
REPORT 4
(1215/52/IM)

NZ WALKING CONFERENCE 2010 REPORT BACK

1. Purpose of Report

To report back to Councillors on the 2010 NZ Walking Conference.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Strategy & Policy Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*

3. Conference Details

The fourth NZ Walking Conference was held in Wellington in August 2010. I attended this two-day conference, held at the James Cook Hotel. It is a biennial conference, alternating with the NZ Cycling Conference. The conference was organised by Living Streets Aotearoa. Sponsors included Land Transport New Zealand, Greater Wellington and other companies, organisations and individuals.

Attendees included transport engineers, school travel planners, community workers, road safety staff, academics, policy advisors, researchers, recreation planners, health promoters, councillors and students. There was a wide geographic spread of attendees from Timaru and Dunedin in the South Island to Whakatane in the North as well as all the main centres.

On Sunday evening the Golden Foot Walking Awards were presented by Fran Wilde to a range of organisations and projects. Unfortunately no Wellington City Council projects were entered but at least Cycle Aware's waterfront cooperation project did well.

The New Zealand Best Practice Walking Facility Winner: Warren Cole Walk and Cycleway - Whakatane District Council



New Zealand Best Practice Walking Facility by a New Zealand Organisation Winner: Nelson City Stepping Out - Nelson City Council



Best New Zealand Walking Promotion Winner: Cruise the Waterfront - Cycle Aware Wellington



Project Winner: Green Prescription Mt Manganui Challenge Sport - Bay of Plenty



4. Subjects Covered

Many of the papers focussed on the direct and indirect economic benefits of walking whereas previous conferences have focussed more on urban design, health or environmental outcomes.

Martin Wedderburn was the keynote speaker on Monday. Martin is a Transport Planner and has been on research teams with CABA (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and is on the Walk21 expert panel. His presentation covered how economic growth related to local connectivity, clustering of businesses and showed how both local property prices and retail performance related to footfall. Safety, security and health costs and benefits were discussed and he used three case studies of how projects can be assessed for walkability and economic benefit. One of these was a conversion of a narrow lane with inadequate footpaths into an attractive shared space. On Tuesday he spoke about benchmarking local authority walking practice.

Nigel Cass, RNZ 2011, spoke about how important walking will be for visitors to the Rugby World Cup, in particular Wellington and Auckland's waterfront to stadium issues.

Gerry Dance and Quintin Howard explained the investment in Model Communities of \$7.28m between New Plymouth and Hastings. The idea is that instead of spreading small improvements around the country that are difficult to assess, two communities committed to improving walking and cycling have enough funding to implement major projects integrated into their overall transport planning and be able to evaluate the effect this has. If success in increasing active mode share and decreasing congestion is demonstrated, it could be a catalyst for further funding for other communities. However, the two provincial cities chosen may not have a great deal of congestion. We should be pushing for an urban area to be the next demonstration project – perhaps somewhere like the Miramar peninsula.

Two concurrent sessions ran and I attended the Infrastructure stream. Jared Thomas from Opus, explained the high cost in economic and personal costs from slip and falls on the road corridor. The injuries to pedestrians that are not caused by a vehicle are comparable to crash injuries. According to ACC, 90% of NZ's over 20,000 pedestrian injuries do not involve moving vehicles. The total annual economic cost is \$1.7 billion. In 2008, 700 trip/fall accidents were admitted to hospital compared to 738 for pedestrians in conflict with a moving vehicle. Small changes in level were the most dangerous design/maintenance faults, followed by slippery surfaces. Jared suggested that ongoing maintenance is more important than design. Clarification that footpaths have priority over driveways should also be provided by material and level changes.

Steve Abley presented a paper that explored whether the walking environment's quality could be quantified by certain engineering measurements. His thesis was that rapid and cost-effective assessments of routes can be done without perception surveys or audit. There was some scepticism whether this could replace more qualitative checks by people but the point was that it could identify priorities in a route network. Such objective analysis may not offer creative solutions.

After lunch the conference participants were amused and delighted by Tom Beard's presentation of "urban pleasures" highlighting the different ways people choose to enjoy city streets in different cultures and whether these varieties – the promenade or passeggiata, are relevant to NZ cities and New Zealanders. Reference to Tom's descriptions by later speakers emphasised the insights he drew. This was definitely the walk as an end in itself rather than a utilitarian A to B journey of necessity. He reminded us that surprise and delight are as important components of the urban landscape as safety and legibility.

Ryan Falconer from Perth looked at the walking renaissance in Perth. This was set against huge growth and a very spread-out conurbation. He described the intersection of the built environment, the "explorable network" including parks and human activity as making a walk-worthy place, not merely a walkable place. The explorable network was about having choice and a diversity of paths, some direct, some mysterious. Again a focus on complexity rather than only efficiency came through. Sometimes walkers want a direct smooth path and sometimes people like to wander a little. However the combination of transport planning and land use was still essential for planning. He saw barriers to walk-worthy places as being car parking requirements, traffic generation standards, levels of service for vehicular rather than pedestrian journeys and making footpaths discretionary in new development.

