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To the Dunedin City Council, Infrastructure Services Committee

Submission on proposed exemption for parking ban on footpath

On behalf of Dunedin Walker Interest Group

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The Dunedin Walker Interest Group is a new and still somewhat informal group, but we have already gathered considerable support with little publicity, with both concerned individuals and organisational representatives on our mailing list. Our purpose is to represent the voices of those for whom walking in Dunedin is a primary concern. This includes those who walk to and from work, those who walk for exercise and recreation, parents of pre-school and school age children, and school age children themselves, and older people, including those for whom driving is no longer an option. Our focus is on those who walk, rather than people with serious mobility issues who are wheelchair or scooter users, who have other groups to represent them.

Walkers who have spoken with us have great pride in their city, and pedestrians can be harnessed as a great aid in improving the liveability of the city, because we are visible, observant and ubiquitous. We can report on litter hotspots, and even help reduce them by picking up litter ourselves. We are in the best situation to notice any emerging difficulties and alert DCC with fixagrams. We are in a good position to report on any antisocial behaviour and minimise it by enhancing the sense of community through our visibility. Most of the people in our group are also motorists, and are very aware of parking pressures on many streets, so are not unsympathetic to the difficulties some residents experience. But despite this balance, pedestrian issues are our first priority.

The Council has acknowledged the importance of pedestrian issues in their Pedestrian Strategy and Long Term Council Community Plan. Our mission is to ensure that they live up to their rhetoric and maintain footpaths for pedestrian use.

Our recommendations on this proposal are presented first, but the rationale behind them is equally important, so is included as supporting material.

Specific recommendations regarding exemptions for parking ban on footpaths

- a. Preservation of safe passage for pedestrians should be the first consideration when any change to footpath status is considered. Safe passage includes being able to

- accommodate the width of a pushchair or two people walking abreast, and to move along a footpath without having to criss cross the road from one side to the other or having to walk along the road itself. This is particularly important in streets with through traffic. Solutions may include the construction of new footpaths or improvement of old, as has been done recently in Glenpark Ave.
- b. Access for emergency vehicles, not driver “convenience” and not degree of current violation should be the criterion for determining which streets are considered for exemption. We note that, ultimately, emergency workers themselves need good pedestrian access.
 - c. Changes to existing parking and enforcement of current restrictions must be considered before any change is made to footpath parking. Changes might include: parking on only one side of the road; use of no parking signs or no stopping yellow lines; creation of new parking areas; leasing of resident only parks.
 - d. Streets being considered for change should be given the opportunity to work together to reach solutions that do not require status change. Opinions of all street users, walkers and car-users, should be actively canvassed. When any change is considered, each street should be investigated by an advisory group with a specific focus on pedestrian safety and convenience, as well as representatives from persons with disability such as blind persons and persons with mobility problems. If serious and unresolvable difficulties are found for regular footpath users, their recommendation should have veto power.
 - e. We do not believe that this process can be completed before the 10 September meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee, and recommend that more time be taken, as once any changes are made it is very difficult to reverse or modify them.
 - f. If a decision is made to make a change to exempt a footpath parking ban, this must be publically notified by on site street signage, and markings on road and footpath must clearly designate allowed parking areas. The marking of designated parking widths should be applied in all narrow streets, regardless of whether an exemption is considered or not.
 - g. Once this process is over and necessary changes are made, we expect that the DCC will undertake a public education campaign about considerate parking, and vigorously combat any remaining examples of illegal footpath parking, and any parking that violates the principle of requiring a clear carriageway for emergency vehicles. This is to prevent footpath parking becoming “normal” behaviour.

**Representatives of the Walker’s Interest Group wish to speak to this submission.
Contact person, Judy Martin**

The following sections set out our rationale behind the recommendations above:

1. Footpaths are for pedestrians

The first point we want to stress is the core principle that footpaths are for pedestrians, and any people with mobility issues who want to get around without having their mobility or safety endangered by motor vehicles. Footpaths are public areas created to ensure pedestrian safety. This is recognised in law, stated in Land Transport New Zealand's Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004, Section 6.14(1): "A driver or person in charge of a vehicle must not stop, stand, or park the vehicle on a footpath or on a cycle path". Parking bans on footpaths are the default legal position, and should only be overridden as a last resort, and then only if the core principle of maintaining pedestrian access and safety is maintained. We also note, once a rule has been overthrown, how difficult it is to get it re-instated, for example, the now widely regretted lowering of the drinking age to 18.

2. Dunedin has many steep and narrow streets and increasing parking pressure

We do recognize that many residential streets are poorly designed to accommodate both pedestrians and motorists, because of Dunedin's hilly terrain, and because many streets were planned and built before car ownership became widespread. Because of the hills, many streets are extremely narrow, and, because of banks or hillsides, have a footpath on only one side. Other factors increasing parking pressure have been the rise of car ownership and resulting decline in public transport, and the increased number of cars per household.

