



## SUBMISSION

### Transit New Zealand

#### Draft 2006/07 10-Year State Highway Plan

## 1. Introduction

The Cycling Advocates' Network (CAN)<sup>1</sup> is pleased to present this submission on Transit's Draft 10-Year SH Plan. The national executive of the group has prepared this submission, with feedback from CAN members. We have based our submission on examination of the relevant documents posted on Transit's website. Some of our local member groups may also be making separate submissions specific to their Transit region. If you require clarification of any of the points raised by us, please feel free to contact us as detailed at the end of our submission.

## 2. Submission

### **General Funding Approach**

Like last year, Transit's 10 year Plan appears to be "business-as-usual" – **predict** (more traffic) and **provide** (more road capacity), with the main thrust still being more and more road building. We believe that Transit NZ has still to demonstrate an understanding that it can not (and does not intend to try to) build its way out of congestion. We would like to see significant changes to the final Plan to bring it into compliance with underlying legislation.

It is stated that SH funding has increased 40% since 2003/04. Whilst acknowledging that the Construction Price Index (CPI) has increased by around 20% over this period, it demonstrates that Transit has a serious commitment to increase road spending.

We believe that SH funding growth should be capped at the rate of inflation. It is acknowledged that this direction should come from Government, with Transit being the implementation agency. Accordingly, this submission is being copied to the Ministry of Transport.

### **Commitment to Sustainable Transport**

Our group perceives Transit as being oblivious to the widespread dissatisfaction by cyclists and many other members of the community with regards to cycle provision on State Highways. This appears to be due to a combination of a lack of understanding of the key issues by Transit staff, their consultants and contractors, and continuing poor funding and project prioritisation in this area. The situation is not helped by Transit's continued delays in producing a national cycling policy/strategy, a document first suggested by CAN in 2000. A draft was circulated in early 2001, with nothing much having happened since.

It says something about Transit's commitment to sustainable transport that in 4½ pages of Overview, walking, cycling and public transport are not mentioned once. Similarly under

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<sup>1</sup> More information about CAN is at the end of our submission.

Consultation, a non-existent "National Cyclists Group" is listed under the key stakeholders and Living Streets Aotearoa (the national walking group) is not mentioned at all.

While acknowledging that many new works incorporate walking and cycling facilities (with varying degrees of success), the rate of improving and retrofitting cycle provision on existing SHs is exceptionally slow, in our opinion. Allocated funding of \$10 million in 10 years, less than 0.1% of all SH funding,) is way below the level of funding required to be consistent with government land transport policy objectives. 10 times that amount will be spent on SH strategy studies.

It continues to concern us that every year such a large list of walking/cycling projects is given in the "3-year Plan" in Appendix D9 (>\$21 million), when Transit only allocates approximately \$1 million to walking/cycling each year. No other segment of this SH forecast has such an over allocation. We feel that this demonstrates Transit's low priority to this work area. While minor safety funding is another legitimate source for cycling improvements too, we would be interested to know (via the SH ten year plan) which specific minor safety projects would have significant benefits for cyclists. Some of these projects may well also be included as part of general SH improvement projects, in which case some kind of annotation to that effect would be helpful.

Our concern about the relative pace in progressing cycling projects is not allayed when we review what has been on Transit's books for a number of years. For example, Tauranga's SH2 Hairini-Turrett cycleway was listed in the 02/03 SH programme and is still yet to reach design stage. Cycleways along Avalon Dr and Victoria St were both listed in the 03/04 programme for Hamilton and Cambridge, respectively, and are also still requiring design. Similarly, a consultant report on Christchurch City cycle facilities recommended expenditure of ~\$300,000 beginning in the 04/05 year, with only a single project having been completed by now. It seems unfair on the expectations of local cyclists to provide a long list of projects, if the projects are unlikely to be implemented.

Transit should consider funding cycling facilities that are not on SH corridors, but on parallel adjacent local roads. This approach would be useful when the parallel facility provides an attractive alternative to SH travel.

We encourage Transit to accelerate a review of open road speed limits. A reduction to more appropriate speed limits would mean some real improvements for cyclists.

## **LTMA Issues**

The Land Transport Management Act acknowledges the need to move towards more sustainable transport systems but this 10-Year Plan scarcely begins to recognise this.

