Living Streets Aotearoa

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Submission from Living Streets Wellington

Ngauranga to Airport Strategic Transport Study

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About Living Streets

Living Streets Aotearoa (LSA) 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
- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

Living Streets Wellington is the local group based in the Wellington region, which is working to make city and suburban centres in the region more walking-friendly.

For more information, please see: www.livingstreets.org.nz

Submission

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission on this important topic. We would like to speak to our submission if the opportunity arises.

The Ngauranga - Airport transport corridor is vital to Wellington. It includes an important part of State Highway 1 and the North Island Main Trunk railway. Equally importantly, it includes the heart of Wellington City; a prime place where people live, work and play.

The transport function and the living function are not always compatible. It is self-evident that the living function cannot take place anywhere else, so the transport function has to adapt. This means that transport that does not need to use the CBD should not do so, and transport that does need to should be carried in a way that minimises its adverse effects.

A central business district that is pedestrian friendly (not necessarily pedestrian-only) has a multitude of benefits including:

- environmental benefits of less CO_2
- fewer particulates, especially from cold starts for short journeys
- support for energy and space efficient passenger transport
- social benefits of mental and physical health, and social cohesion
- economic benefits of retail health and improved business networking.

The regional sub-centres of Johnsonville, Newtown and Kilbirnie should also prioritise active modes.

To minimise the adverse effects of transporting people through and around this corridor, we need to encourage the use of active modes (walking and cycling) and public transport, particularly those forms using renewable energy sources, and facilitate or minimise delay and inconvenience at the transfer between modes.

Significant freight transport nodes included in the corridor study are the ferry terminals, the port, the rail yard and the airport. Line-haul movements should be excluded from the CBD, and interchange between rail, road and shipping (including ferries) facilitated.

Generally the study focuses on peak hour workday trips. More work is needed to address the complex weekend, multiple objective trips. Weekend family bus passes need greater promotion to compete with the sport/shopping/recreation travel demands of the weekend. Discretionary activities require attractive environments to attract people.

Our comments on the specific topics raised are as follows:

Congestion, including The Terrace and Mt Victoria tunnels

Congestion should be managed primarily by modal shift, not by increasing road space. Specifically, we do not wish to see widening of either of these tunnels, since this will only create pinch points elsewhere. Induced traffic, where new capacity fills up very fast with new traffic, traffic from other routes and traffic from other times, is a recognised phenomenon. We oppose opening Pirie St bus

tunnel to any other traffic, since this would at the very least destroy the advantages it offers bus passengers, and the consequent wider benefits.

A report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) is an analysis of a study from the Texas Transportation Initiative (TTI). From their summary:

> *"By analyzing TTI's data for 70 metro areas over 15 years, STPP determined that metro areas that invested heavily in road capacity expansion fared no better in easing congestion than metro areas that did not. Trends in congestion show that areas that exhibited greater growth in lane capacity spent roughly $22 billion more on road construction than those that didn't, yet ended up with slightly higher congestion costs per person, wasted fuel, and travel delay."*

Furthermore, the corollary of capacity reduction effectively reducing traffic volume is supported by a number of studies, particularly "Evidence on the Effects of Road Capacity Reduction on Traffic Levels", by Phil Goodwin, Carmen Hass-Klau and Sally Cairns, which concludes

> "The balance of evidence is that measures which reduce or reallocate road capacity, when well-designed and favoured by strong reasons of policy, need not automatically be rejected for fear that they will inevitably cause unacceptable congestion. The effects of particular schemes will be reinforced or undermined by network conditions, and by the sticks and carrots of other policies, in a time-scale which is continually determined by wider choices about home, work and social activities. The most important responses to a scheme may be governed by the extent to which the scheme tilts the balance in decisions that many people will be making anyway, during the natural development of their lives. Hence, the research results tend to support the view that an integrated transport policy should take account of the interaction between transport and other activities, as well as the interaction between different elements of the transport system itself."

Access to the airport and surrounding commercial area

Access to the airport by public transport should be improved. Anecdotally, half of peak-hour traffic on Cobham Drive is taxis heading to or from the airport, many of them to/from the CBD. Encouraging public transport use by increasing speed and frequency and improving access at the airport has the potential to have a significant effect on traffic levels.