3. It is unclear to us whether concern about parking pressure or clear access for vehicles, especially emergency vehicles, is the main concern in the review of parking on footpaths.

At the 12 March meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC) , as you know, committee members responded to a report by chief transportation engineer, Don Hill,

" The report suggested that in circumstances where, if parking on the footpaths was not allowed there would be no on-street parking availability, provided pedestrian safety was not compromised, it was appropriate to consider creating shared footpath parking areas."

And the Committee resolved to approve **"footpaths in residential roads with a carriageway width of 5.5 metres or less being examined for reclassification as combined footpath and parking areas, provided pedestrian safety is not unduly compromised, and encourages residents of streets wider than 5.5 m to become involved in the consultation process"**.

It requested that after this initial stage of consultation traffic staff **"report to the Committee with the list of streets where it is considered a footpath could be reclassified as a footpath/parking area."**

The problem is presented initially in terms of lack of on-street parking, not in terms of emergency access, as is the focus in the public presentation of the proposal. But the ISC has specifically asked that streets wider than 5.5 metres be involved in the consultation process. From the briefing that Ron Minnema gave to our group, we understood that the 5.5 m width was chosen as a width that accommodated both the minimum needs of an emergency vehicle and parking on one side of the street. We prefer the emphasis on emergency access as a criterion for possible change, but this is almost swamped in the information presented on the website.

“Dunedin has a significant number of narrow streets formed before the advent of the family motor car. Having surveyed 223 blocks of narrow residential streets Council has identified 23 streets where it seems reasonable to ease the present restrictions prohibiting parking on the footpath in the interests of fairness to residents while ensuring access for emergency vehicles.

Council is keen to hear from residents about other streets where parking on the footpath might be a reasonable compromise.”

We are very concerned that the issue of emergency access not be used as a “Trojan horse” to justify exemptions when parking difficulties are the main concern.

4. Emergency access as a justification for parking exemptions

The Walker Interest Group considers that access of emergency vehicles is an important consideration and might justify over-riding the parking ban in individual streets. Passage for other vehicles would be assured by catering for fire engines and ambulances. The group therefore supports the ongoing consultation of regarding the 23 identified street sections. This process even has the potential to improve practical footpath access for pedestrians if it restricts parking on footpaths to one side of the road where it used to happen on two.

The Committee has specifically invited streets outside the 23, including those with widths greater than 5.5, to apply for inclusion for re-designation. We do not wish to see the process extended, but acknowledge that if streets that have perceived problems go through a thorough consultation process, this may improve relations within the street and with the Council, and reduce parking difficulties without re-designation. However we feel strongly that if other streets are included, the same criteria should apply to them as to narrow streets, which will make their inclusion less likely.

The report of the Transportation Planning Manager to the June 18 meeting has listed six factors that were taken into account when preparing the list of 23 possibilities for over-riding the footpath parking restriction. We agree with the importance of the following factors: Width of carriageway and footpath; number of footpaths; current parking restrictions; the number and position of vehicle entries, and would add amount of through vehicle traffic as well. We think that current pedestrian use and parking demand should be lesser considerations, as they are social in origin rather than physical constraints. The first may be artificially lowered by perceived difficulties in footpath use that already exist – eg, parents pushing pushchairs may choose their routes to avoid problematic streets

even where this is inconvenient. Parking demand may be a function of inefficient or inconsiderate use of existing parking space, both off and on road. Both of these difficulties are potentially modifiable by other means (**see recommendation d**).

We note that there are potential difficulties in the streets already identified – for example – see the photo of Picardy St, below, where there is only one footpath (on two different sides, necessitating crossing the road) for most of the block under consideration.



Fig. 1. Picardy Street, showing single footpath on left side where exemption is proposed.



Fig. 2 Whitby St, showing width of carriageway in 7 metre street.

We would also note that not so narrow streets with or without unrestricted parking have vehicle access difficulties created by even slightly imperfect parking. See attached photo of Whitby St with parking on both sides of the street allowing a bare three metres of clear carriageway on a seven metre wide road. (See our **recommendation f** on the marking of parking areas).

5. Implementation

Throughout this consultation process the pedestrian group believes that the legal right of the pedestrian to use the footpath un-hindered should be paramount, so change should be considered only when other options have been considered and when lack of emergency access is a serious issue. In other words, the DCC should be very conservative in applying their criteria. Even where a conflict between emergency vehicle access and pedestrian access exists, it is the ability of the paramedics and firemen themselves to carry their equipment to the target area that is the ultimate requirement, thus the emergency workers themselves become pedestrians.