

Restoring Wellington's Golden Mile



Manners Street



This is your chance to tell us what you think about changes proposed to strengthen the Golden Mile, including re-routing buses through Manners Mall, installing traffic signals on the pedestrian crossings in Courtenay Place and reducing the speed limit.

The aim is to get the best out of our bus system, and also to strengthen and improve the part of the Golden Mile between Taranaki Street and Willis/Mercer streets. The Golden Mile runs from the bus terminus via Lambton Quay, along Willis and Manners streets to the Embassy-end of Courtenay Place.

Changes proposed include altered bus and general traffic routes, relocated bus stops, street improvements, including tree planting, changes to public open spaces, altered pedestrian crossings, new shopper car parking and a reduction in the speed limit on Manners Street and Courtenay Place from 50kmh to 30kmh.

Please give us your views

This booklet explains the main changes proposed and includes a Freepost feedback form so you can give us your thoughts. Fill it out and send it to us or comment online in the Have Your Say section of the Council's website www.Wellington.govt.nz. Feedback is required by Friday 5 December 2008.

If you have questions or would like to know more, Council staff will be in Manners Mall on Friday 21 November, 8am–5pm, and Saturday 22 November, 11am–3pm.

Alternatively, you can contact Rose Palmer on 801 3775 or email goldenmile@wcc.govt.nz

Absolutely

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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Wellington

The main changes being proposed

A two-way bus route on Manners Street (with buses only travelling through what is now Manners Mall)

Re-routing buses through Manners Mall would restore the original Golden Mile public transport route. Trams and then buses used this route until the late 1970s when Manners Mall was built. Since then northbound buses have used Dixon and Manners Street west (Willis Street end) while southbound buses have run along Mercer Street, Wakefield Street, lower Cuba Street and Manners Street east (Courtenay Place end).

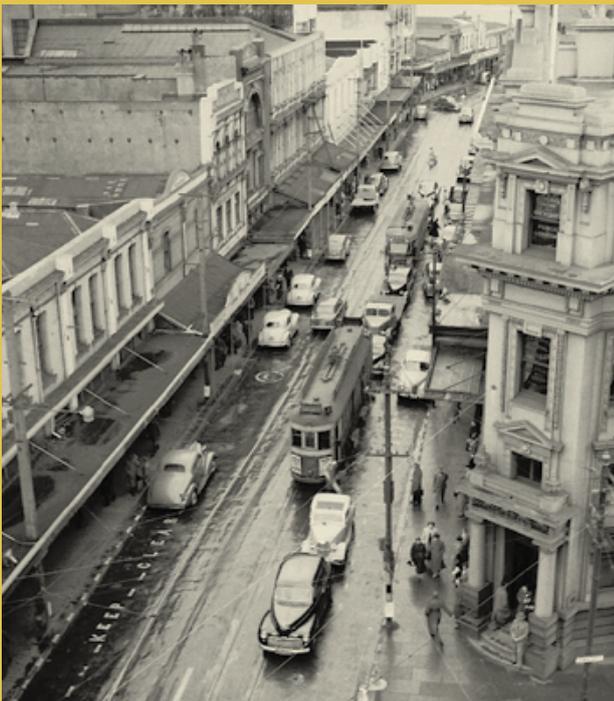
Over the last few months, the City Council has been considering options to simplify the bus routes through this part of town and the preferred option is to alter Manners Mall and once again allow buses to travel between Courtenay Place and Willis Street via Manners Street. The plan is supported by Greater Wellington Regional Council, the New Zealand Transport Agency and bus operators.

The route is more direct and will improve bus journey times because it has fewer difficult turns. It would also make it easier for visitors and others to work out where to catch a bus. International best practice is to try to have bus routes in each direction on the same roads.

This proposal would significantly change the existing look and feel of Manners Mall.

