

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets North Shore

on Safer Journeys discussion document, August 2009

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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 Living Streets Aotearoa 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 including 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 North Shore is the local walking action group based on Auckland city's North Shore, which along with other local groups is working to make city and suburban centres in the region more walking-friendly.

For more information, please see: www.livingstreets.org.nz

Introduction

Living Streets North Shore supports the submission on Safer Journeys¹ made by Living Streets Aotearoa. In making this submission, we wish to take the opportunity to emphasize those matters relating to pedestrian safety and the roadside walking environment which are of particular concern for our group.

We support the vision of a safe road system for all road users. However we would like to see this vision underpinned by a road user hierarchy which places pedestrians and the mobility impaired at the top.² This would ensure that all road safety initiatives give maximum benefit to vulnerable road users. The importance of this hierarchy has also been noted in the recently released *Auckland Regional Road Safety Plan 2009/12*.³

A road user hierarchy consistent with the promotion of walking places pedestrians and the mobility-impaired at the top, followed by cyclists, then public transport, with unaccompanied users of private cars last (Land Transport New Zealand, 2007):

- 1. Mobility impaired and wheeled pedestrians.**
- 2. Able pedestrians.**
- 3. Cyclists/recreational pedestrians.**
- 4. Public transport users.**
- 5. Commercial/business users (including delivery and emergency vehicles).**
- 6. Car-borne commuters and visitors.**

Auckland Regional Road Safety Plan 2009/12, p.17

There should also be an acknowledgement that:

“Walking is one of the safest modes of travel available. It carries the second lowest risk of being killed or injured per time unit travelled on New Zealand roads.”⁴

Travel as a bus passenger is the safest mode. For this reason the road safety strategy should include measures to encourage transport mode shift to a greater use of walking and public transport. The health benefits of active transport modes (walking and cycling) should also be factored into the road safety strategy.⁵

Priorities

Safer Speeds

We strongly agree that safer speeds are an area of high concern. We support initiatives which **reduce permitted and average speeds, particularly on mixed use urban arterial roads.** Road Controlling Authorities should have more scope to reduce speed limits to 40km/h on arterial roads where the business / community mix would attract pedestrians, and to 30km/h in town centres. Reduced speed limits should be introduced in association with traffic calming measures which create self-explaining roads.

School-age pedestrians are a particularly vulnerable group of road users.⁶ Travelwise initiatives in the North Shore area have done much to encourage walking and cycling to school but the busy roads and speeding traffic remain a concern. **All schools should have 40km/h speed zones in operation. The hours of these zones should be extended to at least 30 minutes before and after the beginning and end of the school day.**

Safer Roads and Roadsides

We strongly agree that safer roads and roadsides are an area of high concern.

We support a change to the give way rule for turning traffic and pedestrians. This should be implemented with education programmes highlighting pedestrians' rights at intersections. Rules relating to turning traffic at signalised intersections should be improved, clarified and better communicated to drivers. **Traffic should not be permitted to turn on to a signalised crossing while the green man is on, or on the red man while anyone is still crossing.**

We support a targeted programme of treatments for high risk urban intersections. These treatments must prioritise the safety of pedestrians, in particular, the vision and mobility impaired, and cyclists. In particular roundabout treatments must accommodate safe crossing points for the vision and mobility impaired.

In addition we believe **NZTA should provide financial assistance to Road Controlling Authorities for footpath maintenance.** Footpaths are an integral part of the road space and roadside. Well maintained footpaths would reduce the number of slips, trips and falls, especially among the elderly, thus contributing to a reduction of costs for the Accident Compensation Corporation and would encourage more people to walk in their local neighbourhood, thus reducing vehicle congestion and crash risks. An argument for including "footpath" injuries in the road injury count is outlined in a recent paper⁷ commenting on the development of the next Australian National Road Safety Strategy.

Driveway runovers, should be included in road traffic injury statistics. At present these are undercounted.⁸ While they do not occur on-road they generally occur as a vehicle is exiting a property with the intention of entering the road network.

Safer Walking and Cycling

We agree that the safer walking and cycling should be an area of concern. Because of the vulnerability to injury from collision with a vehicle, we believe **this should be an area of high concern.** Initiatives supported above would contribute to a safer walking and cycling environment.

We support strengthened requirements in the driver licence test so that drivers are more aware of pedestrians' and cyclists' safety needs and rights. This must include a strong emphasis on rules relating to marked pedestrian crossings, signalised crossings, turning traffic and vehicles crossing footpaths to enter private driveways.

We support stronger promotion of road user education to maintain awareness of road user rules which improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.

