NZIA CANTERBURY BRANCH SUBMISSION TO CENTRAL CITY PLAN

TRANSPORT AND PARKING

A. STATED AIM

Draft Central City Plan – Volume 1
Transport Choice (pg. 84)

Christchurch's new transport network for the Central City will offer the choice to walk, cycle, use public transport or to drive to and around the Central City. The goal is to improve travel choices to support the recovery of the Central City, renewed economic prosperity, and importantly to support the wide range of projects included in the Central City Plan.

B. METHOD OF ACHIEVING STATED AIM

Draft Central City Plan – from Volumes 1 & 2

1. **Making the transport systems feed into the centre as a destination and discourage all through traffic in the Central City.**
   Refer: Vol. 2, Part 3.5, 7.9.1 Policy: Road Hierarchy for the Central City

2. **Creating a new roading hierarchy**
   Refer: Vol. 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.1 Policy: Road Hierarchy for the Central City

3. **Removal of the one way streets**
   Refer: Vol. 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.1 Policy: Road Hierarchy for the Central City

4. **Creating new bus routes and stops**
   Refer: Vol. 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.4 Policy: Public Transport in the Central City

5. **Light rail system**
   Refer: Vol. 1, pg 89, People on Public Transport: Light Rail

6. **Cycle ways**
   Refer: Vol. 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.3 Policy: Cycling in the Central City

7. **Pedestrian priority areas**
   Refer: Vol. 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.2 Policy: Walking in the Central City

8. **Car parking**
   Refer: Vol. 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.5 Policy: Car Parking provided by activities and Clause 7.9.6 Policy: Car Parking not provided by activities

9. Eco streets

Refer: Vol. 1, pg 41, Green City: Eco Streets

C. OUTCOME OF PROPOSED METHOD

1 - Discouraging Through Traffic in the Central City

Volume 2, Part 3.5, 7.9.1 Policy: Road Hierarchy for the Central City

Positive Outcomes

i) May result in less traffic on some streets in the Central City and offers benefits to pedestrians and cyclists.

Negative Outcomes

i) Is likely to result in traffic management techniques such as closing down streets to traffic and imposing no turning at intersections which will make getting around the city much more difficult rather than the stated aim of making it easier.

ii) The plan is based on the idea that you can (by redesigning all transport systems) lead people into the centre, but does not recognise that in a city of our topography and layout we currently have multiple routes for getting around which helps reduce congestion by spreading out the traffic and not concentrating on a few specially designed routes. Discouraging through traffic will result in traffic overload on other routes.

iii) Many people do not just go to one destination in the Central City but may have several destinations and purposes. There needs to be an opportunity for relatively easy through traffic so multiple purpose trips can be made.

iv) The plan lacks detail about how through traffic is to be discouraged though it is mentioned in Vol 2, part 3.5, clause 7.9.1 Policy: Road Hierarchy: *"to enable the through movement function to be prioritised some access across and parking on the avenues may be restricted."*

v) No indication of the integration of the Central City roading hierarchy to that outside the four avenues.

vi) Council has not offered any data to support its roading changes as the Traffic Demand Analysis is missing from the Draft Central City Plan, Volume 3, Appendix M. One expert commentator in The Press claimed 80% of all traffic on the one way streets had a destination within the 4 avenues and only 20% was through traffic and the CCC has not provided any evidence to the contrary.

vii) Likely to make it harder for commuter traffic to reach the Central City as well as through traffic, which is a major issue in the short term (during the Transitional City) until the other means of transportation are achieved. May discourage businesses from reoccupying the city if they believe that it will not be accessible for commuters and customers in cars.

Recommendations

i) The Branch does not support the principle of using undefined traffic management and design techniques to discourage through traffic area in the Central City as this appears contrary to the aim of making the city easier to get around.

ii) The CCC is to supply data to support its roading changes as the Traffic Demand Analysis is missing from the Draft Central City Plan, Volume 3, Appendix M.

2 - Roading Hierarchy

Volume 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.1 Policy: Road Hierarchy for the Central City

The overall traffic plan in Volume 1 (page 86) shows three types of street: main streets (red), one way to two way (orange) and avenues (grey). These purport to summarise the philosophies of the draft plan.