Appendix D1 (Project Contributions to LTMA) clearly illustrates the lip service paid by Transit to alternative transport options. Under "Alternatives Considered", the stock phrase "Consideration of alternative modes of transport (especially rail) to reduce traffic volumes and reduce traffic growth" is used throughout. This seems particularly silly when considering projects in Nelson and the Far North where no railway even exists, or the many locations where improved bus or cycling provision or travel behaviour change may be a far more viable option. Also, only four projects specifically mention how they contribute to cycling (although many others would appear to) and three of these are rural seal extensions!<sup>2</sup> This

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<sup>2</sup> Under seal extensions (though interestingly not seal widening) it is claimed that this will benefit cycling/walking because it "Provides a marginal contribution to public health in that: • walking and cycling along the route is more likely (without the dust discomfort and perceived safety risk)". However, for the same project it is also claimed that there will be economic benefits because speeds will increase. Umm, maybe that might put off the cyclists/walkers who could have been attracted to the nice smooth seal, because they will perceive that the safety risk has increased?

suggests that actually very little thought was given to alternatives. If Transit is going to attempt to demonstrate how it is meeting the LTMA requirements, it should at least make an effort to look like some serious thought went into it.

We are concerned that in light of recent funding restrictions, the Travel Demand Management (TDM) projects appear to be on hold or deferred. This seems very short-sighted when they have the best potential to minimise future new road requirements. However we also reiterate our previous concerns that for some TDM projects Transit is actually more focused on "Travel SUPPLY Management" with its emphasis on tools like ramp metering and ITS.

### **Auckland Bias**

Like last year, the plan is weak on a financial overview across the regions. It is difficult, if not impossible, to assess the regional equity of the proposed spending in the various output classes. Maybe such an overview is not desirable from Transit's perspective, as it may highlight the frequently commented on bias towards the Auckland region.

From a national perspective, we believe that further highway expansion in the Auckland region will result in further unsustainable land development and increased levels of traffic congestion. We predict that a business-as-usual approach for Auckland will fail. The rest of New Zealand is cross-subsidising Auckland's low-density urban sprawl and car dependence.

Despite this Auckland bias, but in line with a lack of commitment to walking and cycling, giving pedestrians and cyclists access to the Harbour Bridge is not supported by Transit, but is arguably the biggest issue for cyclists. Currently there is surplus capacity on the bridge and a reallocation of existing lanes to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians would signal Transit's acceptance of these modes as contributing to government objectives with respect to reducing traffic congestion and sustainable land transport.

### **Other Issues**

We support Transit's approach not to bring forward road capacity increases, simply at the whim of proposed new developments, e.g. the recent publicity in Warkworth. Developers must realise that, aside from the "bricks and mortar", a significant cost of any new development proposed is to mitigate the effects of generated traffic on the existing road network, and it is perfectly valid that they should foot that cost.

We are, however, still concerned about the apparent greater focus on congestion over safety in the SH priorities. The old line about congestion costing Auckland about \$1 billion a year is trotted out, yet it is not acknowledged that the social cost of crashes on the SH network every year far exceeds this.

We are pleased to see tolling introduced so that motorists demanding more roads will pay for the privilege.

In the listings of general projects planned, there is little indication about what walking/cycling provision (if any) is proposed to be included; some of the accompanying descriptions provide guidance but many don't. It would be useful if the tables of projects also included a column to indicate whether any significant walk/cycle provision was included e.g. (L) cycle lanes, (F) footpaths, (S) shared pathways, (B) bridge clip-ons, (C) crossing points, (U) underpasses, (O) over-bridges, (W) shoulder widening, (P) pinch point removal, etc.

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cc. Ministry of Transport;  
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Bike NZ;  
Living Streets Aotearoa

The Cycling Advocates' Network of NZ (CAN) Inc is this country's national network of cycling advocate groups. It is a voice for all cyclists – recreational, commuter and touring. We work with central government and local authorities, on behalf of cyclists, for a better cycling environment. We have affiliated groups and individual members throughout the country, and links with overseas cycling organisations. In addition, many national, regional and local government authorities, transportation consultancies, and cycle industry businesses are supporting organisations. CAN is a member of BikeNZ.