

Living Streets Aotearoa



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Waikato Regional Land Transport Strategy Review

Feedback, due 22 January 2010

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In this response to the Discussion paper: regional outcomes and challenges, Living Streets Hamilton will follow the format provided in the online submission form, with the exception that we would like to cover the “What do you think of the outcome statement” question which heads each section with one statement that relates to all of them. This may avoid tedious and possibly cynical repetition.

The outcome statements are uniformly highly desirable states for the Waikato area to find itself in, hence there is no sensible criticism to be made of them. If they could be made to happen we would be living in a vastly improved environment in many senses. However, there is a huge barrier to the realisation of any of the desired outcomes, which you have stated quite clearly yourselves at the end of the summary document in the “emerging regional challenges” section:

“High investment in roads of national significance resulting in decreased funding availability for other activities (such as other routes, maintenance, renewals, public transport, walking and cycling, TDM, safety and community programmes)”

We are dealing with a central government that believes building more roads is the answer to all our problems. Living Streets believe that building more roads is the cause of most of our problems, at least to the extent that the road building stops all the activities listed above which are vital to the improvement of ordinary Waikato citizens’ lives and wellbeing. In the long term, the central government approach is contrary to almost every other developed country in the world and will probably leave us decades behind in the development of a sustainable society.

Living Streets members believe that one of the top priorities for regional authorities is to express in the strongest possible terms the futility of doing reviews such as this if there is no practical way of implementing the findings. We are all wasting our time and breath, dreaming of other ways of living which no-one will fund.

We will now proceed with the feedback form as presented, omitting the first question in each case.

Vision Statement:

Does it accurately reflect what the region should be trying to achieve?

Yes, although it would help if it specifically, rather than implicitly, stated the importance of effective public transport within and between Waikato towns and cities. The list of outcomes is better than the original, although it is disconcerting that the Economic Development vision appears to have either no connection or a negative one with Safety, judging by the cross on page 20 of the discussion document. The vision statement offers no guidance on whether there is a priority list to the statements. Economic Development is however at the top of the list. Living Streets believes that, if there is a priority sequence, environmental sustainability, public health and safety should take precedence in that order

Economic development

*Is there anything else that should be included in the outcome statement or the explanation?
Are the economic development targets suitable?*

They would be suitable if there was any central government support. There needs to be a concerted effort by regional authorities to convince government of the economic benefits of rail, shipping, and public transport. There also needs to be an evaluation of the effects of the predicted future cost of fuel (\$6 per litre by 2060 in section 5.1.3) on predicted growth. The congestion figures need to be set in the context of city size. Tauranga benefits from having a population of only about 118,200, whereas the other cities are much bigger than Hamilton. The fact that Hamilton has worse peak congestion than Christchurch, though it is a smaller city, must have something to do with the relative levels of bus use and the frequency and density of services.

It is unclear what is meant by the target of “carrying more freight per kilometre travelled”. Does this merely mean that growth in new roads and railways will not keep up with the growth in freight? If so, is it a helpful target? The ideal should surely be to have a much higher proportion of freight on the rail rather than on the road.

Are there any other targets we should add?

Please, add that there should be an increase in active transport (walking and cycling), linked to public transport as needed and/or possible. A modest increase of 10 to 20% by 2040 would be better than nothing. This would free up roads for essential traffic, reduce accidents and thus reduce health and social costs. It is vital to convince central government that transport does not exist in a vacuum – it has effects far greater than mere traffic movement.

Safety and personal security

*Is there anything else that should be included in the outcome statement or the explanation?
Are safety and personal security targets suitable?*

Emphasise that by making road systems safe for walkers, cyclists and disabled users, safety will be improved for everyone

Are there any other targets we should add?

A modest 10 to 20% increase in cycling and walking and similar in the use of public transport. We should be able to do much better than that by 2040 with sensible support. Most pedestrian and cycle accidents are on major urban roads. The Ministry of Transport says that 95% survive when struck at 32kph, but only 55% at 48kph. For this reason a target should be added to reduce speed limits to 30kph in all urban areas with significant cycle and pedestrian traffic, or to otherwise provide for safe and convenient movement of that cycle and pedestrian traffic.