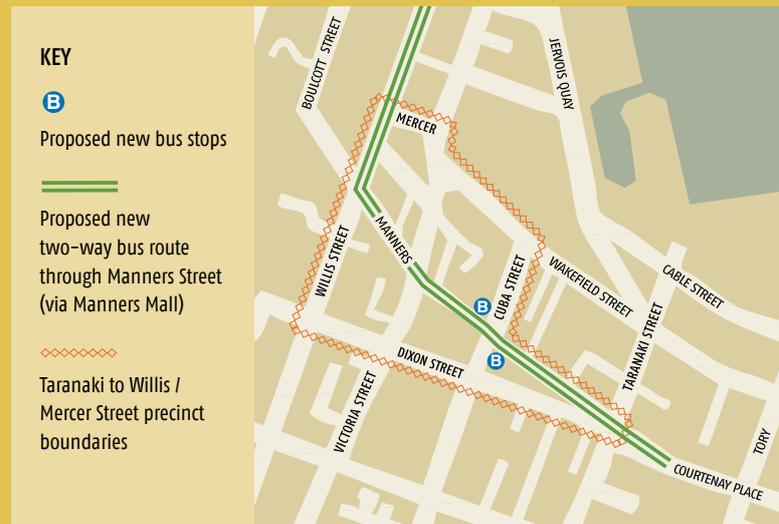
A roadway would be re-established through the mall with wide paved footpaths on either side similar to those at the Willis Street end of Manners Street (see cover photo).

The proposed changes are expected to have benefits for businesses, bus users, pedestrians and cyclists.



Relocated bus stops

Existing bus stops on Dixon Street, Manners Street and lower Cuba Street would be repositioned to provide a north and southbound stop. Initial thinking is that the stops could be positioned either side of the Cuba Street/Manners Street intersection close to Civic Square. Potential also exists to move the northbound stop on Willis Street, currently outside the Grand Arcade, further up Willis Street. There would no longer be bus stops in Dixon Street, in Manners Street outside the ANZ or in lower Cuba Street.



Two-way traffic in Manners Street west

Manners Street between Victoria and Willis streets is currently a one-way street, with two lanes heading west to the intersection of Boulcott and Willis streets. It is proposed this portion of Manners Street would become two-way, along with the section of Willis Street between Mercer Street and the Boulcott/Manners Street intersection. Only buses would be able to travel west towards Willis Street while all traffic would be able to travel in the other direction. Traffic light phasing at the Boulcott/Willis intersection would change to provide a 'bus only' phase (for buses turning from Manners into Willis Street) as well as phases for general traffic turning in other directions.

A consequence of these changes is that traffic would no longer be able to turn into Manners Street from Victoria Street. Drivers would have to drive further up Victoria Street and turn at either Dixon or Ghuznee streets.

Re-routing buses through Manners Mall would restore the original Golden Mile public transport route. Trams and then buses used this route until the late 1970s when Manners Mall was built.



The proposed mall route.



How lower Cuba Street could look in future.

Street changes on Manners Street (east), Dixon Street, lower Cuba Street, Wakefield Street and Mercer Street

Moving the bus routes provides opportunities for street improvements and new shopper car parking. It would free up space to provide more than 50 additional on-street car parks for shoppers (most in Dixon Street) and provide opportunities to make Dixon Street and eventually lower Cuba Street, Wakefield Street and Mercer Street more attractive. Like other proposals outlined in this booklet, these street improvements would be subject to funding. Changes proposed are:

Manners Street east (Courtenay Place end)

- two-way for buses (cars and other general traffic can travel one-way from lower Cuba Street to Courtenay Place as they currently do)
- some parking and loading spaces lost from this part of the precinct
- a new bus stop established for northbound buses
- footpath and street improvements in the vicinity of the intersection with Cuba Mall
- footpath modifications adjacent to Te Aro Park
- car parking relocated to Dixon and lower Cuba streets.

Dixon Street

- removal of existing bus traffic
- scope for a wider footpath on the southern 'sunny side' enabling café and other activity
- street tree planting
- up to 45 new angle car parks for shoppers
- a stronger pedestrian connection across the Cuba Street intersection (strengthening the link between Cuba Mall and Civic Square)
- Cuba Mall loading zones retained
- taxi stand relocated to Victoria Street.

Lower Cuba Street

- removal of existing bus traffic and bus stops
- cars will still be able to exit to Manners Street (low-speed environment)
- potential for some new public (pedestrian) space near the Manners Street intersection
- scope for footpath widening, which would help to strengthen the link to Civic Square
- opportunity to accommodate service vehicles and taxis.

