



Community Bike Maintenance

So, you want to fix bikes for your community? Fantastic!

Community bike maintenance means doing basic bike repairs for free, or for koha, for the community. This is great because it keeps bikes out of landfill, and it keeps families cycling. Sometimes a broken bike can be the biggest barrier to choosing to cycle for people on low incomes, or with little time to spare.

Talk to Bike Auckland about free community bike maintenance courses for you and your volunteers so that you can keep bikes working and in a safe condition, and so you know when to send them to a bike shop instead. Once you've done the course, you can practice at your closest [bike hub](#), or at a [local repair cafe](#), learning from other experienced bike mechanics, until you're confident to run your own.



The Roskill Bike Kitchen, outside the Wesley Community Centre. The Roskill Bike Kitchen works with Red Cross to donate bikes to migrant families. Photos supplied by Puketāpapa Active Transport Haven.

Once you've got your own set up, you can also:

- Provide information about local learn-to-ride courses, group rides, or other bike events
- Give out Auckland Transport goodies like retroreflective bag covers, bells, and lights.
- Encourage people to register their bikes on 529 Garage to protect against bike theft, or register their bike for them
- Tell people about which bike locks are most effective (spoiler: the D-lock, folding lock, and chain lock are best)

There are different models you can follow for community bike maintenance: **a pop up hub, a permanent hub, or a mobile bike mechanic**. Have a read through and decide what suits your situation and community best.

The Pop-up Hub

A pop up hub is exactly what it sounds like - a bike fixing station that “pops up” at a park, market, or other community event. Bike Kaipātiki hold pop up bike maintenance at events throughout their area, including indoor events.



Bike Kaipātiki pop up hubs, photos supplied by Bike Kaipātiki.

The pros: A pop up hub does not have the same resource consent barriers that a permanent hub does, and costs less to get materials for. It is unlikely to need a paid coordinator, and won't need as much time from volunteers. People cycling to the event can have their bike tuned up, and others will find out about your group and may join.

Cons: If the hub keeps moving location, or doesn't stick to a regular day, it can be hard for people to find you. May not have the same community building power as having somewhere permanent that people can hang out at. You need a storage space for when the gear is not in use. You are unlikely to be able to do time intensive maintenance, just quick fixes or bike checks.

Tips:

A teardrop banner can help people to identify your group. A marquee is useful for shelter from sun and showers. If you regularly pop up in the same location (perhaps once a month), or at the same community event, it will help people to know where to find you, regardless of whether they follow your group online. Tying it in with a community event will bring more people than if you hold it as a stand alone pop up.

The Mobile Bike Mechanic

A mobile bike mechanic is just what it sounds like - mobile! It can come to the bike that needs fixing. Bike Avondale have done this using a cargo bike, and book in home visits. It could also work for people whose bikes break down on their way somewhere; it's like AA's for bikes!



Fynn, the Mobile Bike Mechanic, doing home visits with the Bike Avondale cargo bike. Photos from Bike Avondale Facebook.

Pros: Often used for simple fixes like flat tyres, which they may not have taken to a bike hub. People don't have to leave their houses or invest much time to have their bikes fixed. This means more of the community are likely to be served, and more are likely to get back into riding. Creates community networks with people who may not have come to a permanent hub, bringing more people to the group.

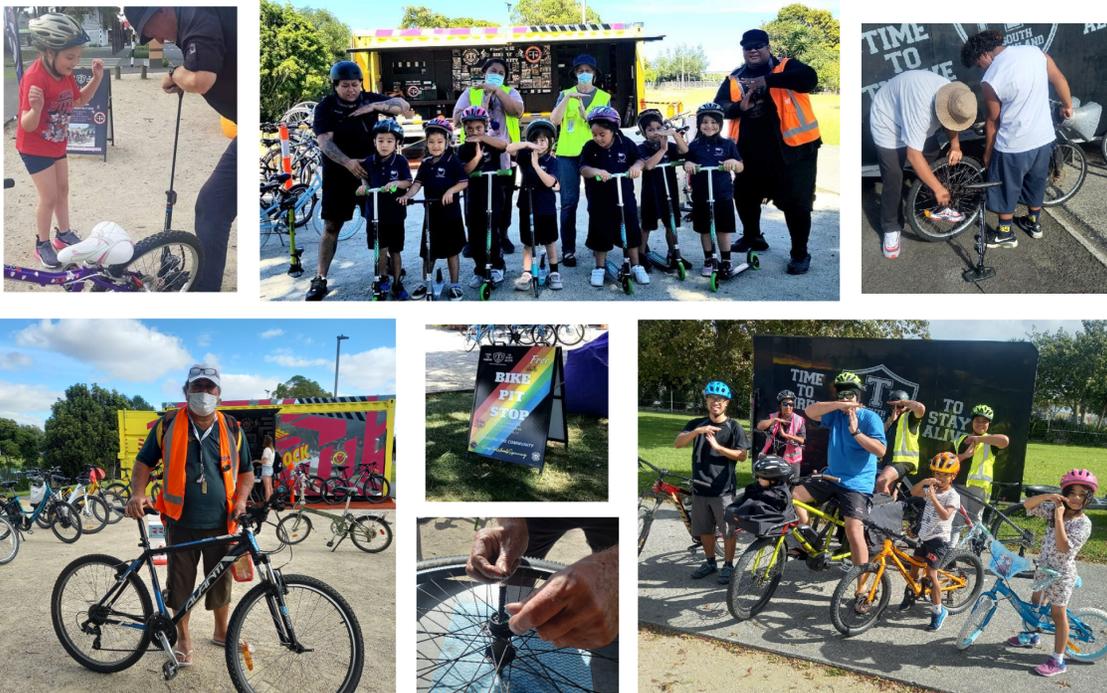
Cons: If using a cargo bike, safe storage is required which can be tricky. Cargo bikes are expensive. Additional volunteer time is invested into travel between locations. May not have the same community building power as having somewhere physical that people can hang out at.

