

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa

On

Proposed changes to the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport Funding 2009/10 – 2018/19 and other transport funding changes

Organisation: Living Streets Aotearoa
Contact person: Celia Wade-Brown
Address: PO Box 25 424, Wellington 6146
Email: celia.wadebrown@livingstreets.org.nz
Phone: 0274836691
Date: 2nd April 2009

Living Streets is pleased to have been asked to submit on the proposed changes. We represent the interests of people who walk all or part of their journeys. A fact sheet about our organisation is appended to this submission.

General matters

The government has a range of measures (policy and guidance, education, infrastructure and service provision, regulation and enforcement, and economic instruments such as taxation) that can be used to guide the development of the transport system and address the challenges. Funding is one tool that will help achieve successful outcomes and the GPS is the primary instrument for directing that funding in relation to land transport.

How transport is funded is one thing. How infrastructure is designed (e.g. whether a new roundabout has effective provision for people on foot to cross the intersecting roads) is another and we encourage the new government to ensure that the recent Pedestrian Planning and Design Guidelines are adhered to in the building of any new infrastructure as the detail of design affects the outcome.

Strong points have been made about the apparent current mode of choice of New Zealanders i.e. that 84% "choose" to drive. "Choice" implies that using the car is what people want to do, but the statistics say nothing about the reasons why people use any particular mode, and because of lack of service provision many people have no alternative to the private car. Also, this statistic is based on km travelled rather than the number of trips and only for commuting to work of over 16s. It does not include students or the elderly. Do their needs not count? Does the school drop-off not obstruct other traffic and create youngsters dependent on using their parents as taxis? Mode share for time spent travelling for shopping tells a different story, of economic interest too. For example, 12% of hours spent travelling to shops are on foot (NZHTS statistics), 27% of time for trips for educational purpose is spent on foot.

Reflecting current choice rather than being a leader for change does not consider the significant differences between urban and rural, opportunities in cities with good public transport and walking facilities. We do not advocate walking as a choice for every trip – just far more than are done on foot now. Lots of little errands, appointments, short commutes could be done on foot as fast as in a car if there is congestion- and what benefits we would see!

Walking is an almost universal contributor to individual journeys. This is less true of freight and there are significant relationships and a few matters of contention. Distribution, service vehicles, needs of urgent trades such as plumbers. However some freight choices that would encourage more large trucks onto local roads are inimical to pedestrian safety and the general amenity value.

So, should government "reflect" mode use choices or influence "choice"? If the choices were made with full information, fully costed externalities and had no deleterious consequences, perhaps the reflection would be reasonable. However, choices are in a constrained environment and do have effects. Modal choices have considerable personal and governmental funding implications. More crashes, obesity and lower air quality certainly impose costs in the immediate future.

In the previous GPS, it was stated that the land transport sector faces serious challenges including increasing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, congestion, the road toll and rising fuel prices. This is still true although fuel prices are at least temporarily lower with global demand having reduced and some speculative behaviour punctured.

The new government has valid concerns with economic crisis and reflection of modal choice need to be seen in that context. Walking is always the affordable choice

Building new infrastructure has been a common theme in response to the economic crisis internationally. Any infrastructure building will be cheaper now than during times of economic growth. Similarly, any infrastructure investment will create jobs. The real question is the legacy it will leave. Living Streets prefers a legacy of walkable city centres, safe routes to school, good access to facilities, priority for freight over commuting vehicles and a recognition that walking is at the heart of transport rather than an afterthought.

The proposed revised GPS notes:

"There will also be a strong emphasis on value for money, and the economic efficiency of projects", "Improvements in journey time reliability", "Easing of severe congestion", "Increasing access to markets", and "Improving transport efficiency".

For buses and trains to be a mode of choice these need to arrive on time, include pleasant walking environments to and from bus/train stops, and good bus shelters and stations. Hence investment in bus priority lanes, good bus infrastructure, footpath maintenance and improvements is value for money and economically efficient. Improving the journey of bus users and those contemplating choosing the public transport would improve congestion so improve the travel time for essential car and road freight journeys. Walking for shorter trips, under 2km (e.g. to school or work) are ideal to ease urban congestion, as these get traffic off the road at peak times.