Wakefield Street (Victoria to lower Cuba Street)

- removal of existing bus traffic
- up to 21 new angle car parks on the northern side.

Willis Street (between Manners and Mercer streets)

- existing Willis Street bus lane extended past Mercer Street to Manners Street
- footpaths and Mercer/Willis Street intersection modified to enable bus and general traffic movements
- loading zones relocated
- four car parks removed.

Mercer Street

- buses no longer use Mercer Street
- road narrowed but vehicle access to Victoria Street retained
- a more pedestrian friendly crossing point on Willis Street at the Mercer Street intersection
- a new public space could be developed over time linking Mercer Street to Civic Square.

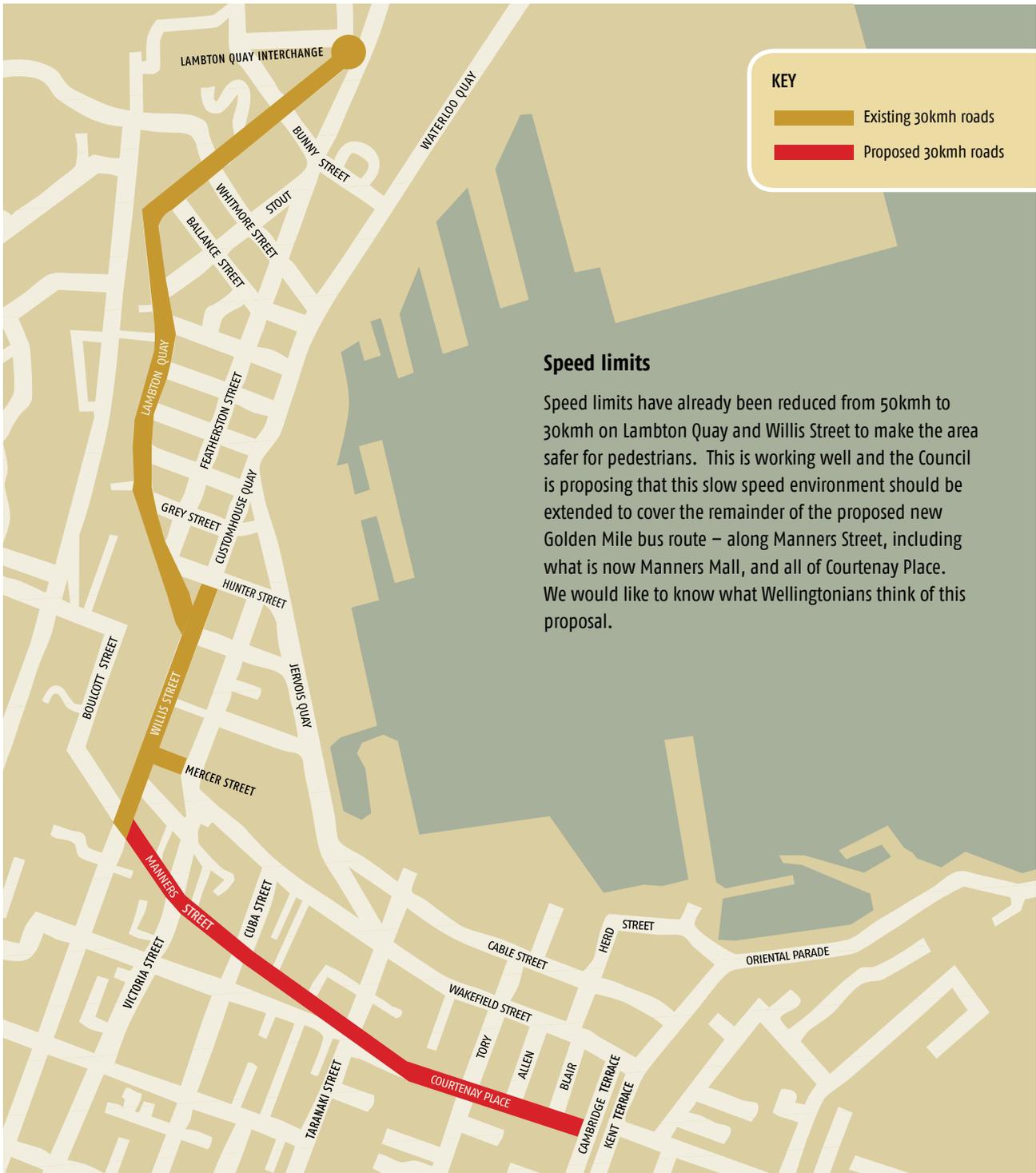
Victoria Street

- fewer buses use Victoria Street
- scope for additional loading zones and taxi stands
- stronger pedestrian link between Manners Street and Cuba Mall
- right turn into Manners Street (west) closed and drivers to use Dixon or Ghuznee streets instead.

