

## DUNEDIN PEDESTRIAN ACTION NETWORK



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Dr Lynley Hood (VICTA) & Mr Chris Ford (Disabled Persons Assembly), co-convenors of the Dunedin Pedestrian Action Network, would welcome the opportunity to speak to this submission.

### **SUBMISSION on the PROPOSED VARIATIONS to the OTAGO SOUTHLAND REGIONAL LAND TRANSPORT PLANS**

#### **ABOUT THE DUNEDIN PEDESTRIAN ACTION NETWORK**

On 24 January 2018, under the banner of the newly established Dunedin Pedestrian Action Network (PAN), Visual Impairment Charitable Trust Aotearoa (VICTA) and the Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA) sponsored a public panel discussion on the topic "Making Dunedin More Pedestrian Friendly". The panel comprised Assoc. Prof. Ben Wooliscroft (Marketing, University of Otago), Dr Crystal Filep (Urban Design, DCC), Councillor Jim O'Malley (DCC), Ellen Blake (Living Streets Aotearoa), and Graeme Rice (NZTA). Since ORC Councillor Bryan Scott was among the 52 member audience, he too was invited to comment.

**THIS SUBMISSION** reflects the pedestrian concerns raised by people of all ages and abilities at the panel discussion. The specific points relate to Dunedin. The general points alert the Otago and Southland RTC to the powerful contribution a pedestrian perspective can make to the three key problems facing the transport system today:

1. inability to assess, plan, fund and respond to changing mobility user demands in a timely way, as this is resulting in some poor investment prioritisation and decisions, and inadequate future-proofing;
2. attitudes and behaviour, together with inconsistent quality of routes in the two regions, which are resulting in fatal and serious injury crashes;
3. parts of the network are vulnerable to closure from adverse events, which is resulting in economic and social disruptions, of which there is increased recognition.

We appreciate that, until now, the Otago and Southland RTC has had no pedestrian organisation to consult. With the establishment of PAN, our smart, well-informed pedestrian advocates are ready and willing to provide their input.

Our message is: prioritising pedestrian safety through effective and comprehensive infrastructure and public transport improvements is a great way to:

1. facilitate the future proofing required to address the mobility user demands of our ageing population;
2. ensure that macho speed-related attitudes and behaviours become unfashionable;
3. reduce the climate-related risks arising from excessive fossil fuel consumption.

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\* Proposed variations to the Otago Southland Regional Land Transport Plans 2015-2021, s.2.3

## INSIGHTS FROM A PEDESTRIAN PERSPECTIVE

PAN strongly supports cycling and cycling safety, but not at the expense of our most vulnerable road users, pedestrians.

A significant factor underpinning all three problems facing the transport system today is the long-standing local, regional and central government practice of bracketing walking and cycling, and funding only cycling. This approach:

- obscures significant differences between the two modes of transport.
- places little weight on the escalating road toll among pedestrians, and especially among elderly pedestrians. We look forward to a road safety official noticing that the death toll among pedestrians was 60% higher in 2017 than in 2016, and that 33% of the pedestrians killed came from the 15% of the NZ population aged 65 and over.
- treats walking as little more than a slow form of active transport - a sign of powerlessness and low status.
- excludes other popular modes of active transport - such as skateboards and kick scooters - from the transport planning process.

PAN proposes that recognising and addressing the contextual, practical and social differences between walking and cycling, and acknowledging the significance of other popular modes of active transport, will go a long way towards meeting the challenges posed by the three key problems facing the transport system today.

**Walking is far more than a slow, cheap form of active transport.** Whether it's a pilgrimage or a protest march, or a stroll around the block, when we walk, we're actually *in* the environment and not just passing through it.

