Engaging communities – learning from bikelash

Bikelash is a term for the disproportionate community push back around installation of cycling networks that is observed across the western world, particularly early in a cities journey toward increased levels of cycling. This kind of push back is not restricted to cycling and has been known to also effect occur with speed and safety projects.

Wordwide there are many examples where bikelash has resulted in compromises that reduce the level of service offered to the point where the cycleway is not suitable to grow cycling, or in cycleways being ripped out and road space being re allocated to cars, and car storage.

The NZ Transport Agency understood that we were able to reach both those effected, and those already predisposed to supporting cycling we were struggling to meaningfully engage with the wider community, and struggling to encourage them to support cycleways rather than those who were pushing back.

We called these people “swing voters” and commission some qualitative research to better understand why people get involved in community push back, what is at the absolute heart of bikelash, and therefor and how to better engage swing voters, what was important and meaningful to them.

The results were extremely interesting pertinent to community engagement, well beyond cycling. The presentation will share the key insights and takeaways for the Transport Agency and its stakeholders.