

Living Streets Aotearoa



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Submission to Wellington City Council /LGWM on Golden Mile Traffic Resolutions

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these key traffic resolutions for the Golden Mile.

The description of the Golden Mile proposals includes “The primary purpose of this project is to connect people across the central city with a reliable public transport system that's in balance with an attractive pedestrian environment.”

Living Streets strongly supports this transformational approach.

Unfortunately the aim doesn't match the outcome, as to provide a minimum attractive environment for Wellington's busiest pedestrian streets requires meeting the very basic levels of service provided for in the Pedestrian Network Guidance (PNG). These proposals do not. Wellington City Council has formally supported the NZ Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide, the precursor to the PNG, both of which are Waka Kotahi documents. Neither of these two partners of the Let's Get Wellington Moving team should be proposing, let alone supporting a less favourable outcome than is available at present. The significant design flaw, that is not recommended by the PNG, are 'shared paths', and shared pedestrian /cycle crossings should not be supported either. Both are proposed for the Golden Mile!

The aim for the Golden Mile is to provide improved pedestrian safety and improved pedestrian convenience, neither of which are further defined so the aims can not be measured against the outcomes.

The brief description of the issues immediately after the above statement begins to refer to 'pedestrians and active mode users' as if they are separate concepts.

“inadequate provisions for pedestrians and active mode users resulting in conflicts between users. This limits the attractiveness to use active modes of transport and reduces the convenience of walking.”

Active modes refers to physically active travel by foot or bicycle. It is unclear what this terminology is trying to achieve. Bicycles, and scooters along the Golden Mile, are not permitted on footpaths at any time. Pedestrian provision is at the top of the sustainable transport hierarchy and we need to see that in the design.

Living Streets recommend these traffic resolutions are withdrawn until the design issues are addressed. These proposals impact a significant area for Wellington and need to ensure the best possible improvements. The traffic resolution process is not the place to refine design.

Specific design issues

Courtenay Place

The key design issues are:

- A toucan crossing (pedestrian / cycle) is proposed for the current busy pedestrian crossing outside the Embassy. It should not proceed. A pedestrian-only crossing must be retained in its current location.
- The south side bus stops remain disconnected from the footpath with the public toilet removed, and the waiting space is still a narrow platform. There is still no direct pedestrian-only route to access this bus stop which is a needed improvement. A design rethink is required
- General traffic is permitted at night when it is at its busiest with the most at risk (inebriated) pedestrians while the more sedate daytime drivers who may want car access to the chemist, etc, have no access. How the traffic flow will work is not clear.
- This is one of the only two bus overtaking spaces, so there is less ability for buses to pass each other along the rest of the route.

Lambton Quay Bowen /Whitmore St

The key issues are:

- This is the only other bus overtaking space by Whitmore / Bowen St
- There is shared path behind the bus stop at the Supreme Court, which should be removed

Bus lane and bus stop issues

- There are only two bus overtaking spaces along the entire Golden Mile so fewer overtaking opportunities than at present
- There is removal of several busy bus stops with little additional space on Willis and Manners St for bus passengers to wait out of the pedestrian path

Lambton Quay /Midland Park

- There are several sections of shared path along Lambton Quay which should not proceed. A pedestrian focused design is needed that prioritise on foot / wheelchair movements with better placemaking
- Midland Park has more pedestrian space with no added shelter provision
- The cycle lane dominates the design despite this being a bus and pedestrian focus project. The new main cycle route along Featherston St is not well integrated with provision along the Golden Mile and it is not clear why cyclists would prefer that main route over this secondary route.
- We have concerns where the bike and scooter parking provision will be – will the new footpath and public space remain pedestrian only?
- Scooters are not permitted on cycle lanes currently and are not permitted on the Golden Mile footpath so it is unclear how the proposals cater to them.

The detailed traffic resolutions are hard to locate and so many people have not seen the detail of what is proposed. Indeed we have been surprised at some of the late design detail revealed but which is still not on these plans.

