



Walking and cycling
in the region

2 Walking and cycling in the region

2.1 Current position

The Waikato region is diverse in settlement types, from large and relatively highly populated urban areas, to very small and isolated rural settlements. Due to this diversity, walking and cycling play varying roles throughout the region.

Cycling and walking infrastructure continues to develop in the Waikato region catering for:

- urban area footpaths, street crossings, shared paths, on-road cycle lanes and river walks
- non-urban needs such as tramping tracks, mountain bike parks, BMX parks, rail trails and river trails.

Many rural settlements have developed paths accessing schools and in many cases local communities. Local authorities are required to have a walking and cycling strategy to qualify for funding assistance from NZTA. Appendix D shows the current status of walking and cycling strategies. Most local authorities plan for walking and cycling in urban developments in the Waikato.

A number of school travel plans and walking school buses have been developed throughout the region, along with a small number of business travel plans. Schools, tertiary institutions and larger employers will be targeted to increase business travel plans. Figure 4 shows the number of school travel plans and walking school buses operating in the region.

The Waikato region is made up of 12 local authorities including Hamilton city. For the purpose of transport, Franklin and Rotorua are not considered as part of the Waikato region under the LTMA. The remaining ten local authorities have been divided into four sub-regions as outlined in Figure 5.

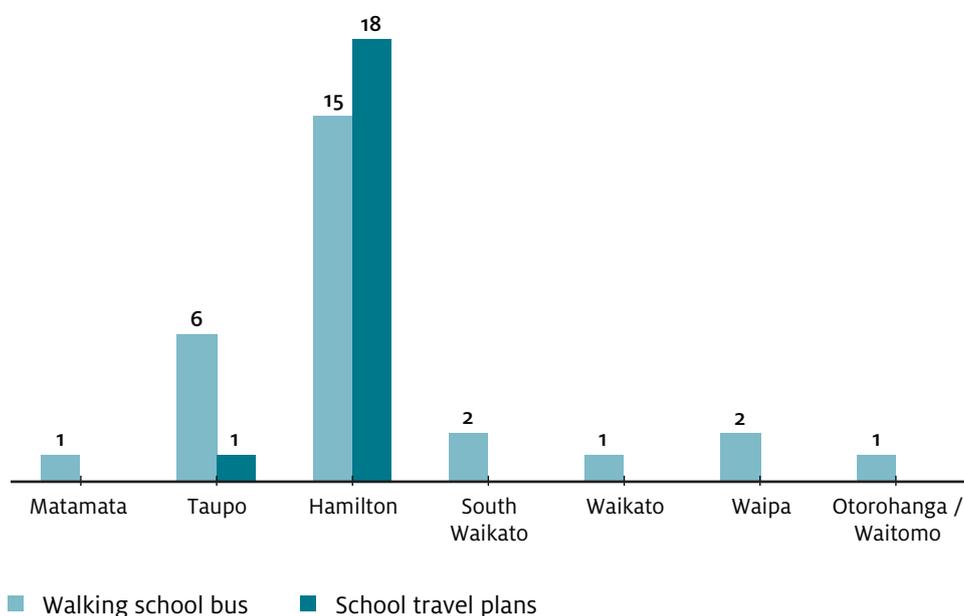


Figure 4: Number of regional school travel plans and walking school buses

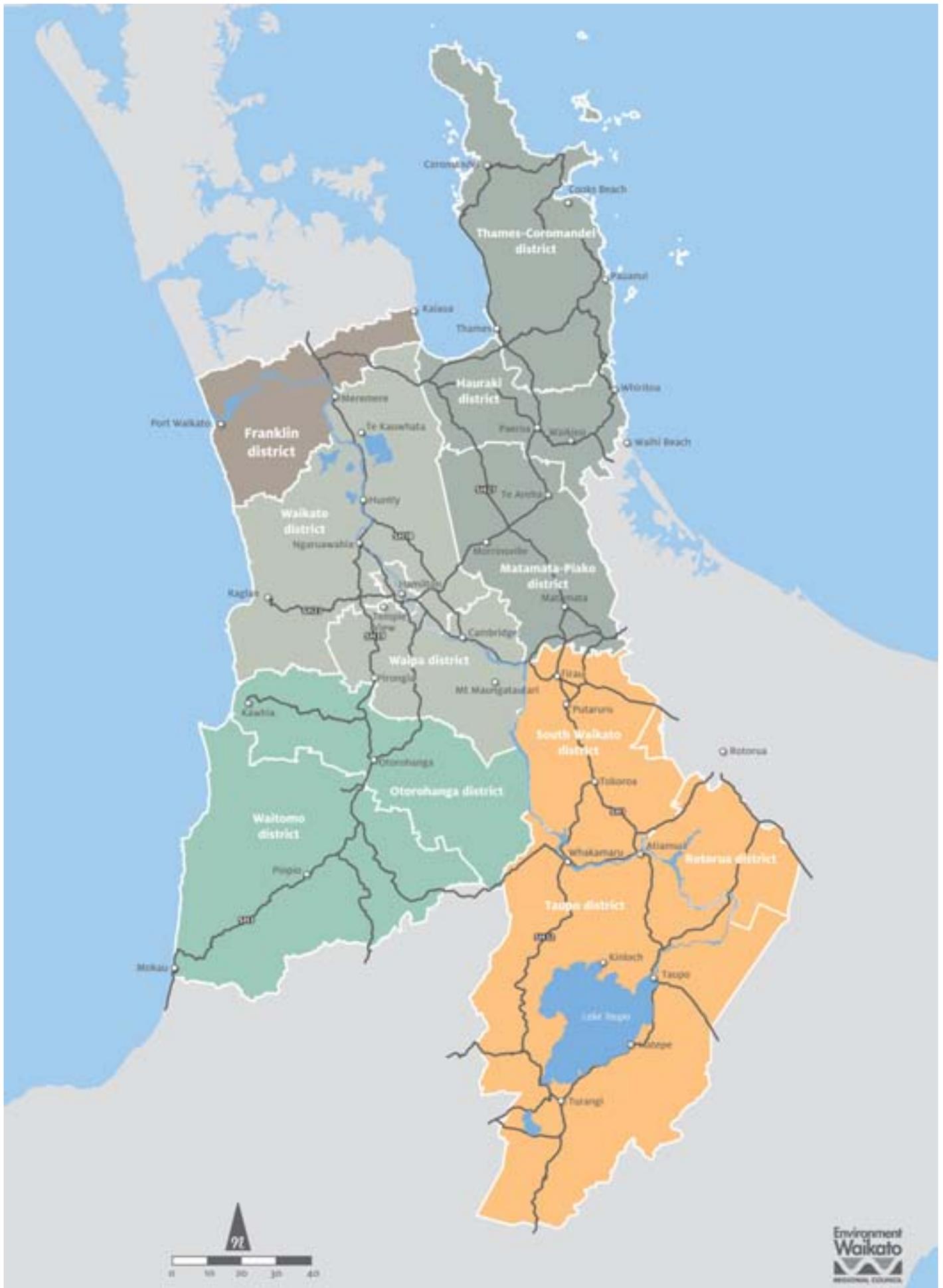


Figure 5: Waikato sub-regions and 12 local authorities

The following sections describe the current position for the national, regional and sub-regional areas. Each sub-regional area will describe individual local authorities and their current position for walking and cycling.

2.2 Of national importance

The Waikato region includes a number of walkways and rail trails that are of national importance.

2.2.1 Te Araroa – national walkway

The Te Araroa project aims to establish a walking trail that follows the length of New Zealand. The Te Araroa Trust was set up to promote the idea, and the trust has since established eight regional trusts, including Te Araroa Waikato Trust, charged with fund-raising and development in their region. The project crosses many district and regional boundaries throughout the country, and involves a wide cross-section of stakeholder groups. The cross-boundary nature of the project in the Waikato calls for regional coordination, and thus there is a regional role in supporting the regional trust in the promotion and advancement of the Te Araroa project. The completed project will enhance and extend walking connections throughout the Waikato region. Te Araroa is shown on the regional map in Appendix B.



Te Araroa, Gaine Rd, 5km west of Otorohanga.

