

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Wellington On Wellington City Draft Long Term Community Plan 2009-19

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About Living Streets

Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national walking and pedestrian organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking friendly planning and development around the country. Our vision is "More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places".

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 comment on the long term Council Community Plan. We would like to be heard in support of our submission.

Introduction

Our submission is based on the following factors:

- walking and cycling are the lowest cost modes of transport and therefore deserve special consideration during a recession
- public transport fares and routes need to consider those who have little choice
- solutions and mitigation of economic recession must be supportive of environmental and social sustainability.
- health costs are rising rapidly and while not part of Council, they are part of NZ Inc expenditure – healthier people are happier and more productive citizens. Walking is great for health and mental stress.
- Economic factors –people shop locally on foot, stay longer and spend more in attractive retail destinations

In general, we seek funding for

- **Safer Routes to School** (or similar)
- **Staff Travel Plan** (if we had more engineers on foot or bike, and more managers on buses, we might get a more even-handed transport system)
- **Road Safety minor works** (often helpful to active road users)
- **Road Safety Programmes** that reduce risk to people on foot rather than blaming them
- **Street Tree development** (so they are well planted and don't cost heaps/interfere with pavement, drains and sewers in years to come!)
- **Making Council facilities accessible** (wheelchairs, visual & auditory impairment)
- Funding for **parking enforcement** on footpaths (fines usually don't cover cost due to being so pathetic – but that's another issue!)
- City-wide **Traffic Calming** and speed reduction in suburbs

Our specific comments on the LTCCP

Areas of focus (vol. 1, pp9-10)

We support the three transport and communications areas as follows:

Over the next three years we will:

- *continue to focus effort on making the transport network more efficient and to manage demand, in particular by encouraging walking and cycling, and by supporting the city's bus network as a sustainable, affordable way for people to move around the city*

We strongly support the emphasis on walking and cycling, and on buses. Every public transport trip begins and ends with walking, so to encourage the use of public transport, walking to and from bus stops and train stations must be safe and attractive. We would

point out that the railway is also an important means of public transport both to and within the city.

- *work alongside Greater Wellington and the New Zealand Transport Agency to implement plans to improve the transport corridor between Ngauranga and the Airport*

The welcome emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport needs to be reflected in the Ngauranga-Airport study, and it is important to cater for movements across the corridor (eg safe and convenient pedestrian and cyclist crossings) as well as along it.

One particular issue to address is that the highest-capacity public transport mode (rail) terminates at Wellington Railway Station, but the highest public transport demand is along the Golden Mile, south of that. Until this imbalance is addressed, preferably by tram-train extension through the CBD, the public transport system of the city (and the region) will be unreliable and dysfunctional, putting extra demands onto the road network.

- *collaborate with central government and the private sector to enhance the city's broadband network – to ensure Wellington remains internationally competitive; a great place to do business.*

This has the potential to remove transport demand, thus improving the environment of the city.

An emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport will also contribute to and support many of the other areas of focus, in particular:

- healthy lifestyles – active commuting is an excellent way of providing physical activity and outdoor recreation at little or no cost. People who use active modes for some or all of their transport journey are more likely to get regular exercise, and active commuting is associated with lower mortality, increased fitness, decreased body weight and lower blood pressure.
- sustainability – encouraging use of active modes and public transport is an excellent way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing road space for private cars and encouraging their use will have directly the opposite effect, making the city less sustainable
- safe urban environment - the best way to make public places safe is to have people in them: having lots of people walking through them in particular makes places feel safe. The best way to make residential areas feel safe is for people to get to know their neighbours, and walk around their neighbourhood. Active modes and public transport encourage this. In terms of road safety, public transport use and walking are much safer than riding in a private vehicle.
- vibrancy - what makes the city attractive for events is that it is walkable, and a large part of what makes it feel vibrant is having people out there on the streets
- competitiveness – an efficient transport system and improved accessibility will help the city's competitiveness.

What's new (vol. 1, p.15)

The proposed Indoor Community Sports Centre will provide good facilities, but not at the "little or no cost" advocated in page 9, and it will not encourage walking, cycling and public transport, as advocated on page 10. Until and unless these contradictions are addressed, the large amount of money proposed to be spent is likely to make the city a worse, not a better, place to live.

