



**OPTION:** This recently built suspension bridge in Hastings has proved popular with cyclists. PHOTO/FILE.MY-HASTINGS-SEPT\_0095

# River crossing favoured option

By John Maslin  
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Submissions to the Wanganui District Council 10-year plan are showing a marked preference for a new direction to the final leg of the Mountains to the Sea cycle trail into Wanganui.

At this week's hearings, submitters have said a suspension bridge across the Whanganui River to bring the trail down the Aramoho side of the river was their preferred option.

Bryan Patrick, who lives on Riverbank Road, said he supported the cycleway but a trail running between his and neighbouring properties and the river would compromise both their security and privacy.

He said the best alternative was a suspension bridge from Upokongaro to Papaiti Rd.

"In January council held a series of meetings with residents and it was clear that the suspension bridge had considerable merit," he said.

Councillor Hamish McDouall asked Mr Patrick if his views would change if the original route — from the River Rd to Dublin St bridge on the Wanganui East side — was cheaper than a bridge crossing.

Mr Patrick said they would — as long as the trail went between his property and State Highway 4 rather than following the riverbank.

Laurence Sunde, speaking on behalf of Riverbank Rd residents, said there were economic advantages to using a suspension bridge and running the trail down through Aramoho.

Residents believed it would be "fiscally irresponsible" to run the cycleway along the Wanganui East side of the river, he said.

A suspension bridge was logical because there was less traffic on the Aramoho side and the Wanganui East option included some costly infrastructure. There would also be no need to take land under the Public Works Act.

Mr Sunde said even if the Aramoho route was more expensive he would still support it because "it's safer and user-friendly".

A submission from David and Sharon Warburton asked the council not to make any commitment to the cycleway until all route options had been considered and prioritised on a business-case basis.

"What portion of the community would benefit from a cycleway investment, what the long-term benefit to the region will be, and why would the council rate this project ahead of other community needs identified in the long-term plan?" they asked.

External funding made the proposition sound attractive but did nothing for the other factors involved in the cycleway, especially the ongoing maintenance, they said. Given other challenges the council faced (the wastewater treatment plant, for one), the cycleway did not seem prudent.

"The proposal to take the cycleway along the riverbank has impacted on the saleability of a number of residences along Riverbank Rd," the Warburtons said.

"The uncertainties around this proposal has impacted negatively on individuals' largest single investment."

## Talent seen as key to growth

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Wanganui's business talent will be the catalyst for growth in the region, according to a submission made to the Wanganui District Council 10-year plan.

It was the thrust of a submission from Business Whanganui, one of the arms of Whanganui and Partners that the council launched last year.

Whanganui and Partners aims to drive economic activity in three major areas — business, tourism and education — and has an operating budget in 2015-16 of \$646,000, averaging \$700,000 a year over the following nine years.

On Tuesday, Business Whanganui chairman Rex McKinnon said a strong economic development budget from the council would

provide things for the city and district in an affordable way. The economic landscape had changed and the district must be more proactive to arrest economic decline: "We have a talented business community in Wanganui and that provides the key."

Jobs were needed to attract people and the council needed to look after existing businesses. It would also mean getting alongside neighbouring territorial authorities because such co-operation combined strengths, Mr McKinnon said.

The existing budget for economic development in the 10-year plan gave the Business Whanganui board a good platform but more would have to be spent over time. It would also need a culture that generated change, including arresting the population decline, then growing that population.

Mr McKinnon said Business Whanganui was working on its strategy and it would be released soon.