Suggested amendment to draft GPS:

Include a statement in the revised GPS about looking for opportunities to increase the options for walking, cycling, and public transport in order to contribute to improving journey time reliability.

The proposed revised GPS has an aim of "Improving transport connections to areas that have economic growth potential".

We note that economic growth can include intensification e.g. Greater CHCH Urban Development Strategy (2008)

We consider land use planning has more effect than any other matter on walkability, accessibility, and origin-destination distances. There needs to be integration between transport policy and land use policy. A statement to this effect appears to be missing from the revised GPS.

Suggested amendment to draft GPS:

Include statement about Integration between land use policy and transport policy.

Overall level of funding

Fuel excise duty (FED and RUC)

We believe that users should pay the full externalities of their mode use and that ACC and hospital costs attributable to motor vehicle crashes should be included in this tax. They are not an irrelevant by-product. We were pleased to see the comments from Dr Smith "the more you drive your car the more risk you have," and agree that more of the ACC funding should become a variable rather than a fixed cost to motorists. Less direct costs such as public health effects from air pollution, the obesity epidemic due in part to the difficulty of walking across or cycling along many arterial roads, cleaning up road run-off into harbours, beaches and streams should also be candidates for their costs to be paid from the fuel tax at a national level.

The Motor Vehicle Rate for the ACC part of the tax could vary depending on the NCAP rating as a proxy for the likelihood of crashes from that type of vehicle. If this were considered, please include the pedestrian protection rating. We note that Euro NCAP released a separate star rating for pedestrian safety valid from 1997 to 2009. As of 2009, the pedestrian score has become integral part of the overall rating scheme, however the technical assessment has remained the same.

With the changes in new diesel engines meaning that they are far more benign and more fuel efficient than petrol, we suggest a change to the RUC collection to a fuel tax payable at the pump might be administratively easier and reduce avoidance. On the other hand, as vehicles become more energy efficient and plug-in electric come on the market, perhaps all vehicles could have some charges via a Vehicle Kilometres

Travelled Tax. The costs imposed by heavy vehicles are much greater per km and hence need to be covered by higher RUCs.

We are ambivalent about abolishing the regional fuel tax and replacing it with \$660 million over 6 years from the Regional Petrol Tax Scheme – while it did allow regions to set their own priorities and pay for their own problems, we see it could also be administratively expensive and particularly difficult at the edges of regions. However, we are not sure why rural areas should pay for city transport when rural areas often have almost zero transport choices.

The GPS specifies a number of funding sources but there are also the local and regional council rates. It is appropriate that transport funding is shared between central and local government but the funding allocations create strong incentives that can distort local decision-making. For example, there is no funding assistance for footpath maintenance while there is for local road maintenance. Given most drivers park on the streets and walk at some point, as well as the “compulsory” pedestrian without access to a car or who chooses not to drive for various reasons, we see the integration of footpaths and roading as essential.

Activity classes and their funding allocations

We would like to see the figures inflation adjusted as is expected in Council LTCCPs, otherwise the real spending power can decline while the figures remain the same.

Sector training and support and research

These classes have been combined. While there has been reduction from a range of 7 to 11 to between 6 and 8, the quantum is similar. Some transport sectors have a strong representation due to their resources while others require support for information sharing and involvement in national and local decisions. An example is that the AA has strong representation, due largely to their excellent road recovery and additional services, not necessarily to members who have signed up to all policy positions. Recent publication of new safety standards and other guidelines for pedestrian planning need promulgation to Council transport staff so we urge you to retain this funding and increase it when possible.

Given the changing direction of much transport spending towards modes with a lesser environmental footprint in, e.g., Victoria Australia, North West American seaboard and Europe, we question whether there is research planned establishing how different the transport environment and needs are in New Zealand from those localities changing the mix in spending away from the private car.