Not mentioned here is the proposed cut in funding for community websites. Hundreds of community organisations, including ours, benefit from this funding, and we oppose this cut in funding.

Also not mentioned here is investment to support the transport and communications area of focus (apart from broadband). Money invested in tracks and public transport facilities will support nearly all the areas of focus. In particular, we support expenditure on the Great Harbour Way (especially Petone-Ngauranga) and on improvements along and across the Golden Mile public transport corridor.

Governance strategy (vol. 1, p36 onwards)

We support WCC being "more actively engaged" – we suggest consultation on transport items such as Manners Mall engages in a more holistic way and seeks issues, discussions and solutions from the general public before going straight to a proposal for consultation. Transport consultation is a key part of city consultation but does not always seem to be conducted in line with the Engagement Policy.

Environment Strategy (vol. 1, p50 onwards)

We do not agree with ceasing development of new tracks for three years – although there are many existing ones, some of the suggestions are key for locals and tourists and work should proceed. The Rural and Urban Coastal Networks and Otari to Makara would replace some car journeys for recreation. The Tawa-Porirua Walkway would enable commuting to stations or Kenepuru Hospital on foot or by cycle and make up part of the Regional Cycle Network. If incorporated into the Walking Plan and Cycling Plan action plans some of these are eligible for NZTA subsidy. Also tracks are good for creating employment.

Stabilising emissions by 2010 and later significant reductions will not be achieved without transport changes, not mentioned here.

Economic development (vol. 1, p82 onwards)

Tourism needs to be encouraged, and most tourists like to walk. The retail sector needs shopper origin survey to clarify what mode their shoppers use and who spends what. If survey results match those completed elsewhere, retailers seriously underestimate role of active modes, especially walking, and over-estimate those who could park right outside. We like the photo for this section, showing people walking and cycling in a compact city centre.

We suggest community street reviews of areas round the Stadium, MFC, TSB Arena, cruise ship disembarkation and St James' Theatre to ensure ease of access to these facilities, perhaps staged over two or three years.

The opportunity cost of weekend parking is met here by the downtown levy. While the initial reaction of many retailers is that free parking is desirable, the \$1.3 million cost could be spent on something more exciting and constructive.

Cultural Strategy (volume 1, p98 onwards)

We support public art to improve the urban environment, especially with community components so locals take ownership e.g. children's murals outside schools. We support community festivals, maintaining the current level.

Social & Recreation Strategy (volume 1, p116 onwards)

The statement that "we also encourage the use of public transport and alternative modes to the private motor vehicle such as walking and cycling" needs to apply to all recreational facilities, including the proposed Indoor Community Sports Centre. We are not convinced that the large amount of money to be spent on the Indoor Community Sports Centre will overall achieve positive outcomes.

We support people feeling a sense of community within their neighbourhood, and we suggest correlation with walkscore (www.walkscore.com), since you know your neighbours in a walkable community.

The sports and recreation aspects of the plan are very concentrated on organised sport rather than individual activity such as walking and cycling on one's own or in small groups. "Round The Bays" type activity is good, but we need to enable daily activity for health and enjoyment. We suggest that a much closer connection with Transport & Parks business units is needed. We support Walking promotion in March each year, and we suggest that a budget is needed to improve existing maps and get walkways onto Google Maps – it would be easier to double numbers walking in the Town Belt than numbers doing aqua-jogging or playing tennis.

With respect to recreation services, we agree about healthy lifestyles, but maximum benefits come from daily activity and free play - team sports are fine for improving teamwork and are fun, but are not the best or cheapest way of improving community fitness. We support playgrounds being within walkable distances – great for young families to be able to recreate without access to a car – and we suggest that more playing fields incorporate surrounding tracks like Karori and Wakefield Park.

Public Health & Safety

With respect to public health and safety, we would like emphasis on public safety and CPTED to be more inclusive of community input, e.g. residents associations and Living Streets could be asked to co-operate in running Community Streets Reviews.

As part of housing upgrades, we suggest audits or reviews of access to nearby schools and other facilities on foot and clear wayfinding for new migrants.