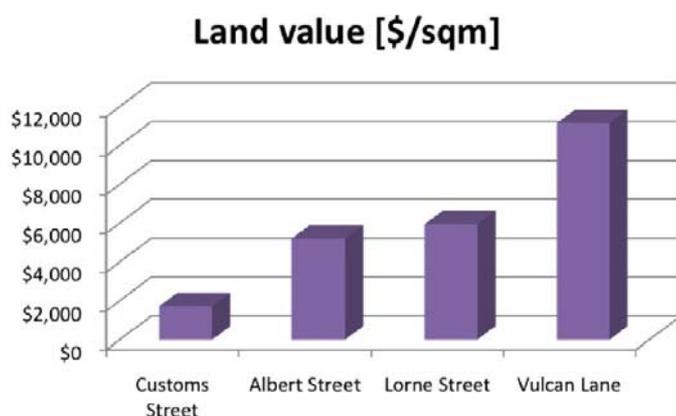
Matthew Harridge from Glen Eira in Melbourne spoke of the different ways a Council can invest in encouraging walking. One of his most memorable points concerned the high population of Orthodox Jews in this area and how their religious observance prevented them using the push button to activate cross signals so they reprogrammed the signals to ensure there was a green pedestrian phase every cycle. Matthew noted that when both the Mayor and CEO appreciate walking, it makes a big difference.

Robyn Davies presented information from New York's Walk 21 conference. She mentioned Jim Walker's quote "What New York has done is making politicians around the world a little uncomfortable. New York did it and did it quickly," emphasising the rapid transformation of a city rather than the slow and piecemeal approach many take. Pedestrian accident rates, traffic congestion and journey times have all dropped.

On Monday night, the Living Streets Aotearoa AGM saw a lively executive council elected for 2010-11, with a range of experience and talent from round New Zealand. Andy Smith from Walk Auckland was elected President.

Tuesday's brief exploration of the route from James Cook Hotel to the waterfront was interesting. In Grey Street café space seemed to have encroached on walkable space too much, although some café space was desirable. The part of Grey Street with vehicular access could be more attractive with shared space. I was horrified to realise that so many of our street signs and rubbish bins do not meet accessibility standards.

Julie-Anne Genter made a fascinating presentation. She started with the provocative question "How could it be economically efficient for 85% of the population to need a two-tonne imported vehicle, running on imported fuel that is subject to fluctuating prices, to go about their daily business?"



She described the balance of movement space and exchange space as affecting land value and rentals.

Julie-Anne highlighted work in the NZTA Economic Evaluation Manual and Tim Hazeldine's work on the economic benefits of mode shift. She also described some shopper origin and expenditure analysis being done in different centres across New Zealand.

5. Materials for Circulation

The many presentations from the conference are available on the Living Streets Aotearoa website www.livingstreets.org.nz/conference2010/papers. I will also have the conference handbook available at committee.

6. Benefit to Council & Subsequent Action

Our emphasis on connecting transport planning and land use planning was confirmed as desirable, as was expenditure on quality public space, seating, lighting and signage. The message that congestion or safety issues need to be solved by looking at causes more than a kilometre from the apparent problem also resonated. The two areas Wellington City Council seems to be out of step

with best practice are its emphasis on on-street parking provision and its view that increasing road capacity as a viable long term congestion solution. However our lack of minimum parking requirements in the central area removes a subsidy for car-based transport. A major challenge will be addressing suburban centre parking and accessibility.

It was important to have a conference focussed on this specific mode of transport since it is sometimes absent from more broad-based transport conferences – or just one aspect is considered such as safety or recreation. The importance of an attractive city to linger in will be a challenge to the view that efficiency of transport is paramount.

The ideas we heard show that generally our Walking Plan and Centres Plan are on the right lines. However, we will need some modest funds for beautification and street trees, not just District Plan changes, traffic calming and better crossings. Also, after the number of years we have had a reference group and national guidelines, finding our bins and street signs still pose hazards to the vision-impaired is disappointing and we need an action plan to modify existing street furniture to make it safe.

7. Report Back on Costs

The registration and conference dinner totalled \$551.25 (GST inclusive). There were no transport or accommodation costs incurred as the conference was held in Wellington.

8. Conclusion

I appreciate Council for sending me. Our official presence was worthwhile to show Wellington cares about walking as well as the time spent on lessons I have brought back. Council staff contributed to conference organisation and presentations.

A final quote that fits Wellington: “A good city is like a good party – people stay for much longer than really necessary because they are enjoying themselves.”

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