



Cycle Action Waikato
Box 19-251
Hamilton
NEW ZEALAND

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From: -

Name and organisation:- Ashley Hooper, Peter Bos, and Claire Sherrington (on behalf of Cycle Action Waikato)

Contact address: - P. O. Box 19-251, Hamilton. Postcode 3244.

Email: - cawaikato@can.org.nz Phone, 022 161 8766 (Ashley), 850 8835 (Peter) or 021 907787 (Claire)

CENTRAL CITY TRANSFORMATION PLAN

We at Cycle Action Waikato are pleased that the council is planning to undertake a programme of transformation to improve the fortunes of the central city. As the council's draft plan document that was released to the public makes clear, the central city has lost a significant share of not only retail activity, but also public mindshare in recent years.

Hamilton City is not alone in facing such a situation. The 'hollowing out' of city centres has been a common feature of land use oriented around the private car throughout the Western world, and has been felt most profoundly in the USA, Canada, UK, and Australia. Many cities have already faced similar headwinds and have responded in ways that may be instructive to us.

Causes for Action

The draft plan document makes numerous references to Hamilton's over-sized central city footprint. One only has to study an aerial map to see that a substantial amount of central city surface area is given over to moving and storing motor vehicles. Of course, to a certain extent this can not be avoided, given that cars are by far the most popular transport mode in and around Hamilton. However, we should acknowledge that if we over-build in anticipation of peak usage we greatly disperse economic activity and places of interest, dilute the agglomeration effects that are so vital to a city's performance, and make the city a less pleasant place to linger.

We are certain that the council is aware of the significant demographic change underway in younger generations' views on personal transport. The NZ Transport Agency's November 2014 report "Peak car: Does it exist and is it evident in New Zealand?"¹ states:

A worldwide trend known as 'driving ambivalence' has hit young people in New Zealand. Statistics show the number of teens getting their licence has dropped drastically in the past five years. Both rural and urban New Zealand are affected by the trend. New Zealand Transport Agency statistics show the number of driving licences held by 16 to 19 year olds has declined across the country over the five-year period 2008 to 2013. Of the cities, Auckland had a 21 percent decline, while Wellington shows the biggest decline with the number falling by 56 percent. Dunedin and New Plymouth, both smaller cities, had a 25 percent drop, while smaller districts such as Opotiki had a 42 percent decline and Gore showed a 16 percent slump.

1 <http://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Our-Work/Documents/fd-peak-car.pdf>

While the situation in NZ is still uncertain and developing, if we look to other, similar nations we see the trend is only becoming more pronounced with time. Nor is its effect here in NZ limited to the younger age groups – the report goes on to state:

- *The distance driven by the 15–24 age group has been flat since 1997/98.*
- *The distance driven by the 25–34 age group has declined since 1997/98.*
- *The distance driven by the 35–64 age group has been flat since 1997/98.*
- *For the 65–74 age group, the distance driven moved up sharply between 1989/90 and 2005–2008; since then it has been relatively flat.*
- *For the 75+ age group, the distance driven increased between 1989/90 and 2006–2009. Since then it has trended slightly down.*

Besides 'driving ambivalence', the headwinds to continued dependence on cars on the scale we have had in the past are growing in strength; the rise of car- and ride-sharing services such as Zipcar and Uber, combined with self-driving technology is likely to accelerate the trend towards seeing car transport more like a utility. As these trends accelerate, they will make most car parking redundant in urban areas and allow more efficient use of road space, while reducing car ownership in the population.

At this point it is undeniable that the private car has begun to diminish in importance. Yet are we planning and building for it?

Responding to Demographic Change

Of course, not only are the aforementioned trends going to require adaptation by the city, but the city also has an opportunity to lead behaviour change and, to a certain extent, shape their impacts on the urban area. Projections show that Hamilton is one of a very small number of NZ population centres that is going to retain a relatively 'young' population. In light of the changing transport trends amongst younger people, this gives greater emphasis to the need to provide for shifting attitudes to transport within the group.

Our Feedback

Urban Form

The proposed delineation of the central city into designated precincts with specific characteristics to a certain extent echoes the way some more successful areas of the city, such as the south end have developed in recent times. Planning for concentration and proximity will enable network effects and make Hamilton more competitive as a city.

