Disability sector collaboration for inclusive access

When we say that walking and cycling are everyone’s business, we need to consider what we mean by ‘everyone’, and how to promote the most marginalized voices in transport decisions. Most road user hierarchies place vulnerable pedestrians at the top. That means that we should consider vulnerable pedestrians before all others in policy, planning, design, and research in transportation. We don’t do that. Disabled pedestrians are often ignored in transport policy, and advocates are required to remind government and private sector professionals of their right to be considered.

The most effective way to truly consider vulnerable pedestrians first, is to engage with them at every level of decision making. Until we have good data about where vulnerable pedestrians do and do not go, and how infrastructure quality affects those choices, we need to talk to vulnerable pedestrians themselves.

This presentation will describe how Waka Kotahi the NZ Transport Agency took the engagement approach by working closely with people who have lived experience of disability, to inform the refreshed Pedestrian Network Guidance. We worked with the New Zealand Disabled Persons’ Organisations’ Coalition and the Disabled Persons’ Assembly. We recruited 11 individuals with varying impairments, and one group of people with learning disability and mental illness. The people were from both small towns and cities from across New Zealand, from Whangarei to Winton. We interviewed each individual or group in person, and then in phone interviews as the guidance was developed.

The engagement approach meant that personal insights were used to inform each chapter of the Pedestrian Netowrk Guidance. We developed overarching principles of universal access to inform design, and provided comprehensive new content about the nature of human capabilities as relevant to pedestrian mobility, and concerning recommended disability sector engagement processes.