2.2.2 New Zealand Cycle Trail – Nga Haerenga

In February 2009, the Government held an Employment Summit to discuss ways of stimulating jobs in the current economic climate. One of the key outcomes of the summit



was the development of a New Zealand Cycle Trail which could potentially assist with generating revenue and employment opportunities in New Zealand. The vision for the Cycle trail is 'to create a variety of riding experiences that collectively would cater to three market segments'. These are:

1. the urban cycleways focussed on reducing traffic congestion and providing leisure activities
2. the mountain bike trails for those seeking a challenge
3. the 'Great Rides' of New Zealand for the families and older travellers seeking an interactive experience.

In July 2009, the Government announced seven 'quick start' cycleway projects, two of which are located in the Waikato region – Hauraki Rail Trail and Waikato River Trails, both of which are described in Section 2.3. The Hauraki Rail Trail will form part of a larger network and will be called the Hauraki Plains Trail. This will incorporate the Muddy Feet Project which begins in Kaiaua and follows the Firth of Thames to Thames where it will link with the Hauraki Rail Trail to Paeroa, heading east to Waikino Gorge and finally linking to Waihi, giving approximately a three day riding experience.

The Waikato River Trails is located in the south Waikato district with approximately 30km of trail already completed. Once the trail is completed it will include 60km of trail from Karapiro to Atiamuri. These 'quick start' projects already provide a platform allowing an opportunity to link these trails to many other potential trails. Economic benefits will include, employment, tourism and accommodation. The New Zealand Cycle Trail will provide for all cycling types, and importantly provide a safe alternative particularly for school students. (Refer to Appendix B for New Zealand Cycle Trail routes in the Waikato region).

Prime Minister John Key launched the NZ National Cycle Trail project on 10 November 2009 on the banks of the Waikato River in south Waikato. The Government is investing \$3 million to assist in extending the existing Waikato River Trails, picking up on Lake Maraetai, Lake Arapuni and upper Lake Karapiro to be finished in time for the World Rowing Championships at Karapiro at the end of 2010.

Early indications suggest that to begin with, existing or proposed cycleways will be investigated to assess locations and feasibility and their potential for linking to a network of

national routes. In 2009 \$50 million dollars was approved by the Government for the New Zealand Cycle Trail which will be available for regions, councils or community groups to conduct feasibility work and co-fund the building of regional cycleway projects.

Another announcement was made early February 2010, that a further 13 cycle trails were identified to go forward to feasibility studies for inclusion in Nga Haerenga, The New Zealand Cycle Trail project. Of these 13, two are located in the Waikato region – The Lake Track of approximately 100 kilometres, on the northern end of Lake Taupo between Whakaipo Bay around to Kawakawa Bay taking in native forest views of the lake and Tongariro National Park. The other trail, Thermal by Bike is a 75 km cycleway from Rotorua to Orakei Korako incorporating four of the world's most unique geothermal areas. With these two latest additions, the Waikato now has the potential to host five NZ Cycleway trails. Although not in the Waikato region, the Moana Coastal Cycle Trail leading from Waihi to Tauranga starts very close to the Hauraki Rail Trail.

2.3 Of regional importance

2.3.1 Regional walking and cycling network

The Waikato river is a significant regional natural feature and amenity, with many cultural and heritage features, providing opportunities to promote walking and cycling beside the river. Sections already developed include the Hamilton River Walks, and the Waikato River Trails. A vision for the future is to have river trails from Mercer right through to Taupo.

The Waikato region has a number of sealed rural roads that are utilised by the more serious cyclists for longer distance riding because they are not so busy.

The purpose of the regional cycling network is to identify longer distance cycling opportunities on and off road. The regional network would enable routes to be connected across territorial authority boundaries to enable improved route connections for long distance cycling. Where feasible rail corridors will be considered.

2.3.2 Waikato River Trail

The Waikato River Trail Trust was formed in 2006 with the purpose of planning, developing, constructing, promoting and maintaining river trails within the South Waikato and wider Waikato region. Some sections of the project are already established. The Waikato River Trail for walking and cycling is planned to follow 100km, from Horahora in the north to Atiamuri in the south. The trails are a regionally significant tourism and active recreation project. The trails provide for walking in all sections and mountain biking in most sections.

The Waikato River Trail offers a range of terrain such as majestic river views, swing bridge near Arapuni, wheelchair access on the southern section near Atiamuri, old ruins and many more.

