

Results and analysis of Living Streets Aotearoa Wellington Branch local body election candidate survey 2022

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Living Streets Aotearoa (LSA) aims to promote walking-friendly communities and to see more people of all ages and levels of ability walking and enjoying public spaces - walking for daily activities, commuting to work or study, shopping, for exercise and for pleasure. All people should be able to do this safely and conveniently.

LSA believes that local government can play a huge part in achieving these objectives. So, to assist voters to make their decisions in the forthcoming local body elections, LSA sent questions out to all candidates for Wellington Regional and City Councils. Here are the results and assessments arising from this survey. We hope these will lead to councillors being voted in who are committed to achieve a better environment for pedestrians within a healthy and safe environment for the future. More information about LSA can be found at www.livingstreets.org.nz

The survey population included all candidates for Wellington Mayor (9) (number of candidates in brackets), six Wellington wards –North (10), West (11), Lambton (10), East (10), South (10), and the Māori Ward (3). The response rates varied from by wards, but were highest in the Motukairangi/Eastern Ward (7 out of 100) followed by the Lambton and Takapu wards.

Candidates for the Greater Wellington Regional Council – Porirua/Tawa (5), Poneke/Wellington (12), Kapiti(2), Lower Hutt (6) and Upper Hutt (4) made 94 potential respondents. The highest response rate was for the Poneke/Wellington Ward (8 out of 12).

We received 30 replies from Wellington City Council and Mayoral candidates. This included two people standing for mayor and also as ward councillors (their scores have been recorded for both places). Four people did not give an individual viewpoint but referred us elsewhere or to the manifestos of their parties. This left 26 replies for analysis, nearly half of those standing. Of the 29 Wellington Regional Council candidates, 15 provided a full response, again about half, with numerous responses from Poneke/Wellington and Upper Hutt. Thus, 41 candidates' responses were analysed in total.

The Five Questions

Question 1 . Walking – please tell us about a project to improve conditions for walking that you will take action on, if elected.

Quite a few of the respondents interpreted “walking” as recreation rather than something required for everyday activity. They mention the need for better signage, lighting, and maintenance for forest, riverside, and bush walks. In the urban context, some talked about decluttering footpaths, weather protection, prioritising of pedestrians and being stricter about parking on footpaths. Public transport and walking were often seen as interlinked, e.g., suggestion of zebra crossings at every bus stop and station. Several referred to the

Accessibility Action Plan, but not many suggested a specific project. If they did, we gave them a higher score. One particular call was to improve pedestrian access to the waterfront in Wellington. Respondents standing for the Regional Council often said that specific walking-related projects were not in their purview but assistance to schools for safe walking projects was mentioned and that lower speed limits in urban areas would assist pedestrians.

Question 2. What should be done to improve the means for pedestrians to cross roads safely?

The majority of replies called for more and better pedestrian crossings. Raised crossings and more time allowed for safe crossing were frequently suggested, some referring to the use of new technology, e.g., autodetection of would-be crossers. Others proposed reducing traffic speed near crossings; enforcement of red/ stop traffic lights; kerb ramps and halfway refuges for pedestrians. There was considerable concern for vulnerable road users at crossings, especially children, older people, and anyone with a disability. Looking more broadly, there were calls for both more pedestrianisation and measures against jay-walking. Some regional council candidates mentioned locating bus stops near crossings.

Question 3. What measures will you promote to reduce private car use in the city, and commuting by car?

The most common answer was to promote alternatives to car use, specifically public transport and walking - walking for short trips, public transport for longer.

Possible aims to reduce car use included - reducing congestion, perhaps a congestion charge; considering how changes in work locations and future residential development influence travel needs; and planning with the “15 minute” neighbourhood to the fore.

Public transport needs to be reliable, efficient, frequent, and cheaper. Relating to buses, there were several mentions of improving bus drivers’ wages; better bus shelters and stops; providing parking close to bus routes (and rail stations); extending priority bus lanes; and more fare subsidies. Regional Council candidates often suggested public transport improvement, plus bus and rail coordination.

Cycling could contribute to the aim of reducing car use – secure parking for e-bikes seemed a good idea. Although not specifically related to this question, there was ambivalence about proposals for light rail. Arguments against it were based on the cost and time needed for implementation.

Question 4. What can be done to make it easier and safer for people to use, get on, and get off buses and trains?

This question was misunderstood by many of the respondents as referring to public transport use rather than physical access. So, many answers repeated material in question 3. The most frequent answer (on the point) concerned the capacity for buses to “kneel” – at all exits and entrances (to include train replacement buses). There was concern about passengers with disabilities; space for bikes, etc.; and better stop design, especially the danger of overlap between bus stops and cycle lanes; and protection from bad weather. Several respondents were concerned that drivers must be made aware of the special needs and limitations of some passengers when getting on and off buses and trains.

Question 5. Do you support the proposed changes to the Golden Mile area in central Wellington, to make it more accessible to people, and with fewer vehicles?

