Sensitivity: General

Improving health through Low Cost Low Risk network approach

Tauranga is one of New Zealand’s most car-dependent cities, with 84% of trips undertaken by private vehicle. Considering 1/3 of car trips are less than 2km, an easy 25 minute walk or 10 minute bike/scooter ride, there is considerable opportunity for more active travel.

During the recent lockdowns people enjoyed walking and biking more in their local neighbourhood, chatting to neighbours they hadn’t met before, but as soon as restrictions were lifted Kiwis were back behind the wheel, driving their gas-guzzling SUVs a few kilometres down the road to the local takeaway shop.

As Transport Engineers, if we really care about people’s wellbeing, we need to make active travel an easier transport choice for everyday trips. Millennials and Generation Z profess to care about climate change and health but still choose their car as their default travel mode. We can change this by making driving short distances harder, for example implementing low traffic neighbourhoods.

The Te Papa Low Cost Low Risk Framework project aims to encourage residents in the Te Papa area of Tauranga to choose more active, sustainable modes of travel by using a low cost low risk network approach to make local streets feel safer for people. The area will undergo substantial intensification in the next 10 years, with apartments and offices up to eight storeys in height, greatly increasing the number of people who live, learn and work within 6km of the Tauranga CBD.

This presentation will describe how a low cost low risk approach can achieve positive health outcomes for a local community without the need for expensive, disruptive and carbon embodied significant works. This is strongly linked to the themes of Taha Henengaro (through mode shift and improving accessibility), Taha Tinana (physical activity, reduction in emissions), and Taha whanau, because a conversation with a lonely elderly neighbour while out walking may just be the highlight of their day. After all, you can’t build community connections through the windows of your tinted SUV.