We particularly support Accessible Wellington and the Disability Reference Group, noting that they need to be included early in projects and planning.

We note that social and recreation grants total \$2,426,000 – do they target effective health and community outcomes?

Urban Development Strategy (vol. 1, p148 onwards)

We strongly support aims for a compact city, and note public expenditure needs to be sufficient to enable this to happen.

We support trees down the centre of Taranaki St, and Adelaide Rd and downtown public space improvement, noting that these are not dependant on Basin Reserve proposals. We agree with increased resource consent monitoring, especially for streetscape commitments (p 163)

We support initiatives to make the city compact, with smart growth along the growth spine and a strong public transport link through the city centre, initially buses (including through Manners Mall) and with provision for light rail. The loss of public pedestrian space must be offset – lower Cuba Street would make an excellent pedestrian mall, linking Civic Square with Cuba Mall.

Transport (vol. 1 p 172 onwards)

We support the move to encourage modal shift away from the private car. This should be done by positive support for walking and cycling, where existing policies should be implemented rapidly, and by fixing the major Golden Mile public transport bottleneck and other priority initiatives. Parking policies need to reflect the full costs of on-street parking (including opportunity costs, for example parking occupying space that could be used for cycle routes or pedestrian areas), and the consequential effects of providing a hidden subsidy for car use (e.g. in “free” weekend parking, making other modes comparatively less attractive).

All WCC projects should be reviewed to ensure that their implementation will not conflict with the areas of focus supported above.

The move to encourage modal shift away from the private car does not appear to be covered in the performance measures on page 183. We suggest that without a target in this area, monitoring the success of the plan will be very difficult. The only measures relating to walking, cycling or public transport appear to be for cycleways (where the percentage satisfaction targets are much lower than for other indicators – aiming for just 50% satisfaction for safety is remarkable) and casualties. Travel time targets appear to be for private car usage, and there are no public transport targets at all. We suggest that travel times by other than the private car should reduce each year, by up to 5%.

Progress with implementation of the Walking and Cycling plans should be monitored explicitly.

We do not agree with large expenditure at the Basin Reserve – we suggest a study for north/south bus lanes within the existing footprint is done first and may be sufficient. Better to implement some bus lanes that are non-contentious earlier rather than making all contingent on tricky parts e.g. Adelaide Rd city-bound in evening peak.

We need to set absolute fuel consumption targets if we are to meet CO2 reduction targets.

We support the primary school increasing walking targets.

We suggest that transport reliability aims relate to the transport hierarchy – reliability for walk, cycle, bus and freight are more important than for car commuters. We suggest policy exploration about how to give service vehicles for tradespeople some priority over ordinary commuters/shoppers.

We want light rail planning to be brought forward rather than focus on SH capacity increases.

We agree with the street pavement condition rating targets -falls and trips are a high ACC contributor, especially with ageing population.

We suggest at least a \$1 parking fee at weekends – this would increase turnover and availability. We also suggest a slow decrease in inner-city on-street car parking – the same as Copenhagen did, to encourage a shift to more walking, cycling and public transport use.

We suggest allocating some planning budget to assessing pinch points and speed issues along the “urban coastal route” as described in Open Space Access Plan – also covered by recreational cycle routes in the Cycling Plan 2008.

We suggest that “Undertake a study to identify the gaps in cycle routes to recreation centres and off-road recreational areas, including difficult and dangerous intersections” be brought forward from starting in 2015 to 09/10, and that planning for reducing urban and recreational coastal route speeds should start as soon as possible.

Wellington Cable Car Ltd (vol. 1 p 244)

This organisation appears to be doing a very good job with respect to the cable car, but there are no performance measures with respect to its vital trolleybus ownership and maintenance function. This is a significant omission.

Basin Reserve Trust (vol. 1, p248)

Proposed roading projects are likely to affect the Basin, and it would be useful to have that impact referred to here.

Wellington Regional Stadium Trust (vol. 1, p249)

The high level of use of public transport could be improved further by better signage and information in the stadium and at the platform ramps, including the provision of real-time departure and platform information, being developed by Greater Wellington.

Development contributions (vol. 2, p62)

Any developments away from or inadequately served by public transport should require contributions to ensure that effective public transport is provided.

