

What's Better Beckenham all about?

New Zealand Transport Agency's (NZTA) Innovating Streets

The NZTA asked councils to submit applications for *“Projects using tactical urbanism¹ techniques such as pilots, pop-ups and interim treatments that make it safer or easier for people to move around or access community spaces. This could be anything from pop-up community-led street events to piloting a new walking or cycling facility, to a low-traffic neighbourhood to reallocating more street space for people to connect with each other”*. They would not fund *“projects that create more space for cars, or any that are permanent in nature”*. The projects have to be complete by the end of June 2021.

The Beckenham Neighbourhood Association (BNA) pitched an idea for the Beckenham Loop to the City Council which was accepted and then submitted to NZTA. The application to NZTA was one of four successful projects in Christchurch and the Beckenham project has just over \$200,000 allocated to it.

What it is designed to do

The Better Beckenham project requested funds for *“a series of temporary streetscape amendments ... that aim to slow traffic and create a safer and more accessible walking and cycling environment.”* Although the application was broad, it listed some possible specific interventions:

- Reducing the speed limit within the Beckenham Loop.
- Temporarily closing Fisher Ave to through traffic (based on resident support following a twelve week closure for road works in 2018).
- ‘Gateway’ treatments at key entrance junctions to inform motorists that they are entering a special neighbourhood area.
- A series of interventions on Birdwood Ave:
 - ‘Intersection repairs’ to improve safety (specifically at Malcolm, Martin and Corson Aves)
 - Improved pedestrian and public space such as seating
 - Safer and shorter crossing points for pedestrians
 - Improved cycling safety
 - Greening/landscaping

The more we (the Beckenham community) can do the work ourselves (e.g. design, engagement, building) the more money remains for the practical on-ground improvements.

The NZTA and Council want this to be a community driven process, where the Beckenham community leads and the Council help us implement it (using the \$200,000).

Associated projects and planned works

There are two related local projects already funded under other programmes. These are:

1. Tennyson St. A safe crossing point is in the Council’s minor works program in the current financial year
2. Eastern and Waimea Tces. The *Ōpāwaho River Route* is one of the Christchurch Major Cycleways. It goes along the river around the Beckenham Loop, and is due to be built in 2022/23.

What Next

These events are part of the process of finding out what the residents of Beckenham want. Initial tactical urbanism projects will start as soon as October, and have to be all complete by June 2021.

¹ Tactical urbanism includes low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment, intended to improve local neighbourhoods and city gathering places (adapted from Wikipedia)

Better Beckenham Q & A

1. Why the Beckenham loop?

Four main reasons.

- I. The Beckenham Neighbourhood Association have been aware of this issue in the past and already had conversations with the local community board about traffic issues in the loop.
- II. The loop in the river means there aren't many routes for through traffic, but the width of the roads means it is easy (and tempting) to drive fast and some intersections are dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. This means there is huge potential to gain real benefit from tactical urbanism interventions specifically within the Loop itself.
- III. A variety of UC research projects over the years have shown that residents feel traffic speed is an issue, and residents want something done about it.
- IV. Three Loop residents lobbied the Council to submit Beckenham and helped write the proposal (all in half a day, to meet the *Innovating Streets* deadline).

The Better Beckenham team are also keen to use our experience to develop a process to help other communities in the future. They have a UC student working with them, who we do a project on this.

2. Who are the 'Better Beckenham' team and who gave them authority to do this?

The BNA had been concerned about traffic issues for a number of years and had spoken to the local Community Board and local City Councillor, Tim Scandrett. In May two residents, Mike and Simon, saw the NZTA call for applications. They approached the BNA, who responded enthusiastically and Dave (from the BNA) joined Mike and Simon and worked on a proposal to the council who submitted to NZTA. They have been joined by Ashley, a UC student who is working on the project as an unpaid intern. The team regularly update the BNA and have spoken at a Community Board meeting.

3. What has happened so far?

We have started sharing some ideas on Facebook and gauging support for them. In addition Ashley has been working with some Beckenham School students to get their thoughts. We have also started engaging with some local residents and businesses.

4. What about Tennyson Street?

Getting across Tennyson Street, specifically for kids going to school, has been a long standing source of concern for residents. As Tennyson is a busy road with through traffic, it needs a permanent solution (and therefore is not eligible for *Innovating Streets* funding) and this is budgeted by the Council for this financial year.

5. Is this the top priority for Council spending?

The money is from NZTA (central government) rather than the Council. Council are responsible for implementing the projects with the community.

6. Why do some examples include seating, play areas and landscaping; this doesn't sound like transport or traffic?

The *Innovating Streets* programme is all about making our streets better for people and creating vibrant neighbourhoods that are comfortable, good for our health and good for the planet. With the Beckenham projects there is opportunity to make our roads safer and use street space in different ways to encourage community interaction. While solving some of the traffic issues with these tactical projects and preserving good access for vehicles, we can create great places around the neighbourhood that are fun and engaging.

7. Where can I find more information?

We are building a Better Beckenham web site and will load on the research, the proposal to Council and NZTA and project updates. You can also email betterbeckenham@gmail.com and be added to the email list.