

## **Submissions on the Hutt Corridor Plan from Living Streets Aotearoa, Wellington Branch**

### **General Observations**

The Hutt Corridor Plan gives the Wellington Regional Council a unique opportunity to demonstrate foresight and avoid many of the transport problems afflicting Auckland and cities abroad. There is increasing recognition of the high economic, social, health and ecological cost of allowing motor vehicle use to dictate the shape of our environment. Reflecting this concern is the Government's recent ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

It is therefore disappointing to see the emphasis on developing roads, primarily to handle peak-period congestion, in proposals for inclusion in the Hutt Corridor Plan. Such proposals are doubly inappropriate when the population of the Hutt Valley is static and aging.

Living Streets Aotearoa supports policies that encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport, particularly rail. Living Streets Aotearoa favours education and incentives as a means of discouraging private car use.

### **Submissions on New Proposals**

A Recommended for inclusion in Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) 2002-7

#### *State Highway 2*

A1 Grade separation at Melling interchange

This expensive proposal would merely move peak-period congestion on SH2 somewhere else and add to that congestion by inducing more traffic at the expense of public transport. The funds should instead be wisely invested in the rail infrastructure.

A2 Upgrade of Silverstream Bridge SH2 intersection

The same comments apply.

#### *Public Transport*

A3 Initiate Porirua-Hutt Valley bus services

This is an excellent proposal consonant with Kyoto obligations.

A4 Increase rail frequency & speed

This is an excellent proposal which will make greater use of existing infrastructure with minimal additional expenditure and environmental impact.

A5 Electrify rail beyond Upper Hutt to new stations

This is an excellent proposal. It will rapidly bring tangible benefits and also send an important “signal” as the first substantial investment in rail and public transport in general in the Hutt Valley (Waterloo Interchange excepted) for half a century.

B Recommended to be considered for inclusion in RLTS 2002-7

*SH2 links*

B1 Investigate/construct HOT lane Petone-Ngauranga

Strong reservations are held about this proposal. Rail is seen as the preferable mode of transport and a HOT lane could be seen as offering unwise competition on this route. It would be preferable to convert one of the existing lanes to a “tidal flow” lane (ie southbound am and northbound pm). If not too difficult to administer, it should be available only to drivers with passengers on a graduated toll basis according to the number in the vehicle.

It is noted that this proposal drops the assurance previously included, that any HOT lane will not compromise the use of cycles on the route. This assurance should be reinstated.

B2a Investigate/evaluate links Petone-Grenada and Melling/Belmont-Porirua

These proposals are undesirable. Such links would have devastating impacts on precious recreation areas especially the Korokoro Stream and Belmont Regional Park, respectively. They would also conflict with other environmental considerations, being very steep and inducing traffic.

B2b Investigate/evaluate cross-valley road links

It is recognised that traffic flows detract from the Petone Esplanade and also from Jackson Street. Heavy goods vehicles make up much of this flow. However, a cross-valley road link is likely to induce traffic and add to congestion. Ideally the Gracefield branch railway line should be used to transport containers and other heavy goods traffic to and from Seaview.

*Public Transport*

B3 Investigate/evaluate extension of Melling line to CBD

This is an excellent proposal which will directly benefit the travelling public and businesses in Lower Hutt. (Please note that the correct name is not Hutt City). It will also be significant as the first substantial investment in rail and public transport in general in the Hutt Valley (Waterloo Interchange excepted) for half a century.

**Submissions on Recommended Options**

*Improving access south*

The do nothing/promote rail option is a valid alternative provided the rail capacity is increased and fares are kept down to current levels. With SH2 peak flow times extending, traffic on this road is becoming self-limiting. This is highly desirable!

Reservations are held about the recommended HOT option (see B1 above). However, it is recognised that the symbolism of a toll lane would be valuable in setting a significant national precedent and sending an important “user pays” signal on the true cost of roading.

It is noted that this proposal envisages toll revenue paying for a new cycling lane; however, provision of a cycling lane should be maintained throughout any construction and not be dependent on such funding.

#### *Improving access west*

The do nothing/rely on existing connections option is preferable to these expensive and unnecessary proposals. See B2a above. A modest upgrading of SH58 should adequately cater for the foreseeable low population growth. When increased access becomes necessary a rail link should be built to the Porirua Basin, from the Wellington-Wairarapa line and an extended Melling line, via Manor Park.

#### *Improving access across the valley floor*

To do nothing/rely on existing conditions is a suitable option in this situation. The merit of reducing traffic on the Petone Esplanade is recognised but the recommended option, to build a new road, will diminish the quality of life and disrupt communities elsewhere. Any new road should run south of Hutt Central and north of Udy Street (rather than Petone Esplanade) in order to preserve the special character of Petone. See B2b above especially regarding heavy traffic.

#### *Bus v. rail*

No moves should be made which might undermine the use of rail as the spine of the arterial network, or jeopardise the future of the Melling branch railway line which is a natural conduit for Western Hutt/Wellington commuter traffic.

Longer term planning should allow for the Melling line to be extended to a junction with the Wellington-Manawatu railway line at Manor Park (with an eventual connection to the main trunk line via the Porirua Basin). Buses servicing the Western Hutt area should deliver commuters to refurbished stations on the Melling line to catch more frequent and upgraded services to Wellington.

The recommended option to extend the Melling line across the Hutt River to the CBD and Waterloo as a prelude to a light rail loop is an excellent proposal. It will be a convenience to travellers, bring economic benefits to Lower Hutt, and encourage rail travel within the valley. It will also be a valuable test-bed for light rail. The proposal is consistent with the Kyoto Protocol.