Living Streets is pleased to support ongoing evidence based research. We already advise on some aspects of research and would like to offer some suggestions regarding priorities in economically depressed times such as shopper origin surveys to enable local authorities to support retail sector in its real rather than perceived needs. The need for updates, training and capacity-building in new models, new examples and new imperatives exists at a local level too. Whether it's the NZ Transport Authority regional staff, councillors and officers of Councils, or other organisations, we need support for visits from a range of experts, as well as listening to the local community's knowledge and views.

While some funding transfer to regions is reasonable, we believe that there needs to be continued national funding of initiatives such as networking support, education of

local areas regarding funding assistance changes, oversight / auditing of whether regional targets are being met, and general support for transport officials to learn new ways of planning cities and transport in the 21st century. Certain matters currently done at a regional level, if at all, could be better resourced if a national approach were taken

Demand management and community programmes

We support this area and while the immediate drop in funding is not great, we are concerned there is no increase in the next six years. Working with households, businesses and recreation facilities to find and eliminate obstacles to preferred travel modes, such as lack of safety or shelter on the route, or lack of knowledge of any bus routes or discounts, gives real meaning to "travel choice". This may be done more cost effectively and convincingly by community sector organisations than public sector employees.

The Greater Christchurch Travel Demand Strategy recently available for Public Consultation (March 2009) notes some alarming trends that could be reversed with appropriate actions. It is a considerable worry that by current trends car travel in Greater Christchurch is expected to grow by 2.5% per annum and based on current population traffic volumes will increase by 27% by 2026. Freight is expected based on current trends, to double by 2040 (p5). This means there is a lot of pressure on the transport infrastructure system that calls for fresh thinking. Traffic growth means longer commuting time, and combined with the issues of noise and vibration, causes stress and fatigue (p 39). The fact of "one fewer trip by car each week, per household, is enough to stop traffic growth" (pgs 5 & 3) shows traveling smarter (changing the way we travel e.g. using active modes or ride share, or public transport and the number of trips we make, e.g. combining trips) means we can ensure adverse effects from current trends do not eventuate. There is hope if we commit to make changes now by ensuring choice is available rather than just reflecting current mode. We need to look to the future rather than embedding the status quo in relation to modal share and choice.

Public transport

Have the Ministry and Minister considered the effect of downgrading public transport on congestion? This is effectively what dropping its share of funding does. Imagine half the bus users in the main metros waking up and choosing to drive a car each to work! We appreciate the commitment to Wellington and Auckland rail in the short term but the longer term drop in the proposed funding is concerning. The old GPS (average of upper and lower ranges) figures had a ratio of public transport infrastructure to new and improved state highway infrastructure in 2014/15 of 15% but the proposed spending ratio is a mere 4%. Even with the argument that spending should reflect existing choices, the drop is significant when there is no ongoing commitment to rail infrastructure from Crown spending beyond the initial \$258 million. Why is it considered that "removing rail from the National Land Transport Fund will {not only} simplify rail funding."?

Relationship between Public Transport and active modes

Public transport numbers are considerably less than the numbers for walking trips. However we support public transport for those journeys and those people where active modes are not possible or practical. In order to catch a train or bus, we need good access, safe lighting, real time information, accurate timetables, reasonable

fares, shelters and seating. It is often the less physically strong who catch the bus or train but they are often expected to wait with neither shelter from the elements nor rest for their legs.

As an example, the development of the Portland Mall shows an attractive combination of public transport and pedestrian space. While some metropolitan areas do not have the corridor density desirable for light rail, Wellington does. Light rail could also be the catalyst for densification in other centres. See <http://portlandmall.org/about/index.htm>

Some members suggest private partnerships to build light rail could be considered, especially if the likely commercial land value increases are able to be captured to fund the initial costs.

For active modes, the existence of public transport is complementary – walk to work and bus home or vice versa. People are multimodal rather than confined to one mode. For public transport operators, pedestrians are their lifeblood. Almost every public transport journey begins or ends with a walk.

In downtown areas, it is the ambience that is important for high value shopping rather than the speed of access. Reducing public transport service quality or frequency would be detrimental to the key shopping areas. This is a good time for upgrading public transport infrastructure where there is evidence of demand. We agree that there would be no point in light rail in Picton, for example, but there certainly is an argument where bus congestion reaches its peak in Lambton Quay.

