

Living Streets Aotearoa



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Submission to Hamilton City Council on the 2010 Draft Annual Plan

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We wish to present the group's comments to the council in person

Living Streets Hamilton is a branch of Living Streets Aotearoa. We aim to promote walking as a preferred mode of transport for short trips, and as a means of recreation and fitness in urban environments.

Our submissions this year are relevant to the Activity Groups of Recreation, Transportation and Urban Development, with connections also to City Profile, City Safety and Event & Cultural Venues.

As councillors will be aware, our submissions over the last several years have focussed repeatedly on what we regard as the worst road crossings in Hamilton, which inhibit free pedestrian movement and prevent walking being a regular means of transport for many people, especially children and the elderly.

Consequently, we are delighted that our concerns have been recognised in the form of audits being conducted this year by Beca Consultants in association with HCC at five of the worst locations: Five Cross Roads roundabout, Boundary Rd at the mosque roundabout, Fairfield Bridge, Grey St, and the Collingwood St roundabout near the Wintec carpark. We appreciated being invited to participate in this consultative process and are sure that all concerned now have a full appreciation of the horrors involved in some of these crossings. We look forward to the next stage in the process – finding a workable solution. While this is not always easy, we appreciate the effort that is now being made.

We are also very pleased that the riverside walkway at Alma St is finally being repaired, to allow continuous access along the riverbank for cyclists and walkers.

This year we would like to focus attention on the need for a number of educational campaigns to help improve pedestrian safety, and request a survey of pedestrian crossing delays at light-controlled intersections in the central city area. We would also like to suggest some improvements for bus services, and ask for some specific attention to roundabout design.

Proposed areas for education campaigns

- Parking on footpaths – an ongoing hazard for the elderly and the mobility-impaired, but also a problem in that parked cars often impede visibility and this can pose a considerable risk to children on the footpath. Living Streets’ “yellow feet” notices might be helpful here.
- Driveway safety – this year has been particularly notable for some dreadful driveway accidents involving toddlers in the Waikato. There are often also near-misses as vehicles reverse out of driveways into the path of oncoming pedestrians or cyclists. Promotion of audible reversing lights might help – they are cheap and easily fitted to most vehicles. Other advertising campaigns might also help.
- Promotion of general road courtesy – it is common to see pedestrians stranded in dangerous places (like the middle of the road), desperately trying to get between oncoming cars. Equally, it is common to see drivers trying to get out of side streets and into main arterial routes. In both cases, all that is needed is for motorists in the main traffic stream to slow down (not even stop) to allow walkers to cross or vehicles to enter the traffic flow. An awareness campaign to promote the rights of all road users may make people aware how little is needed to improve the situation. Maybe even a “catching them doing it right” approach, as is used with children, might be fun. People who have been treated kindly could do a “reverse dobbing-in” and report drivers behaving well. Chocolate fish (or free movie passes) might encourage all sorts of pleasantries!

Pedestrian crossings – survey requested

It is very common to hear Hamilton pedestrians cursing at the long delays imposed on them at light-controlled intersections. This is not mere whining for the sake of it. At some crossings (most notably the corner of Clyde St in Hamilton East) pedestrians can wait for four minutes to get a turn. In the cold and the rain, this can feel like a very long time, and it contributes significantly to journey durations. For short excursions around town, the crossing wait can add almost intolerable amounts of time.

We would like to ask for a survey to establish the total delays (people x time) for pedestrians and motorists at key city intersections. In some cases, we suspect the pedestrians may be doing very badly. There may be better and more efficient ways of letting pedestrian phases fit into the light sequence.

While Barnes Dance crossings seem to be regularly rejected on the grounds they hold up the traffic for too long, and that pedestrians have to wait even longer, it would be very valuable to find out if this is true in all cases. When each stage of a crossing can involve three to four minutes, and two crossings are necessary, pedestrians are currently facing waits totalling 6 to 8 minutes. With a Barnes Dance crossing allowing any movement in a single attempt, would they in fact be more efficient for pedestrians? Might they also be just as efficient for cars as the present system? Is there some other system which might improve pedestrian mobility? Can we please do the observations and try to improve things?

Bus Services

We congratulate HCC and EW on the steadily improving bus service, new routes, and Sunday services – all great stuff to encourage people away from their cars. To further improve the service and encourage more Hamiltonians to use combinations of public transport, walking and cycling, we would like the following to be considered:

- Give urgent attention to providing more bus lanes where possible, at least in peak hours, to improve access for commuter bus services.
- Government legislation has now made it possible for bike racks to be installed on the front of buses. We would like to see this done in Hamilton as soon as possible to encourage Hamiltonians to combine bus and cycle transport as a routine means of urban commuting.
- Give high priority to the construction of more bus shelters on main routes – especially the school commuter routes. Waiting for indefinite periods of time in the rain for a bus to appear is not conducive to the regular use of public transport, and is likely to particularly discourage schoolchildren (and their parents) and elderly patrons.

Design of roundabouts

Roundabouts with single lane entries and exits are much easier for pedestrians to negotiate and often appear to be a lot easier for motorists as well.

The worst possible arrangement involves dual-lane roundabouts with a mixture of single and double-lane exits, as at Five Cross Rds and Dinsdale. Such double-lane and mixed designs mean that drivers are always preoccupied dealing with other vehicles, and pedestrians and cyclists are likely to be overlooked.

Pedestrians are always in danger trying to cross double lanes, as they will be obscured by one lane of traffic and vulnerable to being hit by someone in the other oncoming lane who has failed to see them. The delays introduced trying to wait for a suitable clearing in both lanes are large and often unacceptable.

We request surveys on both pedestrian and driver safety at single and double-lane roundabouts, and if possible a trial of reducing an existing double-lane roundabout to single-lane. This can be done merely with road-marking and would require no structural alterations.

Slowing the speed of traffic entering roundabouts could also be beneficial and is done in other countries.

