

Living Streets Aotearoa



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Submission to Let's Get Wellington Moving on the Cobham Drive – Ruahine Street proposals

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Submission

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on these proposals. We strongly support LGWM's objectives, and view the proposals in the consultation as an important step on the way to achieving them.

We support improvements that make a more pleasant walk along Calabar Road, Cobham Drive and Ruahine Street and which will make this stretch of road safer for everyone.

Currently these high speed busy roads cause significant severance for the adjoining suburbs, preventing safe or pleasant access to the Town Belt, the shops and the beach. The proposed crossing and safer speed limit is a step forward to address these issues.

Safer speeds

As noted in the Case for Change report there is significant severance for the communities in this area from daily and desired routes. Most Wellington roads have a speed limit of 50km/h, which is 20km/h faster than a safer for pedestrian speed of 30km/h.

There is only one small section of this route that is even considered safe at 60km/h and that does not account for increased use by pedestrians and other more vulnerable road users. This will add to the confusion for drivers if there are several speed changes in what is for vehicle users a relatively short distance. For this reason **we recommend a continuous 50km/h** safer speed limit for the entire route consistent with most of the rest of urban Wellington.

Cobham Drive crossing

Living Streets Aotearoa strongly support an at-grade crossing of Cobham Drive, as an equitable and much safer way for people to walk across this road reducing the severance. We support this proposal in particular because of the speed and ease of implementation.

We do NOT support a crossing that diverts pedestrians from the road surface and desire line via an underpass or bridge, neither of which are suitable at this site.

Detailed comments

Safer speed

We suggest the following changes:

- a) as noted in footnote 28 to Table 7, the safe and appropriate speed for Calabar Rd south of Caledonia St is 50km/h, not 60km/h as proposed. The existing 50km/h limit should therefore be extended from the Broadway/Stewart Duff Drive roundabout northwards along Calabar Rd to north of this intersection, with the proposed 60km/h limit starting there.
- b) the same table says that Cobham Drive is median separated with a 70km/h speed limit and limited access, and that the proposed 60km/h limit will apply to the sections controlled both by Waka Kotahi and Wellington City Council (footnote 30). But the section controlled by WCC is very different in character, a single carriageway with on-road parking on one side and just a painted median, with already having a 50km/h limit for about half its length. (It also appears not to be included in the speed analysis in Table 2.) Given this mischaracterisation of this stretch of road and associated lack of analysis, it makes more sense to extend the existing 50km/h limit so that it applies to the whole of the WCC stretch.

Ruahine Road include design features to slow vehicle traffic and allow pedestrians to cross from southern Hataitai.

Cobham Drive crossing

We recommend that separated pedestrian and cycle crossings are provided. It is unrealistic to expect that pedestrians and cyclists will use the crossing without conflict or that they will use it in the same manner (as can be seen from other 'shared' crossings in Wellington). This should be possible to achieve and we note the AustRoad crossing design assessment used is for pedestrians only.

The cycle lane at the pedestrian crossing should be part of the traffic light signals so that pedestrians can safely access the crossing from a safer waiting area away from all traffic.

We note the detail of how the crossing will operate, and suggest that in addition there should be an immediate response to the beg button being pressed, subject only to a minimum green period for traffic. We suggest that adequate shelter for people waiting to cross needs to be provided.

We expect that best practise pedestrian crossing technology will be used, such as Puffin crossings, where pedestrians are detected waiting, there is forward-call for the other side of the road, there is a short wait time (maximum <30second), there is adequate cross time tailored to the person crossing and not assume a fast 5km/h walk speed.

We do not support a footbridge, for the reasons given in Table 5, which we suggest should be amended as follows:

- the *Travel time for pedestrians and people on bikes* section should take into account that a footbridge or subway will impose a longer distance and time than an at-grade route in order to walk/bike the 70-odd steps or 400m of ramps, which on at least one side will probably not be on the relevant desire line;

- the *Personal Safety* section should be expanded to include convenience and attractiveness, noting that ramps and steps will require expenditure of considerable personal energy, and a footbridge (unless fully enclosed) will be very exposed to the prevailing northerly winds.

On the south side of the proposed crossing, the current path through to Kemp St and the access to the ASB Sports Centre are substandard, and these will need to be upgraded and mode-separated to meet the standards set by the new Cobham Drive paths. The connection through to Kilbirnie as marked by the green arrows in Figure 6 is also substandard, and needs to be completed with pedestrian crossings on all legs of the Rongotai Rd/Evans Bay Parade/Onepu Rd intersection.

A more preferred option would be that the Troy St/Cobham Drive roundabout be converted to a signalised intersection with pedestrian crossings on each leg, which would provide much better pedestrian access. A further pedestrian crossing/s are required on the eastern end of Cobham Drive / Calabar Street.

Conclusion

We support this proposal with recommended changes as the positive benefits will be transformational for people wanting to walk and avoid the need to drive between Miramar shops and the ASB Sports Centre or Kilbirnie, and far outweigh any negative effects.

In addition to the above points we strongly support every opportunity to get mode shift to help New Zealand reach its climate targets.

With respect to consultation responses, we note that the proposals can be seen as affecting many current users negatively, while affecting fewer positively. This could well mean that negative responses outnumber positive ones, and we would ask you to bear in mind that the negative effects are likely to be small but the positive effects will be transformational for people wanting to avoid the need to drive between Miramar shops and the ASB Sports Centre or Kilbirnie. As the Ministry of Transport has noted, *pedestrians* [and cyclists] *are*

legally entitled to be on the road. Motorists have a duty to pay for the facilities needed to keep them safe from motor vehicles.¹

References to

<https://lgwm-prod-public.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/public/Documents/Cobham-Dr-2021/Cobham-Crossing-Speed-Tech-Report-1.37MB.pdf>.

About Living Streets Aotearoa

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.

¹ <https://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Report/ff-summary-report.pdf> Annex E