A bus lane along Cobham Drive would facilitate rapid bus access via Pirie St tunnel and a Cambridge Terrace bus lane to the city. Currently the Flyer is infrequent, indirect, and tucked away round the corner of the airport terminal, in a place with no shelter from the southerly (it appears that this latter point may be may be being addressed). Its stop should be directly outside the terminal doors. We believe progress is being made on this. In the longer term, light rail along the CBD-Newtown-Airport axis would improve access to the airport greatly. The airport is very close to the Eastern peninsula and the CBD, but there is no apparent facility for secure cycle parking and access on foot is not easy.

People appreciate a chance to stretch their legs between flights so better provision of pedestrian access to Evans Bay, through the subway to Kilbirnie and down to Moa Point would be a boon for passengers who have to wait an hour or two between flights, or when a flight is delayed. There is no footpath alongside the airport/golf course boundary (this appears to be being addressed towards the south end), but the grass shows the wearing of intrepid feet, indicating desire lines are not being catered for.

Pedestrian access to the waterfront

The opening of the inner city bypass means that traffic that needs to drive along the waterfront should have been reduced significantly. The continuing busyness of both routes reflects the reality of induced traffic and offers little hope for reducing congestion by increasing road capacity. Instead, the opportunity should be taken to change the emphasis of the Quays from being a vehicular route parallel to the water, to being people routes to and from the water, by reducing the width and the speed of the road, and increasing the number and attractiveness of the crossings. A cycle lane in each direction would remove some pressure from the waterfront.

The term "road diet" for reduction of capacity conveys a useful way of looking at capacity rather than "predict and provide". Several more at-grade crossings are required in addition to Queens Wharf. We suggest that Bunny Street be greatly improved and that the frequency of crossing beside the Free Ambulance building is increased with a shorter delay after pressing the . In peak hour, even when the vehicles are at a standstill, people on foot have to wait over two minutes.

Access to the hospital

Wellington Hospital is served by many bus routes, but parking always seems to be seen as a problem. Improving access to the bus stops and extending bus priority measures to the whole of the Ngauranga-CBD-Newtown spine would help alleviate this. In the longer term, the provision of light rail along this spine and then extended to the airport would improve access to the hospital greatly. Over 60% of Wellington Hospital workers live within 5 km of this destination – ideally suited to greater use of active modes.

Emergency vehicles can use bus lanes, so the provision of bus (and possibly High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes facilitates emergency access, and access for those too unwell to manage by themselves. General traffic lanes do not support this access.

Better access with clear routes and information for public transport heading towards the CBD (on the opposite side of the road to the Hospital) would help and encourage those leaving the hospital to use passenger transport in greater safety. Both 'legs' of the return trip should be considered.

Given the separation of some health services, Wellington city people need to access Kenepuru, so the hospital to hospital route needs better support from shuttle services or similar.

Protection of heritage and urban form

This is essential for Wellington to be a vibrant, living city. Urban form in Wellington includes rectilinear blocks, narrow streets and a fairly strict urban containment policy. Any changes that are more than minor in this area should be a last resort, and the urban form should be encouraged by traffic-calming and public transport priority methods, including bus lanes and light rail, as is common overseas.

Increased population density at Johnsonville, Newtown and Kilbirnie could support public transport more thoroughly and make more frequent services cost-effective.

Land use planning so that people have a chance to live nearer their work also reduces car dependency. Increased residential development near Kilbirnie could reduce some traffic to/from the airport if workers can live nearby. Mixed use planning also increases the possibility of more journeys being undertaken by active modes.

We do not support four-laning Wallace Street because it would necessitate removal of pleasant older buildings. Mt Cook, Newtown and Berhampore now have a level of heritage protection for pre-1930s buildings that the general public supports. The character and irreplaceable nature of these inner city suburbs must not be sacrificed.

Inner city speed limits

The inner city should not be a through route except for public transport, so speeds should be slowed to a level appropriate to a people (not vehicle) oriented environment. The approved speed limit reduction on Lambton Quay is an excellent start.