The Waikato River Trail will now form part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail.



Waikato River Trail – Arapuni.

2.3.3 Hauraki Rail Trail

The Hauraki Rail Trail project began in 2004 and is administered by a trust. The project aims to provide a shared use for walking and cycling trail on the former railway lines between Te Aroha and Thames (60km), and Paeroa to Waihi (22km). Possible future links could include Morrinsville and Hamilton in the west and Katikati or Athenree in the east.

The trail currently operates between Karangahake-Waikino railway station as part of the Karangahake Historic Walkway, developed in 1980. Work is about to commence starting at Paeroa joining the Karangahake Gorge section. The trail will offer a number of benefits:

- economic opportunities
- recreational opportunities and health benefits
- safe off-road routes
- preservation of heritage areas
- tourism benefits
- local trips to school and work.

The Hauraki Rail Trail will now form part of the New Zealand Cycle Trails.

2.3.4 Central North Island Rail Trail (proposed)

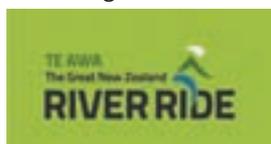
While not located in the Waikato region, this proposed trail (administered by DOC), provides opportunities to connect the historic logging settlements of Ongarue and Pureora, encompassing virtually the length of the Hauhungaroa Range on the west side between these two settlements. The 65km trail will offer shared use opportunities for recreational walking and cycling, crossing district boundaries. The trail presents another regionally significant tourist attraction, with economic and recreational opportunities for the people of the Waikato region. Environment Waikato can play a role in the coordination and promotion of the trail at a regional level.

This project is identified as one of the seven 'quick-start' New Zealand Cycle Trail projects.

2.3.5 The Great New Zealand River Ride (proposed)

This project proposes to develop a cycling and walking trail from Ngaruawahia to Hamilton via the western banks of the Waikato River linking with the northern Hamilton river path. Te Araroa has expressed an interest in this section to form part of their national walkway. The trail will pass through:

- historical Maori sites
- Ngaruawahia Golf Club
- Affco Meat Processing Plant
- Fonterra, Te Rapa Dairy Factory
- Waikato Equestrian Centre.



It will link with the Hamilton Mountain Bike trails at Pukete Farm Park.

The long term vision for this project will see further river trails at the south end of Hamilton linking to Cambridge and will ultimately link with the Waikato River Trails South of Lake Karapiro.

2.3.6 Muddy Feet

The Muddy Feet project involves a multi-agency effort coordinating activities for the protection and restoration of the environs around the Firth of Thames which is fed by several rivers. The site is of international importance, especially as a habitat for waterfowl, shell banks, grass flats, mangrove forest, salt marsh with around 8,500ha of tidal sand and mudflats at the ebb tide, supporting a rich diversity of bird, animal, fish and plant life.

The Muddy Feet project recognises an opportunity to develop access for the public to enjoy this phenomenon while at the same time managing protection for the vast number of bird varieties and other marine life.

It is envisaged that a trail be developed from Kaiaua following the Firth of Thames around to Thames town. This trail will ultimately link up with the Hauraki Rail Trail which starts in Thames tracking south to Paeroa. The Ministry of Tourism has identified the Muddy Feet project as part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail project.



Pied oystercatchers and Bar-tailed Godwits gathered along the shores of the Firth of Thames' proposed Muddy Feet Trail.

2.3.7 DOC reserves

The Waikato region is home to many DOC reserves, offering tramping and some mountainbike options. Some of the major DOC tracks are located nearer urban settlements requiring less travel time to access, see Table 3.

