

Nelson Mayor Candidates

- Matt Lawrey
- Rohan O'Neill-Stevens
- Nick Smith
- Kerry Neal
- Richard Osmaston
- Tim Skinner (No response)
- John Wakelin (No response)

Matt Lawrey

What is your vision of mountain biking in Nelson/Tasman?

My vision is for a future where Nelson-Whakatū is to mountain biking what Aspen is to skiing. It's a future where our city is internationally recognised as one of the best places to go mountain biking in the world, where we regularly host international mountain biking events and where, over time, we become a Southern Hemisphere hub for global mountain biking brands. In my opinion, the sport is a key part of our future in terms of economic development, recreational opportunities and identity. It's also a big part of our ability to attract talent, and even our collective mental health.

What is your vision of general cycling for transport and recreation in Nelson/ Tasman?

We're only scratching the surface of what's possible when it comes to the benefits that cycling can bring Nelson-Tasman. The arrival of e-bikes, in particular, has massively increased our opportunities to grow cycling across all age groups and bring benefits to the region in terms of not only congestion and emissions reduction but also recreational and economic opportunities. When it comes to cycling, Nelson-Whakatū could seriously be a mini South Pacific Copenhagen. To help make that happen, if I'm elected Mayor, one of my main goals will be making it possible for all Nelson kids to safely ride to school.

Have you had any involvement, support or interest in mountain biking our members may be interested in?

I've been a regular cyclist most of my life, bought my first mountain bike in 1990 and in 1994 spent eight months cycling across Southeast Asia. I didn't get into the sport in earnest, though, until 2017 when I bought my first serious bike and started riding with our kids. These days I ride every chance I get. Top Dog is my favourite trail but I'm also in love with Coppermine and I've done the race twice. I'm a Mountain Bike Club member but I'm embarrassed to admit that I've only been on a couple of trail digs. I'm in awe of the contribution volunteers have made to our trails! As a Councillor, I've successfully pushed for multiple cycling projects, including the Tāhunanui cycleway and the planned waterfront walkway-cycleway. In 2018 I organised Ride for the Waterfront; an event highlighting the inadequacy of our waterfront facilities that attracted 90 cyclists.

What action do you plan to take in the next three years to support and realise your vision of mountain biking and cycling?

If I'm lucky enough to become Mayor, one of my first jobs will be securing an agreement with Ngāti Koata to ensure long term access to the trails that help to make this such a great place to go mountain biking. I'll be pushing for us to build back better after the deluge, cheering on the Aorere Enduro, and working with the club to ensure more international events are held here. I'll work with our existing operators to ensure we keep growing the industry and I'll remind anyone who has a problem with this that the sport was worth \$139.8M to Rotorua's economy last year. I'll also be working hard to ensure that every local kid can safely walk or ride to their local school, continuing and, if possible, increasing investment in active transport infrastructure and doing everything I can to bring forward Waka Kotahi's planned walkway-cycleway around the waterfront.

How would you further realise the economic benefits of the tens of millions of dollars that mountain biking brings to our region?

A lot has happened in the four years since the Berl study that identified mountain biking was worth \$17.1M annually to the region. The Covid era has seen a huge upswing in cycling internationally and next year would be a good time to update the study. It would also be a good time for Council to work the Mountain Bike Club and the Nelson Regional Development Agency to build a strategy that defines how we grow the mountain biking pie. It's clear that the city is in need of must-do activities to attract visitors and to keep them in town longer. I would envisage this strategy would explore the potential to reactivate the gondola project.

How much funding are you prepared to invest to realise the potential of mountain biking over the next 3 years?

As much as democracy will allow. After the election, we will have a new Mayor and at least six new Councillors. It will be important that, early in the term, our elected representatives get the opportunity to get their heads around the huge opportunity that mountain biking presents. If I'm Mayor, I will do everything I can to facilitate that process and help to make the case for the sport. It's a compelling proposition and the more Nelsonians we can get on board, the better.

Rohan O'Neill-Stevens

What is your vision of mountain biking in Nelson/Tasman?

Nelson should be a premiere destination for mountain bikers, with high-quality and accessible tracks across a range of grades. Mountain biking plays a key role in our wider tourism economy, as well as being a major attraction for residents, and should be resourced and supported with that in mind, enhancing the supporting infrastructure and information as well as tracks and events. With significant planning work completed, the next term of council should be one of delivery.

What is your vision of general cycling for transport and recreation in Nelson/ Tasman?

Cycling should be a safe and efficient form of transport in our city. Protected, separated cycleways along key routes, with safe speed neighbourhoods, are crucial to supporting people to choose cycling as mode of transport. Council needs to lead greater investment in this space and deliver to the policy work completed in this term, like E Tū Whakatū - our active transport strategy. Specific work and

routes to support children to bike to school are also needed, to support all members of our community the freedom and opportunity of how they get around.

Have you had any involvement, support or interest in mountain biking our members may be interested in?

I'm a regular commuter cyclist and have advocated strongly for cycling and mountain biking in this term of council. While I haven't quite caught the mountain biking bug myself, I was raised in a household of keen mountain bikers and have experienced a number of Nelson's mountain biking offerings.

What action do you plan to take in the next three years to support and realise your vision of mountain biking and cycling?

With policy work like our Out and About on Tracks strategy and our active transport strategy now completed, what's now needed from council is investment and action. I'll be looking to fully resource and accelerate these plans over the next three years, as well as working with local partners to explore other opportunities and areas for investment to deliver to the potential cycling and mountain biking holds for our region. Council also plays a key role in the promotion of mountain biking and providing easily accessible resources about what's on offer. Council CCOs like the Nelson Regional Development Agency also have a role in building our image as a cycling city, and we need a whole of sector approach to this.

