

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa on Safer Journeys Discussion Document dated August 2009

Organisation: Living Streets Aotearoa
Contact person: Peter Kortegast, president
Address: PO Box 25 424
Email: peter.kortegast@livingstreets.org.nz
Phone: 03 546-3666
Date: 2nd October 2009

1.0 About Living Streets Aotearoa

Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national walking and pedestrian organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking friendly planning and development around the country. Our vision is "More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places".

The objectives of Living Streets Aotearoa are:

- to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
- to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
- to work for improved access and conditions for walkers, pedestrians and runners including walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety
- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

There are local Living Streets walking action groups in towns and cities around the country working to make city and suburban centres in their areas more walking-friendly.

For more information, please see: www.livingstreets.org.nz

Our organisation has a close partnership with the Ministry of Transport and New Zealand Transport Agency, providing key stake holder input on strategic policy. We have 5 employees, 14 regional branches and over 200 active members. Our membership ranges from elected local government representatives, engineers, planners and policy makers, through to passionate every day walkers.

Living Streets runs the Golden Foot Walking Awards, the New Zealand Walking Conference and the New Zealand wide Walk2Work Campaign.

The 2006 National Census showed that 6% of commuters walked to work each day as their main mode of travel. But more significantly, every mode of transport involves a component of walking. Walking is the first mode of travel we learn and the last we want to give up.

2.0 Safer Journeys Submission

2.1 Introduction

We consider ourselves to be a key stake holder for the “Safer Journeys 2009’ consultation and would like our submission to be given the appropriate weighting along side other national transport organizations such as: Road Transport Forum, Automobile Association, Local Government NZ and the Road Safety Council.

We had the opportunity to take part in consultations before the discussion document was drafted, and have had an information meeting with Ministry of Transport representative Iain McAuley, which was useful in compiling our submission.

This submission is Living Streets Aotearoa’s core submission and will be supplemented by submissions from our local Living Streets branches. Living Streets appreciates the enormity of producing the discussion document for the Safer Journeys strategy.

We have structured our submission to focus on safety initiatives we strongly support, and new safety initiatives for pedestrian safety that we would like to see added. We have chosen to put our maximum emphasis on these issues as they produce the greatest gains for pedestrian safety. We are more than willing to supplement this written submission with additional supporting information and ongoing discussions if this is required.

2.2 Executive Summary of Key Focus Points

2.2.1 Five existing initiatives supported strongly by Living Streets Aotearoa:

- (i) ***Strongly support*** “**Speed**”: Increase the adoption of lower speed limits in urban areas.
- (ii) ***Strongly support*** “**Roads and Roadsides**”: Change the give way rules for turning traffic and pedestrians.
- (iii) ***Strongly support*** “**Walking and Cycling**”: Roll-out of strongly enforced variable speed limits around schools and address the issue of rural school bus safety.

- (iv) ***Strongly support “Walking and Cycling”***: Improve techniques to integrate safety into land use planning" (p36).
- (v) ***Strongly support “Roads and Roadsides ”***: Develop and support new approaches to safety on urban mixed-use arterials" (p23)

2.2.2 Two new proposed Walking Safety Initiatives:

- (i) ***Introduce a phased in financial assistance rate (FAR) for Road Controlling Authorities for Footpath Maintenance.***
This could be introduced within current budgets by a slight reduction in the road maintenance financial assistance rate.
- (ii) ***Walking should be actively encouraged as the safest travel mode by all key transport agencies and especially through schools. The new Integrated Planning Guideline must ensure all new transport projects incorporate high quality pedestrian accessibility.***
Walking is the safest mode of travel. This mode should be actively encouraged as increased walking will improve road safety.

2.3 Safer Journeys’ August 2009 Document

The issue of safety on New Zealand roads is a challenge that must be faced and overcome to reduce the massive social and economic costs of transport in this country.

Living Streets Aotearoa strongly supports any government initiative to reduce the social and economic trauma caused by unsafe land transport, and is very pleased to see a revised national safety strategy being developed.

