



Talking with businesses about Liberate the Lane!

Our aim is to make the broad range of support for walking, cycling and wheeling across Te Waitematā more visible. To do this, we need your help connecting with businesses about the Liberate the Lane open letter to Waka Kotahi. Thank you for your support.

This guide is to equip you to talk to organizations you already have a connection with, eg. you are a customer, supplier, or employee. It summarizes advice from local businesses and community organizers, to help you feel confident and informed. Check out the liberate the lane website for the list of [supporters](#), useful [resources](#) and [frequently asked questions](#).

Engaging with businesses

- Visit and talk with them in person if you can
- Businesses are most likely to listen to people who have an existing relationship with them – like a customer, a supplier, or an employee – so prioritize ones you know!
- For smaller organizations, the business owner is likely to be the person making the final decision on whether to sign – while for larger ones, you may need to speak to their sustainability department (ideal) or their marketing department

What's on their mind

Businesses are worried about losing customers and profit, and this may make them decline signing on to the public letter, even if they are supportive. Concerns to take care with include:

- Businesses don't want to be seen as 'too political' as it will alienate some of their customer base
- They may have a business contract which means they can't publicly show their support
- They may assume that their customers mostly arrive by car, and may assume that one less motor lane on the bridge will cause more traffic
- They may be worried that their customers will be opposed to liberating the lane
- Keep in mind that senior staff at bigger organizations may be the ones driving



Starting the conversation

Businesses aren't likely to be swayed if you come right at them with facts and figures – even if they are studies from other businesses based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Frame it in a way which is relevant to them, their concerns, and priorities.

- Ask open ended questions and listen actively to get a 'feel' for their current stance on walking and cycling. For example: how do your employees *want* to travel to work?
- As a customer, a supplier, or an employee, talk to them about what the lane change would mean to you personally, and for people like you. Be genuine, personal and relatable – nobody wants to be lectured about the same five canned benefits of cycling everyone brings up!
- For example, as an employee: *"I'd be really proud to say I worked here if we showed the courage to publicly support this'."* or *"being able to cycle over the bridge would help me get to work on time, and in a good mind space to start the day"*
- Talk about relevant things that are happening in the area. For example: tourism activities which could be positively impacted by liberating the lane.

Big talking points

Businesses may want to do the right thing, but they might not know how to do that, or they might not agree that this is the right thing to do, even if they agree that walking and cycling is a priority.

- A lane on the bridge would be a bold, dynamic project for the future of Auckland: It's fun, something to be proud of, to put Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland on the map, it will be wildly popular, and people will say we should have done this years ago
- Eco-friendly tourism is booming, especially bike touring and e-bikes, and it would help draw tourists to Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland city
- Other cities have had success with similar projects, and it will be great for the local economy, creating jobs and business
- It's about transport choice, (not forcing people out of cars) – a wider range of travel options will bring new customers, or help entice employees who currently work from home back to the office



Handling objections

Here are a few reasons why businesses may be reluctant to sign...

- **It's too political:** Let them know that the letter is addressed to Waka Kotahi, not politicians, and we need access for walking, cycling, and wheeling across Te Waitematā regardless of who wins at the next election
- **Cycling is not popular / profitable:** It's important to point out that it's not solely about cycling / cyclists. Liberating the lane is about transport choice for *everyone*, giving the choice to walk, cycle, or ride a scooter (as well as drive and catch the bus). It would open up Te Waitematā for us to stroll over the bridge to admire. That would be a huge asset for all Aucklanders
- **Less lanes will cause congestion:** Here you might want to reference that car traffic across the bridge has been decreasing since 2016 – with the success of the Northern busway and corporate workers changing to working from home

Wrapping up

It's a pretty big decision, and businesses may need some time to think it over. After you've had the conversation:

- Follow up by email, text message or social media
- Thank them for their time talking about the lane, and give them the relevant links to sign up (<https://liberatethelane.nz/#letter>)
- Let them know that you're available to address any questions they have if they need more information from you (or to check out <https://liberatethelane.nz/#faqs>)
- Follow up again a few days to a week later. They may have more queries, and they may need the reminder

Good luck! Remember: the more businesses we get to sign, the easier it will be for others to sign on too!