

CENTRAL CITY PLAN

SUBMISSION TO CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

16 SEPTEMBER 2011

BACKGROUND TO IPENZ

The Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand (IPENZ) is the lead national professional body representing the engineering profession in New Zealand. It has approximately 12,000 Members, including a cross-section from engineering students, to practising engineers, to senior Members in positions of responsibility in business. IPENZ is non-aligned and seeks to contribute to the community in matters of national interest giving a learned view on important issues, independent of any commercial interest.

BACKGROUND TO THE IPENZ TRANSPORTATION GROUP

The Transportation Group is an IPENZ Technical Interest Group. It has approximately 1,100 members in total, with approximately 170 members in the Canterbury/West Coast branch. Membership is made up of transportation and traffic engineering, and planning professionals working in central government, local government, academia and the private sector. Members of the Transportation Group are users across all modes of transportation in Christchurch and are passionate about realising a transport system that can support a stronger, more resilient and successful city in the short and long term. The Transportation Group views the transport network as a key feature across Christchurch City that will play a critical role in helping people to travel and businesses to thrive within and across the central city.

While the Transportation Group does not always achieve consensus, this submission is the culmination of a Transportation Group Members forum for the Canterbury/West Coast branch that took place on 6 September 2011. It also incorporates additional comments from its Canterbury/West Coast Branch members. This submission highlights areas of consensus and raises areas where further analysis is recommended before decisions on detail are made.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The IPENZ Transportation Group:

- Generally supports the draft Plan's guiding principles, transport targets, and direction and understand the need for balance.
- Supports the draft Plan consultation process i.e. the "Share an Idea" initiative; however this feedback should be balanced with sound technical analysis.
- Acknowledges the timeframes to develop the draft Plan were short. However the Transportation Group is concerned there has been insufficient technical analysis of the options presented which may lead to undesirable outcomes. The analysis needs scenario testing to consider the implications and connections to the wider Christchurch transport network (including the road hierarchy) outside the central city.
- Notes land use activity forecasts appear to be missing or not fully developed. Land use forecasts and scenarios are paramount to understanding travel demand, as they guide the design of an appropriate transport system including modal split options.

- Is disappointed the applicable technical transport appendices were not made publicly available on the website.
- Notes the projects offered are presented without detail. The Transportation Group notes that as a result the tradeoffs to enable these projects to be undertaken may not be apparent to decision makers or the public.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The headings used below relate to those from Volume 1 of the draft Central City Plan (the draft Plan).

PEOPLE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT: LIGHT RAIL (P. 89-90)

The Transportation Group (we) consider that more detailed assessment is required into demand for light rail, and benefits, consequences and costs associated with the system.

There was some discussion at the Transportation Group forum around whether the light rail proposal was a transport project or a regeneration project. Is the light rail being proposed to address transport issues, or are there intangible benefits or benefits outside the “transport solution”? If so, these benefits need to be identified and, if possible, quantified.

We think there may be better ways of spending the forecast light rail cost to achieve the transport targets outlined in the Plan. These might include bus rapid transit, improved cycling and walking facilities or heavy rail on existing corridors. Further investigations would be required before confirming of any of these options’ effectiveness.

It was noted that bus rapid transit tends to be more resilient and flexible than rail based systems, and as is the case with rail systems, can also attract investment along the route.

We are concerned that insufficient investigations appear to have been done to identify the city to university route as the highest priority. Whilst we do not have sufficient information to make a fully informed route choice, a number of members expressed concern that this route does not appear to address significant transport issues across the city.

We therefore recommend further investigation into the feasibility of light rail in Christchurch, in comparison to alternatives such as bus rapid transit or heavy rail, be carried out. Such investigations should include:

- Consideration of previous studies, including the Greater Christchurch Public Transport Futures and North and Southwest Public Transport Corridors Studies
- Establishing a business case which includes patronage numbers, capital and operating costs, and funding options
- Identifying the best first, and subsequent routes (i.e. a staging plan).

PEOPLE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT: BUSES AND STREET STATIONS (P. 91-92)

The bus system needs to work well. An effective, coherent, and reliable bus system needs to be in place as soon as possible to facilitate public transport usage. If a light rail system were adopted it should be in addition to the bus system, and would not replace buses. In the meantime a bus based system will be required until additional public transport provision (for example, light rail) is agreed, designed, land acquired, consented, and built.

Certainty about public transport facilities, routes and reliability is linked to business confidence. Businesses and property owners are more likely to invest in specific locations

if they have certainty about staff and customer access. This includes public transport options.

We think a number of smaller street stations will be less suitable for public transport users than a central public transport interchange. It is likely to result in reduced levels of service for users in terms of legibility, safety and comfort. In addition, buses passing through the central city will need to complete one and a half circuits of the slow core to pass each bus station. This will result in significant increases in travel time and a corresponding reduction in efficiency. We note that the single bus exchange has been very successful in the past.

We consider a public transport interchange should be located as close as possible to the slow core. To encourage public transport use it should be closer than car parking. Several possible locations were discussed at the Transportation Group forum, but no consensus was reached. It was however commented that compatibility between the temporary and permanent locations would give users, businesses and property owners some certainty.

It is acknowledged that the removal of buses from Colombo Street and the slow core is likely to improve the area's amenity. However, we think it will also have significant negative impacts on bus network efficiency across the city, and on bus user levels of service.

Concern was also raised at the forum that if Durham Street becomes a public transport route, then buses should be able to cross the river. If diverted to Montreal Street there could be congestion and delays that will affect public transport reliability.

We therefore recommend that a single public transport interchange:

- Be implemented
- Be located as close as possible to the central slow core
- Location be compatible with the temporary exchange location.

