland's pink cycleway or Nelson's cycleway to Rabbit Island. People are excited to tell their friends and take photos. Cycleways with the 'extras', are big wins that communities love. They should be capitalised on. A great way to get people on board is to create products people love.
- **Grow the perceived popularity of cycleways**
Capitalise on ways to showcase the perceived

popularity of cycling. The cycle counter in Auckland does a good job of showcasing the popularity of cycling. But don't market them just to cyclists. Make sure the target audience is swing voters driving cars or taking public transport. Another option could be bike-racks on buses or trains. Bike-racks here increase cycle network options, and act as advertising to swing voters, saying cycling is a popular and valid option.

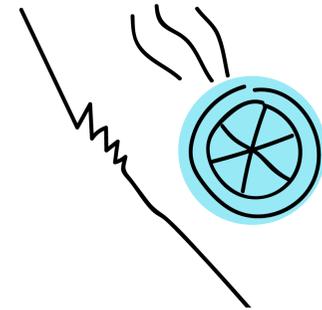
- **Make cycling more appealing and easier for everyone to achieve -** Improving access, and increasing the appeal of cycling to community members will get people talking about cycling as a good option — improving the perception of cycling as a relevant option. Ways to do this include: holding free bike repair/maintenance days

in lower income communities, or offering biking/active transport incentives to employees through their employers.

- **Focus on entire community value -** Stay away from just talking about value for cyclists. Instead, focus on the value of cycleways for the entire community. The community is the majority that needs to see the value. Not everyone who will use the cycle lane currently identifies as a cyclist.

Things to watch out for

- Don't stretch yourself too thin and not do anything well. Pick your wins and publicise those emphatically.



Recommendations for NZTA's communications strategy

Here are some important things to consider as NZTA forms a communications strategy.

What you say is important

NZTA has the opportunity to step out as the leader in establishing trust as a priority. There are certain things that need to be done, and things that need to be avoided.

- Do focus on the benefits to everyone, not just cyclists. Cycleways can't only be for cyclists. They must be for all people in a community if you're going to get the majority on board. "This will allow bikers to..." could be changed to, "This will allow communities to..." or "allow all families to..."
- Do be genuine in your communications and actions. If they don't match up, people will see through it, and trust will be broken.
- Do always explain the 'why' behind what you're doing. For residents and council members to buy into your decisions, they need to understand why you're making them. They need to accept and

internalise the vision NZTA is casting for all of New Zealand.

- Shy away from 'safety for cyclists'. This can be off-putting to the majority if they believe their safety is being compromised in favour of a cyclist. If safety is important, talk about safety for the community, as drivers could be cyclists too.

Areas to explore

Our insights uncovered many opportunities for action. We discovered areas that would be valuable for the NZTA communications team to explore in detail.

- What are the things new cycleways are protecting for people? Is it the right to transportation variety or choice? What else might it be protecting? Use this to get swing voters engaged in promoting cycleways.

- What are the types of problems you're solving for people? It's important to identify the problems so you can more effectively communicate why you are making changes.
- How might you display your expertise to the community without being arrogant? Show you're confident and capable, but open to new ideas and learning from others. Communities need to be able to trust that you have the expertise to make the right decisions.

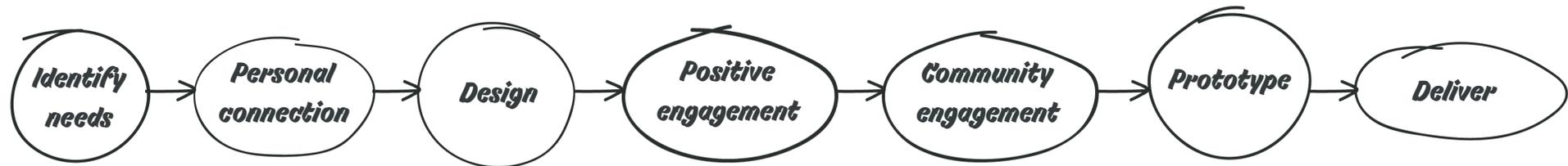
Potential engagement ideas

Based on our fieldwork with swing voters, we've identified seven human-focused connection points to consider in your project development process.

Seven human-focused opportunities to consider during a project development process

During our time in the field we learned a lot about swing voters and how they perceive the world around them. We didn't spend time talking about their preferred process of cycleway implementation. Therefore, this is not a recommended process. On the following page is a list of possible ways to engage with people. The methods we suggest deviate from the traditional consultation methods where you ask residents to come to you, and typically attract people opposed to your ideas. Providing fun and engaging emotional connection will showcase how you care, and will increase the likelihood of attracting people who are supportive of your changes.

Potential engagement ideas



- 1. Identify a real need in a community** - this isn't 'we need more cycleways'. Instead think of contextual problems, eg people in a given area are isolated from the city centre, or residents don't feel comfortable when commuting on the road. What is the real problem your product is trying to solve?
- 2. Form personal connections with key influencers** - find and discuss the identified need with key community influencers. You're the expert designers, but they're the experts in their community. Learn from them and get them onboard with the problem you have identified.
- 3. Design possible solutions** - take the information you gathered from key influencers and use your expertise to gather human-centred solutions.
- 4. Get the media positively engaged early** - be clear about describing why you're building a cycleway. What problem are you trying to solve? Tell the community you're working on a solution to this problem. Don't tell people you have a solution, because you shouldn't have one at this point. Explain the process so no one will be surprised, then stick to it.
- 5. Community engagement** - get people excited about the new vision and change you intend to bring to the community. Put together a local street BBQ or celebration to let them know you care, and are excited to discuss ideas to help solve the community's problems. Communicate all the ways they can share their feedback to you — from a casual chat over a hotdog that day, to online submissions. 60% of this event could be about showing you care. 30% could be about getting them excited about the changes coming, 10% could be about gathering feedback. Showcase your expertise, but that you also want the community's input.
- 6. Refine concepts and prototype** - take the learnings you've gathered and refine your solutions. Communicate how and why you've made changes based on feedback. Then advertise and prototype a solution as another form of community engagement. Prioritise showing you care and can be trusted.
- 7. Refine and deliver solution** - communicate to everyone about the problem you've tackled, and how and why you ended up with the solution. Then make sure everyone involved in the delivery of the cycleway has correct and consistent responses to frequently asked questions.

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