Business District

We **support** the proposed features, in particular pedestrian- and cycle-friendliness, laneways, active street frontages and concentration.

Victoria precinct

We **support** the gradual transformation into medium-density residential, particularly green spaces, mixed-use developments and local shops that will enable the hassle-free convenience of inner-city living that is at present available to only a few in Hamilton.

South End precinct

We **support** the development of a pedestrian environment and better green spaces, and the general vision of opening up to the river.

Garden Place

We **oppose** expansion of the shared zone along the northern side and taking space for parking; while we understand the improved permeability this would provide for drivers, the detrimental effects of readmitting motor vehicles would undermine the many other positive ideas outlined for the place.

Victoria on the River

We request that the connection to the river walkway is suitable for people riding bicycles and those in wheelchairs.

Green Frame

We request that any new paths be at least 3 metres wide to minimise contention between those walking, cycling, using wheelchairs and/or mobility scooters. In the longer term, please give consideration to developing the Hamilton Green Ring² proposal that would link Hamilton's historic town belt, giving a loop of mostly continuous green space (depending on the route ultimately designated) for active transport and recreation.

Unoccupied Retail Space

Given the ongoing issue of vacant CBD property, an initiative pioneered in the city of Newcastle, Australia in the face of a dying CBD may be worth considering:

Through a nonprofit group dubbed Renew Newcastle, Westbury and his colleagues enabled artists, entrepreneurs, and small retailers to set up shop in vacant spaces without paying rent.³

As a result the city was subsequently named one of the top 10 cities in the world to visit by Lonely Planet in 2011. We are aware that a similar idea may have been trialled on a small scale in Hamilton. We ask only that the council is open to the idea and ways in which council could help to facilitate such a scheme as part of the central city rejuvenation.

2 See <http://hamiltonurbanblog.co.nz/projects/hamilton-green-ring-project/>

3 See <http://www.citylab.com/design/2015/09/a-case-study-in-reviving-a-dying-downtown/405421/>

Mobility and Parking

Parking

In response to the council's proposed "Blue Zone" for parking, this seems like an effective way to free up parking for quick trips to the CBD. As an alternative to a 2 hour limit, consider a graduated tariff that will reduce the occurrence of cruising for parks. This was introduced in Auckland's CBD with a rate of \$4 per hour for the first 2 hours, then \$8 for each hour thereafter. For Hamilton, perhaps \$2 per hour for the first 2 hours, then \$4 per hour for each additional hour would be appropriate.

The proposed Business District and South End precincts are effectively ringed by parking, with public parking buildings and areas at the Hamilton City Council offices, Centre Place, Hood/Knox Streets, Alexandra St and various locations along Victoria Street. On top of this there are many other large and relatively low-cost parking areas in the vicinity, e.g. that which was once the Foodtown supermarket.

With that in mind, attention is now needed to making the central city more pleasant and convenient to get around so that people are less fixated on parking "right outside" their destination. A combination of increased pedestrian priority, the CBD Shuttle bus, a bike share scheme and traffic calming can make this a reality.

It should be noted that a growing body of research supports the idea that people who arrive by car tend to spend **less** overall than those arriving by other modes, e.g.:

While the vast majority of people surveyed arrived by car, the auto drivers spent the lowest amount per person/per month when compared to those who biked, walked, or took transit.⁴

And:

A 2012 study conducted on a New York City street after the introduction of a protected cycle lane showed a 49 per cent increase in retail sales in the street. A 2011 Portland State University study which looked at the spending habits of motorists and cyclists found cyclists made more trips to bars, restaurants, and convenience stores, and spent more money.⁵

This may be due in part to the fact that vehicle running costs and parking vie with shopping itself for the disposable income of shoppers. Another consideration is that people who walk, ride bicycles or take public transport are less likely to travel long distances to 'Big Box' stores, where the 'free' parking offered is of no benefit to them.

In the medium term, technologies and services - both on their way and already in use - are expected to greatly decrease the demand for storage of inert vehicles as discussed in earlier sections of this submission. Council parking policy should reflect this.

4 See <http://bikeportland.org/2012/07/06/study-shows-biking-customers-spend-more-74357>

5 See <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/business/9630412/Funding-cycleways-could-boost-business>

Alexandra Street Shared Space Proposal

We **support** the proposal to make Alexandra Street a shared space and would be happy to provide input as designs develop.

