
NZ WALKING CONFERENCE REPORT BACK

1. Purpose of Report

To report back to Councillors on the 2006 NZ Walking Conference.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*

3. The Conference

The NZ Walking Conference was held in Christchurch in November 2006, following on from Walk21 – the Seventh International Walking Conference in Melbourne. Cr Celia Wade-Brown and Julie Alexander, Senior Policy Advisor attended this two-day conference. I travelled to Christchurch by bus, ferry, train and foot, which was cheaper and generated less CO₂ than flying. Some attendees offset the carbon from their trips using the Landcare EBEX21 programme see www.ebex21.co.nz.

It is a biennial conference, alternating with the NZ Cycling Conference. The conference was organised by Living Streets Aotearoa. Sponsors included Land Transport New Zealand, Transit, the Health Sponsorship Council and other companies and organisations.

Attendees included transport engineers, planners, community workers, road safety staff, academics, policy advisors, researchers, recreation planners, health promoters, councillors and students. There was a wide geographic spread from Queenstown and Greymouth in the South Island to Whangarei and Whakatane as well as all the main centres. Overseas attendees came from Canada, Switzerland and the UK.

4. Content and Key Messages

The 2006 NZ Walking Conference was held at a time when walking is becoming a visible mode again. The Ministry of Transport and Land Transport NZ are leading the implementation of Getting There: by foot, by cycle, the New Zealand Walking and Cycling Strategy.

Richard Tankersley, Ngai Tahu, spoke eloquently about the early Māori walking days in the area and how important such daily activity was to Māori. The Port Hills were the setting for his ancestors' explorations on foot.

The Hon Kerry Burke welcomed us to Christchurch as chair of the Canterbury Regional Council.

The Transport Minister, the **Hon Annette King MP**, enthusiastically opened the conference, stressing the health benefits of an active lifestyle. She noted that Auckland regional travel surveys show that 40 percent of peak time car journeys are now education-related.

“The benefits of walking --- for individuals and for the country --- are very clear. The economics alone make great sense, in terms of our health system, as walking is the cheapest way to beat obesity...Walking makes our New Zealand streets more vibrant and safer, and happier places in which to live. Walking makes for livelier and more connected communities.”

There were a mixture of plenary sessions and smaller concurrent sessions.

International Keynote speakers

Todd Litman

Todd is founder and executive director of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, an independent research organization dedicated to developing innovative solutions to transport problems. (see www.vtpi.org). His work helps to expand the range of impacts and options considered in transportation decision-making, improve evaluation techniques, and make specialized technical concepts accessible to a larger audience. His research is used worldwide in transport planning and policy analysis. He is author of the [Online TDM Encyclopedia](#), a comprehensive Internet resource for identifying and evaluating mobility management strategies.

Todd emphasised the importance of land-use decisions and noted that people were willing to pay more to live in a walkable community. He noted that urban revitalisation with walkable neighbourhoods was good for economic development.

Todd produced a table that offered a fresh way of comparing costs of developing mixed work/residential areas where it's possible to walk to many destinations vs. the expenses of a car-dependent neighbourhood. The total cost to the community is usefully worked out as public + private costs whereas many authorities only look at the public cost rather than considering that money spent on transport could more productively be spent in the local economy.

Annualised transport costs per capita

Auto	Public transport	Walkable
Roads - \$500	Roads \$50	Paths \$30
Parking - \$1500	Fuel \$600	Shoes \$50
Fuel - \$1500	Subsidies \$150	
Vehicle - \$3500		
Total \$8000	Total \$800	Total \$80

He suggested that the car was a good servant but a bad master. An interesting question to evaluate priorities was to ask “Would you rather lose your ability to drive or your ability to walk?”

Rodney Tolley

Rodney is the Director of Walk21 – a global partnership of experts that focuses on providing conferences, training and consultancy services, with the aim of raising international awareness of walking issues and supporting professionals in the development and delivery of best practice. He chaired the Programme Committee for the first seven international Walk21 walking conferences. Through these activities he has a unique oversight of developing practice in walking in the UK, Europe, Australia and across the world.

