

Submission to Wellington City Council on the Draft Open Space Access Plan

This submission is made on behalf of Living Streets

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These details may be made available publicly.

We would like the opportunity to speak to this submission.

1. Introduction

We submit that track usage has two main facets, utilitarian and recreational, and that usage of tracks as a method of transport should be given more emphasis than is currently in the plan.

2. Current Track Network

An additional threat to the current network is that there are tracks that exist on paper only, and these are subject to encroachment, which can make them impassable. The maps appear to include a number of such tracks, making the network appear larger than it actually is.

3. Vision

a. Recreation

The existing vision statements are excellent for recreational use. We support the primary/secondary route concept.

b. Journeys

However, we believe that the draft's focus on recreation is too narrow, and many of these paths can become part of daily walking journeys to/from work, school or social visits. Cycling routes could similarly combine some on-road and off-road to become safe and attractive routes.

The Government's Walking & Cycling Strategy emphasizes the need to have modal shift for journeys 2km and under. If the alternative to driving is to walk along a busy, trafficked footpath, we won't get substantial change. If the alternative involves a ten-minute well-signed short cut through Town Belt, more will be motivated to change their travel behaviour. This will require more co-operation and joint planning between Council business units.

We suggest adding "*provide an open space network integrated with footpaths and access-ways to enable safe, attractive and convenient access for short journeys.*"

c. Information & Promotion

There needs to be considerably more attention to information about the tracks – the danger is that most proponents and commentators will already be "track users" whereas the health imperative is to increase the activity of non-exercisers. Maps (online and paper), brochures, signage and promotion will be critical in encouraging new users, both recreational and utilitarian. The provision of information online, in hard copy and on the ground needs to be considered at all stages rather than being an add-on later. It is possible that a comprehensive pedestrian network development could attract external non-parks funding. If people do not know a public short cut exists, there is little point in upgrading it. We suggest that active promotion to local and ethnic groups is relevant given most suburbs have connections to the open space track network that can also serve as access to nearby suburbs. Low-income households in particular can have specific health needs that walking as a cheap and accessible form of exercise would help.

We suggest adding "*provide clear information on the routes, grades and destinations of the track network.*" and "*promote use of the integrated network.*"

4. Network Principles

The principles are generally acceptable for recreational and tourist purposes, good regarding minimal environmental impact, but deficient regarding sustainable transport.

We submit:

- modifying 4 to read: "*The track network will be integrated with the wider city and regional access networks, including footpaths and access ways.*"

- modifying 11 to read: “*some marked tracks*”, since without marking it is difficult to know this status at the start of a route.
- adding new 12: “*The track network will be recorded and promoted.*” There is then the impetus to ensure that the GIS system, Council and external maps and brochures are complete, correct and persuasive.

5. Top Ten initiatives

We agree with the recreational aims for Skyline and both Coastal Connections; with improving northern network as part of the Northern Growth Framework; and with upgrading the Kaiwharawhara stream track

The other open space access tracks seem worthwhile, but we would prefer to see more emphasis given to tracks which could contribute to sustainable transport objectives, e.g. connections between Brooklyn and Newtown, and between the city and Brooklyn via Central Park, Wadestown via Tinakori Hill, and Hataitai via Mt Victoria.

Again, the focus is purely on physical access rather than the dissemination of information, in promotions and on the ground in terms of length of walks, destinations and directions. We want to see a significant effort to describe commuting and other utilitarian access routes as well as longer recreational activity.

6. Sectors

We are pleased to see that many tracks have been captured on the maps but would like to see zigzags and urban paths added such as the motorway path downtown. In addition, some of the tracks marked are on paper only, and do not exist on the ground. Using volunteers from walking groups to update this data could be a cost-effective way of obtaining and auditing accurate and complete information.

We have the following comments on specific sectors:

13. Central City

- there should be a particular focus on the signage and the connections needed to make an effective transport network

15. Mt Albert / Island Bay

- there is no road on the Tawatawa ridge (western ridge bounding Island Bay)
- we suggest perimeter tracks around Berhampore golf course for walking and cycling
- we suggest a walking and cycling route between Island Bay and Newtown via the golf course, avoiding the narrow, polluted route along Adelaide Road.

16. Eastern Suburbs:

- the Eastern Walkway should be extended at both ends: from its current unsatisfactory northern endpoint round Fort Dorset to Seatoun proper, and at its southern end round the coast, and perhaps up the new (and, surprisingly, hard to access when the gate to the sewage plant is closed and unsigned) track from Moa Point to Strathmore.

7. Classification & Standards

Within “urban path & short walk”, the marking of wheelchair accessible routes and the focussing of maintenance on keeping these paths smooth would cater for the growing numbers of mobility-impaired residents and visitors. We believe that universal access is possible for some tracks in both of these classifications.

8. A general comment

Please note that when we tried to obtain a copy of the draft plan from the City Service Centre at 101 Wakefield St, they could not find a copy.