

# Living Streets Aotearoa



Living Streets Aotearoa Submission on the 2015 (Draft) Government Policy Statement for Land Transport

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Living Streets Aotearoa represents the interests of pedestrians. Our organisation was set up as an incorporated society in 2002 with the goal to support more people walking more places more often as part of a healthy lifestyle and smart transport system.

## **Living Streets encourages pedestrian activity through:**

- Education of our society on the multiple benefits of walking (economic, health, social, safety and environmental)
- supporting urban design, transport system development, road design and operation that encourage people to walk
- requesting the adoption of laws that will make walking a safe (and perceived as safe) activity for both existing and would-be walkers

We represent the mobility, visually and cognitively impaired, the very old and the very young, people who have no other forms of transport, as well as the thousands of other New Zealanders who walk by choice or who would like to walk. Living Streets is the voice of anyone who uses the foot path -or would use a foot path if there was one - at any stage of their journey, including public transport users and people who travel by car.

Walking has benefits for health and fitness, for the environment and for the

economy. Once provided for, infrastructure is economical to maintain, seldom requiring upgrades or repair unlike the road network for vehicular traffic.

In summary, Living Streets Aotearoa strives to ensure our communities are walkable. We believe that walking should be viewed as a legitimate form of transport for a whole journey or part of a journey and be allocated the resources this warrants.

## Living Streets' Submission

Living Streets Aotearoa does not believe this land transport policy will deliver a transport policy for all people of New Zealand. We believe transport philosophy needs to have a major rethink in order to do things differently than what already exists.. We suggest the following as examples of actions that get away from a "business as usual" approach to transport policy: developing safe routes to schools to get young people into the habit of walking and cycling, considering our aging population, an acknowledgment of their transport needs and attracting people out of their cars by creating walking environments that create trips on foot that are equal to or superior to trips in private vehicles. Other actions are the development of rail and coastal shipping for the predicted increase in freight movement, and the provision of strong disincentives for single occupancy vehicles.

The GPS needs to take active transport seriously as legitimate forms of transport which has added benefits well beyond just getting people to where they have to go, as briefly alluded to in our introduction.

This GPS Draft states that it will continue "putting the wealth generating capacity of our economy" (P2) at the top of their agenda and proposes to spend about \$17 billion on new and improved roads. when here and around the 'developed' world road transport demand for the private car has peaked and is now in decline. With advancement of Telecommunications technology and changing preferences of the generations people no longer need or want to make a journey in order to communicate or work effectively together.

We are genuinely puzzled that less than 1% is budgeted for active transport modes when we know that return on investment on walking and cycling infrastructure is in the range 10:1 and 24:1. evaluation of procedures for pedestrian improvement projects showed that they are economically beneficial.<sup>1</sup> A British systematic review of sixteen economic evaluations of the health effects of transport interventions that increased walking and cycling found that the mean benefit-cost ratio was 5:1.<sup>2</sup> Genter et al (2008) have produced data from New Zealand of per kilometre walked benefits of over \$4<sup>3</sup>

New roads, particularly the Roads of National Significance, will have a much lower return. If economic efficiency is about return on Investment then much more should be invested in active modes. Building more roads has failed to deliver an economic and efficient road network in the past and will fail in the future. The GPS should forge a new direction. It is a disgrace that this government proposes to spend more on the RoNS than it does on health<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Turner, S., Singh, R., Quinn, P., Allatt, T. (2011) Benefits of new and improved pedestrian facilities – before and after studies. Beca Infrastructure Ltd, Christchurch.

<sup>2</sup> Davis, A. (2010). *Value for money: an economic assessment of investment in walking and cycling*. Bristol: NHS Bristol and Bristol City Council.

<sup>3</sup> Genter, J. A., Donovan, S., Petren as, B., & Badland, H. M. (2008). *Valuing the health benefits of active transport modes. New Zealand Transport Agency Research Report 359*. Wellington: New Zealand Transport Agency.

<sup>4</sup> Vaithianathan,R Centre for Applied Research in Economics. Department of Economics. University of Auckland

The Draft states that the demands that New Zealand has of the land transport system is changing (p7). We query why, if the GPS has been “prepared following a period of flat demand in light vehicle travel” it continues to pour millions into services for vehicular transportation. If our major urban centers are indeed more densely populated than centers in Australia and the US (p8), encouraging and providing for more vehicular transport puts our urban road networks under more pressure. It is anomalous that more funding can not be given to active modes. Why plan to cater for increased vehicular transport when there is technology that makes travel less necessary? Demand will be erratic in the future but people’s need to walk, socialise, be part of their environment where they live work and play is a constant. This Draft consistently accepts current trends rather than attempting to determine the future. (Perhaps this whole paragraph should go up with the one that starts ‘This GPS draft states...’)

We support the statement made with regard to Public Transport (p 3) but would like to see much more investment in this. Many people walk to and from bus stops, train stations and ferry terminals. Explicit commitment to the walking environment supporting Public Transport will allow it to function optimally.

In the section “Active Transport’ (p3) we see a statement committing to investment in walking and cycling by “improving urban *cycling* networks in our urban setting”. How exactly will this benefit people on foot? We object to walking and cycling modes being grouped together when, even though both being active modes, they are distinctly different in nature and need different treatment. What pedestrians do not want are inadequately designed shared walking and cycling paths. Many pedestrians feel vulnerable when sharing with people on bikes, especially those who are sensory or mobility impaired. Cycling advocates state that they do not wish to have their infrastructure combined with people on foot. The minimum width for a safe and comfortable shared, counter flow path is 5 meters.

#### *Road safety*

We support the GPS 2015 (draft) plan to continue to support the delivery of the Safer Journeys vision of a safe road system, increasingly free of death and serious injury. We argue that urban and rural settings where walking is a normal part of everyday transport create safe communities and safe road networks. Therefore we also support cycling and public transport advocacy groups calls for actions that meets their needs. Lowering of vehicular speeds goes a long way to reducing risk of serious injury or death, particularly for the vulnerable road users.

#### *Value-for-money*

We agree that New Zealand needs a land transport system that is effective in enabling the movement of people and freight in a timely manner. More people able to travel safely by active transport modes means that the road network is freed up to make those who have no other choice but to do their journey by vehicular transport.

Living Streets believe that we need to widen choices for trips. The Draft does not even mention walking as a transport option in the section “A land transport system that provides appropriate transport choices” (p15) , Nor is walking referred to in the following three objectives “A land transport system that is reliable and resilient” (interesting when considering walking, the most universally reliable and resilient mode(p16)); “A land transport system that is a safe system, increasingly free of death and serious injury”(walking seldom maims or kills anyone); and “A land transport system that appropriately mitigates the effects of land transport on the environment”. This last point, while concerned with fuel efficiency,

fails to acknowledge the negligible adverse impact walking has on the environment

Walking and cycling together makes up between 7% and 20% of urban commutes, depending on area. But they still get less than 1% of transport funding, Given the “business as usual” approach this GPS takes, it is unlikely that it will achieve value for money, safety or economic growth. There needs to be equitable funding, encouragement of and support for all transport modes to truly give people transport choice.

Thank you.