Table 3: DOC reserves located near urban settlements in the Waikato

Bridal Veil Falls, on Kawhia Road, walking.	Pukemokemoke Bush Loop Track, 10km past Gordonton, Hamilton, walking.
Hakarimata Scenic Reserve and Walkway near Ngaruawahia.	Te Toto Lower Gorge Track, near Raglan, walking.
Bryant Memorial Track, near Raglan, walking.	Waitomo Caves Walkway.
Kakepuku Track, walking and mountain biking.	Te Whanganui-a-Hei (Cathedral Cove) marine reserve, near Whitianga, walking.
Karamu Walkway, Hamilton/Raglan Road.	Karangahake Gorge Historic Walkway State Highway 2 between Paeroa and Waihi –walking and cycling (*note in East Coast Bay of Plenty conservancy).
Karioi Summit tracks, Near Raglan, walking.	Pureora Forest accessed in the east from Taupo and the west from Te Kuiti – walking and cycling.
Maungakawa Scenic Reserve tracks, near Cambridge, walking.	Activities in the Kauaeranga Valley on the Coromandel, mostly walking with mountain-bike permits for events.
Pirongia's Mangakara Nature Walk, plus many other tramping tracks cycling tracks in development.	Kauri Block Track, near Coromandel Town, walking.
Kaimai-Mamaku Forest Park – access to mountain, Waitawheta Valley and Waiorongomai.	Kopuatai Wetland, near Paeroa/ Te Aroha (9,000 hectares).

2.4 Of sub-regional importance

The Waikato region consists of four sub-regions – see Figure 5. Hamilton city is nestled in between the sub-region of Waikato and Waipa district councils, and is New Zealand's fourth largest urban area, and the country's seventh largest territorial authority, and for this reason, the city is described separately from the sub-region it would normally fit with.

As urban growth increases, especially Hamilton city, so too does traffic congestion. Alternative transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport will assist with the reduction of congestion, whilst promoting health through active transport.

A map showing existing and proposed walking and cycling networks in Hamilton city, along with a regional map showing walking and cycling facilities can be seen in Appendix B.

Each of the following sub-regions contain an 'at a glance' section which gives an overview of present walking and cycling facilities.

2.4.1 Hamilton city

Hamilton is New Zealand's fourth largest city with over 130,000 people, including 25,000 students, mostly enrolled in one of the city's two tertiary institutes, the University of Waikato and Waikato Institute of Technology. Cycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements are focussed on both utility and recreational journeys. The city offers many facilities for walking and cycling, with opportunities to link trips with the bus network, all of which is designed towards more integrated multi-modal transport hubs assisting schools and workplaces with travel options along with recreational choices for active transport. Appendix B shows the current Hamilton city walking and cycling map.

Hamilton city is now implementing a 10 year plan (2006-2016) to retrofit cycle routes and pedestrian improvements to existing roads, parks and reserves for access and links which will offer safer off-road options. The plan includes facilities being built by developers in new subdivisions and includes commitments made by the NZTA Highway Network Operations unit to construct walking and cycling on state highways. There is a multi-party agreement to the ten year plan. There are general aspirations to extend the Hamilton river trail which already operates as the spine of the Hamilton walking and cycling network.

The Waikato river is a significant regional natural feature and amenity, with many cultural and heritage features, providing opportunities to promote walking and cycling beside the river. Sections already developed include the Hamilton River walks and the Waikato River Trails. A vision for the future is to have river trails from Mercer linking to Taupo.

Hamilton city at a glance

- As at 2009, Hamilton city currently has 18 school travel plans with 15 walking school buses (see Figure 4). As more schools subscribe to school travel plans, walking school bus numbers will increase, as will cycle skills training, park and walk and cycle trains.
- There is currently approximately 110km of on-road cycle lanes, with more being planned (see Appendix B).
- A number of arterial roads in Hamilton have had extensive road upgrades in the past two years, all of which accommodate pedestrian/cyclist facilities including underpasses allowing for safe journeys and signalisation. Any future urban planning will incorporate pedestrian and cycling needs.
- Pedestrians and cyclists can access Hamilton's shared river path which tracks along the Waikato River covering in excess of 26km with linkages to Pukete mountain bike park. The river path will soon have links to State Highway 1, with cycle lanes to be constructed along Church and Pukete roads, completion of which is expected in 2013/14.
- Hamilton City Council has introduced 40kph zones outside some schools. This continues to be trialled. A 30kph zone has been introduced in part of the Hamilton city centre for increased safety of vulnerable users.

The Accessible Journey

In a partnership between Environment Waikato, Hamilton City Council, CCS Disability Access, NZTA and NZ Foundation for the Blind, the free CBD Shuttle bus route in Hamilton was upgraded to provide a fully accessible journey. This bus route circles Hamilton CBD and connects parking areas with shops, while helping to reduce the distance that the mobility impaired or elderly need to walk to access city centre services.

