

Helping more people take up active transport

Switched On Bikes

Transport is the biggest source of emissions in Pōneke | Wellington, accounting for 56.2% of total gross emissions. Switched on Bikes makes it possible for more Wellingtonians to experience a fast, fun and efficient way of getting around that just happens to be better for the environment.



"We're trying to increase access to bikes without requiring everybody to buy something new themselves." – *Ryan O'Connell, Switched On Bikes*

Switched On Bikes is on a mission to make biking accessible to as many people as possible. Out of their bike shop and rental service on Wellington's waterfront, a team of mechanics, bike specialists and tour guides helps Wellingtonians and visitors tap into the joy of being on two wheels.

In October 2024, the Climate and Sustainability Fund supported Switched On Bikes to deliver four pilot projects aimed at reducing car dependency and emissions, while increasing access to bikes for groups facing barriers. These projects include the Kids Bike Library, subsidised "Subscribe to Ride" e-bike leasing for lower-income households, the introduction of a recumbent e-trike for people with disabilities, and cargo bike trials for small businesses.

Riding a bike isn't always a simple choice to make. The cost of owning one can be a real barrier. Not everyone has the physical ability to ride a bike or the knowledge to keep up with maintenance. Switched On Bikes owner Ryan O'Connell says their offerings make biking a more affordable and suitable option.

People wanting to get around the city on an e-bike without the big price tag can sign up to Switched On Bikes' monthly "Subscribe to Ride" programme. For a monthly subscription, riders are provided with a lock, helmet, rear carrier pack, and maintenance is taken care of. Subscribers can commute by bike for less than the cost of weekly parking. Through built-in bike GPS it is estimated subscription customers cover about 70,000km per year.

Switched On Bikes' Kids Bike Library allows families in the Wellington City Council area with a child between 2 and 13 to take a bike home for free. As the child grows, their bike can be swapped out for a larger size. The returned bike is professionally serviced and then passed along to another family. Ryan O'Connell says being able to use a bike as they grow up helps kids build confidence, have fun and have more options for getting around.

"If kids have constant access to a bike throughout the time they're growing up, they're more likely to take it on as a form of transport as they become independent." – *Ryan O'Connell, Switched On Bikes*

Programmes like the bike library and e-bike subscription make it easier for people to ride a bike that is well maintained. Switched On Bikes take responsibility for making sure their fleet is reliable and enjoyable to ride. Caring for bikes properly also helps to reduce waste by keeping them in use instead of rusting in the backyard or garage.

For those who find pedalling difficult, a recumbent electric tricycle has been added to the Switched On Bikes rental fleet. A rider sits lower to the ground in the trike's seat with their back supported and the pedals out in front of them. Anyone can hire the e-trike, whether they want to explore the waterfront and cycleways, or test out a trike before committing to buying one.

Businesses looking for faster, more affordable delivery vehicles can also try before they buy. An electric cargo bike with a trailer is available for short-term hire. Small businesses with an interest in a no-emissions replacement for their car or van can put the cargo bike to the test without making a big investment.

These initiatives not only improve access to low-carbon options for Wellingtonians, but they also result in measurable emission reductions and increased uptake of climate-friendly transport. Switched On Bikes hope to see more people choosing the efficiency and fun of a bike as their main form of transport.

Ryan O'Connell says it's important for biking to be safe and convenient so people who make the right choice for the climate are also making their lives easier.

> "Most people are going to do the most practical thing for their lives, so we have to make sure that thing is in line with our requirements to address climate change." *– Ryan O'Connell, Switched On Bikes*



Sustainable living shouldn't be a luxury. Let's make clean, affordable transport available to more people - through community schemes and workplace support.

To learn more, visit **switchedonbikes.co.nz**