Tips:

Instead of a cargo bike, you could use a bike trailer, which is more affordable. Bike Avondale schedules their home visits for one afternoon a week. This reduces the workload on the mechanic, and helps the community to know what to expect.

The Permanent Hub

You may have seen permanent hubs operating from shipping containers such as the Ecomatters bike hubs (New Lynn, Henderson, and Glen Eden), Tumeke Cycle Space (Sandringham), Triple Teez (Māngere), Roskill Bike Kitchen, Ōtara Bike Burb, and Cycle Action Waiheke. Triple Teez used to operate from a Council-owned building in a park.



Triple Teez's new Bike Hub in the Māngere Town Centre. Big Street Bikers and Ecomatters provided their two shipping containers. Photos from Triple Teez Facebook page.

Pros: Usually easy for people to find. Regular hours mean people have certainty about when to drop in. It's easy to add more containers when you need more storage, if you have the land space. May have the time and resources to do more complex bike fixes. People can try fixing their own bikes, learning from the volunteers as they go. It's a good base to run group rides and other activities from. A community can form around it easily.

Cons: Getting Landowner approval to have a container can be tricky in some areas, and may take a long time, sometimes as long as 5 years. Containers can also be expensive, and Council owned buildings can be in inconvenient locations. If open frequently, you may need to pay someone to manage volunteers and run the hub, requiring ongoing funding and greater responsibility. Some community members will not have the time or means to travel to a permanent hub.

Tips:

- Before setting up your permanent hub, you could host a regular pop up hub in the same location to build momentum with your community.
- For a permanent style hub it is important to have regular opening hours. These could be once a fortnight for a couple of hours, or three times a week for the full day, depending on your resources.
- If you plan to be open longer than a couple of hours, and more frequently than once a week, you will likely need a paid volunteer coordinator. The coordinator can actively seek more volunteers, open and close the hub, and be available for the full day, taking pressure off of the volunteer team.
- It's useful to be in a highly visible location. This can help people to find you and to learn more about what you do.
- Consider locating your container in a community hub, with other community activities happening around it, as this will encourage more people to visit. For example, the Ōtara Bike Burb hub is located in the Ōtara Kai Village.
- If running your hub from a shipping container, you may quickly need a second or third container for storage.
- Instead of a shipping container, your local board or Council may let you rent a Council-owned community facility, such as Triple Teez's park building, which usually is offered at a very low rate (sometimes \$1 per year). Talk to your local board staff members for more information.
- You can connect with Ecomatters, the Roskill Bike Kitchen, and other bike hubs for advice based on their experiences.
- Contact Council staff at hello@livelightly.co.nz about your ideas. They can support you.
- **For a container, try Panuku or Mainfreight.**



Bikebox Waiheke next to the local sustainability centre. As well as bike maintenance, the Bikebox provides a meeting point for group rides and a space for activities, like the 'Love at First Bike' Pechakucha event (right). Left photo from the Bikebox Waiheke Facebook page.

Challenges to consider

Connecting with your community - should your signage, brochures, or posters be bilingual? Is your location physically accessible for people who use mobility devices? Who can you connect with to reach more diverse communities?

Volunteer recruitment - People are more likely to commit to volunteering when asked in person, rather than online. Create local meetups to discuss the idea and ask for help.

Health and Safety - To keep everyone safe, ensure there are always two people working together and that no one is alone at a site. Have a look at the [Roskill Bike Kitchen Health and Safety Plan](#) for more ideas.

Bike theft - You can search a bike's serial number in 529 Garage to see if it's been marked as stolen. If it's stolen, do not confront the person who currently has the bike. Take what information you can and, after they have left, notify the police, or use 529 to tell the bike's owner that it was spotted.

To prevent fixing bikes which were stolen, Brent says that at Ecomatters:

- They always start with questions about the bike, how long have they had it, how did it get damaged, etc
- Staff and volunteers are instructed to try to observe if they get the same people coming back with different bikes (this is actually pretty easy to observe). They will refuse people who do this.
- They only stick to basic repairs, so will send them off to a bike shop for anything requiring more work.

Possible funding sources:

- [Auckland Council Waste and Innovation Fund](#) - this is specifically for initiatives that reduce waste to landfill, like fixing bikes does.
- [Local board grants](#) - such as Econeighbourhood funding
- Auckland Transport - starting with the [Community Bike Fund](#)
- [Lotteries grants](#)
- [Tūmanawa Active grants](#) - if the project is focussed on youth, disabled people, or young women.
- Try [ANCAD](#) or contact us for more potential funding sources.

Read through our [Funding Application Tips](#) or contact us for funding application support.

Would any local businesses support or sponsor your activities? Think about Real Estate Agencies, bike shops, eco stores, and partnerships with 'green' organisations.