Traffic Resolutions

There are 5 separate traffic resolutions being made for the Golden Mile, while we understand the administrative-ease reasons, this means that the overall picture is lost and the differences between the different sections is not so obvious. Living Streets supports a consistent approach to the entire length of the Golden Mile so it is easier for all road users to understand them. This includes the same restrictions for vehicles 24 hours every day, rather than allowing some access for different classes of vehicle to different areas at different times.

TR 22-23 Lambton Quay

The issues and benefits noted for this traffic resolution are not specific to Lambton Quay, it is therefore difficult to assess if the proposals address the issues with suitable improvements, ie there is no expectation to compare against. This is the same in all the resolutions.

All pedestrian crossings are removed and replaced with new pedestrian crossings. We assume these are pedestrian-only crossings to maintain the same level of safety and convenience as pedestrians expect now. This needs to be made very clear (a combined crossing at the Embassy was a surprise).

The two-way cycle way is described as off-road, yet it is clearly within the public roadway, similar to the footpath, it is part of the road corridor. We are concerned that the correct legal terms are not used in a traffic resolution. A cycle way is not available for use by escooters so what mechanism will allow this? Escooters are not permitted on Golden Mile footpaths currently under the rental escooter code of compliance, what will prevent their use under these proposals.

We recommend escooters and other micromobility are formally banned from footpaths during this process and permitted on a micromobility/ cycle lane and WCC has the regulatory ability to do.

We do not see any bike or escooter parking provided in the cycle lane space. Where will this be provided – we assume footpath space or the street furniture zone will not be parking. The amount of new footpath space has been reduced from the early plans.

Bus stops are being removed along the Golden Mile and we would prefer to see all of the current stops retained, they are well used. The time savings for buses will be made by removing general traffic.

There is only a single lane for buses each way until Bowen St. This reduces the existing passing opportunities, how will bus congestion be avoided?

We object to the creation of 5 new shared paths in this area, the busiest pedestrian route in Wellington, with

- 82 metres from Whitmore this is behind the bus stop at the Supreme Court
- 31 metres Stout St
- 8 metres at Waring Taylor
- 81 metres at Johnson St
- 18.5 metres at Brandon St

So about 220 metres of shared path for Lambton Quay or about one quarter its length. There is no provision for pedestrians to safely cross these shared paths and there needs to be to have an accessible main street. Shared paths seriously disadvantage pedestrians as priority is automatically given to vehicles when mixed modes are present – eg as the lower Cuba St and other shared zone initiatives around Wellington demonstrate (Auckland also has many examples of dysfunctional shared zones).

The Pedestrian Network Guidance (accessed May 2023) is clear, it says
“Shared use paths are often implemented as a way of improving a connection for people on bikes, however the needs of all people that are expected to use the facility should be considered.

Some pedestrians will avoid using shared paths because of anxiety about interactions with cyclists, so their installation should be limited. In all cases, options to provide a fully separated path should be considered first.”

The Golden Mile, as a busy pedestrian and bus focus area, is completely inappropriate for any shared facility.

Schedule C - relates to which vehicles are permitted access to Lambton Quay
Does not mention scooters at all – this needs to be corrected if the bike paths are meant to be used by scooters. Regulation on this is within the powers of WCC.

TR23-23 Willis St Stewart Dawson corner to Perrotts corner Manners St

The benefits are not specific to Willis and Manners St, they should be. Still has confusion about active and pedestrian travel, this makes it very hard to understand what is meant and who will benefit. How will ‘public realm’ space be increased by 75%, all road is public realm. The same statistics are used for Willis St as for Lambton Quay, the figures are different. Scooters not mentioned again.

Neither Willis nor Manners St will gain more pedestrian space so pleasantness only relates to the reduced (but not eliminated) general vehicle trips.

The bus lane is only one lane wide each way, as now, so will not permit bus passing.
There is no increase in space for bus passengers waiting on Willis St, and little if any on Manners St

There needs to be a mobility park on Mercer St closest to Willis St. We recommend there is at least one mobility park at each and every side street.

