

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Wellington

on the draft Walking Policy

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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

General Comments

1. Nowhere in the "Have your say on the draft Walking Policy" document is it revealed that there is more to the Policy than just this document – there is no specific reference to the separate and comprehensive policy document itself. We found that misleading. In future we request that all consultation documents state clearly on the front page where to find the document that is being consulted on.
2. To meet the objectives of the Policy, it is important that pedestrian routes are well marked to enable people on foot to find convenient and pleasant routes to their destination. There needs to be good signage marking shortcuts, walkways, and paths through parks so that people can easily find their way. The Council has done a good job of this in Karori, and such work needs to be extended throughout the city.
3. Another way to encourage more people to walk is to provide good walking maps. The Newtown Berhampore Walking Map has been widely used by Wellington Hospital, one of the City's biggest employers, to encourage staff to walk all or part of the way to work. There should be similar maps for all suburbs.
4. There needs to be fuller integration of paths in parks with footpaths. For pedestrians, being able to walk through a park as part of their journey makes the trip much more pleasant. Examples include the Town Belt, the Waterfront, the Basin Reserve, and Central Park. Paths in parks need to be well maintained to encourage this. In addition new paths could be developed to expand the walking networks e.g. a path from the end of Martin Luckie Park to Dover Street in Island Bay.
5. The sharing of footpaths with cyclists can be a deterrent to walking – fast cyclists are not compatible with pedestrians except where the shared path is wide, and cyclist/pedestrian encounters can be frightening, if not dangerous. Safe facilities for cyclist should be provided in the context of faster, wheeled traffic, not by compromising pedestrian safety and confidence.
6. One of Wellington's major transport providers, The Interislander, advises its passengers "for [their] safety and comfort" not to take the relatively short walk between the CBD and the ferry terminal along Aotea Quay (<http://www.interislander.co.nz/terminals-and-check-in/Getting-To-The-Wellington-Terminal.aspx>), and having made that walk I have to agree - it is unpleasant and dangerous, and an embarrassment to the city. In the eyes of a major corporate citizen, responsible for introducing many visitors to the city's delights. Wellington is clearly not the "great city for walking" this draft Policy claims it to be.

Adopting this Policy, amended as suggested below, should rectify that.

Comments on Questions in Consultation Document

1. To what extent do you agree with the proposed aim of the draft Walking Policy – to create New Zealand's most walkable city?

Strongly agree – but not just in a New Zealand context. Wellington's size and topography mean that it has the potential to become one of the world's most walkable cities, and that is what the city council should aspire to.

2. To what extent do you agree with the seven objectives of the draft policy?

The key objectives are all very good, but they need to be seen in the context of the wider transport strategy, and we suggest the following changes.

Commenting is not facilitated by there being differences between the "Have your say" document and the Policy document itself in the wording of objectives 1 and 7 - we prefer the wording of the Policy - and in the numbering of objectives 4 and 5. The numbering that we have used throughout this submission follows that of the "Have your say" document.

1: add "particularly as an alternative to using other modes of transport". The objective as is would be satisfied if more people went for a stroll, but the real benefits to the city of walking will be achieved when people substitute walking for less sustainable means, for example walking to the shops instead of driving.

3: add "and suburban centres". The walking environment is important throughout the city, not just in the central area.

4: add "and increase the number of people walking to public transport". While the experience is important, it is the positive changes that are brought about by the improvement in experience that need to be achieved. Changes in numbers are easier to measure than improvements in experience, too.

5, 6 and 7: add "and proportion of" after "increase the number" – increasing walking mode share, not just the absolute number of trips, should be the target.

7: the Policy document adds "and the regional hospital", which we support.

3. There are a number of policies proposed that will assist in achieving the aim and objectives of the policy. Do you agree these are acceptable?

These are all good, and we suggest the following improvements.

1.1: delete "where it is safe and appropriate". Except for being a public transport passenger, walking is the safest means of transport, and it is always appropriate to walk. If there are places where it is not currently safe or appropriate, action needs to be taken to remedy this.

1.3: delete "where practicable". Practicability is implicitly a limitation on every council policy, and to single out a specific policy like this implies a lack of commitment.

2.1: delete "that compromises pedestrian safety and amenity". Parking on footpaths is illegal, and it is unfortunate that by the wording of this policy the council appears to be condoning breaking the law. We accept that parking in many of Wellington's narrow streets is difficult, and the council should specify where any form of footpath parking is permitted, rather than leave it as a grey area open to individual interpretation and conflict.

3.3: add "and suburban centres" after "the central area". Walking in the suburbs is important, too.

5.3: change to "Interconnected pedestrian networks will be strongly encouraged, and mandatory in new developments." In the walking policy the focus should be on pedestrians, not on general road users, where an increase in interconnectedness could encourage vehicle use.

5.4: add "and seating" after "shelter". A wait for a bus is made less onerous if there is somewhere to sit.

7.2: replace with "Every opportunity must be explored to make walking to school or work (including the regional hospital) the preferred mode of transport - this should apply to all workplaces, not just the hospital.

There are other policies which will be necessary to ensure that the objectives of the Walking Policy will be met:

1. set up methods of counting pedestrians which will give good data about numbers of pedestrians so that policies can be evaluated and adjusted to achieve the aim of increasing the mode-share of walking, as laid out in government policy
2. upskill staff in best-practice provision for walking by enabling them to attend "Fundamentals of Pedestrian Design" workshops (when available through NZTA) and walking conferences.

4a. There are a number of possible actions that could be taken under each of the objectives to help deliver the aim of the draft Walking policy. Do you agree the list of proposed actions is acceptable?

4b. Funding to implement the proposed actions will be sought through the Council's LTCCP, and the Council may not wish to or be able to fund all of the initiatives. In order for the Council to determine which projects are most important we have prioritised the actions. Do you agree the p[priorities given to the actions are acceptable?

The list is acceptable, but needs strengthening to meet the objectives and policies, both as defined in the document and as modified as suggested above.

All objectives in priorities A and B should be adopted. Those in C and D are described as "expensive or difficult to action", but many appear to be cheap or easy, or both, and with significant potential. For example:

- 1.5 is cheap and easy, and adopting CPTED principles is in policy 2.3;
- 2.4 is very cheap, and letting people know what walking routes exist is an essential prerequisite for getting people to use them;
- 2.11 is cheap, and supports other areas of council transport strategy;
- 2.5, 2.10, 2.17 and 2.18 are all cheap and potentially very useful.

All of these examples could be pursued for \$3,250 – hardly expensive, and none of them appear to be very difficult.

5. *Is there anything you feel has not been adequately covered by this draft policy?*

6. *Do you wish to make any further comments on the draft Walking Policy?*
See comments under “General” above.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft policy. We would like to make an oral submission.