In *Wanderlust*, Rebecca Solnit writes:

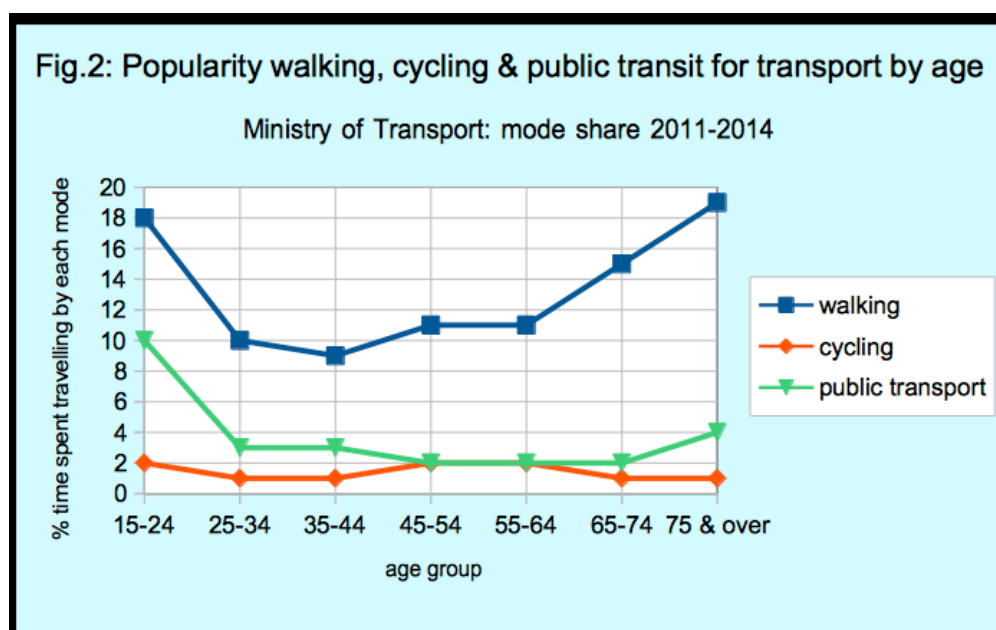
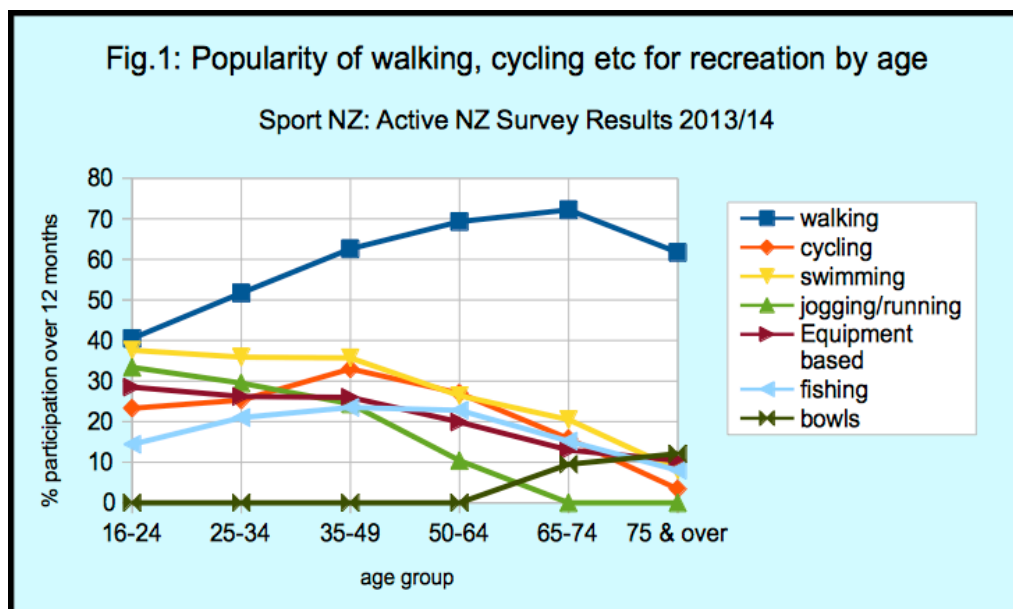
*While walking the body and the mind can work together, so that thinking becomes almost a physical, rhythmic act... even past and present are brought together when you walk as the ancients did and relive some event in history, or your own life, by retracing its route... each walk moves through space like a thread through fabric, sewing it together into a continuous experience - so unlike the way air travel chops up time and space and even cars and trains do.*

