

# Living Streets Aotearoa



[www.livingstreets.org.nz](http://www.livingstreets.org.nz)

## Submission to Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee Wellington Living Streets on Petition of Chris Teo-Sherrell: Keep Footpaths for Feet and Mobility Devices

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional comments on the petition of Chris Teo Sherrell. I am the Living Streets Aotearoa Kaitiuitui a Whanganui a Tara.

A number of Select Committee members asked questions around what could be done in the short term to give walking priority on footpaths and how to make it safe for other modes on our roads.

A transport system should enable all users to have a safe and pleasant experience meeting their essential needs, and support good health outcomes, equity and environmental goals.

### Footpath users

Footpaths in New Zealand are for the use of pedestrians and mobility device users. We are all pedestrians when we are out on foot or in a pushchair or wheelchair.

- The 2018 Census showed that 20% of young people walk to education with a further 17% catching a bus which includes a walk. This daily activity is an important part of the physical activity required by kids and is often the only activity they will regularly get. The percentage of kids walking to school has never been lower and is a significant issue for future health and community.
- Older folks, in particular the over 75s, rely on walking as their main form of exercise and to keep mobile, and walk more in their local neighbourhoods. Walking is the single most popular physical activity in New Zealand across all adults. Adult walking speed is about 5km/h with older adults on average walking slower. Safe walking with dedicated pedestrian only footpaths is recognised as essential by the World Health Organisation Age-Friendly Cities initiative.
- Disabled people make up about 24% of the population, and for many walking is their only independent form of travel and activity. The UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People to which NZ is a signatory, requires access to be improved for disabled people, and not as scooters are showing, to become less safe.
- Safe walking is essential for all of us.

Transport modes are often described as having a hierarchy of use, with walking at the top.

## **Footpath cycling**

Many people are unaware that the research shows that cycling on footpaths is less safe than cycling on roads. In part this is because footpaths are designed for use by people on foot.

## **Solutions**

- An immediate solution to make our footpaths safer is to limit the speed of all vehicle types that use the footpath, so that they go no faster than people walking. This would mean vehicle users do not overtake pedestrians. Speed differences do make pedestrians feel insecure and deter them from using shared paths, particularly older people.
- Ensure all significant decisions about transport like the scooter decision and the Accessible Streets road user priority change are brought to Parliament for decision. They have a significant impact on all New Zealanders and how road space is allocated and prioritised. The Accessible Streets road rule change will permit cyclists on footpaths with a top speed of 15km/h. The Cabinet decision on Accessible Street changes has been deferred until after the election.
- Rescind the NZTA declaration that scooters are not motor-vehicles as they clearly are, and they are not active transport and detract from a pleasant walking environment on footpaths. There is a cost to society of providing care for scooter user crashes, and the negative impact on non-users is putting people off walking.
- To create a safer road environment many councils are working towards lowering speed limits on urban roads, this is a key safety improvement and will make the use of our roads better for all modes of use. Scooters can travel up to 30km/h so will be able to keep up with other motorised vehicles.
- In the medium term provide dedicated separated space for cycleways that can be used by micro-mobility on higher speed roads (that is over 30km h).
- In the long term to develop our urban spaces into people-centred spaces that people can live in with most needs met in a 20 minute walk, or 20 minute public transport ride. High quality affordable housing often means no car parking to keep it affordable, needs to be near schools and parks, food shops, and jobs with no long commutes.

## **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](http://www.livingstreets.org.nz)