The intention of the project was to provide a higher quality of life for those who have limited transport choices through improvements to pedestrian facilities and linkages to accessible bus services.

Hamilton's Lake Rotoroa has an extensive boardwalk/path around the entire lake accommodating disability access linking to existing footpaths, allowing for an uninterrupted walk around the lake of approximately 4km.

- The Taitua Arboretum is located on the western outskirts of Hamilton city, offering a one and a half kilometre circuit to run or walk. A shared cycling/walking cycle network has been established from the suburb of Dinsdale to the Arboretum in conjunction with Waipa District Council.
- The Hamilton mountain bike park is located in Pukete with a club membership in excess of 300. The success of this club appears to be the easy access to the park which is located inside the city boundary, with approximately



Disability access around Lake Rotoroa, Hamilton.

10km of trails and accommodates novices to expert riders. Maintenance and development of new tracks is ongoing and undertaken by the Hamilton Mountain Bike Club.

- A BMX track is located at Minogue Park which hosts several regional and national events each year.
- Many walking/running and cycling clubs.

2.4.2 Waikato and Waipa districts

Waikato district includes the urban areas of Huntly, Ngaruawahia and Raglan.

Waikato district at a glance

- Lake Hakanoa walkway, a 4km walk near Huntly.
- The new 1.5km Hakarimata Rail Trail along the Hakarimata range, an extension of the Hakarimata Walkway, developed in partnership with DOC.
- Newstead Walkway, a 1km walk that may be started at either Morrinsville Road or Vaile Road in Newstead, and leads to some of the tallest eucalyptus trees in New Zealand.
- A shared use walkway/cycleway from Hamilton to Taitua Arboretum developed in conjunction with Hamilton City Council.
- Ongoing walkway development within Tamahere, as identified within the Tamahere Structure Plan.

Waipa district comprises Cambridge and Te Awamutu, with a number of smaller towns and growing number of lifestyle developments. This sub-region offers extensive rural roads that are utilised by road cyclists ranging from recreation to Olympic ability.

Waipa district at a glance

- Mountainbike tracks are located at Te Miro on the south eastern outskirts of Cambridge, and also at Mt Kakepuku and Mt Pirongia.
- Cambridge and Te Awamutu both have BMX tracks.
- Cycle velodrome in Te Awamutu.



Velodrome, Te Awamutu.

- Larger and smaller walks in this sub-region include:
 - Maungatautari Mountain has always held great symbolic significance for Maori, the present iwi of which have been here for at least 500 years. Walking routes include the pest proof enclosures and summit walks
 - Heritage (Cambridge Domain) includes river walk and Lake Te Koutu
 - Maungakawa (Sanatorium Hill)
 - Heritage Walk (Te Awamutu)
 - Lake Ngaroto near Te Awamutu
 - Yarndleys Bush near Te Awamutu
 - Walter Scott Reserve near Te Awamutu
 - Cambridge Tree Trail.
- A proposed shared use walking and cycling path from Leamington to Lake Karapiro of approximately 4.5km.

2.4.3 Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki and Matamata-Piako districts

Thames-Coromandel district comprises smaller urban towns including Thames, Coromandel, Whitianga, Tairua, Pauanui and Whangamata, most of which are popular tourism spots, hosting many tracks to walk or cycle along including road cycling tourists. There a number of large regional parks in this sub-region under the supervision of DOC who continue to increase and upgrade their walking tracks.

Thames-Coromandel district at a glance

- Linkages with existing and proposed walking and cycling routes are included in the Kopu Bridge construction project which commenced in July 2009.
- Thames has recently constructed a shared use walkway/ cycleway of approximately two kilometres following the Firth of Thames.
- National/regional walking and cycling routes planned that link the Thames-Coromandel district with the region include the Hauraki Rail Trail and the 'Muddy Feet' walking and cycling route between Kaiaua and Thames.

- Thames offers numerous heritage sites which can be incorporated into a walking or cycling excursion.
- The Thames-Coromandel district hosts a number of cycling events including the K2 cycle race, Colville Connection mountain bike races and multisport events including the Mighty Moehau and Kauri Run.

Hauraki district incorporates a number of smaller rural towns including Paeroa, Waihi and Ngatea.