In her essay *Street Haunting*, Virginia Woolf writes:

*... when the desire comes upon us to go street rambling the pencil does for a pretext, and getting up we say: "Really I must buy a pencil," as if under cover of this excuse we could indulge safely in the greatest pleasure of town life in winter—rambling the streets of London.*

At a time when the gap between rich and poor is widening, we need to cherish and beautify our footpaths and parks as important, safe and democratic public spaces where people from all cultures, religions, and walks of life can mix and mingle, and enjoy being out and about in a genuinely inclusive society.

**Pedestrians need separate footpaths & walkways.** Walking is New Zealanders' favourite exercise by a very wide margin - for both recreation (fig.1) and transport (fig.2). It suits people of all ages and abilities. It's popularity increases with age. Cycling is far less popular. It's popularity declines with age.



- Shared paths, designed and built according to current guidelines, and footpaths used by cyclists, are dangerous and unpleasant places for elderly and disabled pedestrians,<sup>1</sup> and a source of conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.<sup>2</sup>
- Transport planners are subject to the Human Rights Act, and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, both of which protect New Zealanders against discrimination on the grounds of disability and age.
- Elderly and disabled pedestrians are at risk of serious injuries from collisions with cyclists. They have brittle bones. They move slowly, often with the help of mobility aids. Their vision and hearing may be impaired. Their reflexes are slow. Also, like younger pedestrians, older pedestrians can be poor judges of speed and distance.
- In the five years from 1 July 2009, to 30 June 2014, 184 pedestrians were seriously injured in collisions with cyclists. Thirty-nine of those pedestrians (21%) came from the 13% of the population aged 65 and over.

- Over the same period, 1145 cyclists were seriously injured in collisions with fixed or stationary objects, and 9465 cyclists were seriously injured in non-collision accidents (i.e. they lost control and fell off their bikes without colliding with anything).<sup>4</sup> These statistics support the view that cyclists should not be allowed near elderly and disabled pedestrians who lack the reflexes to leap out of the way.
- Dunedin's population is ageing. In 2013, 14.7% of Dunedin's population was aged 65 and over. By 2018, that figure will have risen to 16.2%. By 2028, more than one in five Dunedin residents will be aged 65 and over.<sup>5</sup>
- Disabilities increase with age. According to the 2013 Post-Census Disability Survey almost 60% of seniors have a disability.
- Elderly and disabled people know that the best thing they can do for themselves, for the economy, and for the environment is to live active, independent, socially engaged lives in their own communities. So that's what they're doing. Statistics NZ rest home data, and retirement village occupancy data, show that only 10% of Kiwis aged 65 and over live in 7 rest homes and retirement villages. The other 90% lives independently in the community.
- As our population ages, the proportion of people who walk rather than cycle - whether by choice or necessity, whether for transport, exercise or recreation - will escalate.
- Unlike cyclists, who get killed and injured by motor vehicles while riding along traffic lanes, pedestrians get killed and injured by motor vehicles while walking across traffic lanes. For pedestrians who need to cross the road to shop, or socialise, or catch a bus, the only safe and effective solution is a transport system in which there are fewer cars travelling at slower speeds.
- A pedestrian-focussed transport system with fewer cars travelling more slowly will require better public transport and more space for other active modes - cycling, kick scooters, skateboards and so on - all of which will be safer and more popular in a people-friendly low-car environment.
- For a healthy, safe, inclusive, environmentally friendly, future-proof region, we need to prioritise pedestrian safety now.

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1. Submission, Road Controlling Authorities Forum on Petition 2014/59 of Joanne Clendon, NZ Parliament, 2016.

