27/8/07

Feedback on Victoria University Travel Plan

It is with great interest that I have been following the University's plans to enhance transport to and from each campus. The proposed plans and actions in the scope statement present some excellent initiatives and, as such, I am curious about the effect on transport to and from each campus once they have been implemented. As walker and user of public transport, and, potentially, as a cyclist (although I have found cycling around Wellington rather dangerous so far), the improvements in these areas are extremely relevant to me. I would like to offer you some feedback on the Scope Statement to assist with the project:

** Section 8.1 "Walking"

The actions mainly focus on safety for pedestrians at night, and informing staff and students on the most appropriate walking options. I do, however, think that further improvements should be made with regard to pedestrian safety and increasing efficiency with travel time (see my shortened list of suggestions below). I have further ideas about this initiative and would love to share these with the steering committee if they are available.

1. Improve waiting time at pedestrian stoplights at junction of The Terrace and Salamanca Road. It takes pedestrians at least 90 seconds to cross the junction from the East end of the Terrace to the Southend of Salamanca Rd and vice versa, which encourages jaywalking (out of frustration). This is very risky at such a busy intersection, especially considering there is a 'blind corner' at the lower end of Salamanca Rd. (green arrow in enclosed map salamanca.png).

2. There should be more pedestrian crossings along Salamanca Road and The Terrace to enhance safety and to encourage more people to walk to Kelburn Campus. Indeed, The Terrace is the main thoroughfare to the city from the Kelburn campus, and because of the road's slope, the constant traffic and the abundance of parked cars, this is a difficult road to cross. I have noticed, furthermore, that drivers are not particularly willing to slow down or even stop for pedestrians. So it would be a very good improvement to add another pedestrian crossing somewhere along that side of the road. (red arrow in enclosed map salamanca.png).

3. Roads around the campus would benefit from obstacles to force drivers to slow down, just like around primary and secondary schools. This would dramatically decrease the number of pedestrian/car accidents and give pedestrians more space, so to encourage more people to walk.

** Section 8.3 "Passenger Transport"
- A number of improvements can be made if/when NZ bus services will adopt a 'smart' ticketing system, which will make it possible for passenger to transfer buses. In my own experience, coming from Island bay, I would be able to transfer from bus 1 on to bus 18 without

purchasing a new ticket. If smart ticketing is introduced, NZ bus (Stagecoach Wellington) should coordinate bus timetables, to make transfer times shorter. How far underway is the development of smart ticketing? Do you know where could I obtain more information on these plans?

- The action plan states that bus travel needs to be made more affordable for students. However, I believe that lowering the costs for University staff should also be taken into consideration. As long as it is still cheaper (or even a little bit more expensive) to come by car, the convenience and the time saved by taking the car, staff members won't be pursuaded to use public transport. The university could stimulate staff members to use public transport, perhaps by offering a gold pass as part of their contract or alternatively, offering a reduction on purchasing a gold pass as part of an arrangement with Stagecoach Wellington. This would also set an example for many commuters.

- The action to develop routes to serve key suburbs without direct bus routes to Kelburn might be redundant if NZ bus introduces a smart ticketing system with an improved transfer system.

I doubt that adding bus routes that connect with Kelburn campus directly will improve anything. I have noticed that the suburbs that are connected with a direct bus route are not the most time efficient routes. I, for example, live at the start of bus route 23 at the Southgate end. According to the time table it should take me to the university in 30 minutes. However, the bus —not even during the less-busy daytime hours— has never been able to keep to this schedule. In the morning it is at least 10 minutes late, and in the afternoon it is even further delayed. I find that it is faster to alight at the crossing of Willis Street and Boulcott and walk to the University campus. I have some ideas for improving this specific line, and I would really like to discuss this with GWRC or Stagecoach or whomever, by way of suggesting improvements for this (and other) routes. Do you have a suggestion as to whom the appropriate person could be?

- Another action plan is to improve and develop congestion-free bus routes. I believe this is a vital point and should be a real concern for Wellington City Council. As long as cars fail to ‘give way’ to buses, buses will continue to be delayed, and people will feel less inclined to use public transport. The city council and NZ bus service should definitely provide permanent bus lanes (not only during rush hours like on Adelaide Road) and maybe even consider allowing bus- only streets, such as closing off Courtenay Place and Lambton Quay to non-bus traffic.

Many of my suggestions are part of a much wider rearrangement of the bus setup. I believe Victoria University is in the position to negotiate a better transport system and road setup with GWRC and Wellington City Council. I hope improvements will be made in the

immediate future. I sincerely hope the steering committee will take my remarks into consideration, and I look forward to your reply.

With kind regards,
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