We support lower speed limits around schools, as outlined above, and **greater use of lower speed limits in town centres, mixed use arterial roads, and on high risk rural roads.** The safety of pedestrians who must use rural roads without footpath provision to access schools and other community facilities should be an important consideration when reviewing rural road speeds.

We support better integration of land use planning. Rules relating to "shared spaces" being introduced in urban centres to enhance street life must be clarified and provide pedestrians with priority, to protect the most vulnerable road users, the mobility and vision impaired.

Addressing Distraction

We believe that addressing distraction should be an area of high concern. In 2007, 35% of those killed by a driver, whose attention had been diverted, were pedestrians.⁹ Following on from the soon to be introduced ban

on handheld mobile phone use,¹⁰ the use of hands-free phones should also be banned. A number of studies have found that hands-free use also leads to an increased risk of injury crashes.^{11, 12} **More education is needed to raise awareness of other in-car distractions.**

Fatigue is also a factor which needs to be addressed. Driving while fatigued should be an offence.

Across all road safety education campaigns there needs to be **greater emphasis on the responsibilities inherent in using a motor vehicle** and efforts made to **promote a culture change to consideration for others by all road users.**

Other initiatives

We support:

Raising the driver age to 17, with a 12 month learner licence period and robust graduated drivers licensing system. There is preliminary evidence to suggest that this would be supported by a majority of parents of potential young drivers.¹³

Introduction of compulsory third party insurance. This would encourage a more responsible attitude to vehicle ownership and driving.

Reduce the legal adult blood alcohol concentration limit to BAC 0.05.

Introduce a zero blood alcohol limit for drivers under 20, all those without a full licence and commercial drivers.

Address recidivism by providing more opportunities for repeat drink and drugged driving offenders to enter alcohol and other drug treatment programmes. Recidivism will not be reduced unless the underlying drug and alcohol addictions or harm-related behaviours are addressed.

Create lower speed zones on rural roads, particularly those used by pedestrians to reach nearby schools or local facilities (shops, libraries, sports grounds, etc).

Increased enforcement of road traffic rules, particularly, those relating to speed, failure to stop or give way, and distracted driving. Penalties, by way of demerit points, should also be increased. Police enforcement activities, including speed and red light cameras, should also be more visible as this will also act as a deterrent to dangerous driving.

Conclusion

Our top priorities are:

- Safer Speeds
- Safer Roads and Roadsides
- Safer Walking and Cycling
- Addressing Distraction

Central to the road safety strategy should be a **philosophy of “share the road”** and consideration by all road users for the safety of their fellow travellers, whatever transport mode they choose.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage in any further discussion of the road safety strategy to 2020.

References

- ¹ *Safer journeys: discussion document*. Wellington: Ministry of Transport, August 2009.
- ² *Pedestrian planning and design guide*. Wellington: Land Transport New Zealand, 2007.
- ³ *Auckland Regional Road Safety Plan 2009/12*. Auckland: RoadSafe Auckland & ARTA, 2009. p.17.
- ⁴ *Pedestrians: crash statistics for the year ended 31 December 2007*. Wellington: Ministry of Transport, 2008.
- ⁵ Genter, J.A., Donovan, S., Petrenas, B. *Valuing the health benefits of active transport modes*. Wellington: NZ Transport Agency, 2008.
- ⁶ *Pedestrians*, op. cit.
- ⁷ Watson, B.C., King, M.J. Opportunities for enhancing the Australian national road safety strategy. *Journal of the Australasian College of Road Safety*, 20(3): 17-19, 2009.
- ⁸ Chambers, J. *Understanding and acting to prevent driveway injuries to children: Safekids Position Paper*. Auckland. Safekids, 2007.
- ⁹ *Diverted attention: crash statistics for the year ended 31 December 2007*. Wellington: Ministry of Transport, 2008.
- ¹⁰ *Road User Amendment Rule 2009*. Wellington: NZ Transport Agency 2009.
- ¹¹ Charlton, S.G. *Distractive effects of cellphone use*. Wellington: Land Transport New Zealand, July 200
- ¹² McEvoy, S.P., Stevenson, M.R., McCarrt, A.T. Woodward, M.; Haworth, C.; Palamara, P.; Cercarelli, R. Role of mobile phones in motor vehicle crashes resulting in hospital attendance: a case-crossover study. *British Medical Journal*, 331: 428, 2005.
- ¹³ Brookland, R.; Begg, D.; Langley, J.; McDowell, A.; Ameratunga, S.; Broughton, J. *The opinions of newly licensed drivers and parents in New Zealand on the minimum car driver licensing age*. A paper presented at the 18th Australasian Epidemiological Association Scientific Meeting (AEA). Dunedin, 30 August - 1 September 2009.