Walking and cycling facilities

Separate facilities are sometimes very useful. Attention to the gaps in delivery often shows desire lines where pedestrians would like to go but are poorly provided for. Some specific budget is therefore welcome. Bridges, new crossings, countdown systems, route signage and facilities for the mobility or vision impaired such as tactile tiles at crossings are all welcome improvements. Walking plans and strategies often look at key routes and we believe this is a useful way of improving pedestrian experience and reducing congestion rather than improving isolated black spots. This also applies to minor safety improvements in the general roading category.

State Highways

We note the considerable increase in this area and don't support increased capacity in general. However there are some communities where the impost of a State Highway is high such as Levin. However, if there is a by-pass, the town may become a shadow of itself. The benefit to a town of passing traffic with the competing need for freight, business and leisure traffic to move through it can be managed by speed reduction which will not add significantly to journey time but will prevent small towns from being divided by an abyss. The engineering has to be done well to reduce speed gradually so there are not unnecessary jams.

Many places in New Zealand, including metropolitan, small town and rural communities, have State Highways servicing them that also create a chasm between neighbours, between residents and the local facilities. If some of the State Highway funding is used to resolve these paradoxes that would be helpful. Some interchanges designed even in the last ten years do not cater well for all modes using them. In some cases underpasses can work well but they need to have good lines of sight – for

example raised or sunken roundabouts with at grade walkways through. Again the Pedestrian Planning Guidelines offer useful guidance.

As well as the return of congestion post-expansion, there will be greater demand for parking if road capacity increases. There is evidence that cities which provide considerable parking space do so at the cost of attractive areas. More traffic pouring into our cities means the local streets are busier and spaces better used for parks or buildings have to cater for increased numbers of one-person commuter vehicles.

Local roads

We hope that changes to the Funding Assistance Rate (FAR) could enable footpath maintenance to be at least on a par with local roading maintenance. This would have to be dependent on the local authority not reducing the budget in that area or it would just transfer costs rather than improve the situation.

The FARs for walking plan implementation, model communities, accessible neighbourhood schemes and area-wide safety schemes need to be at a more encouraging rate than 50% if the government wishes to see significant change at a local level in New Zealand's metro authorities. Consideration of very high (90 or 100%) rates for the first three-year period would kick start a programme of exemplar projects whose benefits should then encourage other local authorities to follow suit.

While we realise that construction of paths through parks can now be eligible for a subsidy if they offer serious transport benefit, the process of applying for funding is so time consuming that the financial offer is often not taken up.

Even if one doubts central government has a role in encouraging good footpath maintenance, a look at hospitalisations and their costs might give cause for a second thought. For the elderly, consequences of a fall may result in permanent loss of independence and a move to a rest-home or hospital instead of enjoying life at home.

"Approximately 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. They tend to be elderly ... and are more likely to be seriously injured if they fall." For the elderly, consequences of a fall may result in permanent loss of independence and a move to a rest-home or hospital instead of enjoying life in their own home.

See Figure 3.7 – Hospital admissions from falls in the road environment (2001 – 2003) in <http://www.landtransport.govt.nz/road-user-safety/walking-and-cycling/pedestrian-planning-design-guide/docs/chapter-3.pdf>

The part of the local roading budget that is often called "Minor safety improvements" is invaluable for a relatively responsive infrastructural change. Roads and intersections designed and built in the mid 20th century often have sweeping curves and huge asphalt expanses even in residential areas that are intimidating for people to cross on foot, especially the young and old. This money is used by local Councils to introduce pedestrian refuges, roundabouts and kerb extensions as the funding allows and situation demands.

Road Policing

Policing is an essential part of road safety. While the changes for 09/10 295 – 305 to proposed 285 – 295 are fairly insignificant, by the end of the forecast, the difference

is for 18/19 is proposed 375-385 against 450 – 480. It could be an efficient use of resources to have more permanent speed cameras, advisory speed signs and red light cameras. Cameras at traffic light intersections can a) reduce crashes and their consequent personal and economic costs and b) to reduce the lag time between phases. Pedestrians are particularly vulnerable to drivers running red lights. Drivers already know they are unlikely to be caught.

