

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa on Government Policy Statement on Transport

Contact persons: **Andy Smith / Ellen Blake**
Email: **wellington@livingstreets.org.nz**
Date: **2 May 2018**

Submission

Living Streets supports the approach outlined in this new Government Policy Statement on Transport (GPS).

We support the development of a more dynamic second GPS next year and would like this to show stronger leadership on the transport future we want to create rather than just react to predictions. For instance is the sustainable transport hierarchy part of the vision.

Walking or wheelchair use is part of every journey. Walking is favoured by New Zealand women, and is New Zealanders favourite recreational activity. These strengths mean that walking is easier to promote and an essential element to transform the transport system in the direction proposed by this GPS. Shorter journeys will be undertaken by people on foot if footpaths are an attractive enjoyable experience as well as functional.

Strategic direction

Living Streets welcomes and supports the strategic direction of this GPS. The focus on safety and access is sensible and supported by the environment and value-for-money priorities.

Living Streets supports the increase in spending for public transport, the new funding for rapid public transit, the increase for regional and local road improvements, increased funding for Police, transitional rail, and the increased funding for safety. Our comments largely relate to pedestrian and walking-related activity.

Safety

A system free from death and serious injury is the only ethically tenable goal and has our support. We support the prioritisation of safety for people particularly for vulnerable users. We

support the retention of footpaths dedicated for pedestrians as the primary way to maintain an overall safe and accessible system for people when walking or using a wheelchair.

We support improvements to footpaths to support safety for pedestrians from the hidden (because slips, trips and falls, even crashes are not reported) hazards of unfit infrastructure. We would like to see the wording changed slightly to make it clear that footpaths are included in safer 'roads'. This is necessary because it is a significant and welcome change in this GPS that could be otherwise missed.

We would like to see a national approach to pedestrian crossing facilities particularly how to improve existing zebra crossings which are not always as safe as they could be. There is good evidence to show that raised platforms are better and have the benefit of slowing vehicles as well (eg <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/pedestrian-planning-guide/docs/guidelines-selection-of-pedestrian-facilities.pdf>).

We support safer and more appropriate speeds particularly around schools, shops and retirement homes.

We support the funding and promotion of the safest and cleanest modes of transport including public transport bus and rail. The Avoid: Shift: Improve paradigm has been applied to both environmental and safety outcomes – cities with integrated transport and land-use where walking is easy are safer, cities with well-designed integrated transport systems are also safer – less vehicles and less exposure to vehicles by other travellers improves the overall system.

Targets for increased use of sustainable modes are needed. We should aspire to do better than most of the cities on this list and not be lagging at the bottom of the list. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modal_share#Cities_with_over_1,000,000_inhabitants).

We support decision-making based on a strong, transparent evidence base. Safety for walking requires a non-vehicle approach and is not the same as safety for cycling. We would like to see safety improvements in these two modes proceed separately.

We support a review of vehicle types and their use in our transport system particularly in so far as they impact the safety of pedestrians. Better data on impacts on pedestrians are required to support such a review.

We recognise the important place of enforcement in making safety improvements and support increased funding for Police traffic services.

We also support the use of regulatory changes to improve safety particularly where this would support more walking. We support the development of give-way rules to support priority for pedestrians and cyclists so that turning vehicles, or those exiting side streets must give way.

Access

Living Streets supports the priority of access that is the purpose of a transport system, along with land use and telecommunication systems. The focus on integrating these is welcome with the emphasis on making best use of existing facilities before planning new ones. The focus on resilience, transport choice and access and social and economic opportunity is appropriate. This

lends itself to the mode-neutral approach as a means of assessing and funding transport proposals. A vision to steer this will be an improvement in the second GPS.

Living Streets appreciates the need to focus on high growth areas now and would like to see the use of public transport, walking and cycling extended to all urban areas to help our ageing population retain access, and our growing generations to have transport choices. The focus on regional development should include transport choice initiatives.

Living Streets supports the setting of targets to increase the walk mode share, in particular for the walk to school. Targets are urgently needed across many areas but we appreciate this may not occur until the second GPS iteration next year.

We would also like to see the consistent use of standards for both infrastructure and service which should apply across the country. Inconsistency in both infrastructure and service creates barriers to access for many people. New Zealand guidance is available but needs to be used, and doing so could be a requirement for funding. Appropriate guidance is provided in the NZ Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide, RTS 14 for vision impaired pedestrians, and NZS4212:2001 for accessible buildings (including access to them). A goal should be set to bring the entire national footpath network up to a good standard accessible for all, using this guidance.

We would like to see the national standards actively promoted by training for all staff working in pedestrian and footpath management areas. Awareness of these standards and a funding requirement to use them is essential.

The Safe System Assessment Framework by Austroads is also available to help promote a Vision Zero /safe system approach (<http://www.austroads.com.au/news-events/item/318-safe-system-assessment-framework>).

Increasing accessibility of public transport for people with reduced mobility should include work to improve the walking connections to public transport stops. A target to audit high-use stops and stations to improve accessibility should be part of this work, particularly with a community focus approach like the Living Streets Aotearoa Community Street Reviews. Good walking access is essential to the success of public transport.

Environment

We applaud the fact that the environment is included as a priority as the transport system is important in reducing NZ's greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. A good transport environment can reduce human stress and encourage social interaction (rather than be a barrier to it). We anticipate a greenhouse gas reduction target for the transport sector will be included in the second GPS.

