
GREENING THE QUAYS PROJECT

1. Purpose of Report

To outline the key objectives for Greening the Quays project (CX051) and how this project will be implemented.

2. Executive Summary

A number of studies have been undertaken for improving pedestrian access and amenity of the waterfront route, looking at both urban design and transportation objectives. A major study carried out by Opus International Limited, “*Wellington Waterfront Route Improvement Study*” in 1999, looked into the options for improving the waterfront route to achieve both urban design and transport objectives. The options outlined in the study ranged from retaining existing traffic capacity to removal of two lanes and included options for tree planting to improve the amenity and accessibility. The removal of lanes from the Quays route would have a significant impact on the City’s traffic network capacity and is not possible in the short term without seriously affecting the accessibility to and through the City.

However, it is possible to deliver on the urban design objectives of improving pedestrian access across the Quays route and improve the amenity by the removal of some lane width and tree planting along a widened central median (Appendix 1). In addition there are other kerb adjustments that can be made to further enhance the Quays route and pedestrian amenity.

It is proposed to undertake the Quays project over two years. The scope of works in the first year would include; design, consultation with stakeholders such as Wellington Waterfront, Cycle Aware Wellington, bus operators and utility companies, awarding of tenders and initial construction. The scope of works in the second would be the completion of construction phase. The budget would need to be brought forward from the 2006/07 financial year to enable the project to commence in the 2005/06 financial year.

The scope of the Greening the Quays project does not preclude further enhancement work to occur in the future once the Inner City Bypass is operational and the waterfront development is complete.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree that the Central Sector of the Wellington Waterfront Route Improvement Study Opus Ltd report, that retains the existing lane configuration with a widened planted median, be designed and implemented.*
3. *Agree that the funding \$0.5million be brought forward from the 2006/07 financial year to the 2005/06 financial year to enable design and construction of the Central Sector and that this is reflected in the 2005/06 annual plan.*
4. *Agree to undertake a traffic and pedestrian amenity assessment once the inner city by-pass is completed.*

4. Background

Lambton Harbour is separated from the inner city by the waterfront route of Waterloo, Customhouse and Jervois Quays, along with the one-way pair of Cable and Wakefield Streets. The core of the route is four lanes with an additional lane each way allowing intersection movements. It carries high volumes of traffic, which creates a perception of a significant obstacle for pedestrians wanting to move between the inner city and the waterfront. The Quays are regionally important streets; however they have low levels of amenity for both drivers and pedestrians.

The Quays route is one of two arterial routes servicing the CBD (the other being the Wellington Urban Motorway) and the large population in the eastern and southern suburbs. Both routes provide essential access to key supra-regional facilities such as the Airport and Hospital. The route is highly strategic and is managed with a high level of efficiency through advanced signalling techniques and use of the Council's central traffic signal computer. Currently around 50,000 vehicles per day travel along the route.

Over the last decade there has been a number of policy and technical analyses undertaken looking at improving accessibility across the Quays route, and improve the experience of walking, sitting or driving along the route.

- The *Transport Strategy 2004*, Wellington City Council. The strategy set out to better link the inner city with the waterfront, and strongly promoted the Inner City Bypass “... to allow greater integration between the inner city and the inner harbour” (p.27).

- *Urban Design Strategy* 1994, Wellington City Council. The strategy sought to improve the amenity of the waterfront route and access between the city and the harbour.
- *Wellington Waterfront Route Improvements Study* 1999, Opus International Limited. The study looked into the options for improving the waterfront route to achieve both urban design and transport objectives.
- *City to Waterfront* 2004, Gehl Architects. This report focused on the desirability of improving accessibility and amenity of the links to the waterfront.

The *Transport*, *Urban Design Strategy* and *City to Waterfront* reports identified several objectives to improving the waterfront route. These were:

- downgrading the status of the route from an arterial to a principal street
- provide increased pedestrian opportunity for safe and convenient crossing between the city and the waterfront
- civilise the street space, encouraging use and occupation
- enhance the experience of using the waterfront route for vehicle occupants
- reflect the importance of the route as a gateway to the city
- enhance the identity of the city.

To achieve the above objectives, the 1994 *Transport* and *Urban Design Strategies* suggested, among other actions, that the number of lanes along the route be reduced. However, circumstances have changed significantly in the last decade.