Signalising pedestrian crossings on Courtenay Place

As part of its commitment to improve the city's public transport routes and reduce delays, the Council is also looking at putting in traffic lights at the three pedestrian crossings in Courtenay Place. These are the only remaining unsignalised crossings on the proposed new Golden Mile bus route and when there is a succession of people filing across them, buses are held up. Putting in signals is expected to improve bus travel times, particularly at peak times but it would mean pedestrians would have to wait a little longer to cross at times.

The Council is keen to promote walking as a way of getting to and from work and around the city and also to improve connections where possible. However, it is conscious that in Courtenay Place individuals are unintentionally adding to the delay being experienced by bus loads of commuters. The new lights would be coordinated with the existing lights as much as possible to provide a green wave for buses and other traffic at peak times. During off-peak times, the signals would be programmed to give preference to pedestrians.



Speed limits

Speed limits have already been reduced from 50kmh to 30kmh on Lambton Quay and Willis Street to make the area safer for pedestrians. This is working well and the Council is proposing that this slow speed environment should be extended to cover the remainder of the proposed new Golden Mile bus route – along Manners Street, including what is now Manners Mall, and all of Courtenay Place. We would like to know what Wellingtonians think of this proposal.

Why is this being looked at?

Wellington is a dynamic and growing city. Forecasts are that by 2026 there will be around 35,000 more people living in Wellington City than today.

Having a well functioning CBD and public transport system will be crucial to dealing with these changes. The changes identified, particularly between Taranaki and Willis Street, can help address these challenges.

The proposals aim to develop and enhance the Golden Mile to create an attractive, vibrant, people-friendly and prosperous Wellington City.

They contribute to the objectives of the New Zealand Transport Strategy, Regional Land Transport Strategy, Ngauranga to Airport Corridor Plan, and Wellington City Council's urban development and transport strategies.

The proposals are expected to benefit bus users, retailers, pedestrians, cyclists, visitors and others who use the area, and help improve the city's public transport system. The Council is working in partnership with Greater Wellington Regional Council, which is the primary agency responsible for the provision of public transport services throughout the region, as well as the New Zealand Transport Agency and bus operators.

Wellington already has the best bus patronage levels in the country but we want them to be even better.

Currently 35 million peak and off-peak passenger transport trips are made in the Wellington region each year. Greater Wellington has targets of 50 million trips by 2016. For this to happen, public transport needs to be a viable and efficient choice for residents.

Public bus transport is provided through a combination of commercial and subsidised services. Greater Wellington and bus companies address service standards, route planning and operational issues, while Wellington City Council's role is to provide the necessary infrastructure (bus lanes, bus shelters, signals and physical routes) and traffic management. This consultation is about improvements the City Council can make.

Other planning and investment to support a world-class transport system is under way. Greater Wellington is undertaking a comprehensive review of Wellington's bus system. It has already committed to progressively introduce 61 new electric trolley buses from 2007 to 2009, and is well advanced in planning to provide a real-time passenger information system from 2009 and comprehensive integrated ticketing from 2011.

What's happened so far?

Over the last few months, the Council has talked with a range of people and organisations about the proposals to help gauge support and to get a better understanding of the opportunities, challenges and concerns.

These discussions have included individual retailers, the Retailers Association, the Wellington Regional Chamber of Commerce, bus operators, Greater Wellington, the New Zealand Transport Agency, Police, the Youth Council, Wellington Cable Car, the Taxi Federation, Cycle Aware, Living Streets, architects and property owners.