This was the only question worded to allow “pro” and “anti” responses. Four out of five respondents supported the proposal. They called the proposal “overdue”, “transformative” and “great for people and business” - “changing the focus from vehicles to people”. The 20% of respondents who did not support the proposal called it a “backward step” and a “disaster”. ‘Anti’ responses were mainly based on perceived detrimental effects on business and problems for increased public transport services – slowing buses.

In some cases, respondents seemed to know little in detail about the proposal (it just sounded good). There were concerns, however, about the reduction of bus stops along the route and about disability

Scoring the candidates

Scoring was based on a 5-point scale, with 5 as the highest/best response, well aligned with the objectives of LSA, including reference to actual locations for pedestrian infrastructure, plans, and actions endorsed by LSA. Scores of 4 or 3 reflected some significant knowledge of the issue raised by the question and/or some pertinent suggestions. Replies which scored below 3 were not well aligned with LSA’s objectives, or did not make pertinent suggestions. Non-respondents did not receive a score. We believe that those who contributed a reply should be given some consideration for making this effort.

Gaining a 5 score for each of the five questions would give a maximum score of 25. So, a rough classification could be based on –

- Any score 20 and above – very good. 37% of responses fell into this category.
- Scores 15 to 19 – middling. 37%
- Score under 15 – low. 25%

A voting guide – based on LSA positions

Wellington City

Mayor – only two candidates (out of 9) responded to the survey. Ellen Blake gained a high score on all questions. Ray Chung’s response was based mainly on his own personal experiences and was not in favour of the Golden Mile proposal. His score was very low.

Wellington wards – Response varied between wards. We must bear in mind that a non-response does not necessarily mean views contrary to those of LSA. We cannot make recommendations for non-responders.

Te Whanganui-a-Tara Māori Ward – Two out of 3 candidates replied. Nikau Wi Neera’s response was scored middling to high, slightly above that of Matthew Reweti.

Takapū/Northern Ward - Five candidates responded. These ranked, by scores, from 1 to 3, James Sullivan, Tony Randle and Jenny Condie. However, Tony Randle strongly opposes the

Golden Mile Plan. Robyn Parkinson gave no personal response but referred to the Green Party manifesto.

Wharangi/Onslow-Western Ward – 5 candidates responded, and their scores were close, apart from Chung (standing here as well as for mayor) who received a low score and who did not back the Golden Mile plan, calling it “poorly designed”. All others supported the Golden Mile plan. In order they rank Lachlan Patterson, Rebecca Matthews, Bob Mason and Alexander Garside.

Pukehinau/Lambton Ward – Five out of 10 responded. Carrying over her high score as a mayoral candidate Ellen Blake ranks highest in the ward, followed by Iona Pannett and Afnan Al-Rubayee. Jane O’Loughlin’s score was lower, some of her replies were brief and focused on cycling. Tamatha Paul supported the Golden Mile plan but commented that there was **still a lot of work to be done to not further exclude disabled people**

Motukairangi/Eastern Ward – Seven out of 10 candidates responded. Several had good scores and the highest scoring were Sarah Free, Teri O’Neill, Rob Goulden and Luana Scowcroft. Tim Brown came next, followed by Aaron Gilmore. These last two were very critical of the Golden Mile scheme, suggesting that it would reduce visits to central Wellington and damage retail trade. Nathan Meyer did not put in an individual response.

Paekawakawa/Southern Ward – Only 3 responses were forthcoming, plus a non-response from Inoke Afeaki. Laurie Foon scored highest. Dipak Bhana and Paula Muollo have lower scores based on Bhana’s brevity and Muollo’s strong opposition to the Golden Mile scheme, which would “shut down” city business.

Greater Wellington Regional Council

Porirua-Tawa Constituency – Five candidates, two respondents. Robin Smith gained a high score. Chris Kirk-Burnnand is a sitting member and contributed two responses. He takes a regional view and notes the limits to WRC powers. Very critical of Golden Mile plans and planning processes.

Poneke/Wellington Constituency – There was a very high response here – 8 out of 12 – and many high scores, some contributed by sitting members. All the following scored well - Roger Blakeley, Chris Calvi-Freeman. Chris Montgomerie, Thomas Nash and Yadana Shaw (running jointly), with Daran Ponter, Thomas Bryan and Leigh Catley just a little behind. All were in favour of the Golden Mile plans, with a few reservations.

Kapiti – One sitting member did not respond, while the only other candidate did so and his response – Asher Wilson-Goldman’s – presented very much Kapiti-oriented positions.

Lower Hutt – Only one out of six Lower Hutt candidates replied to the LSA questions. This one – Alex Voutratzis – scored well.

Upper Hutt – Three out of four candidates replied – the highest response rate. Ros Connelly, a sitting member of the WRC, scored highest, followed by Quentin Duthie. Peter Hayes

scored lower, having a non-urban view of walking, and is strongly opposed to the Golden Mile plan, on the basis of poor earlier attempts at pedestrian precincts.