Access and mobility

Is there anything that should be included in the outcome statement or the explanation?

Here, it is important to specifically mention active transport, public transport and disabled access to public transport in the outcome statement. It is also important to mention extension of weekend services for public transport as for many people, especially those in lower socioeconomic groups, transport is a major barrier to participation in normal life.

Are the access and mobility targets suitable?

They are very modest, especially for public transport use. Heavy targeting of school traffic should be able to increase the 7% figure, and making roads generally safer should increase walking and cycling in urban areas. This may not necessarily involve huge expenditure – raised crossings, paving alterations, visual barriers, and even the good old pedestrian crossing (of the white paint variety) work well in other countries. There's no reason why they can't here, with some major road user education programmes and probably heavy fines for contravention of the law. The latter should in fact be a useful income stream for some time until the driving public gets the message.

With the household travel survey showing Hamilton bottom (11%) of 5 cities for walking, a lot needs to be done to achieve 30% of trips by walking or cycling by 2040. However, 30% is a low target compared to many overseas cities, several of which have worse weather and more hills.

Are there any other targets we should add?

Provide a steady annual increase in pedestrian and cycle crossing points on main roads within towns and cities (numbers to be determined by consultation with local authorities in each location). There is no mention of priority for buses, despite being high on the list of congested cities. Bus lanes and priority at signals gives buses a competitive advantage in speed and reliability and cuts the cost of running them.

Public Health

Is there anything else that should be included in the outcome statement or the explanation?

Provide more efficient public transport networks to minimise the duration of trips and the waiting time between stages of individual trips.

Consideration should be given to whether Peachgrove Rd is the most suitable site for emissions monitoring. The air quality monitoring statistics suggest that other sites had higher readings and it seems that locations such as Te Rapa would be higher still. Benzene concentrations are usually highest around petrol stations but there is no evidence of monitoring them.

Are the public health targets suitable?

Again, they are modest. Let's aim higher and put some numbers on them!

Figure 15 illustrates that the regional bus routes don't serve most of the areas of greatest poverty. If this outcome is to apply to those areas an integrated bus network needs to be developed.

Environmental sustainability

Is there anything else that should be included in the outcome statement or explanation?

State specifically that targets can only be met in a sustainable manner by vastly improving rail freight services

Are the environmental sustainability targets suitable?

Good, but modest. And they probably won't be achieved unless the rail option is implemented. To avoid global warming the suggestion is for reductions of 40% or more. Thus 10 to 20% is inadequate. Freight transport and the far greater efficiency of rail and shipping are not mentioned.

Integration

Is there anything else that should be included in the outcome statement or explanation?

It should be emphasised that to reduce our car use, we have to have vastly improved public transport and viable cycling and walking options. Without this, nothing works.

Are the integration targets suitable?

They don't address the vital underlying issue: if people can't get to work/school/other activities efficiently by public transport or safely on foot or by cycle, they will use a private car.

Are there any other targets we should add?

Try for reduction of private car use by at least 20%, via the introduction of improved bus routes and safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists. The introduction to this outcome says "There are three aspects to integration: integration of land use and transport planning, integration between all transport modes and policy and inter-agency integration." The last two aspects are ignored in the targets.

Global Challenges

Do these global challenges accurately reflect the current and future situation?

They cover most of it. The one you have missed out is governmental and individual mindset, which may be one of the most important and the most difficult to deal with.

It is unlikely that hydrogen will provide an alternative to oil. Other technologies such as maglev trains in vacuum tunnels are at least as likely. However, there may not be an alternative to replace all of the 98% of travel currently powered by oil, and planning should consider that possibility and how it might be dealt with.

Existing Regional challenges

Are these regional challenges still relevant?

Yes, and they highlight the need for change.

Emerging regional challenges

Are these emerging regional challenges accurate?

Yes, and they show trends still going the wrong way to achieve the objectives of the Plan.