

Living Streets Aotearoa



Living Streets Aotearoa Submission on High-Risk Intersection Guide

Contact person: Meg Christie
Email: meg.christie@livingstreets.org.nz
Phone: 03 3786817
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Living Streets Aotearoa (LSA) is the New Zealand organisation for pedestrians. Our members seek to create walking-friendly communities and promote walking as a viable mode of transport.

Walking is a valuable way to get around for many reasons. It is essentially a free, easy and egalitarian form of physical activity providing multiple health benefits that range from ameliorating obesity related diseases to bone health to improved mental wellbeing. Walkers contribute to social capital and safety/security in the community by providing “more eyes on the street” and pedestrians do not contribute to carbon emissions and congestion commonly associated with vehicular transport.

Most trips involve walking at some stage regardless whether one travels by car, public transport or bike. Therefore walking needs to be acknowledged as a legitimate way to travel as well as a travel mode within its own right. The New Zealand Travel Survey (2000) showed that nearly one in five trips (18.7%) was made by walking. Around 70% of trips involved just walking and 30% in association with other modes of transport.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this important subject. We will only comment on those issues regarding pedestrian infrastructure and road treatments that impact on pedestrian safety.

On average, 36 pedestrians are killed and 1000 pedestrians are injured on New Zealand roads every year. Around 36% of these are at intersections.

p32: The plan acknowledges that there is a lack of information about pedestrian and cyclist crashes, thus “dealing proactively with walking and cycling risk ...is more difficult than for other road users as crash prediction models are not so well developed and exposure data (pedestrian and cyclist volumes) are rarely collected. ...proactive methods require local knowledge of where cycling and walking activity is focused and to look for features that are known to be less safe for pedestrian and cyclists. Therefore Living Streets urge that crash prediction models be developed and data collected. The issue that "where activity...is focused" does not acknowledge that safety issues (perceived and real) affect pedestrian behaviour - people avoid places they would otherwise like to walk if they are seen to be dangerous, so increased safety is a trade-off against reduced convenience. That sort of trade-off needs to be recognised.

Pg 95 Pedestrian Facilities: Uncontrolled/Give Way IS4

LSA fully agrees with the measures outlined in the draft that will make intersections safer for pedestrians: pedestrian refuges, dropped kerbs, tactile paving, shortening of distances to be crossed, removal of signs and street furniture where they obscure visibility, exclusive pedestrian crossing phases, shorter cycle times and raised pedestrian crossings at free left turns. However, LSA believes that pedestrian should be given right of way at uncontrolled intersections by turning traffic when the pedestrian is travelling straight through. Drivers in Australia, Britain, and some regions in Canada and the US must give way to pedestrians crossing roads into which they are turning. In this way pedestrians are treated like any other flow of traffic at interactions. LSA believe that this will make the walking conditions safer and more attractive for all pedestrians as drivers are forced to take pedestrians seriously as part of the overall traffic flow..

Pg 101 Pedestrian Facilities: Traffic Signals IS10

LSA fully supports all the points suggested in the plan. Measures at traffic signals should be designed for pedestrians with the lowest level of ability as this removes barriers for those with special needs, ensuring safe crossings that are beneficial for all pedestrians. We are supportive of the provision extended phases and the provision of refuge islands, especially in the vicinity of schools, where the elderly are likely to be and where there are large crossing distances or where there are multiple lanes.

Pg 106 Pedestrian Facilities: Roundabouts IS15

Traffic speed is a significant issue for pedestrians; the faster drivers go the more difficult it is for them to avoid hitting a pedestrian in their path, and the greater the chances for serious injury or death. Roundabouts are of particular concern and LSA would like to see speed reduced and violations enforced.

LSA is supportive of all other measures outlined in the plan regarding pedestrian safety and roundabouts and would like to see all roundabouts with pedestrian facilities in some form (or some other viable alternative for safe passage around and through the area). Otherwise New Zealand will have the situation whereby some roundabouts will never be navigational for people on foot.

Living Streets would like to see roundabout designs that actually do slow vehicles down. This generally requires enough 'deflection' so that vehicles must slow down to safely get around it. Roundabouts should be designed with semi-mountable aprons for effective speed calming. The semi-mountable apron must be high enough to discourage drivers to over run it but also provides for the larger turning requirements of vehicles such as rubbish trucks and service vehicles.

Also, wherever possible, we recommend that approaches to roundabouts should be single lane to minimise the crossing distances for pedestrians.

Living Streets Aotearoa, is currently campaigning to make changes in road rules to allow right of way for pedestrians over vehicles at intersections, bringing New Zealand up to international best practice.

Walking is a valuable alternative and addition to other forms of transport. Given that most trips at some stage involve walking, it is in everyone's best interest that the part of the journey done on foot is safe and convenient and that pedestrians enjoys similar rights to all other uses of the transport network