Hauraki district at a glance

- Hauraki Rail Trail – refer to Section 2.3.3 for a full description of this project which presents an opportunity to showcase and protect nationally and regionally significant heritage areas.
- The Muddy Feet Project is explained in Section 2.3.6.

Matamata-Piako district incorporates a number of rural towns including Morrinsville, Te Aroha and Matamata.

Matamata-Piako district at a glance

- Ongoing footpath maintenance and construction programmes in all towns which will include identifying linkages.
- Matamata offers a 2km shared use path for walking and cycling to the Tower Museum along Tower Road, and a 3km shared path around Centennial Drive and Tom Grant Drive which is used by commuters and students.
- Te Aroha offers a number of mountainbiking and heritage shared use walking and biking trails all accessed from the town centre.
- Kaimai-Mamaku Forest Park walking tracks including Wairongomai Valley with mining heritage features.
- Kaimai Heritage Trail comprises of historically themed tracks, and includes interpretive displays and restored historic features (such as a kauri dam, tramways, and old mine shafts). This trail is intended as a major visitor destination for people to learn an important part of New Zealand's history. The three main entry points are the Karangahake gorge, Franklin Road (near Waihi/Paeroa) and Wairongomai Loop road (near Te Aroha).

2.4.4 South Waikato, Taupo and Rotorua districts

South Waikato district is home to Putaruru, Tirau and Tokoroa and characterised by small rural communities.

South Waikato district – at a glance

- Te Waihou Springs walkway, located northwest on the outskirts of Putaruru offering a three hour return walk, with amazing scenery.
- The Lorraine Moller Arboretum also located northwest on the outskirts of Putaruru, offering disability access.
- The Jim Barnett reserve located off Waotu South Road has a series of walking tracks through native plantings.
- Lake Moana-nui is encircled by a paved walking and cycling track.
- Tokoroa hosts a popular mountainbike track close to the town.
- The Waikato River Trails beginning south at Atiamuri and tracking north of Arapuni, following the Waikato River, headquarters of which are located in Tokoroa. See Section 2.3.2 for a fuller description of the trail. Most of the trails are shared use, with parts not suitable for cycling.
- A shared walking and cycling track connecting Baird Road to Princess Beatrix Avenue.
- A 6km cycle track connecting Kinleith Industrial Park with Tokoroa township.
- A mountain bike and horse-riding area situated off State Highway 32.
- A disused rail corridor between Putaruru and Rotorua is being investigated as a possible walking/cycling trail.

Taupo district is Waikato's second largest urban area, with a population of approximately 21,000, and is a key tourist and event destination. Taupo's two smaller rural communities, include Turangi and Mangakino. Taupo has advocacy groups for both walking and cycling.

Taupo district at a glance

- Taupo currently has six walking school buses and the council is assisting one school with a travel plan.
- 31km on-road cycle lanes and 6.5km of shared use paths (off-road) for walking and cycling. See Appendix B for map of existing and proposed cycling and walking tracks and shared paths.
- Great Lake shared use path (along lakefront) walking and cycling.
- Huka Falls shared walking and mountainbike path.
- The Whakaipo to Kinloch Track (W2K) recently opened.
- Crown Road off road cycle skills course, aimed at school student training.
- The largest cycle event in New Zealand consists of 160km bike ride around the lake each November with cyclist numbers in excess of 10,000 riders.
- Mountain biking is also popular with some of New Zealand's finest tracks for recreation and racing. Taupo has utilised many gullies for walking and cycling, cutting through urban areas providing a safe off-road environment. Trails are also located on the town's fringe leading to Huka Falls connecting to the famous 'Craters of the Moon' mountain bike trails.
- The annual 'Round Taupo Relay' for walkers and runners attracting in excess of 5,000 participants.
- The annual New Zealand Ironman Championships each March.
- Turangi offers a number of walking trails near the town.
- Mountain bike trails are located south and west of Turangi, and access to the Pureora Forrest on the western side of Lake Taupo.

Rotorua District Council is affiliated with the Bay of Plenty regional council, while some territory is included in the Waikato region. Almost all walking and cycling facilities are located nearer Rotorua urban area which is located in the Bay of Plenty region. Rotorua is a tourist destination and has a number of recreational walking and cycling opportunities.