We propose that the current 70 km/h speed on SH1 Ruahine St be reduced to 50 km/h, since it is just a short stretch but with houses along part of it, a single footpath that is frequently obstructed by parked cars, and with an awkward intersection in the middle, and the density of traffic means that a speed higher than 50 km/h is often not possible anyway. It is inconsistent with the 50 km/h limit on the other two-lane sections of SH1.

Hataitai Park and the routes to Newtown and Mt Victoria are separated from many Hataitai residents by busy traffic. Access to the airport should not be at the cost of local liveability. The over bridge is a long way round for many and at-grade crossings are considered more attractive generally. We support a signalised crossing at Goa Street if the lights are sensitive to pedestrian needs.

Passenger transport, including bus lanes

Encouraging and facilitating passenger transport through the CBD are vital to the city's future. This should include bus lanes, traffic signal pre-emption, and restrictions on other vehicles impeding bus flow. Bus flows through the CBD are already taxing the capacity of road space, and the next step to increase passenger capacity would be to introduce light rail. Provision should be made for light rail to extend travel through the Railway Station along the city spine to Newtown allowing a seamless journey from the north through the CBD. This can be extended to the airport at a latter stage for world class public transport.

Light rail and buses are complementary - combined they allow for better service to outer suburbs using feeder routes and frequent, easy, accessible travel through the city. Examples overseas (e.g. Sheffield, Croydon, Strasbourg, Grenoble, Adelaide and Melbourne) show how light rail improves both accessibility and the whole urban environment. Busways, with their concrete edges, are not pedestrian-friendly whereas a light rail track, bus or trolley route, imposes no barrier.

For passengers from Johnsonville, Tawa, Porirua, Paraparaumu and the Hutt Valley, the enforced mode change at the railway station is a major disincentive, adding both time and cost in terms of paying another fare. A light rail extension from the north through the CBD would minimise time loss and physical inconvenience, while integrated smart-card ticketing, like London's Oyster card, would eliminate the latter and reduce boarding delays.

The Golden Mile should be public transport, cycle and delivery vehicles only, at peak hours at least (7 a.m. – 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.)and possibly from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The bus lane turning from Dixon Street into Victoria St is a sham due to unclear signage and negligible enforcement. More bus lanes will require adequate enforcement – preferably by delegating powers to the local authority rather than overstretching police resources.

Another vital part of the passenger transport network along the corridor is the railway. This carries passengers to and from the CBD as well as shifting freight to and from the freight terminal, the port, and the ferry. Both passenger and freight services by rail make major contributions to reducing road congestion.

The rail mode could be enhanced by adding extra tracks between the NIMT/Wairarapa Line junction and the station, eliminating a major pinch-point, and by providing direct access from the NIMT to the ferry terminal. The discussion document says that the "throat" issue is being addressed by ONTRACK, but gives no details. We are not aware of any public consultation on this.

Encouraging passenger transport also has positive environmental effects, particularly when powered by renewable energy sources. Electric trains, trolleybuses and light rail all fit this bill. Even if the diesel buses are used, there is significantly less CO2 emitted per passenger than the private car, motor scooter or taxi.

Bus lanes are very helpful to cyclists provided the buses are considerate. A downside for pedestrians crossing is that buses travelling down a clear lane at 54k (the maximum before they could be ticketed) are intimidating. We suggest that 40k limits apply to general traffic AND bus lanes. That would still give a comparative advantage to the buses.

Walking and cycling

These modes have very different characteristics, and should be treated separately. The lengths of journeys, speeds, range of users, including age and ability, and their needs are different for the two modes. Sharing space often means that space is taken away from the pedestrian, creating a slow facility for cyclists and a threatening environment for pedestrians, and doing nothing to change modal share towards active modes.

Without people walking in it, the city centre would be dead and unchanging. Pedestrian activity should be encouraged, by traffic calming, improved pedestrian routes, better footpaths and shelters, improved signage, removal of obstacles on footpaths, including parked cars, and high-quality street furniture. Signage of key routes and shortcuts is as important for those on foot as those driving.

A major impediment to walking to and from the Miramar Peninsula is SH1, where there is no safe pedestrian crossing on Cobham Drive or Calabar Road east of Evans Bay Parade. This also isolates Rongotai from Evans Bay. Despite the road being four lanes with a 70 km/h limit, people do cross the

road as evidenced by paths worn across the Cobham Drive median strip. A Wellington City Council billboard on Cobham Drive, addressed at drivers, has "Dying to cross the road" as its slogan. Unless provision is made for pedestrians, this will happen.