2. The Clendon petition concerned cycling on footpaths. In addition to submissions from experts and organisations, many people made personal submissions, reflecting on the joys of walking in pleasant and safe environments, and reporting collisions and other frightening experiences involving cyclists on footpaths and shared paths. As a result of these encounters, many submitters said they would never use, or no longer used, shared paths. Here are excerpts from some of their submissions:

***"I no longer use the shared Hamilton river walkways as adults on mountain bikes use them as race tracks."***

***"Over the past 5-10 years, my mother and my mother-in-law, both in their mid-late 80s, have had their pleasure diminished and/or their walking routes curtailed after being overtaken without warning by speeding cyclists."***

***"I am 71 years old and for over ten years have relied on public transport and walking for my mobility... the alarming experience of being overtaken from behind at close quarters and without the slightest warning by a cyclist travelling at excessive speed is one to which no-one should have to be subjected."***

***"I have experienced the shock of a road bike rushing past without warning or dodging between pedestrians. I have seen the fear on older people's faces when this happens."***

***“I know one elderly man who was knocked down by a cyclist riding at speed on the footpath and had to be taken to hospital.”***

***“As a keen walker, I like to be able to enjoy the outdoors without having to be alert every second to the likely need for stepping aside quickly for faster traffic. I like to have my little thoughts, and to listen to my Spanish lesson tapes. Or stop to chat with friends or fellow walkers.”***

***“Currently I walk around the waterfront in Auckland where the footpath is a shared space between pedestrians and cyclists. In my view it is a dismal failure for both users and as a pedestrian I feel very unsafe due to the speed and lack of consideration of most cyclists. I also cycle and have used this shared cycleway. After one use of it I felt that I could not ensure the safety of the pedestrians without dismounting often.”***

***“Shared Pathways have been permitted by NZTA, and have led to conflicts between users, cyclists and walkers, here in Nelson/Tasman. (Great Taste Trail, Bishopdale link shared pathway, Railway Reserve etc.) Injury accidents have occurred to walkers, people walking their dogs have upset cyclists.”***

***“I am a fit, well, and strong, older citizen but avoid shared cycle/walking pathways at weekends and other busy times. They are TOO dangerous.”***

***“Nelson CC has introduced ‘shared pathways’ for walkers and cyclists and I have experienced and observed - pedestrians experiencing near misses from cyclists and cyclists being injured trying to dodge pedestrians - cyclists rarely indicating their approach which is a real concern to the elderly. Older friends feeling extremely vulnerable and nervous; depriving them of the simple and healthy pleasure of walking, relaxing and enjoying their environment - often commuters riding at dangerous speed and children appearing to lack an awareness of safe distance and courtesy.”***

***“The advent of well-intentioned ‘shared’ pathways is already making walking more stressful for pedestrians, especially for the elderly, and those of us with young families.”***

***“Imagine taking a child along a walkway. You want the child to be able to run forward, see a bird, stop and watch it for a while, then run to the other side of the track to look down at the stream, and then spot another bird and follow it to the other side of the track, and then be distracted by an interesting fern, and so on. That behaviour is not possible if there is a risk that a fast cyclist will come around the corner.”***

***“I am elderly, have hearing difficulties, but my biggest problem is my personal balance... The footpath is now the only place left for me to walk safely as all walkways are used by cyclists.”***

***“As an older person... I am very aware that if I was to be hit by a cycle - even at a relatively low speed - I would probably be quite severely injured.”***

***“Try walking around the Farm Cove Walkway in Pakuranga, Auckland and see how you get on. Those cyclists are not aware of sharing with care and in fact it is frightening. As people age and start to slow down, lose their hearing and sight, should they not walk because of the dangers imposed by cyclists on paths?”***

3. Publicly funded hospital discharges for year ended 30 June (2009/10-2013/14), Ministry of Health.

4. *ibid.*

5. Statistics NZ, Subnational population projections: 2013 (base)-2043 update.

6. Disability Survey: 2013, Statistics NZ.

7. Statistics NZ (total population aged 65+, population living in residential care for older people 2013); NZ Retirement Village Database Whitepaper February 2017.