Western Rail Trail

Please ensure ramped access to Lake Road from the rail trail for those riding bicycles and those in wheelchairs.

Central City access by Bicycle

Many approaches to the central city do not invite CBD access by bicycle for less confident cyclists. The bridges on Anzac Parade (formerly Bridge Street), Claudelands Street and Boundary Road are bottlenecks where cyclists must share narrow lanes with faster motor vehicle traffic or use the pavement.

Previously, the Boundary Road/Whitiora bridge was the safest means of crossing the river to the CBD, but since the bridge was converted to 3 traffic lanes it is a lot more dangerous to cross by bicycle.

A past “City Heart” project proposed to add a clip-on lane to Claudelands St bridge. This project would likely be eligible for generous funding under the central government’s urban cycleway programme and should be revisited.

Additionally, large roundabouts such as those at the southern end of Tristram Street, and where Cobham Drive meets Anglesea Street, are particularly intimidating. Both Anglesea and Tristram Streets produce a kind of severance between the central city and areas west. The section of Victoria Street between Claudelands Road and Liverpool Street is scary even for experienced cyclists, on account of the absence of cycle lanes and the risk of being ‘doored’ while passing parked vehicles.

General

We strongly **support** making it “easy to get around for all ages with excellent walking and cycling paths, and defined loops”, as well as strengthening connections in and around the central city, particularly to major facilities.

Our Requests

1. Please shelve the proposal to open up the Northern side of Garden Place to cars.
2. Build ramped access to Lake Road from the Western Rail Trail with a gradient suitable for those in wheelchairs and people of all ages riding bicycles.
3. Reactivate the “City Heart” clip-on proposed for Claudelands Street bridge. This may be eligible for generous funding as part of the central government’s urban cycleway programme.
4. Investigate potential to reallocate space on Boundary Road bridge by narrowing general traffic lanes (which has been shown to encourage safer driving speeds). If this is not possible, the bridge could be upgraded by way of a ‘clip-on’ to provide space for protected cycle lanes. As with the Claudelands Street bridge clip-on project, funding may be available from the urban cycleway programme.
5. Reactivate other “City Heart” proposals that were shelved.
6. Investigate what further improvements can be made to crossing points along Tristram and Anglesea Streets for pedestrians and cyclists.
7. Extend the people-friendly 30 km/h zone along Victoria Street from Claudelands Street to Liverpool Street. The Victoria Street 30 km/h Zone (Hood St to Claudelands St) has proven to be hugely successful, and is a big factor in the people-friendly vibrancy that is working so well in the South end of the CBD. The North end of Victoria St (Claudelands to Liverpool) which is very much in decline, is crying out for this treatment.
8. Expand the 30 km/h zone treatment (as found in Bryce St between Anglesea St and its eastern end) to the below streets between Victoria and Anglesea Streets :
 1. Knox St
 2. Hood St
 3. Alexander St
 4. Collingwood St
 5. Caro St
 6. Alma St
 7. Ward St
 8. Claudelands Bridge
 9. Anzac Parade (Bridge St) and bridge
 10. Worley Pl
 11. Bryce St
 12. London St
 13. Harwood St
 14. Rostrevor St
 15. Princes St
 16. Hamilton Parade
 17. Liverpool St
 18. Clifton St
9. Shift the focus from providing parking for everyone right outside their destinations (which is unrealistic) to making the central city (particularly the area bounded by Hood St, London St, Victoria St and Anglesea St) a safer, easier and more pleasant place to get around without a car, regardless of whether people have reached the CBD by car or used active/public transport.

10. Provide low-cost all day parking in Sonning Car Park (River Road) for commuters' daily parking needs, thereby freeing up CBD parks for 'pop in' shopping and entertainment.
11. Provide further low-cost commuter car parking at Claudelands Event Centre. Trial extending the free CBD shuttle bus route to take in the event centre. Investigate altering another nearby bus route to also link Claudelands and the CBD, as the no. 15 route already does, thereby providing a more attractive frequency.
12. Instead of a flat \$2 per hour with a 2 hour limit, consider a graduated tariff for the parking "Blue Zone", which will dis-incentivise long stays while allowing for them in certain conditions (when the user is willing to pay the extra cost of staying beyond 2 hours).

END