Internationally there has been a large decrease in walking for utilitarian reasons (commuting, walking to school and short trips to the shops) but there’s been an increase in walking for recreation. He shared the results of an international survey of opinion and compared it to a sample from NZ. Generally NZers thought there were more trails now and more attractive streets but that road crossings were worse and location of new development was inimical to walking. The logical outcome of wanting to walk more, for health, recreation and environmental reasons, while being scared to do so and destinations being further apart, was just what’s being seen – more recreational discretionary walking and less functional necessary walking. Trouble is that people walk less overall when walking is an optional extra rather than a daily activity as part of ordinary life.

Other presentations

There was a **brief history of Living Streets Aotearoa**, which evolved from a Wellington advocacy group set up in 1998 to an incorporated society for the interests of pedestrians and walking promotion in 2002. Active branches include Christchurch, Wellington, Hamilton, Taupo and Auckland.

Auckland Regional Transport Authority hosts a regional walking and cycling forum. Members participate in the National Walking & Cycling Committee led by the MoT and Land Transport NZ, make submissions to various bodies and promote walking through articles, newsletter, website and an email group. A major networking project is underway to link up individuals and groups with a stake in walking to connect them with their local Councils and Sports Trusts more effectively.

Tim Hughes from Land Transport NZ introduced the NZ Pedestrian Planning and Network Guide that will soon be available to support the work of transport and urban planners and designers.

Walking School Buses

Several presentations referred very positively to these. In the Auckland region there are 200 Walking School Buses successfully operating. All presenters agreed that the co-ordinators and leaders needed some support to keep the buses going. Different recognition schemes were mentioned. In Christchurch the walking school bus co-ordinator organises Walking Wednesday challenges. It was recognised that this option is only suitable for children of certain ages and that they soon prefer to walk with their friends and be more independent. Walking School Buses have further social advantages for new entrants in that they connect local families.

Tauranga: City on its feet – this recreation-focussed project received SPARC funding and resulted in many new walking groups.

2007's Walk **to School Week**, offering Travel Wise schools and Walking School Buses a chance to celebrate their achievements, is happening at the beginning of March. The Auckland Region is leading the charge here and I believe Wellington City Council is also participating.

Two **Map Toolboxes** have been developed to help communities, councils and schools develop useful walking maps. Responsibility for these is being transferred from the Health Sponsorship Council to Land Transport NZ. They outline where data can be found, how to consult on what a community wants depicted on such a map and the considerations of what's useful information for pedestrians.

The WalkIT resource database is now available for planners, advocates and other users at www.walkit.info Examples of its contents are "NZ Walking Strategies – best practice", Maps of Auckland inner city runs, photos of signage and much more.

The City of York has continued to use a road user hierarchy. This is very different from the traditional NZ approach of arterial, connector and local road hierarchies. The York hierarchy is

1. pedestrians
2. people with disabilities
3. cyclists
4. public transport users
5. commercial and business vehicles
6. car-borne shoppers
7. coaches, car-commuters and visitors.

All modes and users have their place but this is seen as the safest and most sustainable order for consideration of road corridor and public space design and injury reduction.

Community Street Reviews

Living Streets had worked with Land Transport NZ to develop a new way of assessing walkability. This involved a refined questionnaire that measured perceptions of several aspects plus captured comments and suggestions for improvement. Research into whether the assessment can be as consistent and objective as other levels of service assessment e.g. road smoothness. There was considerable discussion regarding the relative merits of discussion in community street audits vs. the more individual method in a review. It was noted that the written form possibly avoided undue influence by the review leader but also missed opportunities for common solutions and shared ideas. It was firmly agreed that there was no single way of assessing pedestrian quality/walkability and that both consumer feedback and expert (designers or planners or safety engineers) assessments were relevant ways of analysing public space.

Auckland Regional Transport Authority (ARTA)'s Tricia Allen proposed seven requirements for a walkability assessment tool in order for it to be useful for them:

- Clear objective quantifiable measure.
- Clear indications of what needs to change.
- Identifies key barriers.
- Nationally recognised, especially by LTNZ.
- Provides data on footfall.
- Measures walkability as “walking seduction, not merely accessibility”.
- Uses everyday ways to test every day environments.

There were discussions about the community development/ ownership of working in a bottom-up way and involving people with different levels of mobility together. The mix gave participants a better understanding of each other's needs and perceptions but the less mobile people's predicaments skewed the responses from the active and mobile.