Value for money

We support the emphasis on value for money if this means that those projects that demonstrate evidence for clear benefits having accounted for all costs, options, and help achieve the objectives of our transport system receive funding. This includes support for an investigation into current investment evaluation practises.

Levels of service for prioritising investment in footpath and pedestrian infrastructure need to be further developed and should include amenity items, such as the number of seats or trees per kilometre of footpath. The lack of data has limited the value of the One Network Road Classification for pedestrian services. In this regard level of demand should also include gap analysis of who is not using pedestrian infrastructure due to poor standards or levels of service.

Investment in footpath maintenance should be explicitly included in the local road maintenance activity class. It is a significant and welcome new activity within this class and has previously relied 100% on local contributions. The new emphasis needs clear signalling.

To ensure there is good take-up of footpath maintenance funding we support a matched FAR to the existing level of footpath maintenance funding provided by local councils (or an average amount over the last three years), e.g existing footpath maintenance + same amount in FAR funding = 2 x footpath maintenance funding. This would increase funding to ensure there is an improvement in footpath maintenance over the short term. Footpaths are cheaper to build and maintain than vehicle paths so for relatively small investments can achieve significant improvements. Living Streets sees this as critical due to the timing of the GPS being later than council planning cycles, and the need to actively rebalance and bring up to standard infrastructure that has been neglected.

Transitional rail funding

Living Streets supports the inclusion of rail in this GPS. We note that now rail is to be treated on the same mode-neutral basis that some if not many solutions may not be road based.

Themes

Living Streets supports the themes of integrating land use and transport planning, incorporating technology and innovation, and a more mode-neutral approach to planning and investment, with the proviso above, that as walking and pedestrian infrastructure has been underfunded previously there needs to be a mechanism to allow for 'catch up' and encouragement to use the funds for this purpose.

There are many innovative ways to encourage and prioritise more walking. Some of the barriers to doing this are legislative making it difficult to use new technologies due to overly restrictive rules, e.g. use of Puffin crossing technologies where pedestrian cross times are automatically adjusted for, to allow safe crossing time for all users.

Land use and transport planning must integrate more. Living Streets has previously suggested a national policy on subdivision that would include guidance on adequate provision of pedestrian facilities.

Walking and cycling are both active, healthy, non-polluting modes but their demographics, accessibility and infrastructure requirements are very different. While Living Streets understands that walking has been lumped in with cycling in previous GPSs it is now appropriate in this new GPS to separate the only non-vehicle mode more clearly. This is the first time pedestrian infrastructure has been prioritised in central government policy, it would be a shame

if it continued as the poor cousin to a vehicular mode. This will also make it clear that walking does have priority and that the intention is to provide dedicated pedestrian infrastructure. For instance, on page 27 under transport choice, there is an example that mistakes walking to school as a cycling goal.

The measures required to encourage walking are quite different from vehicle modes. Walking contributes more to successful public transport systems than is often recognised.

The GPS will set transport thinking in a new direction in New Zealand and this is the time to improve BOTH walking and cycling by separating out targets and design issues. Local authorities will follow Government's lead and should be encouraged to separate walking from cycling and address historic underfunding and oversight rather than ignoring people on foot.

Living Streets supports the establishment of robust walking baselines which can be used to measure progress. The [International Walking Data Standard](#) will be essential to this.

Investment in land transport

Activity classes are presented in a mode-specific manner. There are several that include provision for walking – the walking and cycling improvements, road safety, demand management, and local road maintenance.

Walking and cycling improvements include promotional activity which is welcome, as the quality of infrastructure provided is as much an issue for pedestrians as simple provision. We would like to see some of this funding be made available for much-needed research on pedestrians and walking. Living Streets is yet to see the separate walking class allocation within this activity. We do not support funding for shared paths in a walking activity class. Shared paths disadvantage both people on foot, including wheelchair users, and cyclists. Shared paths encourage drivers to get cyclists “off the road”. Shared paths encourage local authorities to make cheap provision for cyclists at the expense of people on foot, especially the frail and elderly.

The local road maintenance class does not mention footpath maintenance, it is only referred to in the supporting Q&A document. Living Streets strongly urges footpath maintenance be explicitly referenced as it is a significant change for this class, and that ‘footpath’ remains defined as currently. Local road maintenance has been underspent and a more supportive FAR will be needed to ensure councils can meet their contribution and make the improvements needed.

We support the inclusion of targets and monitoring to ensure that the desired changes are occurring, such as an increase in walking to school.

With a mode neutral approach to funding we note that NZTA will now be bidding for funding for its state highway managed roads against local authorities, while NZTA will also be making decisions on allocation of funding. We recommend a different more transparent process be used to allocate funding with an impartial third party managing funding.

We would like to see a priority for NZTA is to acquire robust data on pedestrian mode, pedestrian crossings, footpath asset state, as well as staff with expertise in pedestrian requirements in order to fulfil their functions.

Similarly Regional Land Transport Committees will now need to consider a broader range of activity, and could be reformed to include a broader representation of interests able to balance local road and state highway priorities.

Funding

Living Streets supports the overall funding approach. We support investigations into greater use of demand management such as using congestion charges. Any congestion charge should be hypothecated for safety, public transport, cycling, and walking modes.

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