

Uneven traffic balance

Vehicular traffic is dominating Wellington city centre and has a negative effect on a number of streets and public spaces.

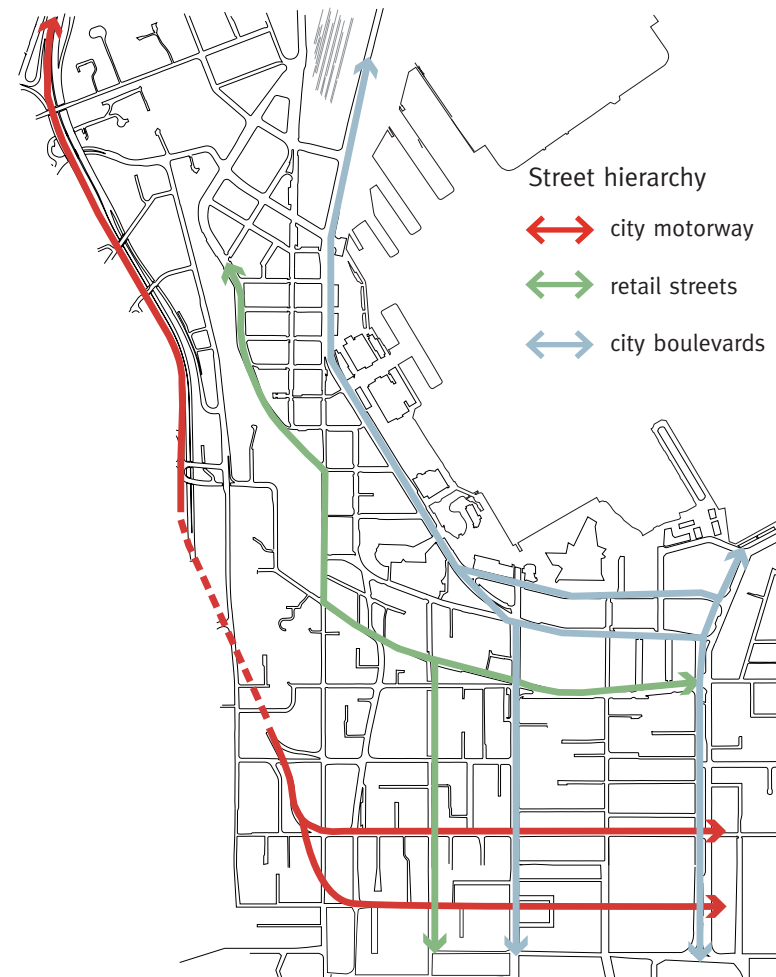
City streets have been turned into highways and the vehicular traffic flows through the city centre are high, much higher than what would be expected of a city the size of Wellington.

While in Europe there is a understanding of the different conditions present in the new world causing high levels of car ownership due to the difficulties of getting around there are still many cities which have taken up the challenge and addressed high vehicular traffic volumes, realizing that vehicular traffic will keep growing as long as it is easy to drive.

Portland, Curitiba and Bogota are cities which have created new policies based on a vision of what the city might be like, and shaped traffic patterns to achieve this vision. Portland is an American city with the typical new world problems of long distances which has been particularly successful in creating a high quality city centre based on public transport, pedestrian traffic, cycling and controlled vehicular traffic.

In order to bring prosperity and progress to the city, Wellington needs to address vehicular traffic at a political level by determining a vision for the city. This vision should address the future of the waterfront, how the Golden Mile can be maintained as a high quality retail street, and how large parts of the inner city can be transformed into multi-use precincts for shops, restaurants, offices, theatres, cafes and much more. The vision needs to include clear goals for strengthening of public transport, a higher priority for pedestrians in the city centre in general, a gradual transformation of the city “roads” into city streets, the introduction of a bicycle culture and better facilities for recreational activities.

Much is dependent on such a vision and the need to formulate it now is urgent. Strong leadership and dedicated people will need to stand together to change priorities in the capital of New Zealand.



Develop a strong and clear street hierarchy

Roads need to be identified as motorways, retail streets, side streets or boulevards. Through the development of a street hierarchy pointing out the primary and secondary streets, certain street types can then be refined through the design of lighting, paving, street furniture, planting etc.

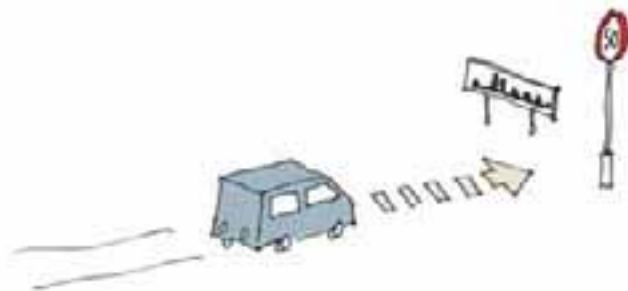


#### From urban mini-motorways to city boulevards

Urban mini-motorways as e.g. Cambridge and Kent Terrace, Taranaki Street and Jervois Quay ought to be developed into city boulevards offering improved visual and physical quality both for motorists and pedestrians.

Planting trees in the streets tends to soften the street environment and give character to the street and the city. The wide streets could provide room for outdoor cafes, wider footpaths, cycle lanes and street trees.

In many of the wide streets in the city it is perceived that there are too many lanes of traffic relative to the traffic volumes e.g. Cambridge and Kent Terrace and Taranaki Street.



#### Introducing speed limits

Lowered speed limits and the introduction of speed reduction measures in the inner city area will reinforce the perception of the streets being city streets and not thoroughfares.

#### Traffic reduction

In order to improve the quality and vitality of inner city Wellington a reduction in vehicle traffic volumes and speeds need to be achieved. The through traffic with no business in the city centre should be redirected. No drastic or sudden measures are suggested, but rather a firm policy over a period of 10 to 15 years with reductions being introduced in small instalments. Wellington city centre is currently automobile dominated. In a gradual process a better balance between walking, public transportation and private motor vehicles can be achieved.

#### Recommendations

- a) Reduce through traffic.
- b) Introduce “green waves” at traffic lights to increase street capacity and avoid idling.
- c) Make medians in streets to curb traffic and facilitate safe pedestrian crossings.
- d) Reduce the amount of parking to control traffic coming into the city centre. Copenhagen has successfully used this policy, gradually bringing the amount of parking spaces down and thus achieving less traffic while encouraging use of public transport, walking and cycling.
- e) Improve traffic safety to allow disabled, the elderly and families with younger children to move more freely.
- f) Improve the visibility and accessibility of public transport to encourage more bus use and walking. Dedicated bus- and pedestrian streets can improve the bus system e.g. the Golden Mile, Lambton Quay.
- g) Improve conditions for walking and encourage people to walk.
- h) Create pedestrian priority streets where many people already walk to improve conditions for walking and city life, as well as to reduce traffic.
- j) Turn mini-motorways into city boulevards to improve visual and physical quality for motorists and pedestrians.