



Press Release on Accessible Streets package, released (10am Monday 9/3/2020)

Living Streets Aotearoa and the Footpaths for Feet Coalition strongly criticise the government's Accessible Streets package, released today (Monday 9/3/2020).

This was such an opportunity for a great rebalancing of the transport system to be achieved, in which modes that move at different speeds would be separated. Instead, with one exception this package is even more anti-pedestrian than we feared it might be.

It's open slather on pedestrians! They should really have called it the Inaccessible Streets package as far as pedestrians are concerned.

Under this package of proposed rule changes anything moving on wheels, having a power output of 300w or less and being less than 750mm wide, that is not a motor vehicle, will be able to be used on the footpath. So that's any mobility device, unpowered or powered transport device, bicycle or electric bicycle no matter what the mass of the device is.

And they'll be allowed to travel at up to 15km/h which is 5-7x the speed of an older pedestrian and 3-4x that of a healthy adult walking. The Minister seems to think this is running speed. There are few ordinary kiwis who could sustain that speed for long. NZ's men's marathon record holder, Zane Robertson, only manages to maintain 19.4 km/h! One of the golden rules of safe transport is to separate modes travelling at such different speeds.

'This proposal flies in the face of what we have been saying to the government and is the opposite of what organisations like the International Transport Forum are saying, that footpaths should be for people on foot and disabled people using wheelchairs or other mobility devices.' said Dr Chris Teo-Sherrell, convenor of the Footpaths4Feet Coalition.

'We agree with the ITF that all powered transport devices should be used in dedicated, protected lanes on the roadway along with bikes and e-bikes, or sharing the roadway where the speed limit has been lowered to 30km/h. After all, what is the difference between somebody on an e-scooter going 25km/h and a bike being ridden at that speed in terms of the safety of the user and others?'

'The Government has repeatedly said that it must address the perception of safety as well as the actual safety of different modes if it is to get more people walking and riding. Yet it is proposing something that will make pedestrians and wheelchair users less safe and feel less safe. This will almost certainly result in fewer people walking which is the opposite of what is needed to lower traffic congestion and transport's contribution to climate change.'

'The Footpaths4Feet Coalition urges the Government to go back to the drawing board on this and to come up with proposals and resources to ensure micromobility users and cyclists feel much safer moving on the roadway and pedestrians and wheelchair users feel safe on footpaths'.

Ends.

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Notes to media:

Footpaths4Feet is a coalition of 13 member organisations, including Living Streets Aotearoa, Grey Power, Disabled Persons Assembly, CCS Disability Action, Alzheimers NZ, Blind and Low Vision NZ, Deaf Action NZ, Association of Blind Citizens NZ, Health Action Trust, Age Concern, Dunedin Pedestrian Network, Retina NZ, Visual Impairment Charitable Trust Aotearoa NZ.