

Living Streets Aotearoa



Draft Porirua Transportation Strategy Stage 1: Overall Strategy Scope; Walking, Cycling and TDM

Submission from Living Streets Wellington

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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 to submit on this draft strategy.

While we appreciate the overall thrust of the document, we do not believe that it pays sufficient attention to the principles of sustainable transport. Last year Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) produced a draft sustainable transport strategy, and we suggest that Porirua makes a close study of the analysis contained in that document. In particular we would draw your attention to their Community Outcomes (pp 10 and 11), and their Sustainable Transport Principles (pp 13-18), and the hierarchies contained in them. Noteworthy is that their hierarchy of transport users has pedestrians at the top and car users at the bottom (principle 2, p 14).

Our specific comments are as follows, listed by the document's paragraph numbers.

1.1 Background

One of the principles of the New Zealand transport strategy is to ensure environmental sustainability, yet there is no mention of the environment in the initial two paragraphs, which appear to be a summary of the vision behind the strategy. We regard that as a significant omission.

The third paragraph implies that there is some certainty about the construction of the Transmission Gully Motorway (TGM), but this is not the case. While the project is included in the Regional Transport Programme (RTP), that RTP is carried forward from the draft Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS), which was revised significantly after consultation, and has not been tested for alignment with the RLTS as adopted. All uncommitted projects in the RTP are subject to review, and there is no certainty that any particular project will become a firm part of the programme. TGM also suffers from a significant funding shortfall. Given this, the risks in constructing a strategy based on any such perceived certainty would be high.

We are pleased to see that the strategy sees the need to encourage travel by modes other than the private car.

2.4 Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy

As explained above, TGM is in the RTP that supported the draft RLTS. It has not been tested for alignment with the RLTS as adopted.

2.6 Recommended Scope

Since TGM is by no means a done deal, basing the Strategy on the assumption that it will be built is a high-risk position.

3.2 Issues

The final paragraph says that "high rates of pedestrian and cycle crashes may act as a disincentive for others to use walking and cycling as a mode of travel". While true, this fails to distinguish between

perception and reality. This paragraph earlier says "For walking ... safety is ranked between cycling and the other modes". This appears to mean that walking was ranked as being more dangerous than other modes, when in fact it is safer than all other modes except public transport. It is this misconception that needs addressing, as well as the need to improve safety.

In Figures 3.1 and 3.2, Camborne is mis-spelt.

3.5 District Policy Context

In the Porirua Development Framework section, a significant omission is the need to improve pedestrian and cycle links with the CBD - they are currently very poor.

4.1 Background

It is a significant over-simplification to say that walking and cycling "share physical space [and] many background issues and promotional policies and initiatives". The needs of walkers and cyclists are very different, and walking and cycling are carried out by very different groups of people.

In general, walkers and cyclists do not share physical space. Most cycling is done on the road, sharing space with vehicles; most walking done on footpaths. Where space is shared, unless it is very well designed with plenty of space allowed for both modes there will be significant conflicts. It is particularly disconcerting for pedestrians to experience being suddenly overtaken by fast, silent cyclists, and for cyclists to experience pedestrians deviating from a straight line into their path, but both of these will happen in shared facilities. Pedestrians and cyclists also have different desire lines: pedestrians tend to want to take the shortest route, cyclists one that enables them to keep moving. Everyone is a pedestrian, and walks (or equivalent); people choose to cycle, and have to have particular equipment. Pedestrians tend to wander, at a speed of 4/5 km/h; cyclists tend to move in direct lines, at speeds of 20 km/h and more. Given these differences, a single policy that tries to satisfy the needs of both pedestrians and cyclists is quite likely to fail to meet the needs of either.

4.3 Existing Cycling and Walking Facilities and Initiatives

All the walking facilities and initiatives, which are excellent, appear to be aimed at recreational users, predominantly cyclists. There appears to be no support for walking as a means of transport, and little support for cycling in that role.

4.4 Issues to be Addressed

Given the comments in 3.2 above about the misconception of the safety of walking, in 3.5 about the impenetrability of the CBD to walkers and cyclists, and in 4.3 about the lack of support for walking and cycling as means of transport, it is hardly surprising that walking and cycling for the journey to work are declining.

4.5 Vision

Walking and cycling are not a single transport choice, and a realistic and achievable vision needs to recognise this.

4.6 Core Objective, 4.7 Supporting Policies

Similarly, objectives and policies that recognise the different characteristics of walking and cycling are much more likely to achieve desired outcomes.

4.8 Actions

Table 4.2

A significant omission here is any improvement in walking access to the CBD, particularly from the south and east, and to the railway station. The design of the CBD itself and the barriers of SH1 and the NIMT are major obstacles to pedestrian movement (and also to cyclists). Links do exist, but they are circuitous, poorly mapped and signed (if at all), and subject to flooding. In our view improving pedestrian access to and between the CBD and the railway station is the single most important initiative that should be included in a walking plan. While all the initiatives listed are commendable (particularly CW1), they do not do a great deal to address this major issue.

We note that CW9, 10, 23 and 24 involve pedestrian/cyclist underpasses. While we support facilitating crossing Titahi Bay Rd, underpasses are not necessarily the best solution. They tend to be seen as dangerous and undesirable places, and are difficult to design to meet the needs of both groups of users. We suggest that the option of other alternatives be left open, and that "underpasses" be replaced with "safe and convenient crossings".

Table 4.3

We support all these initiatives, particularly those related to walking to school and work, and ensuring that the District Plan, resource consent applications and design standards encourage walking and cycling.

5.5 TDM Vision

We submit that this vision needs to include a reference to environmental sustainability. For instance, KCDC's transport vision is "to create a physical transport system which enables people to act in a sustainable way".

5.6 Core objective

The environmental requirements of transport legislation are much more than just minimising the environmental impacts of transport. We suggest that this should be "Ensure the environmental sustainability of transport within Porirua".

5.7 Supporting Policies

We support these.

5.8 Actions

Table 5.2

The cost and provision of parking have been shown to be significant factors in mode choice. We suggest that greater emphasis be laid on the potential for control of parking to achieve the TDM vision and objectives.

Table 5.4

We strongly support travel plans, and agree that Porirua City Council should promote itself as an exemplar.

Table 5.5

We strongly support incorporating TDM principles into planning procedures and guidelines.

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

Mike Mellor
For Living Streets Wellington