Cycling reduces the number of vehicles on the road, and should be encouraged. In the urban environment, separate cycle facilities are needed, not shared with pedestrians. The waterfront route is too narrow for fast cyclists to share, especially round Shed 5 - better provision should be made along Jervois and Customhouse Quays. The cycle lanes round Evans Bay Parade south of Greta Point should be re-instated. Cyclists do not use the signed option of the shared footpath - they would put themselves at danger of collision with pedestrians and with vehicles accessing NIWA and the residential development if they did. Cycling is particularly useful for the commuting journey since it suits the working age population and covers longer distances.

Where space is limited but cyclists are to be encouraged, a cycle lane for uphill is more important than downhill, where the speed differential is less.

At some intersections, the co-existence of a pedestrian phase with turning traffic leads to unpleasant and dangerous conditions for walking. Turning traffic from Adelaide Rd into John ST (especially southbound) makes crossing John St particularly unnerving. Elimination of right turning traffic (into John Street) or separate phases are alternatives for solving this matter. Taranaki/ Courtenay also suffers from conflict from turning traffic.

Linkages with the railway station

Good linkages are essential, both by public transport and on foot. The railway/bus station complex should be signed better and managed as a single entity, so that it is easier to understand which services depart from where. Bus and train timetables should be co-ordinated, so that where services are relatively infrequent (half-hourly or less) they connect at the station. Pedestrian access across the forecourt should be improved - people and vehicles compete for space directly outside the station in the forecourt, and in Bunny Street. Jan Gehl identified this as a particular issue in his October 2004 report to Wellington City Council.

Better access to the ferry terminal from the railway station and CBD would be beneficial; this could be improved by providing a more legible path for active modes of transport. The two nodes are less than 2km apart – an easy, pleasant 20-25 minute walk would be an asset for tourism and commuters. There is poor walking access from where overseas cruise liners berth along to the city, and the pedestrian crossing facilities to the railway station are particularly bad.

Availability and cost of parking

Parking is important, but its provision and pricing need to take account of the negative effects of the car on the urban environment (both when in use and when parked, taking up space), and on competing uses for road space. We support wider provision of mobility parks.

Movement of goods to & through the city

Freight transport takes two main forms: line-haul and local collection and delivery. Line-haul trucks should be excluded from the CBD, using SH1 instead. More thought needs to be given to the transfer of goods from rail and ship to local delivery vehicles. Local collection and delivery should be timed to avoid times of high pedestrian activity. There need to be adequate loading bays, and loading restrictions enforced strictly.

Funding availability

Funding will always be scarce, and projects need to be prioritised. The emphasis should be on projects that improve the quality of life in the city while addressing key environmental issues of climate change and particulate emissions.

Travel Demand management, information provision and better conditions for people on foot are low cost and should be implemented whatever the decisions about passenger transport or road capacity. It is difficult under current funding assistance rates to sufficiently fund the marketing and promotion required to lead significant behaviour change regarding mode choice. Large engineering projects tend to attract politicians, engineers, consultants and millions of dollars. Providing walking school bus leaders, transport interviewers to help families make travel choices that work for them, and increasing the frequency of existing bus services while lowering fares are all measures which increase operating costs. Operating costs, especially when they fund people-led interventions rather than asset maintenance, seem much more difficult to provide for than capital projects.

Congestion pricing for the CBD should be seriously considered for peak hours. As well as discouraging single occupancy drivers that have other options, it can provide a funding stream for improving streetscape, passenger transport and travel demand management functions.

Health

Physical activity is seen as a leading cause of ill health. Active mode transport means an easy way to get "the daily prescription". See http://www.dietandcancerreport.org/ , which, despite its title, concludes that activity is at least as important as diet. Recently Councils, SportWellignton, Regional Public Health and others compiled the **"at the heart"** strategy for wellbeing for the Wellington Urban Region. The strategy suggests active transport policies for planning and investment are very important and reminds us to implement the Urban Design Protocol. Health is barely mentioned in the Nauranga to Airport documents.

