Living Streets Aotearoa

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Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa on

Future Mobility Inquiry

Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee

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Submission

Living Streets Aotearoa thanks the committee for this opportunity to submit on the future of mobility in New Zealand.

Walking is an important element in human mobility, it is freely available to all, promotes both physical and mental health, provides for social connectedness, is important for economic activity, has the lowest environmental impact of any transport mode, and is the lynchpin that makes all other transport modes work.

Pace of change

While we appreciate that the focus of the committees work is on future mobility technology we would highlight that the main way people get around is as old as humans and will remain a dominant mode into the future. Walking is freely available to all and there are important equity issues for our society in ensuring that everyone can get out easily and be part of their community.

New technologies may assist and promote healthy walking activity, and should be adopted depending on how much they increase and complement active travel. However some technologies or their use have the potential to adversely affect or discourage walking and should not be encouraged, e.g. use of vehicles on footpaths. We need to be discerning in the technology we adopt.

Vehicle modes of travel play a big part in our greenhous gas emissions (GHG). It is important that any policy development acknowledges this and seeks to rapidly reduce transport impact including use of the most efficient freight transport modes – coastal shipping and rail. Walking

has the lowest impact on the climate, and, if more people walk more often then it can be used to reduce transport GHG impacts.

Changing trends

- Demographics

The age structure of New Zealand is changing with an increase in older people over the next 40 or so years, and apparently the millenial generation are not so interested in private car ownership. This means there will be more people in New Zealand who don't own or have use of a private car. The importance of being able to walk nearby or to the bus or train stop will increase. The need for dedicated pedestrian space will increase and the importance of high standard pedestrian infrastructure also [nb Pedestrians include people who use wheelchairs].

Some new technologies may be particularly helpful for maintaining mobility and social connectedness of older people or those with disabilities. The Age Friendly Guidelines highlight some of the special requirements to assist older people be a part of their communities (World Health Organisation - http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_material/en/). These technologies should be encouraged especially when they also maintain healthy activity and complement walking.

- New technologies

People are living longer therefore technologies that keep people active become more important [active people stay healthy and happy for longer]. Examples of areas where technology is changing fast are:

– health related (hip/knee replacements), mobility devices (scooters), visual and hearing aids
- mapping and wayfinding – apps make it easier to find the best route for a journey, audible wayfinders help vision impaired and others (eg at train and bus station)
- health information availability – green prescriptions
- pedestrian crossing technologies including at rail crossings – countdown clocks, smart technologies like Puffin crossings, variable cycle traffic signals
- new vehicle types and safer vehicles (pedestrian friendly bus and truck design, proximity sensors, autonomous vehicles may improve pedestrian safety)
- new road technologies – variable speeds, digital warnings, well constructed pedestrian infrastructure.

Productivity

Walkability has been shown to be a key requirement for many highly productive industries and is essential for affordable housing. Walking is also shown to increase workers productivity as they arrive at work wide awake and relaxed. There are many examples that show a walkable environment encourages productive activity, e.g Government sector in Wellington, Wellington's Golden Mile - retail, IT businesses cluster in walkable neighbourhoods (Google).

New technologies also mean that working at home or while out walking is possible.

Optimise infrastructure and reduce costs

Walking infrastructure is the least cost infrastructure in the transport system. It however suffers from a lack of maintenance funding to local government and a lack of consistent application of standards.

- Funding
Current funding arrangements perversely incentivise vehicle infrastructure, both new and maintenance, which has resulted in years of poor standard pedestrian infrastructure. This has led to inconsistent treatments so that there is no predictability for pedestrians (which is a barrier to walking). There is a need to rebalance this with equal funding levels and availablility for pedestrian infrastructure, a dedicated FAR for local authorities' pedestrian projects that meet the standards, would be a step in the right direction.

- Standards are available for good quality pedestrian infrastructure tailored to New Zealand conditions but are not being used consistently – as they are 'just guidelines'. There is a need to include these standards in all roading contracts at every level of government. They are:

- NZ Pedestrian Plannng and Design Guide 2007
- RTS 14 – Guidelines for facilities for blind and vision impaired pedestrians
- NZS 4121: 2001 Design for Access and Mobility – Buildings and Associated Facilities.

