



Newtown Residents' Association Regional Land Transport Plan oral submission to the Greater Wellington Regional Council. Presented by Rhona Carson on 13/4/21.

I am here today as President of the Newtown Residents' Association. We are a very diverse community and our Association doesn't claim to represent all views. However in this submission we are asking for an increased level of community engagement, and we believe that this is important for all the Newtown residents.

LGWM (Lets Get Wellington Moving) and the Newtown-Berhampore cycleways are two projects that have the potential to make big changes to the way of life in the Newtown community, and for each of these a lot of time has passed with no decisions about their implementation.

Newtown is a densely populated area, and narrow streets with little off-street parking mean that there isn't room for all the modes of transport – cars, buses, car parking, protected cycle ways, protected (not shared) footpaths, maybe even light rail – to coexist. There are many different (and conflicting) views among residents about how to deal with this. Because of this, this submission has little to say about specific outcomes, but is more concerned about process and focussing on the importance of recognising and acknowledging the needs and wishes of all members of our community. It won't be possible to satisfy everyone, but we ask that there are continuing efforts to communicate and explain the rationale for decisions, to listen to concerns and to do whatever is possible to ameliorate adverse effects.

We had LGWM high on our list of priorities because we have particular concerns about the likely adverse effects of establishing a mass rapid transit system through Newtown.

In 2013 there was active discussion about the Regional Council Wellington Public Transport Spine Study, which considered options and recommended Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – Dedicated bus lanes for new bigger buses. Eight years later decisions seem further away than they seemed to be then but we are somewhat relieved about this delay, as the 2013 recommendations would have dramatically changed Riddiford St, removing all of our street trees and demolishing our pedestrian friendly kerb extensions and central refuge islands. Rapid transport was being prioritised over liveability in our suburban centre, and the plan overlooked the safety and traffic calming reasons for which these features were created. However it feels as though this threat hasn't gone away, and now the National Policy Statement on Urban Development adds an extra dimension to the uncertainty about what the future holds for our community.

We find it frustrating that GWRC and WCC attempts at consulting the community have been episodic and unconnected. There are times of making proposals and asking for submissions – and then nothing happening and nothing more being said, until the topic emerges into the public arena again months or years later.

We would like something more continuous and consistent, with ongoing feedback about progress, discussions about the pros and cons of proposals, and careful consideration of the possible unintended consequences, before firm recommendations are made.

We would also like the Regional Council and the City Council to combine to engage with the community, as almost all transport decisions involve both councils.

The RLTP project to change travel behaviour with trips to the Wellington Regional Hospital is an example of this, and the RPTP strategy about Park and Ride is another. Both involve parking on our local streets – park and ride is happening informally in Newtown, with people from more distant suburbs driving to Newtown, parking and then taking a bus or walking to the City. The City Council has had extensive discussions about a parking plan for Newtown, and there is meant to be a further process of working with the community coming, although at present this is one of those processes that has vanished from sight. We hope that future discussions about this and similar issues will involve the community and both Councils, as changes to City Council parking regulations will interact with the implementation of Regional Council projects and strategies.

This is one example, but most GWRC transport decisions also have an impact on WCC projects – for instance the District Plan, which will be reviewed in the near future. We would like to see a much more coordinated and connected approach to examining all aspects of an issue.

In the past few days we have heard that you have been discussing which of a number of objectives for LGWM are more important -

- Enhancing the liveability of the central city (we question why only the liveability of the central city is considered)
- Providing more efficient and reliable access for users
- Reducing reliance on private vehicle travel
- Improving safety for all users
- Future proofing the transport system

This seems similar to the questions that have been asked of community members over the years during periods of consultation. My experience is that generally all of the objectives are important, and that the practical implications of ranking them are unclear.

I notice that the word 'rapid' doesn't appear in the list of objectives.

I suggest that 'mass rapid transit', as defined in the NPS-UD 2020, ie "rapid transit service means any existing or planned frequent, quick, reliable and high-capacity public transport service that operates on a permanent route (road or rail) that is largely separated from other traffic" is incompatible with liveability. We're talking about buses, trams or trains making their way through established communities, and the only way to create a permanent route separated from other traffic would be to demolish large areas of existing street scapes and even buildings. We have seen what happened to Te Aro with the creation of Karo Drive, and it is alarming to consider that happening to our community.

We wonder if part of the difficulty in making decisions about LGWM, as well as the cost, is that it is impossible to achieve rapidity along with liveability. It might be easier to make progress if the emphasis was on the reliability and predictability of public transport rather than rapidity.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.