How would you further realise the economic benefits of the tens of millions of dollars that mountain biking brings to our region?

I think we undersell the quality, variety and quantity of our mountain biking offerings. We need to improve that storytelling and public perception, alongside improvements to the MB infrastructure, if we are to fully leverage the economic benefits.

How much funding are you prepared to invest to realise the potential of mountain biking over the next 3 years?

Obviously the level of investment is not up to one person at council, but I will be advocating for our investment to recognise the scale of return that mountain biking currently provides, and what it could provide into the future. We have seen other council's successfully leverage council investment into significant central government investment - and that's what I'll be looking to do, bringing millions into our regional economy to support this growing sector.

Nick Smith

What is your vision of mountain biking in Nelson/Tasman?

Mountain biking is a personal passion as well as a recreational activity that I have actively supported throughout my political career. Four significant projects I have been involved in achieving is enabling off season mountain biking on the Heaphy track that I initiated as Minister of Conservation and which required a change in the National Park Rules, the initiation of the Great Taste Cycle Trail as part of Key Government's National Cycleway, the creation and investment of \$12million in the new Paparoa Track that I made the decision specifically including mountain biking and providing funding and support through Government for the development of the Old Ghost Road track.

What is your vision of general cycling for transport and recreation in Nelson/ Tasman?

My vision for Nelson is for us to be the mountain biking capital of NZ. We have the foundations of this with iconic rides like the Heaphy, Old Ghost Rd, Codgers, Wairoa Gorge, Coppermine, Kaiteriteri etc and a very active and capable Mountain Bike Club. The first priority has to be completion of the Great Taste Cycle Trail. I have been involved in helping resolve issues with the Golf Club on the section through Tahunanui and this should be opened later this year. There are also sections in Tasman that the off road sections need to be completed and, although out of Nelson, we should take a regional perspective. I would also like to work with Waka Kotahi/NZTA and the N/T Cycleway Trust on improving the SH6 section alongside Whakatu Drive. I am also keen to engage with clubs on the work to expand the network of rides. We also need to be active in promoting events in the region for the sport to help raise the profile as these both bring economic benefits to the region and help promote our profile and brand as a great place to recreate. The Council can never be the sole funder but can be an important partner in making such events successful.

Have you had any involvement, support or interest in mountain biking our members may be interested in?

I am an active mountain biker and have done many of the national trails with my family, most recently the West Coast's Wilderness Trial. A regular family trip for us is from home in Annesbrook to Mapua return using the ferry from Rabbit Island and with younger family members the trip through Spooner's Tunnel. I am not an expert rider and my riding is focused on enjoyment and those up to Grade 4. My instruction to DOC as Minister to change the rules to allow mountain biking under appropriate conditions to be allowed in National Parks was very controversial with strong opposition then from tramping, mountaineering and conservation groups. It was bizarre that power boats and helicopters were allowed but not mountain bikes. It took years but I was successful in getting the change through.

What action do you plan to take in the next three years to support and realise your vision of mountain biking and cycling?

I will work proactively with the Nelson/Tasman Cycle Trust and the Mountain Bike Clubs to help enhance the sport for the region. The role of Mayor is not to be exclusive or to solely promote one sport or recreational activity, but to fairly support and invest in all. My approach to Council investment will be to particularly support clubs that foster development of younger people, those sports that are well run and are raising funds themselves and those sports that offer wider economic benefits to the region.

How much funding are you prepared to invest to realise the potential of mountain biking over the next 3 years?

I cannot give a specific \$ sum as a Mayoral candidate. Any Council financial commitment needs to have majority Council support and go through the proper planning process. The new Council is going to have substantial financial pressures from the flood cost and with very high inflation. It will not be easy but I am confident we can find the resources to invest in the growth of mountain biking.

Kerry Neal

Kerry:

Kerry

“As stated earlier ,because of the enormous expenditure that will be required to return our district to something like normal , all items including what ever is allocated to your organisation will have to be reconsidered and in many cases extracted from the plan. From my experience in Local Government I can't recall any long term plans that carry much weight so on that basis ,and in view of what we are facing ,I can not give you any assurance of support . Any candidate that does without considering the points I have made to you would be acting irresponsibly.”

Richard Osmaston**What is your vision of mountain biking in Nelson/Tasman?**

I love mountain biking. In the 1960's and '70's we were it! I'd be happier if the activity were more accessible and less elitist. Some 'bikes are pretty flash!

What is your vision of general cycling for transport and recreation in Nelson/ Tasman?

It's the way to go. Let's make sure it's affordable. For everyone.

Have you had any involvement, support or interest in mountain biking our members may be interested in?

Commute daily by bike from Renwick to Woodbourne. Ride around our Lake Rotoiti farm on a bike, not a quad or tractor. Supporter of Lake and surrounds track development. Again, let's make sure we don't become elitist and climate denying. Like skiing. Sadly.

What action do you plan to take in the next three years to support and realise your vision of mountain biking and cycling?

By removing the toxic, fatal and consumption/growth based monetary system, we'll free up society to thrive. On foot, on bikes, on water. Let's adopt a money free, Resource Based Economy. Quit all non-essential work, and liberate humanity to do whatever they want to. Which likely includes cycling.

How would you further realise the economic benefits of the tens of millions of dollars that mountain biking brings to our region?

Er. Yeah. Nah. Sorry chaps. Try and keep up. 'Economic benefits' doesn't accommodate recent realisations about climate, inequality, pollution, stress and technological unemployment. Next question please. ;)

How much funding are you prepared to invest to realise the potential of mountain biking over the next 3 years?

As much as you like. The pretend tokens are imaginary anyway. If you're keen, and your community supports your proposals voluntarily, then let's go for it. The money tokens don't even exist. Enjoy them. We'll never have to pay them back.
