

Living Streets Aotearoa



www.livingstreets.org.nz

PO Box 11-663 Wellington

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Hon Paul Swain
Minister for Transport

Dear Minister,

On behalf of Living Streets Aotearoa, thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on Getting there – on foot, by cycle, a draft strategy to increase walking and cycling in New Zealand Transport. We appreciated being part of the first stage of consultation and are pleased to contribute to Transport issues via the National Pedestrian Advisory Group currently convened by Transfund and in other fora. We seek to increase the influence and effectiveness of this role over the coming months and years.

We welcome the strategy's release and look forward to its implementation.

Our focus is primarily upon pedestrian issues but we also support improvements for cyclists, recognising that a number of improvements will benefit both groups. In this submission we concentrate on matters for pedestrians.

We would welcome your support for Living Streets Aotearoa. In our submission we raise issues beyond the role of the Minister of Transport and hope you will support changes across agencies where this will support more people walking, more often. An example is the IRD treatment of mileage allowance and car park benefits. We hope that the public sector will set a lead in transport plans and fleet management.

We wish the government every success with the vision of New Zealand's transport system as affordable, integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable and we believe walking is a key element in its achievement.

Celia Wade-Brown

President, Living Streets Aotearoa

celia.wadebrown@paradise.net.nz

(04) 383 6691 or 027 483 6691

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General matters and highlights

More walking by more people, in absolute numbers, distance and modal share, is crucial to the attainment of the New Zealand Transport Strategy.

The tribulations of a land transport system that gives undue priority to the private car are manifold:

- The primary road toll – especially tragic are deaths of children on roads and driveways.
- The secondary road toll – deaths and enforced inactivity due to air pollution and its effects.
- The tertiary road toll – the dire consequences for people who no longer choose to walk or allow their children to walk because it has become dangerous, inconvenient, unfashionable, uneconomic or uncomfortable to walk.
- Huge expenditure from central and local government on transport infrastructure and avoidable health costs.
- Unravelling of social fabric in communities where neighbours no longer know each other.
- Increasing inequity between those who drive and those who do not, by reason of age, disability, economic factors or choice.

Furthermore, transport run-off, reduction in productive or ecological land value, global warming and habitat destruction are well known. Turning the tide by a few percent each year, rather than the current alarming increase in fuel consumed (e.g. from 107.9 million litres in Wellington City in 2001/02 to 138.9 million litres a year later) is both possible and desirable. Fuel efficiency, technological improvements and skilful driving are not enough.

The recent focus on walking and cycling is welcome but there will only be significant change in modal share if this strategy is part of an implementation of the New Zealand Transport Strategy that focuses on Travel Demand Management and integrated approaches to modes. Furthermore, action by sectors and agencies beyond the transport sector is essential for behavioural change.

We recommend the aim should be a steady increase in modal share rather than an impossibly rapid revolution. Encouragement for pedestrians must happen at the same time as, say, discouragement for more commuter car-parking so that the public are not pushed into antagonism to transport changes. Many changes to traffic priorities and funding such as better footpaths, Safe Routes to Schools and walking school buses are commonsense and attractive. These small-scale, low-cost activities should be advanced earlier than trying to “motorway one’s way out of congestion”. This will require support funding for programmes and co-ordination, i.e. salary, as well as construction and maintenance of infrastructure.

Changes to mileage allowances paid by the public sector and to tax treatment of mileage and car parking would have a critical effect. Levelling the playing field so that walking and cycling allowances at a similar level are payable without disadvantage would alter behaviour by choice rather than compulsion. For example, in July 2003, the Remuneration Authority refused to alter the mileage allowance for elected local government members so walking or cycling allowances could be paid. Given a free car park and a 70c car allowance per kilometre, it’s financially attractive to drive rather than cycle, walk, take the train or bus.

A key difference between vehicular provision and pedestrian provision in the road corridor is that footpaths and footpath extensions are deemed purely local in benefit and expected to be funded solely from rates, whereas roading attracts a national subsidy. If central government wishes to improve the local pedestrian environment, the Transfund subsidy rate is a very useful tool. For example, Wellington City Council has more than 170 footpath extensions on its books. It is funding 18 – 19 smaller projects each year while receiving 25 – 30 valid new requests each year. If it’s this

much of a backlog in the best walking city, how bad are the backlogs elsewhere? Walking is essentially a local mode of transport and currently footpath extensions are considered solely local benefit so attract NO Transfund subsidy. A change to the funding rules would be welcome as a catalyst to get local government to catch up with its local infrastructure responsibilities.

Minor safety projects attract a 48% subsidy from Transfund and we note this allocation of funding has recently increased. However, there are approximately 300 minor safety works identified and the funding available will allow the construction of approximately 20 projects per year

We support the strategy’s recognition of recreational and utilitarian aspects of walking but contend that they should not be viewed as altogether separate. Walking through parks may well be part of a longer journey with a specific destination. Similarly, walking is often part of a multi-modal journey – it’s impossible to have public transport without walking as a supporting mode. Current statistics do not capture this combination since only the longer-distance portion is captured. It may therefore be appropriate to alter funding allocation criteria so that footpaths (and cycleways) that are not part of a roading corridor may attract Transfund subsidy. Co-ordinating between different parts of local government such as Recreation and Transport, Purchasing and Policy is important.

We note that the different foci and priorities are mutually supporting and can form a positive feedback loop or “virtuous cycle”. The best example of this is the relationship between walking’s modal share and the relative risk index. The perception and reality of personal risk and traffic danger are higher where there are fewer walkers. Both objective and subjective factors are important here – and perception is not necessarily subjective. “Accordingly, policies that increase the numbers of people walking and bicycling appear to be an effective route to improving the safety of people walking and bicycling.” (ref. Peter Jacobsen, ‘Safety in Numbers’ Injury Prevention 2003:9 pp205-209) For example, within California, Berkeley’s Journey to work share is 14.9% and relative risk index is 0.8 (the smaller the better), Sacramento’s figures are 2.8% and 2.1 and at the bottom of the table, Lakewood’s share is 1.0% while its relative risk index is 4.5.

These matters are often issues of implementation rather than theoretical strategy so we urge the government and its agencies to move swiftly on agreeing the outline at the top level and beginning the next stage of implementation. There are a number of possibilities about the relationship of this Strategy to other strategies and policies and we request that thought is given to what documents are required at which level and which are the lead documents. We also request clear relationships between the different transport agencies and NGOs.

Non-Transport docs	National Transport	Regional Transport	Local Transport
Health Strategy	NZTS	RLTS	TLA Transport Strategy
Sustainable Development for NZ 2003	Walking & Cycling	Pedestrian Strategy (e.g. Canterbury, ARC, GW)	Pedestrian strategy (e.g. Dunedin)
NEECS	Safe Routes to School		Safer Routes project
Urban Heri			

Within the NZ Health Strategy, for example, there is already recognition of the need to work intersectorally:

“The Government recognises that good health and wellbeing rely on a range of factors, many of which are outside the health sector. The sector must, therefore, seek to move towards more intersectoral ways of working to ensure these linkages can be made, both centrally and locally.”

The rest of this submission completes the submission booklet electronically.