Walking and safety are intrinsically linked. The public perception that walking is not safe has resulted in the decline in the numbers of commuters walking to work and children walking to school. However, according to the Ministry of Transport’s own research, walking is the safest mode of travel of all the modes. The issue for pedestrians is that they are in conflict with high speed vehicles.

We see improving road safety and improving safety for pedestrians as being extremely important. A safer pedestrian transport environment will encourage more walking, which has significant health, economic and social benefits. NZTA’s own research has demonstrated a composite \$2.70 benefit per pedestrian per day for each new pedestrian.¹

It is also well established that increased numbers of pedestrians increase business turnover. Commercial rentals are directly related to foot traffic. Therefore pedestrian numbers have a direct economic effect and influence economic growth. NZTA are currently undertaking research into the actual economic spend of different transport modes, with initial research supporting international findings that pedestrian numbers have the largest influence on shop turn-over.

¹ Page 8-12 of NZA EM Manual Volume 2, Amendment No1 1 January 2009

2.3.1 Proposed Vision

We support the vision of a safe road system that is increasingly free of road deaths and serious injuries.” We believe the vision should be extended to include all injuries, not just serious injuries. The vision should be backed up with specific targets for each category to enable progress towards the vision to be tangibly measured. Data is already being collected and is available and it makes sense to use it.

We recommend that targets are added to the strategy

2.3.2 Proposed policy approach – the safe system

We support the concept of a safe system. However, the strategy seems to focus on making a more dangerous mode safer, rather than encouraging more people to use a safer mode. The Ministry of Transport documents *How New Zealanders Travel* and *Risk on the Road* both state that the two safest travel methods are walking and travelling by bus. A national road safety strategy should put at least as much emphasis on encouraging people to choose safer transport options as on making other options safer. We therefore believe that safer walking and public transport use should be a priority of high concern.