Several reports have also been commissioned to look in detail at how the proposal might impact on the area and traffic flows. For instance Jones Lang LaSalle looked at the existing commercial/retail sector in the Taranaki to Willis Street precinct and the potential effects of the proposed changes in the area.

Among other things, they identified some potential benefits for Dixon, lower Cuba, Wakefield and Mercer streets if buses are removed. They also noted that of the 200 pedestrian malls constructed in the United States in the 1960s, 78 percent have been completely or partially reopened to traffic. Significant improvements in occupancy rates, retail sales, property values and private sector reinvestment have been reported in 90 percent of cases. Similar benefits have been experienced in Australia where malls have been reopened to traffic.

During the discussions so far, many people have said they do not believe Manners Mall functions particularly well as a public space. The changes proposed would provide opportunities to develop several smaller public spaces.

These new public spaces would be in Dixon Street, at each end of what is now Manners Mall and in Mercer Street and lower Cuba Street. Lower Cuba Street could be developed a little bit like Blair and Allen streets and potentially closed off to traffic for special events like the Cuba Carnival, creating a better link through to Civic Square.

Traffic modelling shows that the proposed changes should only have a minor impact on general traffic flows, and should improve the Boulcott/Manners/ Willis Street intersection, which does not work very well at peak times at the moment.

Work so far has identified a high level of support in principle for the proposal to reopen Manners Mall to buses as well as a number of issues that will need careful management if the plan proceeds. These include design features to help make sure the area is as safe as possible for pedestrians and to ensure pedestrians use both sides of the street. Construction work would also need to be managed to minimise disruption to mall businesses.

What other options were considered?

The Council considered four options.

- An enhanced status quo – retaining the existing split bus routes but putting traffic lights on the Wakefield Street pedestrian crossing and fine tuning intersection signals to assist peak-hour bus movements.
- Bringing bus routes together on to the same roads using Mercer, Wakefield and lower Cuba streets. City-bound buses would no longer use Dixon and Manners Street west.
- Bringing the bus routes together using Dixon and Willis streets. Buses would no longer use lower Cuba Street, Wakefield Street, Mercer Street or any part of Manners Street.
- Re-routing the buses via Manners Mall, as outlined in this booklet.

The Manners Mall proposal was considered the strongest option after all four options were assessed from an economic, public use, transport and design perspective.

When would the work happen and how much would it cost?

The Council is proposing to stage the changes over the next five years, primarily so the bulk of it could be paid for using money that has already been tagged for roading, street and bus priority improvements.

Signalising the crossings in Courtenay Place and removing the right-hand turn from Victoria Street into Manners Street would happen this financial year, most likely before the end of June 2009.

The changes required to allow buses to travel through Manners Mall would happen in the 2009/10 financial year along with the creation of additional angle parking in Dixon Street, subject to funding approval through the Council's Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP).

Street improvements in lower Cuba, Wakefield and Mercer streets would happen in subsequent years if City Councillors confirm funding for them through the LTCCP process.

The proposal outlined in this booklet – including putting in traffic lights at the Courtenay Place crossings, altering intersections, altering Manners Mall and improvements to Mercer, Wakefield, lower Cuba and Dixon streets – is estimated to cost \$11.1 million. The Council's existing LTCCP already has \$10.5 million budgeted over five years for other bus priority and urban redevelopment work that could be used to fund this project instead.

The proposal is expected to generate an additional \$250,000 a year from charges for the additional new on-street car parking. In addition, if the work goes ahead, the Council will not have to spend an estimated \$300,000 on repairs to the paving in Manners Mall.

The Council will be reviewing its long term plan (2009 – 2019) over the next eight months and will be seeking feedback from Wellingtonians on what they see as the priorities. Depending on the outcome of this consultation, this project will be assessed against other projects.

What happens next?

The public consultation period runs until Friday 5 December.

Feedback will be formally reported back to City Councillors in February 2009. If you would like an opportunity to speak in support of your submission, please tick the oral submission box on the feedback form.

The Council will decide whether the project should be included in its draft Long Term Council Community Plan once the submissions have been considered. Wellingtonians will get an opportunity to comment on the draft long term plan before it is finalised.

More information

For more information on this project please visit www.Wellington.govt.nz

or contact project manager Rose Palmer, phone 801 3775 or email goldenmile@wcc.govt.nz