

# Living Streets Aotearoa



## Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa

### on the Land Transport Management Amendment Bill

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#### About Living Streets Aotearoa

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 Aotearoa has a network of local Walking User Groups around the country working to make city and suburban centres in their regions more walking-friendly.

For more information, please see: [www.livingstreets.org.nz](http://www.livingstreets.org.nz)

## **Submission**

In general, we welcome the intent of this amendment bill, particularly as it relates to sustainability and mode choice.

### **Timings**

We support a move towards three year funding but note that there is a particular need to get the first three years' planning cycle right for active modes. There is a need to plan for consultation with stakeholder groups and the general public beyond the central government select committee budget processes. Whether the NZ Transport Authority or the Ministry leads that triennial consultation is a moot point.

We strongly endorse the requirement for Regional Land Transport Committees to move towards a 30 year planning horizon. This will clearly show the effects on emissions from different ways of reducing congestion and will remove some of the over-reliance on short term congestion relief from increasing road capacity rather than sustainable public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and travel demand management. There is also a need for transport models which can take into account behaviour change programmes, such as Travel Plans and Walking School Buses, using a range of traffic reduction figures available from existing documented projects here and overseas.

### **Relationship between Public Transport and active modes**

Public transport numbers are considerably less than the numbers for walking trips. However we support public transport for those journeys and those people where active modes are not possible or practical. In order to catch a train or bus, we need good access, safe lighting, real time information, accurate timetables, reasonable fares, shelters and seating. It is often the less physically strong who catch the bus or train but they are often expected to wait with neither shelter from the elements nor rest for their legs.

### **Funding and Transport Staff Resources**

There needs to be a step change in allocation of funding from road building to walking, cycling and public transport so these modes are attractive options for more people, especially in light of the recently released Update of the New Zealand Transport Strategy discussion paper. The stated ambitious goals in mode shift and emissions reductions cannot be achieved with minor tweaks.

While some funding transfer to regions is reasonable, we believe that there needs to be continued national funding of initiatives such as the networking support, education of local areas regarding funding assistance changes, oversight / auditing of whether regional targets are being met, and general support for transport officials to learn new ways of planning cities and transport in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Certain matters currently done at a regional level, if at all, could be better resourced if a national approach were taken.

Journey planners and transport modelling are two areas where better systems could be developed. This is particularly useful where people are crossing regional boundaries. An effective national travel planner would show accurate walking routes to and from coach, bus, train and ferry routes (rather than the current street-based inaccuracies such as being routed to WALK through a BUS-ONLY tunnel). This could also enable travelers flying to different airports to reduce taxi congestion if they knew how to get from the airport bus to their downtown destination and how long it would take.

We also support funding at a local territorial level. For walking in particular, journeys rarely transcend district boundaries and are therefore more the interest of the local authority than the regional authority when it comes to physical infrastructure.

The need for updates, training and capacity-building in new models, new examples and new imperatives exists at a local level too. Whether it's the NZ Transport Authority regional staff, councillors and officers of Councils, or other organisations, we need support for visits from a range of experts, as well as listening to the local community's knowledge and views.

We hope that changes to the Funding Assistance Rate (FAR) will enable footpath maintenance to be at least on a par with local roading maintenance. FAR for walking plan implementation, model communities, accessible neighbourhood schemes and area-wide safety schemes need to be at a more encouraging rate than 50% if the government wishes to see significant change at a local level in New Zealand's metro authorities. Consideration of very high (90 or 100%) rates for the first three year period would kick start a programme of exemplar projects whose benefits should then encourage other local authorities to follow suit.

While we realise that paths through parks can now be eligible for a subsidy if they offer serious transport benefit, the process of applying for funding is so time consuming that the financial offer is often not taken up.

Whatever the exact shape of new funding, organisational and legislative frameworks, it seems clear that walking will have an increased part to play. More people choosing to walk more often contribute to walkable cities, increased public transport journeys and to desirable health outcomes.

There will need to be a concomitant increase in resources to support, encourage and develop walking within the Transport public sector. We are grateful for our modest funding for the Strengthening Walking User Group Networks. However, there is not enough resource at present within the Ministry of Transport and Land Transport New Zealand to adequately progress the current “Getting There: by foot, by cycle” Implementation Plan. Some of the ten agreed initiatives are not yet resourced, and progress has been slow on the initiatives that have been started.

We recognise that the individuals involved work hard and are committed to sustainable transport, but we feel that the cross-fertilisation of ideas between Health, Sport & Recreation, Transport, Urban Planning, Police and Education is lacking. Representatives from these sectors can paint a bigger picture if we are brought together rather than kept in silos. Information flow and ideas interchange need to be part of a shared process in order to achieve the outcomes.

We would like to see sufficient resources allocated within the Ministry of Transport and the new NZ Transport Authority so that the Implementation Plan can proceed effectively. This would also enable the “Getting There” National Advisory Group to meet and advise on all ten initiatives.

While there may be some need for revision of the Implementation Plan so that it looks beyond 2006-09, starting a new one before we’ve really achieved much of the first GT Implementation Plan would not advance progress. A good implementation plan is particularly important now, given the move towards a three year funding cycle for the NLTP which will commence in 2009. Otherwise many walking initiatives, whether infrastructural or promotional, will be unable to be funded at a national or local level until 2012. This would be most unfortunate given the Government’s laudable Climate Change objectives.

### **Fuel excise duty**

The thrust of the Amendment Bill is to hypothecate fuel duty (petrol tax and Road User Charges). We believe that users should pay the full externalities of their mode choice and that ACC and hospital costs attributable to motor vehicle accidents should be included in this tax. They are not an irrelevant by-product. Less direct costs such as public health effects from air pollution, the obesity epidemic due in part to the difficulty of walking across or cycling along many arterial roads, cleaning up road run-off into harbours, beaches and streams could also be candidates for their costs to be paid from the fuel tax at a national level.

We support regional tax and RUC allocation but don’t believe roading projects should come first and public transport initiatives second. In fact this money would be appropriately available for travel demand management, organisational travel plans, walking school bus support and other “soft” options for influencing travel choice and

therefore reducing congestion. These options are usually cheaper than construction of infrastructure or funding public transport operations, but receive less attention and support.

### **Regional Land Transport Committees**

We would like to see the Access & Mobility and Sustainability representatives supported in their roles. We suggest an audit of appointments be done to ensure that these roles are a) filled and b) filled by people with good community networks and understanding of the objectives of the NZ Transport Strategy.

### **Government Policy Statement**

We support the idea of having such a statement that gives direction to the Transport Sector as long as it's consistent with a sustainable future. We wonder whether this could also be a tool to push Treasury, IRD and the Higher Remuneration Authority, among other organizations, towards considering sustainable outcomes when they tax bus passes as fringe benefit taxable but exempt free car parks on owned land, when the remuneration authority refuses to reimburse walking or cycling journeys at any rate despite saying that the mileage rate for car use "takes into account an element of time as well as cost". A level playing field in these matters would do as much as many infrastructure solutions to achieve the goals of a more sustainable transport system. Similarly, pressure to realise urban containment, intelligent densification and locating destinations such as shopping centres, libraries and stadiums in walkable or public transport + walkable places is essential to reduce the need for car travel. The recent discussions on coastal freight are also helpful in that large trucks are very intimidating to people of all ages on foot.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the document.

We wish to be heard in support of our submission.

Celia Wade-Brown

For Living Streets Aotearoa

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