

Interviewee: Paul Gruschow

Title: Mobility Scooter Advocate

Interview Date: 01/31/24.

Interview Time: 9:00-9:45 AM

Can you please tell us about your experience as a user with a mobility scooter and your role within the community?

Follow up: As a user with a mobility scooter do you ever work with the GWRC?

- Disabled so used wheelchair and mobility scooters to get around
- Multiple sclerosis, used to work full time 17 years ago, now can't.
- Had a car and modified for hand controls- stopped driving 3 years ago
- Rely on mobility scooter to get around
 - o Using the train to get into Wellington
 - Busses don't allow mobility scooter
- He is on the disability advisory group
 - o It got dumped after the 3-year election
- On project liaison group for the river link project

Do you consider yourself an advocate for the disabled community?

- "I would as far as that goes"
- "The reason I do that is, so they realize some pedestrians are disabled as well"
- Do work in community with disabled people, run some groups and helps the hospital

Can you explain how your experience as a mobility scooter user relates to the Hutt River Corridor?

- "The river trail is mostly on the flood plain so it's on the river side of the stop bank"
- "The road closes because of the floods sometimes"
 - o This alters the quality of the river trail
 - More angulating
 - o After a big storm there can be a lot of sediment on the trail
 - o Won't use after and big storm

- Has its limitations but will use it sometimes
- Hasn't used it as much lately because there is another shared path on the river side which is better
- Uses it a couple times a month but depends on the season

Do you believe recreational use of the River Corridor is important, why or why not?

- "It's a wonderful place, you meet cyclists on it and walking people and dog walkers"
- "Commuters would work be on it at a different time then me"

Do you believe the Corridor, in its current condition, is well-adapted for the disabled community?

- "Its alright on the scooter I don't know about electric wheelchair"

What sections of the River Corridor do people with limited mobility use?

- "Normally get on at Kennedy good bridge and use it to go into the Hutt"
- Has used it to go all the way to Petone beach
- Has gone over ava rail bridge or Waione bridge

What is your ideal situation for people with disabilities within the River Corridor?

- "Pretty well as it is"
- "Its quite good as it is"
- "People are worried their scooters will run out of battery"
- People will have to come out with a tractor to take him back

Follow up: what would it take to accomplish this?

- Somewhere to charge battery

Follow up if yes: What activities do you use the corridor for?

- "Normally me on my own or will go with my friend with a mobility scooter"

Do you believe there is conflict between the users of the Hutt River Corridor?

- "I haven't seen that, but the river trail is quite narrow in parts, so you really have to show courteous to each other"

- Different people with different purposes
- “Some users find commuters rude because they have a purpose and somewhere to be”
- “There is no keep left issue because it’s not wide enough”
- “I haven’t seen disputes on that one”
- Busiest time is Saturday morning near the market

Follow up if yes: What do you believe could be a solution for the conflicts between users without excluding any user?

- “People need to be educated and need to be nice people”
- “Realize that they are there together and need to share”
- Car drivers are the worst at least they aren’t on the trail

What is your opinion of dogs being on or off lead in the River Corridor which is a shared space?

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- “As long as the dog is well looked after and trained there is no problem with them running around”
- “Leads cause more issues cause if the dog goes one way and the owner goes the other you need a way to get around”
- This issue hasn’t affected him

What is your opinion on cyclists using bells while passing other users?

- “I find myself that often that the bell is heard after they go past me”
 - o I’ve got bad ears
- “I don’t have a great worry either way”

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- Not at all really

What is your opinion on visitors using headphones in a shared space like the River Corridor?

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- The more the merrier
- “It’s a nice thing that the Hutts goes there for recreation”

Do you believe the trails along the corridor should be expanded? If so, why?

- “Probably but I don’t think it’s an urgent issue”
- I don’t think it would change the usage patterns

What are your thoughts on adapting the River Corridor for increased commuter cyclists use?

- “Could be a bit annoying but wouldn’t change what I do. I don’t tend to go early morning or late at night”

Do you believe providing more transport opportunities for commuter cyclists is important?

- “I think so yah a lot of people moan about it, but I don’t think its an issue”

What do you believe is the best way to go about adding a commuter route in the Hutt Valley, and is the River Corridor the space that should be used?

- “The problem is the direction they are coming from and where they are going”
- “It could be but it’s also a flood plain, so it is subject to flooding”

What improvements would you like to see?

- Surface needs to be improved
- Strucutrally fine

What other trails do you use?

- Uses the belt way meets up with river trail at top
- Goes along the railway line
- Its wider and its really good I used to mostly go down to Queensgate- belt way only makes him cross the road 7 times vs 20 times just on the road
- Beltway is way closer to his house than the river trail
- Also involved with where he is going more