Under the regulatory framework of Volume 2 there is a roading hierarchy of 4 types; avenues (*highest traffic movement function*), distributor streets (*relatively high traffic movement function)*, typical streets (*to provide property access and through routes for walking and cycling)*, and ways (*prioritise people ahead of traffic).*

Positive Outcomes

i) May provide better amenity for pedestrians and cycle users on some streets

Negative Outcomes

i) 'Avenues' are currently not pedestrian or cycle friendly and in places there is limited access for those walking or cycling from nearby suburbs into the city centre. As the avenues get transformed into their new role they are likely to become more of a barrier for people to journey into the centre.

ii) 'Distributor streets' on the plan number more than the current one way streets which would tend to indicate an attempt to spread out the traffic load over more streets.

iii) 'Typical streets' are not allowing through traffic which potentially could be an issue. While some typical streets are currently between one way streets with limited options for access, close off one end and you still limit access, just differently. However there are other designated typical streets such as Peterborough, Chester, Armagh and Hereford Streets which run across a number of distributor streets which presumably under this policy will see them blocked at least once per block.

iv) 'Ways' are the most confused as they are intended to prioritise people and under 3.5.2 (definitions) 'Way' is a "...*central city Lane* ... and a ...*Shared space street where no delineation between traffic lanes or any areas for walking and cycling. The street is designed so that vehicles and people walking or cycling can safely mix in the same space.*"

v) Existing city lanes such as Popular Lane are covered by the "Way" definition, but so are streets such as Victoria, Colombo, Worcester, High Streets, and Ferry Road. The latter of these "Ways" are called "main streets" in Volume 1 and the diagrams and proposed depicted there do not match the shared street definition. For main streets there are two diagrams in Volume 1, one with commercial areas for cafe seating and a footpath, the other with footpath and separated cycleways. That implies not one of the main streets will have cycleways for its full length which is also contrary to the plans of cycleways provided.

vi) Generally the diagrams in Volume 1 are very selective and could be seen as misleading when read with the numerous plans that also accompany the total document.

vii) The hierarchy is noted as being based on: ...*vehicular movement plus place function.* It appears to have no consideration for uses of the street, for example some distributor streets have cycle ways, and others don't. Likewise bus routes on only some of the ways. It does appear that the distributor streets and the ways designations could both use a second sub category for uses in association with place. There are really three issues that should dictate the hierarchy: **traffic**; **other users**; and **place.** Currently you need to read a number of the diagrams in conjunction to get an overall picture which then provides a lot less coherency to the proposed hierarchy.

Recommendations

i) The Branch does not support the current roading hierarchy policy on the grounds that the hierarchy levels are too simplistic and do not appear to be co-ordinated with all the transport uses for the particular carriageways.

ii) The Central City Road Hierarchy plan (Volume2, Part 3.5, Appendix 4b) does not appear to match the Transport Choice key projects plan shown on page 86 of Volume 1. It is hard to provide a submission without knowing exactly which plan the CCC intends to follow. The CCC must provide a more accurate and detailed traffic plan explaining exactly how they intend to carry out the aims of the Draft Central City Plan.

3 - Removal of One Way Streets

Vol. 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.1 Policy: Road Hierarchy for the Central City

Positive Outcomes

i) May provide easier access for pedestrians across the central city.

ii) Lower traffic volumes may make some streets more attractive for some business tenants (although probably not retailers).

Negative Outcomes

i) The implication of one way streets is that if there is an effective route through the central city then traffic will use it and not stop. To date we have seen no data from the CCC to prove or otherwise this position and it is something that will not be particularly simple to ascertain.

ii) The aftermath of the February earthquake showed us how critical the central city streets are to getting around Christchurch. Traffic was not allowed into the central area so had to go elsewhere and with eastern river bridges closed, remaining streets couldn't cope and there was a period (still ongoing in some areas such as Riccarton) of extreme congestion on our roads.

iii) With the typical streets now designated not for through traffic, there being more distributor streets than current one way streets, and the discouragement of through traffic (how the latter is achieved is not yet detailed) there would appear to be less choice for vehicular traffic in the central city. This may make it harder for people to get to destinations in the central city, which contradicts the aim of it being easier to get around the Central city.

iv) With more distributor streets, there are also more intersections and this is what in the end causes problems on a grid layout city as we have. Traffic management becomes more of an issue with potentially greater waiting times at intersections. The one way streets are still a good tool to allow more efficient flow of vehicles. Without them the stated aim of it being easier to get around will be difficult to meet.

v) There is a conflict in the principles of the Draft Central City Plan in that discouraging through traffic implies a level of control or restriction, while a city that is easier to get around implies the opposite, i.e. more choice and less control.

vi) As far as "*improving appearance and landscaping*" the proposals shown in the images in Volume 1 (page 98 in particular) could apply equally to a one way or two way street, those elements of improvement are not defined by the traffic direction. The beautification has actually been achieved in these images by the removal of on-street carparking.

Recommendations

i) The Branch doesn't believe that there is sufficient detail, information or analysis regarding the impact of the proposals and therefore the removal of the one way street system requires a lot more investigation and co-ordination with other measures before any final decision on their removal can be made.

ii) The Draft Central City Plan does not provide enough information to show that vehicle traffic can be controlled sufficiently to discourage through traffic while still being easy to get around - thus impacting on the overall viability of the central city to encourage people in.

