



31 January 2005

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Christchurch City Council
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Re: Central City Transport Plan (Concept Overview) - SUBMISSION

Spokes Canterbury, the local cycling advocacy group, is pleased to offer this submission to you regarding the Central City Transport Plan. We would be happy to provide any further information or clarification if required. In making this submission, Spokes has based its feedback on the public consultation details received, and from our involvement in the stakeholder working group.

Although we have had quite a significant involvement in this Plan during its development, we felt that it was necessary to provide a separate submission so that Spokes' preferred position was quite clear. The nature of the working group meant that an agreed consensus was pragmatic for putting forward plans to the public and, as a result, all parties have had to make concessions from their desired outcomes.

General

Spokes is very supportive of the Concept Overview and we look forward to its imminent implementation. The central city has suffered somewhat as a result of a lack of planning like this in the past, resulting in a piecemeal approach to transportation.

In general, the proposals look very promising for cyclists in the central city. In particular, a consistent 30km/h zone within the central core will send a strong message to would-be cyclists that this is a cycle-friendly area. Although it could be argued that often central city traffic can't currently achieve faster speeds anyway, it will be a significant bolster to the *perception* of cycling in the central city. The likely removal of some motorised traffic from the central core and appropriate street treatments would also make it a better environment for cycling.

We are also generally supportive of proposals to improve conditions for pedestrians and public transport in the central area. As a rule such treatments tend to also provide a more pleasant environment for cycling as well. We acknowledge the need for future Bus Exchange expansion and the ability for buses to be able to travel both ways on Lichfield St.

Whilst it is our contention that central Christchurch is in fact still "over-parked", particularly in comparison with successful overseas examples, we are pleased to see a shift from on-street parking to more off-street provision. This should enable more of the road corridor to be available for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport. As an aside, it would also encourage more inner-city residential development, if some kerbside space was freed up for residents and their visitors.

It is important that the Council also works hard on other related developments in the central city that have an impact on transport. For example, greater provision of residential accommodation within the Four Avenues would provide a larger market of nearby customers for central city retailers, without the traditional high demand for car access/parking.

Specific Concerns

Spokes has identified a few potential issues or concerns that need to be looked at:

- While the central core may become a better cycling environment, this will be of little consequence if it is considered too difficult to get to this core. For example, the "four avenues" are often still perceived as significant barriers to many cyclists, and the one-way streets can also be intimidating to go along/across. The original two-way Lichfield St proposal

provided a nice solution to assist west-side cyclists accessing the central core; it is hoped that similar facilities can be provided in the revised proposals. The use of the Avon River corridor as a “greenway” for accessing the central city from both sides is also a concept that Spokes has long supported. Removing general motorised traffic from parts of Colombo St would also provide an excellent north-south spine.

- It is disappointing that the concept plans do not propose any bus/cycle/pedestrian-only streets or sections of streets, or more aggressive traffic management restrictions. Access to much of the city by motor vehicle should not necessarily mean thoroughfare as well. The fact that (for example) it would still be physically possible to drive from one end of Colombo St to the other (or indeed most streets within the central one-way grid) does little to deter unnecessary motor traffic from these areas and to encourage the use of the designated arterial routes instead. At the detailed design stage, we would like to see proposals that more proactively reduce motor traffic from some areas.
- With the introduction of any new pedestrian areas, cyclist accessibility would be reduced if bans were put in place, similar to City Mall (Cashel St). As it is there are strong technical reasons for removing or limiting the existing central city restrictions on cyclists, so certainly any new developments should continue to accommodate cyclists. Where necessary, appropriate design can help to minimise any potential conflict. As part of the subsequent implementation of this Transport Plan, Spokes would like to see a review of all cycling bans in the central city.
- A greater priority for buses in the central city may involve more use of bus lanes, and in many cases shared bus/bike lanes. There are some perceived concerns about mixing buses and cyclists, so these need to be thought through carefully. The experience in Auckland has shown that, with good design and extensive education/enforcement, shared facilities can provide benefits for all parties.
- While accepting the general concepts outlined in the Transport Plan, the business representatives on the stakeholder still seemed somewhat wary about the specific detailed proposals to be put forward. Many of their concerns appear to be based on the possible introduction of various traffic/parking “restrictions” (often to better meet the needs of other road users) and the implication that this will push people away to the suburban shopping areas. Spokes feels that the risk is overstated and that a well-designed central city core can help arrest the “suburban flight” and equally attract many new people (and businesses) back to the area *because* of the changed environment. But some public resistance may be inevitable and needs to be countered with adequate information and, ultimately, strong leadership by our elected members.

As is often the case for cycling, “the devil is in the detail”, so Spokes will be taking close note of the more detailed design proposals still to come. Although a fairly long process has taken place to date, it appears to be producing concept proposals for the central city that will generally enhance it for cyclists and all city users. We look forward to seeing them come to fruition over the next few years.

Yours sincerely,

Glen Koorey

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Spokes Canterbury (the former Canterbury Cyclists' Association) is a local cycling advocacy group dedicated to including cycling as an everyday form of transport within local and regional planning. The group is affiliated with the national Cycling Advocates Network (CAN) and includes a number of CAN's executive members.

Spokes provides significant cycling expertise through its many longstanding advocates, transportation professionals and (most importantly) regular cyclists. The group is represented on Christchurch City Council's cycling steering committee and Environment Canterbury's Regional Land Transport Committee and provides regular feedback on various council transportation and planning proposals.

Website: http://www.can.org.nz/spokes_chch