



Media release for immediate distribution, 30 October 2016

Welcome addition to the list of high-priority issues by New Zealand's transport safety watchdog the Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC).

Living Streets Aotearoa welcomes the focus on safety at railway level crossings from the nation's transport accident watchdog. Living Streets President, Andy Smith says “We hope TAIC will be able to implement safety measures and sort out who is responsible for the intersection of road, rail and footpath. Walking is the glue that combines rail commuting with destinations so there will always be many pedestrians around railways where they should be able to walk in safety.”

All intersections carry a risk for people walking and these risks must be designed out to make a safer system as set out in the Government’s Safer Journeys Action Plan. Level crossings are just another place where the pedestrian and high speed vehicles come into conflict.

There has been 31 collisions between pedestrians and trains since 2004, with approximately 78 per cent happening at crossings where automatic alarms were installed. There are solutions for safe rail crossings as we can see in Europe where people and trains have been mixing for a long time. Melbourne is currently spending millions on grade separation (building bridges or sinking railways) of rail, roads and footpaths.

Graeme Easte, a Walk Auckland member, has highlighted this problem before, but unfortunately it takes crashes and injury to finally bring this to the attention of safety organisations.

Andy Smith says “Living Streets Aotearoa would like to see an urgent investigation to address safety and see how we can make trains and walking work well together - as they should. We want to encourage more walking and use of public transport which are good for people’s health and the planet. Train travel is very safe, and walking to catch a train should

also be as safe. Auckland has a great expanding rail network with increasing frequency of trains.”

“The Government needs to look at the funding for rail improvements, and not expect Auckland Transport to stump up with half the cost. A modern rail system is essential for a thriving and liveable city. The Government is aware of some of the solutions, it’s past time for talking, we need to see some action.”

Living Streets Aotearoa looks forward to safer journeys for pedestrians.

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

Contact

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Links

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/85167156/Three-accidents-in-four-years-another-reason-to-remove-Aucklands-level-crossings>

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/85788154/railway-crossings-and-robinson-helicopters-added-to-list-of-nations-biggest-transport-safety-concerns>