

# Living Streets Aotearoa



## Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa on a Low Emissions Economy

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### Submission

Living Streets Aotearoa thanks the committee for this opportunity to submit on the path to a low emission economy with the best possible improvement for the wellbeing of New Zealanders.

Living Streets Aotearoa supports the move towards a lower emission economy. Our comments relate to opportunities to reduce transport emissions and substantially improve New Zealanders wellbeing.

The household travel survey shows almost half of all trips are less than 6 kilometres and 17% are less than 2 kilometres, with 65% of trips less than 10 kilometres<sup>1</sup>. Shorter car trips are more polluting. Travel to work is the single biggest reason for travel followed by social visiting and shopping, with 84% of travel done by car or light motor-vehicle as a driver. Car ownership in New Zealand is high compared to other OECD countries. The impacts of increasing car use include economic costs both in terms of congestion and provision of infrastructure, social costs on health and preventable diseases, and environmental costs in terms of emissions and urban and community impacts.

A small decrease in the number of car trips can have a significant impact on emissions. Electric vehicles will help to address the direct emissions of transport but will not decrease congestion, nor improve health. The short distances travelled in most trips suggests that walking can be a viable alternative for many journeys, and together with public transport services can reduce the number of single occupant car trips. A 2 kilometre journey will take less than half an hour to walk.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/travel-planning-toolkit/docs/resource-1-facts-and-figures.pdf>

Living Streets has developed a four point plan to help support greater uptake of walking that will contribute to a lower emission economy and significant health and environmental benefits. Increasing walkability has been shown to benefit worker productivity, house price affordability, retail dependent businesses, as well as being favoured by many large industries looking for new locations (eg Google). These measures can be implemented easily and do not rely on new technology being developed, they can be done now.

Our four point plan to encourage more walking to promote health and reduce emissions, is:

1. Improve safety in urban areas with a 30 km/h speed limit around schools and shopping centres

Reducing death and injury on our roads needs to be a focus to provide liveable urban areas that support walking. Speed is a key, if not the key factor in all injury on our streets. Reducing speed will encourage more people to walk by making it safer and more pleasant.

Children need to be able to walk safely to school to develop a life-long habit of everyday activity and reducing speeds is one response that will improve the ability to cross roads safely. Busy pedestrian places provide the economic benefits needed for thriving communities. Slower speeds in shopping areas allow people to more easily move from the shops on this side to the doctors or café on the other side of the street.

2. Fund walking infrastructure by assigning 1% of the National Land Transport Plan budget to walking

Walking is the invisible mode in the NLTP, potentially receiving only a tiny proportion of funding for new infrastructure but in practice this is not used. Footpath maintenance is funded by our rates through local government and relies on each council to prioritise for this. Improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and programmes through equitable funding from the NLTP will encourage more people to walk more often.

3. Reverse the decline in kids walking to school with a national 'safe routes to school' programme

A generation ago, 42% of us walked to primary school – now it's less than 30%. In 1990 primary aged children walked one and a half hours a week – now it's down to one hour. To reverse this decline walking needs to be an easy choice for the trip to school for children and their parents.

There are many good models to achieve this including great pedestrian design, walking challenges, and rewards for meeting walking targets. School travel plans developed with local authorities can target action to the areas most needed at each school. We welcome the decision to include the 'journey to education' in the next Census 2018. Good information is the first step to reverse this decline.

4. Future proof our roading projects by making the NZ Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide the national standard for all new roading projects

Everywhere we walk in urban New Zealand should be accessible to all people and provide a consistent environment where we can be safe. This is not always the case with pedestrian injury from slips, trips and falls on footpaths estimated to be equal to injury from vehicles.

People need to enjoy being out as part of the community rather than watching for that uneven footpath or seeking for a kerb drop-down to get their pram or wheelchair across the road. A consistent standard for footpath construction and maintenance will allow people of all abilities to move around easily.

Three important guidelines need to be used to achieve this and should all be mandatory standards. They are the NZ Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide and the RTS 14 Guidelines for facilities for blind and vision impaired pedestrians. The NZS4121:2001 Design for Access and Mobility – Buildings and associated facilities needs to be consistently followed.

### **About Living Streets**

Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national walking and pedestrian organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking friendly planning and development around the country. Our vision is "More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places".

The objectives of Living Streets Aotearoa are:

- to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
- to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
- to work for improved access and conditions for walkers, pedestrians and runners including walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety
- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

For more information, please see: [www.livingstreets.org.nz](http://www.livingstreets.org.nz)