

Living Streets Aotearoa



August 28th, 2020

Letter of support for resource consent application for the Te Ara Tupua path

Living Streets Aotearoa supports the NZTA submission for resource consent for Te Ara Tupua shared pathway. We share the Great Harbour Way vision for a continuous walking, running, wheelchair and pushchair route around Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington, Harbour. We welcome cycling too as a healthy active mode that reduces motorised traffic but prefer the modes to be separated where possible, especially given the speed and weight of e-bikes.

While walking is the most convenient mode for distances under 2km, the existence of longer routes for either commuter running or recreational enjoyment is very motivating for people to exercise in the natural world. Walking addresses stress, mental and physical health. We evolved as walking beings and neuroscientists such as Shane O'Mara explain the importance of this mode for our bodies and brains. (see notes below).

Fixing the gap between Ngaūranga and Petone has been the biggest issue on the Great Harbour Way route. While the 72km full Great Harbour Way between Pariwhero (Red Rocks) and Ōrua-Pouanui (Baring Head) is an ambitious undertaking, every section has its distinct pleasures and opportunities.

Te Ara Tupua will be a great connection. Access will provide one of the longest and most pleasant wheelchair-friendly routes in the region. It will be useful for people taking the train to Petone or Ngauranga (on foot, with bikes or with wheelchairs or pushchairs) and enjoying the walk back. Fully accessible routes with appropriate signage are essential to maximise the range of people who can enjoy this route.

We are delighted that this project will now be fast-tracked. It has been a very long time in gestation already. Since the high-level intention to invest was announced, the project has worked through the stages of need analysis, benefit investigation and assessment, community and stakeholder consultation, design and innovation, and subsequent re-consultation. GHW trustees have been consulted and involved throughout. Celia Wade-Brown has been Living Streets Aotearoa's representative on the Great Harbour Way Trust. She strongly advocated for Fixing the Gap while she was Mayor of Wellington and achieved the highest priority for the project on the Regional Transport Committee, securing funding from the three relevant Councils (Hutt City, Greater Wellington and Wellington City).

We support the concept for Te Ara Tupua as a linear park – wide enough for multiple activities, not just a single function commuter thoroughfare. Attention to planting, wildlife and heritage will provide an educational and holistic experience. Māori heritage, European

settlers, wildlife information signage (and future sculptures) must be provided for (including instructions to avoid intrusive activities for e.g. penguin nesting).

The quality design, with its ground-breaking incorporation of Māori art and values, its close attention to safety and its determination to provide exciting family experiences, has gained our full approval and admiration. We also see many tourism opportunities arising from this project, such as the electric ferry to Miramar, Days Bay or Petone and biking or walking back, and small companies setting up services and accommodation to assist people experiencing the full route. These opportunities and experiences can only enhance the strong Wellington Nature experience and reputation.

We consider the investment in Te Ara Tupua will lead to substantial behaviour change and modal shift; for the first time there will be an active transport link between Wellington and the Hutt Valley, and current vehicle and rail modes. This is likely to benefit the whole region socially, recreationally, economically and environmentally. Te Ara Tupua will truly be a linear park for all people. We continue to fully support the project and the team and look forward to the opening of this Te Ara Tupua as soon as possible.

However we would like to note that the Project Page underplays the benefits for walking, running and wheelchairs. As a walking-focussed organisation we frequently notice Government agencies and Councils overlooking the most fundamental mode of transport. We suggest the benefits are amended to be more inclusive. Far more people walk than cycle.

Expected benefits

- a high quality shared path for people who want to cycle or walk
- sustainable and affordable transport
- promotes healthy lifestyles
- riding a bike becomes a safer and more attractive transport choice shifting people from vehicles to cycling and walking which also reduces traffic congestion and emissions
- the opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to ride a bike using a path that accommodates less confident as well as experienced cyclists
- more connections to the wider cycling network
- better safety standards and capacity improves the network's resilience to events such as storms and earthquakes
- supports tourism-related cycling and boosts the Wellington regional economy.

Could be improved to

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- riding a bike becomes a safer and more attractive transport choice shifting people from vehicles to cycling **and walking** which also reduces traffic congestion and emissions
- the opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to ride a bike using a path that accommodates less confident as well as experienced cyclists
- more connections to the wider cycling **and walking and public transport** networks
- better safety standards and capacity improves the network's resilience to events such as storms and earthquakes
- supports tourism-related cycling **and walking** and boosts the Wellington regional economy.
- **A fully accessible pathway for people who use wheelchairs**
- **A family-friendly route for people with prams and pushchairs**
- **A significant running route for marathons and events including triathlons with an adjacent kayak route.**

For more information, contact Living Streets Aotearoa member and Great Harbour Way trustee Celia Wade-Brown celia.wade-brown@livingstreets.org.nz 021 247 8360

Living Streets Aotearoa is the New Zealand organisation for people on foot, promoting walking-friendly communities. We are a nationwide organisation with local branches and affiliates throughout New Zealand.

We want more people walking and enjoying public spaces be they young or old, fast or slow, whether walking, sitting, commuting, shopping, between appointments, or out on the streets for exercise, for leisure or for pleasure.

* **Reference to Shane O'Mara**

In Praise of Walking

The new science of how we walk and why it's good for us

- Shane O'Mara

Walking upright on two feet is a uniquely human skill. It defines us as a species.

It enabled us to walk out of Africa and to spread as far as Alaska and Australia. It freed our hands and freed our minds. We put one foot in front of the other without thinking – yet how many of us know how we do that, or appreciate the advantages it gives us? In this hymn to walking, neuroscientist Shane O'Mara invites us to marvel at the benefits it confers on our bodies and minds.

In Praise of Walking celebrates this miraculous ability. Incredibly, it is a skill that has its evolutionary origins millions of years ago, under the sea. And the latest research is only now revealing how the brain and nervous system performs the mechanical magic of balancing, navigating a crowded city, or running our inner GPS system.

Walking is good for our muscles and posture; it helps to protect and repair organs, and can slow or turn back the ageing of our brains. With our minds in motion we think more creatively, our mood improves and stress levels fall. Walking together to achieve a shared purpose is also a social glue that has contributed to our survival as a species.

As our lives become increasingly sedentary, we risk all this. We must start walking again, whether it's up a mountain, down to the park, or simply to school and work. We, and our societies, will be better for it.

Sunday Independent Book of the Week

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