Living Streets support the return of motorbike parking on Mercer St, this reduces footpath parking.

There should be no unrestricted general vehicle access to the Golden Mile bus route (including Customhouse southbound from Hunter to Willis/Lambton) at any time.

TR24-23 Manners St

The issues identified in the resolution are not specific to Manners St.

The only bus change is to increase the length of the Arty Bee bus stop near Cuba St. The crowded bus stops on the north side of Manners and near Willis St remain unchanged.

Scooters are not mentioned in this resolution, they are clearly not an authorised vehicle and should also be prohibited from the footpath as well.

Living Streets recommend Manners Street has no general traffic access at any time, we do not support after 7pm general traffic access from Willis St. There are also three sections on Manners St with three different access arrangements at different times for different class of vehicle which is confusing for all road users. We note this is different timing to that proposed on other streets of the Golden Mile which will be confusing for all road users.

Two-way vehicle access on lower Cuba Street would make this area consistent with other side roads along the Golden Mile and still allow access to buildings in that area. And maintain a consistent general traffic-free Golden Mile.

TR 25-23 Courtenay Place

The issues discussion is not specific to Courtenay Place.

Living Streets do not support motorbike entry into Courtenay Place during the day, it is unclear why this is proposed. We are not clear who 'permit holders' are and how they are different from authorised vehicles.

Living Streets do not support the shared paths and shared zones of:

- 9.4 metres from Taranaki St
- 20 metres
- 9 metres
- 8 metres
- 9.8 metres near Cambridge Tce (about 50 metres total).

Shared paths are not an improvement to this area and should be removed.

The two-way cycle lane should not be between the bus stops and footpath, this has been a design fail in other parts of Wellington. If a cycleway is required (rather than a wider bus lane), consider the centre section of road between the bus lanes. The bike network should include Tory St and already provides for travel along Cambridge Terrace to the waterfront to take all vehicles off the Golden Mile.

The pedestrian crossing at the Embassy has been moved despite being on the desire line for that busy venue and more convenient for Majoribanks St pedestrian access. It has now been moved south and is proposed to be 'shared' with pedestrians and cyclists as a toucan crossing. There is no mention of this in the traffic resolutions. Living Streets opposes this change, it is a significant downgrade for pedestrians in this busy area.

TR 28-23 Authorisation of vehicles on special vehicle lanes

The times permitted for authorised vehicle access on Lambton Quay only restricts access during peak bus times, that is commuter times, and not during peak pedestrian times.

Living Streets recommend that the busy 12-2pm pedestrian peak is also a no access period for most authorised vehicles, particularly for Lambton Quay, Willis St, and Manners St.

Some provision for access to private vehicle parking along the Golden Mile is provided. What restrictions are in place to prevent increase in private vehicle parking spaces? There do not appear to be any restrictions on this valuable access, which is in the nature of residential-only parking elsewhere. Consideration of a fee for private parking access similar to residential parking purposes should be considered to help limit its expansion. Otherwise a limit on vehicle numbers is required.

Authorisations do not guarantee access to a loading zone. Authorised vehicles should be required (regulated) to use loading zones only for parking, this would require an additional offence to be included. Parking on footpath by vehicles is an identified issue on lower Cuba St where parking enforcement is difficult due to poor limitations on spaces available for parking use.

It is unclear where events such as the Xmas parade fit in these authorisations? Considering that there is only a bus lane and cycle lane available, use of the bus lane would require buses to reroute or stop for any event in this area.

More criteria on what an unforeseeable or exceptional circumstance that requires vehicle access is needed. The resolution says you can park on the Golden Mile and dispute a parking ticket if you think you had an exceptional reason to park there. This opens the door for many issues.

Living Streets assume the 30km/h speed limit will remain in place. Consideration to reduce this speed is needed as the impact on at risk road users from the authorised users on more empty roads, often with larger vehicles is increased.

We would like to be heard in support of this 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.