



# Living Streets Canterbury

PO Box 25-297  
CHCH 8144  
canterbury@livingstreets.org.nz  
Ph: 027 286 8653

Transport Issues  
Environment Canterbury  
PO Box 345  
Christchurch 8140  
Email: transport@ecan.govt.nz

To whom it may concern

## **RE: PRE DRAFT CANTERBURY REGIONAL LAND TRANSPORT STRATEGY**

### **SUBMISSION BY LIVING STREETS CANTERBURY**

Living Streets Canterbury is a branch of Living Streets Aotearoa – a group that advocates for pedestrians in their myriad forms (wheelchairs, skateboards, scooters, walkers and runners). Walking (in all its forms) like cycling, has excellent health, environmental and social benefits. Our vision is more people walking more often. We broadly concurred with what was in the last RLTS but note with some regret that it hasn't been well actioned.

Our single greatest concern is that provision for cars which appears to be the norm and on which we argue our society has become unhealthily dependent, can have very negative effects on walking routes, communities, our environment, and our health. Unfortunately, experience shows (both overseas and in New Zealand) that the more roading and parking we provide for cars, the greater this dependence on the car as the preferred form of transport becomes. This greater provision for car users as opposed to other modes of transport has the net effect of forcing other more active and more vulnerable transport forms off the road.

Main roads can be very difficult to cross as people living in Templeton or near some reaches of busy streets such as Brougham St in Christchurch will tell you. Walking and cycling become dangerous and unpleasant activities on roads built without thought for the needs of these road users. The more dangerous and unpleasant walking and cycling become, the more people have to use their cars. This leads to greater congestion, and the need to spend more on car provision. We need to break this cycle.

Over-use of the car leads to a lack of physical activity which affects both our physical and mental health. Often, we focus on the death and injury risks associated with walking and cycling, forgetting that the risks associated with a sedentary society far outweigh these risks. Living faster does not result in greater happiness. Driving everywhere is bad for our weight and cardiovascular fitness. Pollution from cars affects our air (<http://www.gw.govt.nz/air-pollution-from-cars>), and our waterways (Ermens 2007). Noise from vehicles also has distinct physical effects on health (Stansfeld & Matheson 2003; Bowling & Edelman 1987). Car drivers do not pay these costs and they are not factored into the costs of economic models that assess the return on roading projects.

In comparison, active transport forms are relatively cheap to provide, and are more than cost effective in terms of their returns for the health and wellbeing (Sloman et al 2009). These forms of transport also have wider benefits (also not included in most economic models) including less congestion, less noise and less pollution of water and air. Philip Darnton of Cycling UK noted that an important element in getting more people cycling was developing programmes and keeping them going over time. One must assume that the same goes for walking. Benefits that occur due to improved provision for walkers often accrue over time so a long-term approach is needed.

In short walking needs to be seen as a valid and important form of transport that requires and deserves provision. Provision for cars should NEVER disadvantage pedestrian access. Pedestrian access is NOT simply an add on to the “real” projects that provide for cars. It is clear that providing more and bigger roads is not an effective fix, long term, for traffic congestion (Koorey 2004).

In short this RLTS needs to introduce some new ways of thinking about transport. At present we often look at roading projects in terms of those who pass through a particular area with minimal focus on those who actually live and work in the area. Some strategy is needed around how to build the social change required to make places more liveable for the people that live there rather than giving priority to those that pass through. The strategy also needs to look at how we might encourage this change of thinking amongst councils and councillors in the Canterbury region.

Our rankings for issues:

### **1. Environmental impacts**

Ranked at number 1 because it seems that we are up against some important environmental constraints which will mean big change – whether through having to deal with more drought because of climate change, or because the price of fuel sky rockets as we move into a post peak oil world. In addition environmental impacts also include other forms of pollution – from PAHs and heavy metals in our surface water, noise pollution as well as bad air which in turn affects public health.

### **2. Transport effects on public health**

Over use of the car has obvious affects on our national obesity rates. A more walking-focused society would help to reduce these rates. Exercise is also known to improve mental health, to combat stress and to improve cardiovascular fitness and mobility in older people. Exercise such as walking also has other important societal benefits. Slower modes of transport such as walking also help us to mentally slow down and to appreciate the everyday. They encourage greater sociability and foster stronger community - an important factor in building resilience and adaptability.