In addition, we recommend:

- A robust detailed site selection process be carried out which includes (but is not limited to) consideration of public transport patronage (both short and long term), CBD land use, and bus passenger access to key destinations.
- Public transport access (including buses) be maintained through the slow core.

STREETS FOR PEOPLE: SLOW CORE (P. 93)

The Transportation Group supports the creation of a slow core that gives priority to pedestrians as it will support a vibrant central city.

There was consensus from the members present at the forum that the slow core should be expanded to include the civic and cultural precincts to the west of the proposed slow core (as far as the eastern edge of Hagley Park). This would result an area with maximum dimensions of 600 by 800 metres being created, which would be the key areas that attract pedestrians in large volumes and ensure a consistent walking environment.

Although it is not clear from the draft Plan whether general traffic would be discouraged from driving into or even through the slow core and some discussion was held on whether motor vehicles should be able to drive through it. No consensus was reached on this matter. However, the Transportation Group recommends the pros and cons of this aspect be carefully considered.

STREETS FOR CYCLING (P. 95-96)

Cycling was the most popular transport theme that emerged from the “Share an Idea” consultation and the draft Plan reflects this to some extent. However cycle network planning does not appear to have been clearly developed. Robust network planning is critical to achieving the draft Plan targets of increased use of cycling for trips and improved safety for cyclists (page 85). Cycle route planning (as outlined in the Land Transport Safety Authority document *Cycle Network and Route Planning Guide*) aims to provide cycle routes that:

- Provide the highest level of service for cyclists, including safety, convenience and comfort
- Provide operating space to cycle and other users
- Minimise conflicts with other users.

Particular consideration to the varying skill levels of cyclists wishing to access the network is also required (less able/confident cyclists through to skilled commuters). This will ensure a variety of route choices are available depending on the cyclist’s skill level.

The draft Plan states that a new network of continuous and safe cycle routes will be developed. The plan on page 86 shows the greenway, the streets that will feature cycle lanes, and the paths through Hagley Park and the Avon River Park which will include cycle paths. The network shown does not appear to be complete and perhaps focuses purely on access to and from the central city rather than through it. There is no east-west street based link north of the slow core, for example.

It is noted the cross section of the Avon River Park (page 31 of the draft Plan) shows cycle paths on both sides of the river. We support this, as it will ensure the corridor is a viable component of the network over its full length through the central city.

We assume the cycle facilities on the Avenues, Main Streets and the Avon River Park are included in those project budgets and that the budget allocated to streets for cycling is for cycling on other streets. If this is not the case the budget allocated to cycling appears to be disproportional to the expenditure for other transport projects (such as light rail).

We recommend a cycle network plan be developed to provide cyclists with safe, comfortable and direct routes (not just to and from the central city but as part of wider travel patterns). This will retain existing cyclists and encourage more people to cycle.

We recommend the benefits gained by providing cycle infrastructure in meeting the transport targets be reflected in the allocation of funding.

AVENUES: ENHANCING THE AVENUES (P. 97)

The Avenues already serve an important transport function, and increased reliance on the Avenues to carry traffic will require making a number of complex trade-offs. As an example, there will be a need to balance the provision of increased capacity on the Avenues as a ring road with a potential reduction in accessibility to and from the Central City associated with severance issues particularly for walking, cycling and public transport. The trade-offs between increasing capacity on the Avenues and providing access across them needs to be understood. These trade-offs also needed to be fully explained to the public and decision makers.

The wider transport network impact of increasing reliance on the Avenues to carry traffic should also be considered.

Members at the forum also raised some concern about Deans Avenue forming part of the ring road. This road is considered to be too far removed from the central city activities and therefore may not provide the same function as the other three avenues.

AVENUES: ONE-WAY TO TWO-WAY (P. 98)

There was general agreement within the Transportation Group that clarity was required on what we are trying to achieve before decisions are made about whether one-way or two-way streets are the best solution. It was noted that Montreal and Durham Streets carry the highest traffic volumes, and the consequences or trade-offs of any changes must be understood and accepted.

It is suggested that removing the one-way streets could result in more “Manchester Street-type environments”, which was generally not considered an improvement from a transport and safety perspective. It is noted that two-way streets can be less efficient as there is reduced opportunity to co-ordinate the traffic signals. There are also potential safety implications.

There was some discussion at the forum that the specific function one-way streets currently provide could be maintained whilst modifying some aspects to achieve improved amenity and safety outcomes.

There was general consensus on the need to analyse the benefits and disbenefits on changing one-way streets to two-way, including understanding the impacts on the wider transport network.

There was consensus that the existing Oxford/Lichfield one-way street should be moved south to Tuam Street to enable the Avon River Corridor to be continuous along the river.

PARKING AND SERVICING (P. 99-100)

We realise car access to the central city will still be important in the future. However there needs to be a balance between the use of private vehicles and other travel modes. The supply, management and location of car parking can have a significant impact on the appeal of other modes including walking, cycling and public transport. There was consensus at the forum that active and public transport should have more permeability into the slow core than private vehicle transport, as this will help create a vibrant central city. The location and management of car parking, particularly in relation to the slow core and the provision of other transport modes (for example, public transport facilities) is a key tool to support modes other than the private car.

Therefore, the Transportation Group supports long term parking provision outside the slow core, and some short term predominantly on-street parking within the core to provide for shoppers, service vehicles and people with mobility impairments.

The Transportation Group generally supports the Council’s provision and control of parking so the inter-relationships between private vehicle use and other modes can be managed. This is preferable to allowing a large number of private landowners to provide parking which could undermine the attractiveness of walking, cycling and public transport.

CONCLUSION

The IPENZ Transportation Group appreciates the opportunity to make a submission. We do not wish to be heard at the public hearings.

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