Crown Road, skills training facilities.

Rotorua district at a glance

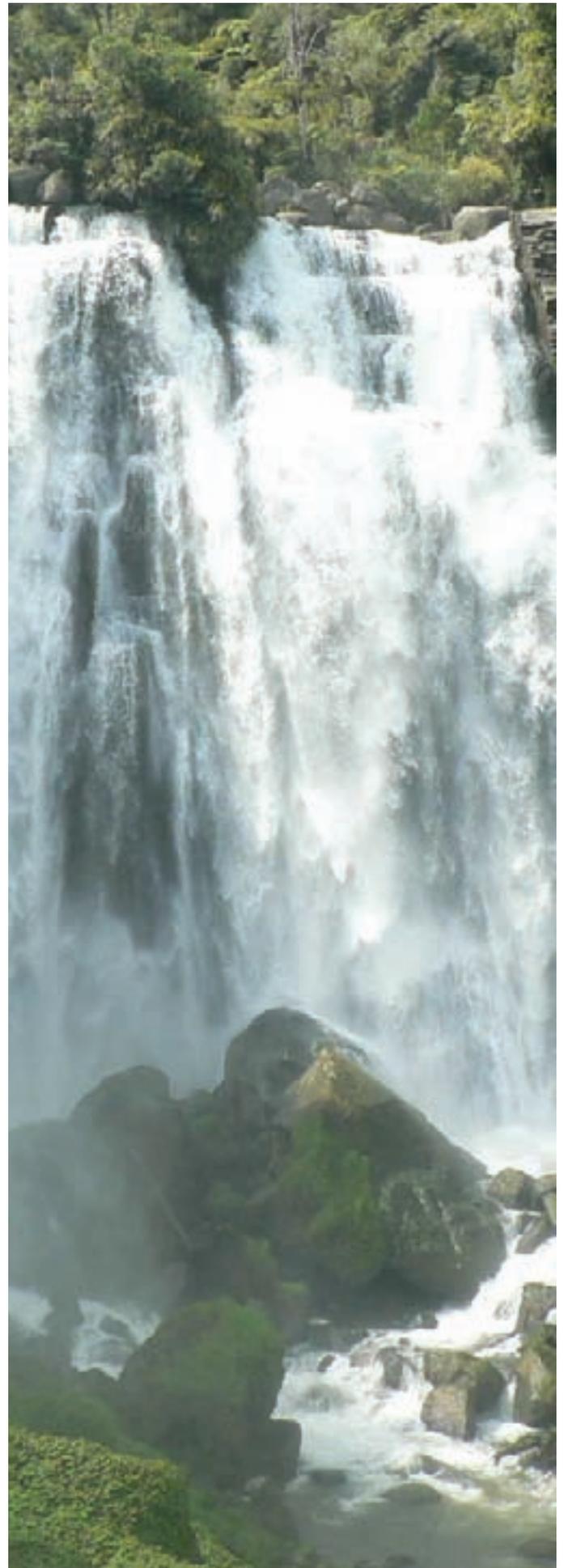
- Rotorua is home to Redwood Grove within the Whakarewarewa Forest with many kilometres of walking and mountainbike trails with numerous competitions on offer.
- Rotorua hosts New Zealand's longest running marathon.

2.4.5 Otorohanga and Waitomo districts

The Otorohanga and Waitomo districts have two main urban centres, a number of small rural communities, and growing rural lifestyle development in the north. Walking and cycling initiatives will focus mainly on key pedestrian and cyclist generating areas in the two main centres. This sub-region is currently developing a joint walking and cycling strategy.

Otorohanga and Waitomo districts at a glance

- The Waitomo Caves is located between Otorohanga and Te Kuiti, on State Highway 37, and is a national tourist attraction, with the Waitomo Walkway nearby taking about two hours to walk the complete track.
- The 46km between State Highway 37 to Marokopa on the west coast, offers a number of attractions, all of which involve walking.
- The Pureora Forest Park is located between Te Kuiti and Taupo and offers extensive walking and mountain bike trails with many heritage interests.
- Kiwi Park, a national tourist attraction with short walking tracks.



Marokopa waterfalls.