Climate Change

Apart from the contention that congestion increases greenhouse gases, there is very little comment on the imperative to do our share in avoiding "dangerous climate change" by reducing the CO2 and other greenhouse gases produced from transport. This is the most urgent environmental issue that urban transport planning must face.

Modelling calculations have not been provided in the technical report which is a surprise. However, models tend to perpetuate current patterns of travel. Dramatic change rather than acceptance of increased private car traffic demands a paradigm shift. It is more fruitful to examine comparable cities and projects than to use a model that doesn't even include mode of transport to school and the effect this has on congestion in itself and the effect it has on parents' choices for their subsequent journeys.

Comments on detailed Technical Report

This is full of some excellent data which needs to be widely promulgated. The general attitude seems more supportive of passenger transport (especially light rail), walking and cycling than the Study Report. However, we don't agree with some of the conclusions and modelling.

We support Jan Gehl's comments regarding the need to tame vehicular traffic and his comments regarding reallocation of space. We agree that compared to other NZ cities, indeed Australasian cities, Wellington is more sustainable. We endorse Gehl's suggestion that pedestrians be given more priority at traffic lights.

The technical report has a most interesting comparison – if the current 6000 pedestrians per hour along Lambton Quay and 2500 along Featherston St were to go by car, six or seven lanes would be required. The corollary is that if pedestrian traffic can be encouraged between other destinations and public transport nodes, road capacity could indeed be reduced.

We support the idea that parking be shifted to the edges of the city with more walking routes into retail areas. We note that the recent addition of angle-parking along Lambton Quay really is not consistent with a gradual reduction in inner city parking such as Copenhagen experienced. We realise that dramatic reductions could adversely affect retailers given the proximity of Hutt City and Porirua. However we contend that during the week, commuters are potential shoppers regardless of their mode of commuting, and that the central CBD and waterfront offer a superior visitor experience than malls and car parks in neighbouring cities.

The report notes that few people commute by foot from Hataitai and we agree that the Mt Victoria tunnel is currently a disincentive. A safety glass barrier might make the experience more pleasant. A thorough upgrade of the Hataitai to City walk via the Town Belt, with signage, good surface and lighting from the city streets to the heart of Hataitai could address those low numbers.

We note a high percentage of people who work in Newtown walk to work and that a significant number who live in Newtown walk to work in the CBD. Therefore it's essential that any bus lanes created through Newtown are managed so they don't sever the community.

Pedestrian routes – we note that interesting shops, a pleasant environment and reasonably swift crossing times are as important as the width of the footpath. We are also concerned that streets NOT identified as top of the pedestrian hierarchy are still often busy and that every street in the urban area should have at least one footpath. Access within suburbs, as well as good routes into the CBD, is extremely important for fostering walking.

The discussion of a light rail route from Courtenay Place to Newtown along Kent/Cambridge could combine with a shared walk/cycle route down the middle of the street (retaining footpaths along the outside too). This would have the benefit of shade and shelter from the trees. Some of the turns through the centre could be dispensed with, as they are at night to discourage “boy racers”. This would reduce the stop/start effect for active modes.

The key issue “Buses are less likely to influence land use at Newtown and encourage higher density development compared to a light rail system” is highly significant given there are only three growth nodes proposed in Wellington City Council’s Urban Development Strategy. Transit oriented development is essential if our footprint is not to grow.

We do not generally support any increase in one way streets. Traffic often moves faster and the city becomes less legible.

The pedestrian hierarchy should extend to suburb-to-suburb connections as well as the CBD, especially Newtown and Kilbirnie and the suburbs that can feed into an improved Thorndon Quay experience. We like the ideas of “green waves” automatic pedestrian signals and “walking space management” referred to in section 16.3

16.8, discussing access from the Eastern suburbs, fails to include walking tracks through the Town Belt. We make suggestions for improvements in an earlier paragraph.

We find Fig 18.1 unconvincing. With PT/TDM emphasis the active modes increase very little. Surely if the population growth is within the growth nodes, a higher percentage will walk or use PT to work.

We would like to speak to our submission if the opportunity arises.

Mike Mellor
For Living Streets Wellington