There was a workshop on the second afternoon where small groups trialled both methods in the streets of Christchurch. There was broad agreement on the issues on each section. The streets in the city centre varied hugely so there was no consistent quality of the walking experience. Attendees generally felt that a Council suggestion that the Cashel Mall be opened to general vehicles was a retrograde step.

Jane Mudford from Land Transport NZ explained how the Safer Routes national project had developed into a Neighbourhood Accessibility Project.

Diana O'Neill from SPARC described NZ as “the most active nation, with 39% of adults active for more than 30m five days a week. The most common activity is walking – reported by 61% of men and 81% of women. The corollary is of course that 61% are not sufficiently active. Diana described Green Prescriptions where doctors prescribe activity instead of or as well as medication.

Participating doctors recommended more activity, usually walking, for people with weight issues, diabetes, high blood pressure and other ailments. The majority of Green Prescription patents reported that they felt better and lost weight.

Dr Darren Walton, from Opus Consulting, presented a fascinating research study. First he identified that walking trips were declining as a percentage of all trips although distance and duration for trips have not changed hugely since 1998. The study was based on observation and interviews of people who catch the train in Auckland and Wellington. Some used the park and ride and some walked and he tried to identify the key differences. Counter-intuitively, living on a hill made them 4.5 x as likely to walk. People consistently over-estimated the walking distance between people's homes and station.

Perceptions of the barriers to walking were not necessarily predictors of activity. Only 3% said that fear of crime was a barrier but in a differently worded question, 19% said that “reducing crime would increase walking”. However, differences in whether people walked were correlated with living on a hill, number of cars in the household and whether it was likely to rain. His research challenged accepted wisdom that it's fear or distance that prevent walking. The perceived reasonable distance to walk to the station was 820m.

Marie Winitana from Wellington Regional Public Health described a health intervention for inactive Māori. It was a ten-week walking programme for Māori living in the Greater Wellington region. The first Hikoï happened in 1995 with 5 teams and in 2005 there were 140 teams. Face to face encouragement, social walking and after dark walking were successful components.

There were many other interesting presentations with questions and debate.

At the **AGM** during the conference, an Executive Council from round the country (Hamilton, Auckland, Wellington, Carterton and Christchurch) was elected. Cr Wade-Brown was re-elected as President of Living Streets Aotearoa.

5. Material for Circulation

The International Walking Charter is attached as Appendix 1. It was launched in October 2006 at Walk21 and promoted at the November NZ Walking Conference. Living Streets will be promoting the charter throughout the country in 2007. While individuals may like to sign it now, Council can consider this when we debate the Walking Plan later in 2007. The Hon Annette King, was the first Minister of Transport in the world to sign the Charter. N.B. Hamilton City Council adopted the Charter in December 2006.

The slides from the conference are all available on the Living Streets Aotearoa website www.livingstreets.org.nz.

The Hamilton City Council report is available at www.hamilton.co.nz/file/fileid/2213.

The Newtown and Berhampore Walking Map (Edition 1) was available as part of the Walking Maps Toolbox for Communities and was the subject of a presentation. It is available at http://www.livingstreets.org.nz/pdf/Newtown_map.pdf and paper copies will be available at the Committee meeting or on request.

6. Benefit to Council/Elected Members and Subsequent Action

A very interesting aspect was the dialogue between people from different sectors so the transport, health, recreation and government staff and elected members found common ground and considered all the potential benefits from increasing walking. Certain misconceptions about different professional's views were dispelled.

It was important to have a conference focussed on this specific mode of transport since it's sometimes absent from more broad-based transport conferences – or just one aspect is considered such as safety or recreation.

I learnt more about the economic benefits of walking – from lower infrastructure costs, lower personal costs and less money to be spent on healthcare given physical inactivity's role in our health system. However, people are more motivated by health and social aspects than personal savings, according to one speaker's research.

Wellington region could have a Walking forum so information about projects, walking promotion and measurement is shared between sectors in the region.

The conference ideas may help us evaluate the proposed Walking Plan as part of our Travel Demand Strategy when it comes to us later in 2007.

Appendix 1 International Walking Charter

Appendix 2 Notes from Walk21 in Melbourne

Appendix One

Appendix Two

Walk21 Seventh International Walking Conference

– see walk21.com

A staff member from Urban Development attended this conference at the end of October 2006. Celia Wade-Brown attended and contributed. She paid for her own travel and accommodation, including carbon offsetting. There were several pre-conferences walks and talks in Sydney.

