

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission on the Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Draft Corridor Plan

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Date: July 2008

About Living Streets Wellington¹

Living Streets Wellington is the Wellington Branch of Living Streets Aotearoa (LSA) which is a national organisation with a vision of “More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places – young and old, fast and slow, walking, sitting and standing, commuting, shopping, between appointments, for exercise, for leisure and for pleasure.” The objectives of LSA are:

- to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
- to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
- to work for improved access and conditions for walkers, pedestrians and runners e.g. walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety

¹ For more information, please see: www.livingstreets.org.nz and <http://www.livingstreets.org.nz/wellington.html>

- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

Submission*

Living Streets Wellington thanks the Greater Wellington Regional Council, Transit New Zealand and the Wellington City Council for providing the opportunity to make a submission on the Ngauranga to Wellington Airport draft corridor plan (the 'Plan'). We wish to be heard in support of our submission if the opportunity arises.

Living Streets Wellington defines walking as including running, jogging, using a scooter or skateboard, wheelchair or walking aid. Walking is the primary mode of transport and the glue that holds the rest together. It exemplifies independence for young and elderly alike.

Summary

Living Streets Wellington supports aspects of the Plan but believes that investment envisaged in the Plan needs to be more strongly re-oriented to support walking and other complementary modes, including more investment in light rail and other forms of public transport that are climate friendly, energy efficient, and more supportive of walking. This should be complemented by (i) giving more attention to road traffic constraint to create a corridor that is friendly to active modes; (ii) providing for walkers and others wishing to cross the corridor as well as for those travelling along the corridor; (iii) giving walkers better access to the regional public transport spine by having light rail extend rail services south through Wellington City. We do not believe the current draft Plan is consistent with the emphasis now placed on sustainability in the Update of the New Zealand Transport Strategy (UNZTS).

We believe the Plan is correct in highlighting the need for flexibility given imponderables in the future, but we also believe the Plan is not sufficiently forward looking. Enough is now known about the urgent need for greater sustainability, especially in relation to climate change² and fossil fuels, that the Plan should be focused around reducing the dependence of the Wellington Region

This submission prepared by Living Streets Wellington members, led by Assoc. Prof. Ralph Chapman
2 E.g. Hansen, J. (2008) 'Tipping Point: Perspective of a Climatologist.' In State of the Wild 2008-2009. Wildlife Conservation Society. http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/2008/StateOfWild_20080428.pdf,
Pierrehumbert, R. (2006) 'Climate Change: A Catastrophe in Slow Motion', Chicago Journal of International Law. Winter. <http://geosci.uchicago.edu/~rtp1/papers/LawReviewCatastrophe.pdf>

on motor vehicle-based mobility. Without a major strategic shift in this direction, the Plan will not be discharging its responsibility to provide for a sustainable (as well as affordable, integrated, safe and responsive) transport system as required under the Land Transport Management Act.

General Comments

What we like about the Plan

- The dual emphasis on (i) a highly reliable and frequent public transport, and (ii) interconnected active travel networks. In particular, we like the upgrading of the Johnsonville line as a priority and bus priority measures being provided through the central city (Plan p 9). However, we consider that more needs to be done in practice than the Plan offers, towards both enhancing public transport and interconnecting active travel networks.
- Assigning priority to walking routes and cycling routes and facilities. We trust this is a real intention for the RLTC to consider in 2009 and will not simply be a gesture towards active travel.
- Recognition of the potential for light rail. We note that the railway to hospital leg is discussed as a “future option” post-2013; i.e. the Plan does provide some recognition of the benefits of light rail. But what it offers is too little, too late. We believe planning should start now on providing for light rail through to Newtown, with the future option of extending it to the airport to be seriously considered in the next 5 years.
- The light rail part of the publicity image. We note that perhaps the most engaging image in the whole Plan is that showing the light rail near Basin Reserve (with the flyover more or less hidden behind the new entrance to the Basin, in the background). It is interesting to note that what makes this image ‘progressive’ and engaging is precisely the light rail element.
- Reducing traffic lanes from 6 to 4 on the waterfront. This is important to reduce traffic levels, especially now that the bypass is open (and recognising that this was broadly a quid pro quo for the bypass).

What we don't like about the Plan

- The assumption that traffic will continue to grow as the Plan supposes. We see the combination of a trend rise in petrol and gas prices and a need to price carbon dioxide to

address climate change as biting heavily into traffic growth in Wellington,³ to the extent that it is unclear that there will be significant growth at all over the next 20 years. We note however that there is likely to be strong growth in demand for public transport and active travel modes i.e. walking and cycling, as required by the Updated New Zealand Transport Strategy and partly anticipated in the Regional Land Transport Strategy.

- Duplication plans for the Terrace Tunnel and Mt Victoria Tunnel. We believe these duplications (costing at least \$167m and \$175m respectively) would have the major disadvantages of generating more traffic⁴ along the whole route from Ngauranga to the airport, lowering the quality of the neighbourhoods (such as Te Aro and Hataitai) through which they pass, rather than enhancing the neighbourhoods the way a light rail to the airport would. The induced traffic would also have significant other detrimental effects, including lowering air quality and increasing noise levels, as well as increasing carbon emissions. We believe that duplication of the Mt Victoria tunnel would attract travellers who might otherwise take light rail to the airport and in this sense the Plan is inconsistent with the Regional Land Transport Strategy, which holds that “the road network will provide well for those trips which cannot be made by alternative modes.” (see Plan p4).
- The changes to the road around the Basin Reserve: We consider this embryonic plan, which we understand to include a flyover for east-west traffic, to be ill-conceived and detrimental to the quality of sporting activities at the Basin, as well as likely to induce further road traffic, which we see as undesirable for the reasons identified above.

Additional Comments

Strategically, the Plan should concentrate more on the sensible proposals it does include (although these should be strengthened) to improve public transport, cycling and walking, creating an attractive synergy among these modes. This should be translated into a greater allocation of resources for those modes rather than motor vehicle transport. The allocations should be at least in proportion to the existing modal split (i.e. allocate resources for cycling and walking projects proportionate to the number of trips taken); preferably, to meet the requirements of the UNZTS,

³ Radio New Zealand reports (22 July 2008) suggest a 3-7% downturn for traffic in the five main cities, including Wellington, in June 2008 relative to 2007. Similar numbers were reported in Auckland in June, relating to the May year-on-year numbers:

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/feature/story.cfm?c_id=1500966&objectid=10517584

⁴ For evidence that building or widening roads generates more traffic, see for example Goodwin, P. (1997) *Solving Congestion, UCL Inaugural Lecture*; Litman, T. (2007) *Generated Traffic and Induced Travel*, VTPI, Canada; and Kingham, S. (2008) ‘Why not cycleways?’ The Press, 10 July.

the allocation should consciously lean towards a growth in active modes. There should on no account be a split that engenders growth in motor vehicle traffic.

Increased traffic densities which will result from expanding and improving capacity for motor vehicles will also reduce the safety of walkers, in most parts of the city and not just on arteries. This will deter those who would otherwise be prepared to take up walking to work or for other reasons. It is vital not to deter modal switch of this nature, which the UNZTS calls for.

For good urban design, it is important to give priority to walkers in inner city areas, and combine this with increased use of 30km/hr zones and removal of simultaneous green traffic lights and pedestrian phases at busy crossings along this corridor. The *Safe Routes to Schools* programme should be expanded, with a commitment to giving priority to pedestrians. Other important steps are safety improvements around all bus stops and train stations, and giving priority to traffic calming measures along the corridor and suburban centres. The implementation of the Great Harbour Way walk and cycle path would also be a valuable flagship initiative.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.