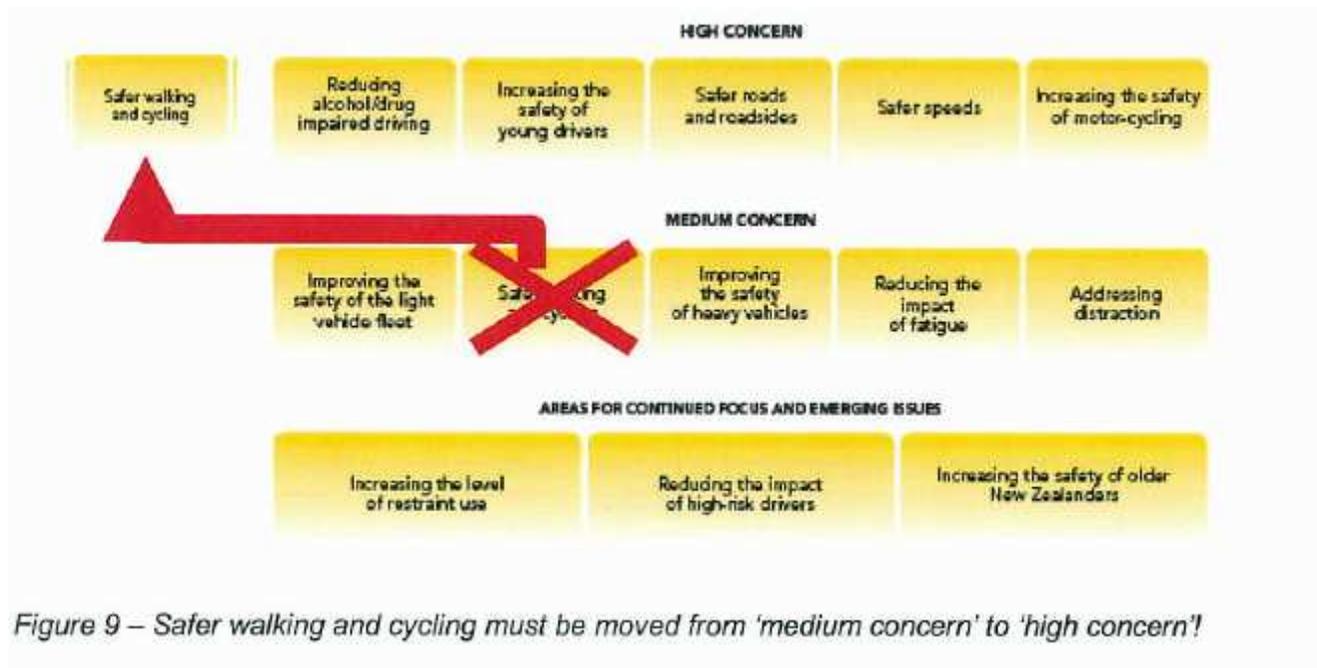


Figure 9 – Safer walking and cycling must be moved from 'medium concern' to 'high concern'!

2.3.3 Road Safety Priorities

The two priority areas which will have the greatest benefits for making journeys on foot safer are Safer Speeds and Safer Roads and Roadsides. Living Streets therefore supports all the initiatives in these two priorities. However, as outlined above, we believe that encouraging people to use safer forms of transport should also be a high priority, and we recommend that Safer Walking and Cycling should be a priority of high concern. We support all the initiatives in this priority.

2.4 Key Areas of Existing Safety Initiatives we strongly support

2.4.1 *Strongly support* “Speed”: Increase the adoption of lower speed limits in urban areas.

2.4.2 *Strongly support* “Walking and Cycling”: Roll-out of strongly enforced variable speed limits around schools and address the issue of rural school bus safety.



Speed of vehicles is the single most critical safety issue for pedestrians. The effect of speed on pedestrian crash survival rate is fundamental. There is a 100% fatality rate for pedestrians involved in crashes at speeds above 80km/h, which drops to just 20% at speeds below 40km/h.² Lower speeds in urban areas and around schools will create a safe forgiving environment regardless of any other physical infrastructure. This safer environment for pedestrians will encourage greater numbers of pedestrians through an enhanced sense of safety.

2.4.4 *Strongly support* “Roads and Roadsides”: Change the give way rules for turning traffic and pedestrians.

The existing give-way to right turning traffic road rules are in need of review and removal from the current Traffic Control Rules. This is a significant safety issue for pedestrians as the current rule requires left turning vehicles to focus on oncoming right turning traffic and creates a blind spot for pedestrians crossing the intersection or side road. By removing this rule, left turning traffic can focus on the side road activity and pedestrians have certainty. This will improve

² NZTA Pedestrian Planning and design Guide, Page 3-8, Figure 3.5, Dec 2007, also refer ACC and LTSA Down with Speed Review October 2007

pedestrian-vehicle conflicts on side roads and major facilities entrances. It is important to realise that 90% of all pedestrian injuries occur while pedestrians are crossing the road.³

This rule should be strengthened, so that turning vehicles give way to pedestrians. The discussion in the document (pp22/23) is confused and confusing, implying that left-turning traffic is already required to give way to pedestrians, and this is not the case. This would be a very significant improvement for pedestrian safety. *This law change is a top priority.*



2.4.5 Strongly support “Roads and Roadsides”: Develop and support new approaches to safety on urban mixed-use arterials”

2.4.2 Strongly support “Walking and Cycling”: Improve techniques to integrate safety into land use planning”

The needs of pedestrians for crossing busy roads such as traffic calming, more crossing points, and wider footpaths, is not given enough weight by Road Controlling Authorities and NZTA. Better urban design and integrated land use planning to make quality, urban slow speed environments to increase the use of public transport, walking and cycling should be a priority safety issue.

Good land use planning can also improve safety by reducing the need for more dangerous modes of travel for everyday trips.