Looking at both Melbourne and Sydney from a walking point of view was interesting. Both their CBDs are reasonably compact but the suburbs spread. Ferries in Sydney made walking and public transport a popular combination. Leisure walks within the city were promoted heavily – both as special events, e.g. The Seven Bridges Run/Walk and as activities to be undertaken by locals and visitors. The Sydney harbour circle walk was amazing – lots of combinations of on-street footpaths and reserves rather like Wellington's City to Sea walkway except that there were always loops within areas so the walker had a choice of a long linear walk or shorter circular ones within an area. We learnt about the auditory guides that could be downloaded to mp3 players. Getting beyond the CBD on foot was challenging where arterial roads had inadequate crossings and very heavy traffic.

The following conclusions have been drawn from the debate both within and around the Walk21 7 Melbourne Conference and are presented in accordance with the conference themes.

THEME 1. Making it Possible

1. Traffic authorities and walking organizations need to work together to reduce road danger that is a major barrier to increasing levels of walking. Actions to progress could include:

- Adapting safety rating systems for roads such as the World Bank's traffic management model to also include pedestrian safety and mobility measures;
- Promoting strategies targeting motorists to reduce speed, share road space and respect pedestrians;
- Undertaking major demonstration projects to increase levels of walking and reduce road danger.

2. Creating walkable environments is critical to increasing levels of walking both within new build areas and as a retrofit to existing developments. A suite of consistent planning tools is needed to make this possible. Actions to progress could include:

- Developing comprehensive guidelines for sustainable and walkable communities to support regional structure planning, town and neighbourhood design and public space development;
- Formally adopting these guidelines within regulatory and approval processes;
- Conducting consultation and training programmes on the guidelines with developers;
- Setting standards for future developments in partnership with developers, planners and designers;
- Including comprehensive training units in all relevant undergraduate courses;
- Implementing consistent measuring of the walkability of street networks using Ped-shed analysis rather than generic radius distances;
- Developing comprehensive guidelines for retrofitting existing urban areas.

THEME 2. Making the Choice

3. The continued marketing of walking to communities as a responsible, enjoyable and beneficial choice is having significant impact around the world; encouraging walking as both a health activity and mode of transport. To generate cultural change the profile of walking must continue to be raised. Actions to progress can include:

- Increasing marketing of messages which emphasise walking as an every day transport option as well as continued promotion of walking for recreation, tourism and health;
- Promoting walking as a responsible activity that provides a local contribution to nationally and internationally significant issues including climate change, obesity and oil usage;
- Celebrating the enjoyment that walking can provide by connecting people to places, spaces and other people;
- Creatively using technology, such as mobile phones, MP3 players, and GPS to deliver more targeted and personalized information that encourages and supports walking;
- Continuing to develop support structures such as clubs and groups.

THEME 3. Making the Case

4. Advocates and practitioners need to continue to build and present the case for walking to facilitate stronger commitment, investment and engagement at all levels. The case may be made stronger with the following developments:

- Setting international guidelines for the collection, analysis and dissemination of qualitative and quantitative techniques for measuring walking;
- Allocating more funding to support research into walking behaviour and the relationship with walkable environments;
- Analysing trends in the attitudes, scale and spread of effective policies and practices;
- Developing appropriate evaluation processes and measures and systematically incorporating appropriate evaluation into all projects;
- Developing and promoting ~ demonstration projects.

THEME 4. Making it Happen

5. People walk when there is a shared commitment and established momentum between government, organizations and communities to making it happen. The following steps should be pursued:

- Developing stronger advocacy through strategic alliances and greater collaboration;
- Developing business cases which link the health, environmental, transport, retail and social benefits of increased walking;
- Developing interdisciplinary, professional networks;
- Continuing to provide advocacy forums at individual, country and international levels to raise the profile of walking and assist in the collation and dissemination of guidelines and best practice;
- Developing walking information centres to collate, distil and disseminate pertinent resources and support networks;
- Promoting the International Charter for Walking, particularly to senior decision makers, as an advocacy tool and a check list to guide development;
- Developing policies and practices which focus on active travel for children and seniors;
- Integrating and prioritising walking issues in the wider transport decision making processes;
- Training senior decision makers;
- Allocating resources for research and projects.