- more best practise required (kerb dropdowns, use of tactiles, not digging up footpaths as soon as redone!)
Use of the above best practise guidelines in a more formal way will help optimise infrastructure to ensure predictable walking environments and this will encourage more people to walk more often.

Exciting newer design technologies have the ability to improve infrastructure performance and make a more pleasant walking environment, e.g rainwater gardens slow and clean rainwater drainage.

A standard approach with consistent pedestrian infrastructure will not only encourage more healthy walking it will reduce costs for maintenance and design of new infrastructure.

Accessibility and social connectedness
Communities are strengthened if you can leave your front door to take part in your daily activities using local services. Good pedestrian infrastructure is essential for this but is often not provided. Housing is only affordable when people can easily take part in their local communities. Communities are only accessible when everyone can be part of it.

- Public streets are the great meeting places of society
Public streets are not only places of movement but are the largest single area of public space in our towns and cities, and are very important for social activity. There is a lot of work on the place-making function of roads with some exciting new developments that make streets great places to be (with significant economic spin-offs).

- Access to public transport
As over 80% of New Zealanders live in urban areas it is important to have access to public transport to allow accessibility for all and maintain social connections. A good interface is required with pedestrian infrastructure to achieve this as every public transport trip has a walking component. Bus and train stops require good pedestrian access to them.
There are many public transport technology developments – integrated ticketing, real time information, better and safer vehicle design, clean energy technologies, more accessible vehicles.

Save lives and reduce injury

- Standards

Research has shown that falls related to poor infrastrucutre are at least as common as vehicle related crashes for pedestrians, more significant for the elderly. More research is required on this.

Consistent use of pedestrian design standards will reduce the risk of injury both from falls and vehicle caused injury. Roads need to be designed so all users can easily understand how they need to move through them. This is particularly so if large vehicles are present with pedestrians.

- Speed

The speed of vehicles is the single most important aspect of creating safer roads for all users. This can be controlled with good design and other newer technologies – speed warning signs, etc Slower urban environments are a future that Living Streets embrace – research and experience show a significant improvement in safety with a change from 50km hour roads to 30km hour roads in urban areas.

- Children first

Children need to walk as their first mode of travel to connect with their community and environment, and protect their future health. It is essential that child-safe road environments are promoted. New vehicle design can assist with this (backing sensors) as can reduced speed roads especially around schools (digital warning systems). Feet First and school travel programmes will become more important and can use new technologies to encourage walking (walk games??) Compact urban development with schools in walking distance of residential areas are also needed to achieve this.

Reduce environmental footprint

Walking has a very low environmental footprint and is therefore a great mode to promote to lower the collective environmental footprint.

- Better health throughout life is important to save resources. Older populations often have higher health costs which can be reduced if they remain active and part of the community.
- climate change impact
- good pedestrian infrastructure maintenance saves resources and avoids costly injury (eg falls)
- actively encourage walking
- design and maintain compact walkable communities – there are many exciting new building technologies that can support this.

Living Streets Aotearoa sees the future of mobility in New Zealand embracing new technologies that support a healthy active lifestyle for us and opens up opportunities for all to participate in a meaningful way both economically and socially. This will mean adopting some technology but not all. It will require a clear vision of the future where people are healthier, happier and more involved in their communities.

We would like to be heard in support of our submission.

About Living Streets
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.

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

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http://www.livingstreets.org.nz/node/4684

Freight

NZ Freight volume graphic
http://schiff.co.nz/interactive/nzfreight/

Economics of walking

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http://content.tfl.gov.uk/town-centre-summary.pdf

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Review of studies that have quantified the economic benefits of interventions to increase walking and cycling for transport 2012
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New technologies

Pedestrian countdown technology
https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2015/september/pedestrian-countdown-technology-to-be-doubled-by-summer-2016

Smart crossing technology Puffin crossings are similar and there is an example in Lower Hutt
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/article-2580819/Smart-pedestrian-crossings-coming-road-near-soon-London-tests-hi-tech-SCOOT-designed-protect-moseying-tourists.html

Intelligent pedestrian crossing technology
https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2014/march/tfl-to-launch-worldleading-trials-of-intelligent-pedestrian-technology-to-make-crossing-the-road-easier-and-safer