- The Inner City Bypass currently being constructed has a significantly lower traffic capacity than what was envisaged in 1994.
- Growth in peak hour commuter trips by car has increased at an average rate of 1% per year over the last ten years, whereas the 1994 strategies assumed a growth of only 0.5% per year.
- More recent policies such as the 2004 *Transport Strategy* and the 2000 *CBD Corridor* study place great importance on strengthening the public transport spine along the Golden Mile, which requires shifting vehicular traffic onto the Quays route.

5. Discussion

5.1 Improving inner city – waterfront connections

5.1.1 Current initiatives

There is a long standing issue that the Quays route is a major obstacle to safe and convenient movement of pedestrians between the CBD and Wellington Waterfront. There is little doubt that physically a six lane road presents a

substantial visual barrier, however in reality there are frequent opportunities for pedestrians to cross the road to the waterfront at signalled crossings along the length from the Railway Station to Oriental Parade.

Work has gone into providing and upgrading these crossing arrangements which are well used and have a good safety record. The frequent and increasing use of the Waterfront by the public would appear to show that the road is not in fact proving to be a significant deterrent. The Residents Satisfaction Survey November 2003 showed that eight out of ten residents (80%) rate access to the waterfront as good or very good and virtually all residents (94%) have accessed the waterfront by foot from Jervois Quay or Cable Street. Slightly more than one quarter (28%) think they would visit the waterfront more often if it was easier to cross the roads. It was concluded from this that while foot access is not considered a barrier to visiting the waterfront by the majority of residents, providing easier access across Jervois Quay and Cable Street would improve accessibility for many waterfront visitors.

Over a number of years the number of signalised crossing points along the waterfront has been improved with currently a total number of 13 signalised crossing points including two footbridges between Bunny Street and Oriental Parade. The signals along the Quays are operated to give the maximum time for pedestrians to cross throughout the day. At peak times, where both vehicles and pedestrians experience greater delays, there are obviously some constraints. An additional crossing was introduced in 2004 on Cable Street at the Taranaki Street intersection. Investigations are under way for a further crossing over Cable Street near the Chaffers New World as part of the Waitangi Park development. It is recommended a further set of traffic signals be installed on Customhouse Quay at the Brandon Street intersection to facilitate the Kumutoto development phase of the Waterfront and allow for an additional crossing point of the Quays.

There has been a continuous process of improvement to pedestrian facilities across the waterfront road over the last few years, and this process is continuing. For example, Wellington Waterfront and Council are developing an extension to the City to Sea Bridge. This bridge is proposed to be built in early 2006. The bridge will provide better connection between the Civic Centre, Taranaki Wharf and Te Papa.

Council has also taken several steps recently to develop the Willeston Street link to the waterfront. Council bought the former BP service station on the corner of Willeston Street and Jervois Quay with the intention to use the site as the basis for a piazza across Jervois Quay to Frank Kitts Park. Work to develop this link is in the planning stage at present. Council is also working in partnership with What's New Limited to undertake streetscape works on the northern side of Willeston Street, from Victoria Street to Willis Street, as part of the building refurbishment. These works include paving, seating, tree planting and footpath widening to enhanced the Golden Mile to waterfront link.

5.1.2 *Reducing traffic lanes*

The decade-old proposal of improving pedestrian access to the waterfront by reducing the number of lanes along the route is no longer a desirable option given the changed circumstances - a smaller than expected bypass, higher than expected traffic growth, and increased pressure to move vehicles out of the public transport spine along the Golden Mile.

In 2003, *MWH Ltd* was commissioned to evaluate the traffic impacts of reducing the number of lanes along the Quays route between Bunny Street and Oriental Parade to two lanes southbound. This showed that a number of the intersections would be overloaded with much poorer performance. Travel time increases of up to 5 minutes with much lower vehicle speeds were shown to result. Additionally, road links such as Thorndon Quay/Tinakori Rd and the Motorway would be likely to experience increased demand and congestion. Reduction of road capacity would bring in to question the ability to support continuing future development in the CBD which is placing steadily increasing pressure on the existing road network.

Recent work on the City Gateway project has also highlighted the importance of good road infrastructure to allow for the future redevelopment and growth in the area north of the Railway Station. Such development and others especially south of the CBD will put increasing pressure on the limited capacity of the City's road network, especially the two constricted arterial corridors; the waterfront route on the east of the CBD and the Urban Motorway-Inner City Bypass in the west and south.