Performance monitoring

This activity class has been subsumed into management of the funding allocation system but the total is considerably less – in 09/10 it has gone from 60-65 range to 33-39 range. Sometimes transport data is spread around NZTA, MoT, SPARC and other places. Information is drawn from census data, travel-to-work surveys and other sources. It is more difficult to get a full picture of small business use and non-commuting travel.

Comments on other GPS paragraphs

27. Value for money

We agree that this should be a consideration and draw attention to the costs that are incurred through physical inactivity. It is important to include costs and benefits over a reasonable period such as twenty years, with a discount rate that doesn't dismiss health benefits or costs and changing congestion patterns. For example, if demand fills up a wider road because no other choices have been made available, the congestion relief may look good for the first few years but the eventual congestion is even more costly. We'd like the issue of affordability to be included as well as value for money. This applies to the total cost of transport (to individuals and public bodies), the effects on affordability of housing and the effect on the NZ economy of an increased proportion of GDP being spent on fuel.

www.smartgrowth.bc.ca

If it's cheaper to get people to walk or cycle or catch a bus or train than to build new lanes for commuting, why shouldn't road taxes be used for them? Hypothecation of road user taxes, introduced by the previous government, has no more logic to an integrated transport system than expecting taxes raised by GST on food to be used for food banks or taxes on the profits on clothing retailers to be used for growing cotton.

Efficiency of freight, business delivery and trades people's needs are more important than commuting which could often be done by other modes, at other times or in shared vehicles. If the one car one commuter model expands, commercial vehicle reliability will suffer. It is not productive for some one to drive to work if it's 2km away! On the other hand, if someone lives 20km away from work that is a different matter. While individual choice of location is an important part of the NZ lifestyle, we shouldn't subsidise that choice and make it seem cheaper to live further away than it is. If fuel prices go up over the life of the GPS, which is likely, people will feel trapped if encouraged to have located on the edge of cities and then unable to afford their commute because it's not economically viable to run public transport and is too far to cycle or walk.

We urge you to remember the health benefits for walking are evaluated at \$2.60 per km walked. While the benefit accrues to the Health sector rather than the Transport sector, we hope commonsense will include this in any cost benefit analysis. Here's the link to the revised NZTA evaluation manual which demonstrates the co-benefits.

<http://www.landtransport.govt.nz/funding/economic-evaluation-manual/eem2-1.pdf>

pp 3-18 and 8-10 to 8-12

We consider the market for road transport may be distorted compared to other modes since no depreciation is paid on the capital asset, effectively subsidising road use by vehicles.

31. Routes of national significance

We agree that within the national highway system, some parts are more critical than others however, we emphasise that all journeys depend on there being a network of routes. Tourism in particular, relies on being able to get to some delightfully obscure places. Similarly, while we hope that the proposed national cycleway route will qualify for some strategic assistance beyond the walking and cycling activity class, its value as a developing network shouldn't be underestimated. We believe that where it is adjacent to centres of population, there will be considerable use by people on foot as well as cyclists, for commuting as well as leisure.

Targets

What and where are these? If you don't measure it, it doesn't count. The previous targets were quite modest, for example, the target that relates to vehicle aimed to reduce the kilometres travelled by single occupancy vehicles, in major urban areas on weekdays, by 10 percent per capita by 2015 compared with 2007. The further we go as a nation to increase single occupancy travel, the more difficult it will be to retrofit our cities and towns to be more functional, efficient, safe, economically vibrant and friendly. The more private car traffic there is, the harder it will be for children to walk to school and we'll continue with a generation losing the habit of walking to a destination independently.

Climate Change

We recognise that this Government is still committed to action on emissions reduction. We would like to emphasise that increasing road capacity may reduce emissions in the short term but increase them in the medium term. There is not the luxury of tackling the economic issues first and climate change second since there is a limited amount of time to change direction. Technology may help in some vehicle efficiency measures but that alone seems woefully insufficient. In the economic situation we're in, people are also not rushing out to buy new fuel-efficient models.

