Kia ora tatou,

It’s really great to be here today to celebrate the start of work on this extremely important project for Dunedin city.

But while it is a celebration, it also a time for reflection because the catalyst for this project came from tragic circumstances – the death of cyclist Dr Li Hong “Chris” He on the one-way outside the hospital in 2012. And he was not the only one. Two other cyclists lost their lives on the one way pair over the past 15 years.

Ki ngā mate – haere, haere haere atu rā. We think of their loss and their families.

Because of that tragedy, the Council on behalf of the community, and with support from cycling advocacy group SPOKES Dunedin, called for urgent action to ensure such horrors were not repeated.

The Dunedin City Council and New Zealand Transport Agency formed a combined working group to find a range of short term improvements. They were put in place and they worked.

They also identified what lasting improvements would be needed to enable the Dunedin State Highway 1 system through the central city to be used safely and efficiently by cyclists, as well as motorists.

Dunedin is unique in that it has only a couple of roads running north south right through the city and doesn’t have motorways to bypass the university or central city areas. The one-way system is it. It has to provide for the complete mix of traffic types, from trucks (large and small), commuter traffic, cyclists and people walking along or across the highway.

This project will not only significantly improve safety for cyclists on the one-way system between Queens Gardens and the Botanic Garden, it will also help to keep pedestrians safe.

This is very relevant throughout the one-way system, whether in relation to students around the university; staff and visitors to Dunedin Hospital; or visitors to our city around the Railway Station and Queens Garden.

Some, actually considerable public comment and complaint has been made about the loss of car parking as a result of this project.

Frankly the view that finding space for empty, stationary vehicles is more important than other road users’ lives and safety is abhorrent.

Obviously where possible the city is working to offset parking loss. However, much of the current research on inner city regeneration shows that a loss of parking and a more
encouraging space for cyclists and pedestrians actually leads to an increase in economic activity. It certainly makes for a more pleasant urban environment.

In a broader context, city partners are working together to enable travel by bike to be a more appealing and safer choice. Many people have told us that they want to cycle, but simply don’t feel safe hopping on a bike in the central city.

On that note Dunedin City Council is excited to be delivering its next package of cycleway work starting later this year.

This work will focus on providing safe connections between the one way system, and also providing improved connections to and around the harbour.

As we head into next year’s Long Term Plan, there will be further conversations with the community about delivering future cycleway projects to further enhance facilities throughout the city.

But for today, this project represents the spine of Dunedin’s cycling infrastructure and it is really pleasing to have it underway.

So thank you to the NZ Transport Agency for listening to our community’s appeal for safer central city roads. Thankyou for the research, thinking, planning and most importantly consultation that you put into this project.

I say that on behalf of the community but also at a Council and personal level. This investment in Dunedin will enhance our city and keep all road users safe. I look forward to riding it.

Kia ora tatou.

Dave Cull
Mayor of Dunedin