5.2.3 *Future Quays Route Assessment*

At this stage removal of traffic lanes would increase delays and congestion on the Quays route and increase pressure for longer cycle lengths to be introduced so as to maximise traffic flow. This would have an adverse effect on pedestrians' ability to cross the road.

However it is recommended that a complete traffic assessment be undertaken once the Inner City By-pass is completed. This review would look at vehicle numbers using the Quay, any delay times caused by proposed lane removal and opportunities to increase the number of at grade formal pedestrian crossing facilities. It would also include improvement in pedestrian amenity, information from the resident's satisfaction survey and would be developed in consultation with Wellington Waterfront taking into account future development along the waterfront. The outcome of this assessment would be the development of objectives for the Quays. These objectives would then feed into the CBD Corridor Study.

5.2 Improving amenity

The *Wellington Waterfront Route Improvement Study* was undertaken in 1999 to identify the possibilities for enhancement along the Wellington Waterfront route; Waterloo Quay, Customhouse Quay, Jervois Quay and Cable Street. The study was divided into three distinct sectors – Southern, Central, and Northern. Three possible options were identified for the Central Sector.

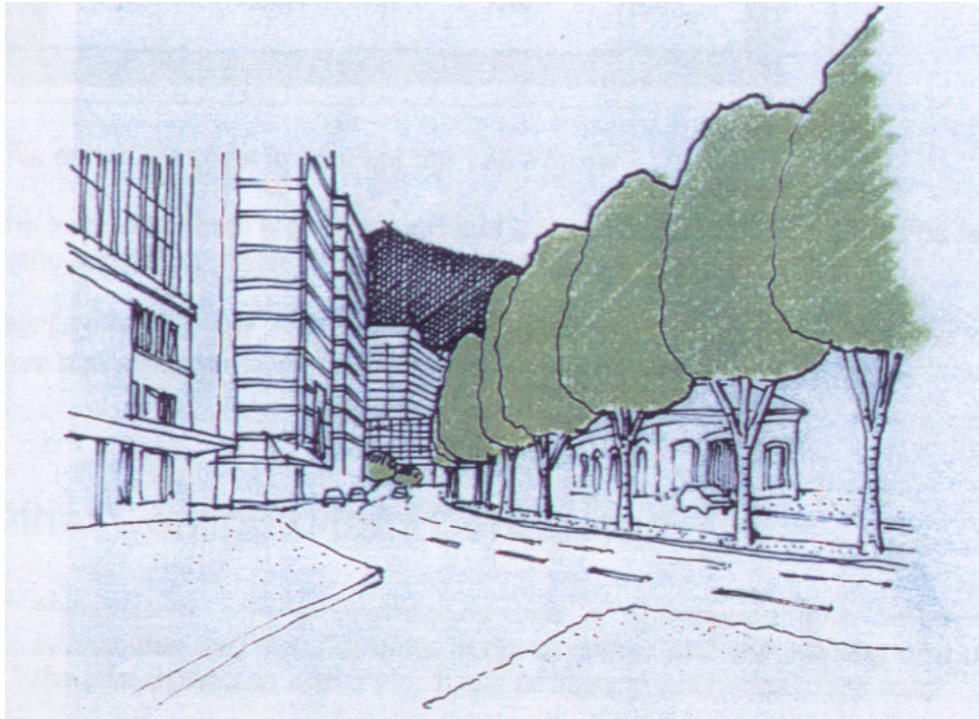
- Option One. Retains the existing number of lanes with some intersection modifications. This allows for a physical central median with one row of trees.
- Option Two. Removes one lane of traffic in one direction. This allows for a wider central median with planting of two rows of trees
- Option Three. Removes two lanes of traffic, one in each direction. This allows for a physical central median with a single row of tree planting and a single row of tree planting on both sides.

The study recommended that Option One be implemented for the Central Sector (Appendix 1). This involves the creation of a two metre wide central median with a single row of trees along the Quays route. This provides a central refuge for pedestrians on an enhanced planted median. A report on this study was considered at a Councillor workshop where the majority view of Councillors was to accept Option One.

5.2.1 Post Office Square

The *Wellington Waterfront Route Improvement Study* identified a modification to the northern end of Post Office Square. Traffic merging onto the Jervois Quay at this point, currently causes problems. It is proposed to modify the intersection and installing signals for the traffic entering onto the Quays. A larger 'open space' would be created outside the Tower Building. The lane width between Post Office Square and Shed 7 is under width as part of the Quays project it is recommend to shave off part of Post Office Square frontage with Jervois Quay.

