



December 11th 2018

Submission on the Newtown Connections Transport Project

This submission is from the Newtown Residents' Association.

We wish to speak to our submission.

Introduction

The Newtown Residents' Association is the Incorporated Society representing Newtown and the surrounding suburbs. We are an active local group of residents and businesspeople, concerned with maintaining and improving our area's liveability, connectedness and sustainability and working to make our community a thriving, diverse, great place to live.

Submission

The prospect of cycleways through Newtown Berhampore and Mount Cook has been with us for a long time, and many years of meetings have seen a great deal of passion about the topic. Our Association members have a wide range of opinions on cycleways, and so rather than making a submission advocating for any particular way forward we are focussing on the importance of recognising and acknowledging the needs and wishes of all members of our community.

We are concerned that after several years of inaction the final design and implementation of these cycleways will be rushed, in order to meet the requirements of funding from the NZ Transport Agency Urban Cycleways Programme. Cycleways are an investment in the future and need to be carefully designed. We recommend that comprehensive engagement with the local communities should continue during the detailed design phase. There is valuable local expertise; do draw on this so that you can build it once, and build it right.

It won't be possible to satisfy everyone, but we ask that there are continuing efforts to communicate and explain the rationale for decisions, to listen to concerns and to do whatever is possible to ameliorate adverse effects. The biggest problem area is maintaining streetside carparking on the one hand, and the desire for a network of protected cycleways on the other hand, and the extreme difficulty of fitting both into our narrow streets.

We agree with making it easier and safer for people to cycle. This is a healthy and environmentally sustainable mode of transport, and it is good to encourage and support those who would cycle but experience it as unsafe in current conditions. However we know that while many people are delighted with the prospect of protected cycleways many others are alarmed about how this will affect their current way of life.

Parking

We are starting with acknowledging the need for parking because many residents fear that this is in danger of being dismissed as unimportant in a project that is focussing on meeting the needs of cyclists. Many of our residents are elderly, have physical limitations, are transporting small children or for many other reasons are dependent on using and parking cars, and there are a lot of properties without off street parking. In addition, if the provision of cycleways is successful and more people leave their cars at home this in many cases will mean leaving them parked on the streets.

There is a statement in the Newtown Connections documents that possible ways to manage parking better will be looked at during the detailed design phase of the project. We think it is unfortunate that these ways weren't fully considered and discussed at this stage of proceedings, as they could have affected the way people responded to the proposals, but we agree that this is an extremely important discussion.

The survey document asks "what are the priorities for parking" – we prioritise parking for Newtown residents and short stay parking for shoppers over parking for people commuting for work or study. We have longstanding objections to the amount of parking taken up by workers, primarily from Wellington Hospital.

Cycleways

We recognise that it is important to make cycling safe for people, including children, who don't already cycle. People who are dubious about cycleways often observe that there are very few cyclists, but we realise this is the very thing that the project is trying to address. The ideal is continuous protected cycleways, with special attention to safety at intersections. As observed above meeting this goal while also preserving adequate parking is very challenging.

We note that cycleways separated from traffic aren't automatically safe. The Island Bay experiment has shown us that being constrained in a narrow slot between parked cars and the kerb adds a dangerous constraint. The kerb on your left makes it very difficult to swerve when car doors are suddenly opened. Shifting the kerb out and forming the cycleway at footpath level provides a safer, more flexible, environment for cycling and walking, and provides a functional understandable framework for parking.

There is no consensus in our Association about which (if any!) cycleway routes to support, and people have been encouraged to make their own personal submissions. That said, Option C seems to be preferred more often than any other. We can agree to support the off-road cycle paths, although there are conflicting opinions about supporting them in isolation from connected on-road cycleways. The proposal to create a path across Wellington Hospital land from Owen Street to Hospital Road has been discussed at our meetings and there is agreement that this would meet a need, for hospital staff biking to work as well as others riding to and from the city. It needs noting that the Owen St – Mein St intersection is problematic at busy times as cars driving east along Mein St appear over the crest of the rise without warning. Reducing the speed limit to 30kph right through the Newtown suburban area would be a good idea for increased safety all round.

Community Engagement

The project has started well with involving the community but more would be welcome. The engagement so far has been on an individual basis with little opportunity for dialogue. This could be addressed with open/round-table forum sessions, as in the Oriental Bay cycleway and 10-year plan feedback sessions. Will Wellington City Council initiate these, and ensure that they are open and accessible to all, including people who can't travel far or work at irregular times? We would also

welcome consultation sessions taking place at schools, hospitals, nursing homes and similar venues to involve those who might otherwise be overlooked.

Bus and walking improvements, as well ways of managing parking, will be included in the next phase of design. Can we be confident that these improvements are given suitable priority and are open for feedback? We look forward to hearing more.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Rhona Carson

President, Newtown Residents' Association.

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