Science Daily (Feb. 15, 2009) – Without decisive action, global warming in the 21st century is likely to accelerate at a much faster pace and cause more environmental damage than predicted, according to a leading member of the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. IPCC scientist Chris Field of Stanford University and the Carnegie Institution for Science point to recent studies showing that, in a business-as-usual world, higher temperatures could ignite tropical forests and melt the Arctic tundra, releasing billions of tons of greenhouse gas that could raise global temperatures even more—a vicious cycle that could spiral out of control by the end of the century.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/02/090214162648.htm>

New Zealand is marketing itself as 100% Pure, yet at the same time beginning to move away from environmental considerations while the rest of the world does the opposite. This has the potential to have significant economic consequences for tourism and export.

Non-transport issues that affect transport choices

Transport choices are not made upon cost per km alone. Availability of options, perceptions of safety and amenity for those on foot and the feasibility of combining journeys are also factors. If major destinations are further apart, then people's mode choice will emphasise car use.

We wonder whether a more comprehensive assessment across other parts of government could be taken, considering a fairer treatment of transport choices e.g. when bus passes are taxed as fringe benefits but free car parking (if freehold rather than leased) is exempt, where schools or recreation facilities are built.

ICT

We are pleased that there will be technology investment in the "ultra-broadband" area. Video-conferencing (from suites to skype), working from home and effective download speeds can reduce travel demand and improve productivity.

A national address data register as a basis for a common journey planner (for all modes – walking, car, truck, bus, train, ferry, air or cycling) would be much more useful than a plethora of ones that do half the job on outdated or incomplete data and are incapable of crossing regional boundaries.

Journey planners and transport modelling are two areas where better systems could be developed nationally. This is particularly useful where people are crossing regional boundaries. An effective national travel planner would show accurate walking routes to and from coach, bus, train and ferry routes (rather than the current street-based inaccuracies such as being routed to WALK through a BUS-ONLY tunnel). This could also enable travellers flying to different airports to reduce taxi congestion if they knew how to get from the airport bus to their downtown destination and how long it would take. The comprehensive planner could be developed in partnership with the AA and LINZ and LGNZ. TourismNZ might want to be involved too. It would have considerable benefits for emergency services and the postal services, which is where the last iteration began. It should also be integrated with existing systems such as Google Earth rather than developing an expensive system in parallel.

Please also consider a national integrated ticketing system, rather than the shambles we seem to be heading for, and national real-time information. The latter fits well with fast broadband becoming accessible everywhere public transport reaches.

Working hours

The nine day fortnight, days which are not a standard 8:30 to 5, staggered hours, working from home are all mechanisms which can reduce peak congestion, increase productivity and make life more pleasant.

RMA

National Policy Statements – we urge the new government to encourage local authorities to give effect to research which shows the economic and health benefits of higher density, mixed use centres. This could well be via a National Policy Statement which would then flow on to District Plans.

Government sector transport costs

We would encourage a cross-sectoral approach to reduce public money spent on transport. This could include better utilisation of existing video-conferencing facilities, online or paper highlighting of walkable routes between offices (often not know if the employees don't live in the same neighbourhood) and reduction in taxi use.

Last words

In conclusion, whatever the exact shape of new funding, organisational and legislative frameworks, it seems clear that walking should have an increasing part to play. *More people choosing to walk more often* contribute to walkable cities, efficient journeys, a productive work force and to desirable health outcomes.

We recognise that most individuals involved work hard and are committed to efficient safe transport, but cross-fertilisation of ideas and integrated planning between Transport, Urban Planning, Police, Health, Sport & Recreation, and Education is lacking. Please encourage representatives from these sectors, whether in central or local government, to work together to produce a robust and future-proof transport sector in New Zealand. Our staff and members would like to work alongside them.

Thanks you for the opportunity to share our ideas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Celia', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

President
Living Streets Aotearoa