Higher levels of productivity are not a good thing from an environmental perspective. What we need is a good quality of life rather than higher GDP. This is better for our mental and physical health but also is even more important for the wellbeing of future generations.

### **3. Energy use and the price of fuel**

Scientists working in the area of biofuels say that there is NOTHING on the horizon, including electricity which comes anywhere near to the energy output of oil. We MUST, or rather we will be forced to, decrease our use of energy in the next 30 years. Investment in active modes of transport such as walking plus investment in public transport will be important in order to cope with these changes.

### **4. Funding and affordability**

The more we spend on provision for cars and trucks the greater our reliance on these forms of transport. The more motorised leading to a situation where other road users do not feel it is safe to use more active and beneficial forms of transport. Car travel is very expensive in terms of the deaths and injuries that are caused (many cycle, pedestrian, car and motorcycle accidents are caused by car drivers) and the costs in terms of public health and wellbeing. *Can we afford to keep funding them? Or are we like drug addicts who will meet the costs of feeding the habit, no matter what negative effects result?*

We need to break the cycle (the downward spiral) of car dependence and see active forms of transport not simply as add-ons to provision for cars but as equally valid transport forms.

### **5. Supporting the region's economy**

This is not as important as most argue, although we would rate it as important to finding some more evidence-based ways to think about this. Firstly the *causal* link between road traffic growth and a region's economic growth is not very clear, particularly where the networks are already largely developed (Koorey 2004). It is perfectly feasible that improvements in facilities for other transport forms may actually be just as valuable as a focus on cars and trucks. There is certainly no evidence to contrary!

Furthermore, while the success of a country is often measured by its economic productivity, greater economic productivity does not cause significantly human satisfaction and happiness beyond those that reduce poverty. Increases in average income in developed countries such as New Zealand have little or no effect on average levels of wellbeing and satisfaction. Likewise there is little correlation between high income and perceived wellbeing. (Helliwell 2003).

Research coming out of the UK also shows that the return on expenditure on cycling facilities generally surpasses that of expenditure on car facilities (Sloman et al. 2009). One might assume that this might apply to walking facilities too. The health benefits of getting more people out walking are likely to be similar and it is the health benefits that make the return on cycling facilities so good.

## **6. Land use development and its impact on transport**

### **7. Dependence on cars**

Already mentioned above and something that is a factor in nearly all of the issues mentioned). Getting on top of dependence of any kind typically involves lifestyle changes and a rethink about what really matters in life. People often perceive the car to be the most efficient form of transport however when you consider the time needed to maintain a motor vehicle, pay for its upkeep e.g. petrol and oil, time spent on congested roads and trying to find a park it is not near as efficient as people perceive. Our dependence on motor vehicles also negatively impacts on others in our community including those who do not drive and just like any dependence we ignore these impacts so we can continue with our addiction.

8. **Safety** (an important aspect of issues discussed above and of public health). Please think of safety for the most vulnerable road users – not just for those driving motor vehicles.

### **9. Technological change**

Technological optimism can get us into a great deal of trouble. Technology, new ideas and new ways of thinking may offer us some new avenues for development. The RLTS needs to be open enough to incorporate possible changes in the next 30 years)

## **10. Population and household changes**

These matter in terms of considerations about land use and about the needs of an aging population. Public transport and safe forms of active transport are even more important for the health and well being of those in the older age groups and their capacity to remain active and useful members of society.

### **References used**

Stansfeld SA, Matheson MP. 2003. Noise pollution: non-auditory effects on health. *Br Med Bull* 2003;68(1):243-57.

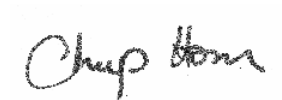
Bowling, A & Edelman R. (1987) Noise in society: A public health problem? Health Promotion International, Vol. 2, No. 1, 75-84,

Helliwell JF (2003). How's life? Combining individual and national variables to explain subjective well-being. Economic Modelling 20, 331-360.

Koorey, G (2004) Examining the Emperor's New Clothes – Myths and Truths for Sustainable Transportation Paper presented at Towards Sustainable Land Transport conference 2004 available from: <http://can.org.nz/system/files/koorey-2004-tslt-symp.pdf>

Slovan, L; Cavill, N; Cope, A; Muller, L; Kennedy, A. (2009) Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of investment in Six Cycling demonstration towns. Cycling England, London, UK.

Your Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chrys Horn". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr Chrys Horn

Co convenor, Living Streets Canterbury