³ (NZTA Pedestrian Planning and design Guide, Page 3-7, Dec 2007)

2.5 New Walking Safety Initiatives We Propose

2.5.1 Funding assistance should be provided for Road Controlling Authorities for Footpath Maintenance.

Currently NZTA provides funding assistance for the operation and maintenance of all transport roading infrastructure, except footpaths. Pedestrians are classified under the transport act as a transport mode. Living Streets sees the funding of footpath maintenance as critical for improving the facilities provided for pedestrians. Over 400 people are admitted to hospital in New Zealand each year due to slips, trips and stumbles on the same level in the road environment.⁴

This funding assistance can be provided within existing budgets through a minimal reduction in the overall Funding Assistance Rate (FAR) for all roading activities to allow this area to be funded. This will directly reduce pedestrian hospitalisations due to falls on poorly maintained footpaths and generate savings in ACC and health costs to the taxpayer.

This should be an initiative under the Safer Roads and Roadsides priority, as the roading corridor includes footpaths, and the strategy should be treating all road users fairly, rather than favouring some classes of road user over others.

2.5.2 Walking should be actively encouraged as the safest travel mode by all key transport agencies and especially through schools. The new Integrated Planning Guideline must ensure all new transport projects incorporate high quality pedestrian accessibility.

Walking as a transport mode needs encouragement and needs to be integrated into all transport planning. We see this as a critical safety initiative and should feature as part of the Safer Journeys document. More people walking will directly reduce road fatalities and hospitalizations, as walking is the single safest mode of travel. Schools should actively promote and encourage walking to school.

NZTA are currently preparing an Integrated Planning Policy Document, which Living Streets strongly supports. We would like to see the completion of this existing project and its implementation as a key safety initiative.

2.5.3 Place the legal onus of blame for road crashes on those that cause the danger, eg drivers rather than cyclists or pedestrians;

In many countries overseas, where there is a crash between a vehicle and a pedestrian or a cyclist, the driver of the vehicle is deemed to be responsible for the crash unless proved otherwise. This has the effect of making drivers more cautious around more vulnerable road users. This is in keeping with the road user hierarchy adopted in many countries, and recently in the *Auckland Regional Road Safety Plan 2009/12*, which puts pedestrians (mobility impaired, wheeled and able) at the top, followed by cyclists.

⁴ NZTA Pedestrian Planning and design Guide, Page 3-9, Dec 2007



2.6 Ranking of the Priority of Safety Initiatives which will improve safety for pedestrians

We have ranked the top ten priorities listed in the document which we believe will have the greatest impact on improving pedestrian safety. We have also listed the initiatives we would like to see included in the strategy.

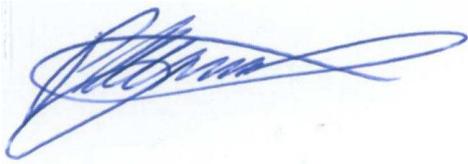
1. Increase the adoption of lower speed limits in urban areas;
2. Change the give-way rules for turning traffic and pedestrians;
3. Develop and support new approaches to safety on urban mixed-use arterials;
4. Improve techniques to integrate safety into land-use planning;
5. Support the roll-out of strongly-enforced variable speed limits around schools and address the issue of rural school bus safety;
6. Raise the driving age to 17;
7. Introduce compulsory third-party insurance;
8. Add specific walking and cycling questions to driver licensing testing so drivers are more aware of pedestrians' and cyclists' safety needs;
9. Reduce the legal adult blood alcohol limit to 50 mg per 100 ml (BAC 0.05);
10. Introduce a zero BAC for drivers under 20 years, adults without a full licence, commercial drivers **and repeat offenders**.

Add these initiatives:

11. Provide funding assistance for Road Controlling Authorities for Footpath Maintenance.
12. Active encouragement of walking as the safest travel mode by all key transport agencies and especially through schools. The new Integrated Planning Guideline must ensure all new transport projects incorporate high quality pedestrian accessibility.
13. Place the legal onus of blame for road crashes on those that cause the danger, eg drivers rather than cyclists or pedestrians;

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our ideas on this important document.

We would like to be heard in support of our submission, should the opportunity arise.



Peter Kortegast

Living Streets Aotearoa National President

Senior Projects Manager Opus Consultants

BE(Civil)

Ph (03) 546-3666

peter.kortegast@opus.co.nz

c/o Living Streets Aotearoa

PO Box 25 424

Wellington 6146