It is important to note that Post Office Square is a listed heritage area in the District Plan and alterations to the area would require resource consent.



*Proposed view of Customhouse Quay
Looking north from the top end of Post Office Square*

There are other adjustments to the kerb alignments that can be made to provide further tree planting and footpath improvements.

5.2.2 Possible Tree Species

It is important that the species of tree selected to be planted on the Quays route is able to, in both form and appearance, make a significant contribution to the enhancement of the route. Three studies identifying possible tree species have been previously prepared by Council; Greening Central Wellington, Wellington Waterfront Route Improvement Study, Wellington City Gateway Tree Species Selection – Waterloo Quay. All these reports give recommendations on species that could be used on the Quays route.

Wellington Waterfront Route Improvement Study recommends three predominant species; pohutukawa, alder and Chinese elms to be used along the central sector of Quays route. The Greening Central Wellington supports the use of pohutukawa in the central sector and indicated reservations on the use of the deciduous trees for the following reasons:

- The Quays are a more exposed coastal climate than that of the Lambton Quay area where deciduous species have been planted in the past.
- Other deciduous species are even less suited to the Quays environment than those listed in the Wellington Waterfront Route Improvement Study and are therefore less likely to survive or will be stunted in appearance if planted along the route.

It is critical that the species selected for the route are able to provide a significant impact on the visual appearance of the Quays route. Both pohutukawa and Norfolk Island pine are appropriate species to be planted along the Quays route as both have proven tolerance of the conditions, are coastal species and fit within the existing city street tree pattern.

5.2.3 Funding Issues

The Quays Project (CX051) has \$120,000 allocated in the 2005/06 annual plan. This allocation is to undertake further planning, investigation and consultation with stakeholders before the implementation of the Quays project. The implementation phase is currently programmed to occur in 2006/07 with \$3 million dollars allocated over two years.

For the Quays project to be begin in the 2005/06 financial year the some of the budget needs to be brought forward from the 2006/07 financial year to the 2005/06 financial year to enable design and construction of Option One and that this be reflected as part of the 2005/06 annual plan proceedings.

It is proposed to continue the development of both the Northern and Southern sectors in the 2006/07 financial year (\$1,741 million) in association with Wellington Waterfront Development and the Northern Gateway Development.

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Total
Current budget allocation	\$120,000	\$1,433,000	\$1,741,000	\$3,294,000
Proposed budget allocation	\$500,000	\$933,000	\$1,741,000	\$3,294,000

6. Conclusion

The Quays route is one of New Zealand's most significant streets. While it has a regionally strategic transport role, it also plays a critical role in defining the character of the Central City.

Changed circumstances no longer make it possible to achieve the strategic direction set in 1994, namely to reduce the transport role of the route by lowering its status and capacity (by reducing the number of lanes). However, retaining its strategic transport role does not remove opportunities for strengthening the contribution that this street can make to the character and experience of the central city.

Overseas case studies show that streets with 50,000 vehicle movements per day can be attractive, and can allow for easy pedestrian movement along and across the street. The proposed implementation of Option One in the Central Sector of the *Water Waterfront Route Improvement Study* will make this street easier to cross and greatly improve the

experience of moving along it. The positive impact on the image and experience of the central city will be significant. If future policy development lowers the transport role of the route, this option will provide an excellent foundation for further accessibility and amenity improvements.

Contact Officer: *Geoffrey Snedden – Acting Manager Urban Design & Heritage*

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

This paper makes a contribution to the multiple Strategic Outcomes of 1.1 Liveable City, 1.2 Network City, 1.4 Compact City, and 1.5 Beautiful City.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

This project is contained in the Council Plan # CX051. The changes indicated here will lead to an increase in capital expenditure in the coming year of 0.5million in the 2005/06 financial year.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

Wellington Tenth Trust will be consulted as part of the development of the project.

4) Decision-Making

The recommended option has been developed and reflects the views of the relevant Council Units.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Consultation with stakeholders such as Greater Wellington, Wellington Waterfront, Cycle Aware Wellington, utility companies and bus operators will be undertaken as part of the development of the project.

b) Consultation with Maori

Wellington Tenth Trust will be consulted as part of the development of the project.

6) Legal Implications

N/A

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report recommends measures that are consistent with existing WCC policy.