4 - Creating New Bus Routes and Stops

Volume 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.4 Policy: Public Transport in the Central City

Positive Outcomes

i) The draft plan creates 12 Super bus stops or street stations noted with facilities that are "...*equal to or better than the previous bus exchange*" generally located on the edge of the compact centre, and integrated with other forms of getting around. This may encourage more use of public transport to bring people into the central city in the long term.

Negative Outcomes

i) Four bus stops are on streets with cycle ways indicated, so there may be conflict between cyclists and buses, which is likely to discourage cyclists. It would be preferable for streets to promote either buses or cycles, but not both.

ii) Four bus stops are not shown on intersections, so facilities described may be able to be provided and potential be as the conceptual collage provided in Volume 1 (page 92). However the remaining eight stops are shown indicatively on intersections and the issue of how feasible it is for buses to actually stop near intersections is not addressed.

iii) There is no indication of how the facilities are to be provided: land leased from the owners (and therefore subject to the fluctuations of the commercial market) or through land purchases by the CCC.

iv) Also with many of the stops on distributor streets the buses are likely to be affected by (or cause) traffic congestion. There is no indication of specific bus lanes around the compact centre nor specific bus lanes inside the four avenues. More information is required to assess the feasibility of the proposed bus system.

v) It is difficult to see a bus network working on this layout, due to the complexity and difficulty of working out how links work, and where you need to change buses to get to a desired location. The plan states later the final bus routes "*will evolve as the area is redeveloped and the way people use the central City changes*" and the stops need to be considered as very indicative so it is hard to comment on the feasibility of this system.

Recommendations

i) The Branch does not support the public transport section of the draft plan as it is too indicative and lacking in detail

5 – Light Rail System

Volume 1, pg. 89, People on Public Transport: Light Rail

Positive Outcomes

i) If it is economically feasible (which is unlikely) then a light rail system might provide some benefits to the city such as reducing traffic congestion.

Negative Outcomes

i) The main justification in Volume 1 for a light rail system appears to be that it will have a 'transformational effect upon the city's image'. It is hard to believe that this 'feel good' factor alone is worth the estimated $410 million (which seems optimistic), given that there seems to be limited public enthusiasm for light rail (although there were quite a few requests for a Monorail in the 'Share an Idea' submissions).

ii) It is impossible to provide detailed comment on this proposal as there is no indication on the draft plan where this will run or how economically feasible it would be. How this will integrate with bus routes is also not given. Volume 2 does not even mention it.

iii) Despite the disclaimers in Volume 1 page 89, the experiences of other cities which have considered or built light rail systems would suggest that Christchurch does not have the density of built form, population, or economy to justify it. The CCC would need to provide more information to justify their claims that a light rail system makes sense.

Recommendation

i) The Branch cannot support the light rail proposal in this plan due to the lack of any detailed information or analysis.

ii) A more realistic short to medium term rail option is a new commuter train system that utilises the existing heavy rail tracks and services potentially growing regional towns and outer suburbs. Then at least Christchurch would no longer be the '*largest city in Australasia without any form of commuter rail network.' (Vol 1, pg 89).*

iii) Light rail should be reassessed as a long term option (say from 2020 onwards rather than from 2013) when the city is out of the Recovery phase.

6 - Cycle ways

Volume 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.3 Policy: Cycling in the Central City

Positive Outcomes

i) For many people bicycles may be a better option than public transport as an alternative to motor vehicles, especially considering our topography and that our public transport is and cannot be as well developed as larger cities. The provision of safer bicycle routes is likely to encourage a lot more people to consider cycling around Christchurch.

Negative Outcomes

i) The Central City cycle network plan in Appendix 4c shows little integration with cycle routes from outside the four avenues (current City Plan, Volume 3, Part 8, appendix 4a) so it is difficult to actually determine that the right streets are indicated for cycle ways. In addition if we are serious that cycling is a viable transport alternative, almost all streets should have a safe cycle section.

ii) This plan appears to just tinker at the fringes. While in normal circumstance, one can understand the need for selected cycleways being created, but with the extent of rebuilding required in the central area we have the opportunity to provide for it on a much larger scale and not just building it up incrementally, as would normally be the case.

Recommendations

i) The Branch supports the creation of safer, separated cycleways as proposed but would recommend that the proposal be expanded to many more streets to encourage cycling as a valid alternative to public transport or private cars.

7 - Pedestrian Priority Areas

Volume 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.2 Policy: Walking in the Central City

Positive Outcomes

i) The principle for an Avon River Park quoted in Volume 1: '*The continuous journey will encourage people to wander along both banks of the Avon River while minimising the interruption of traffic. Pedestrians and cyclists will be given priority in the widened river corridor with new cycle ways, footpaths, and river crossings. River crossings will be enhanced with paved platforms and kerb extensions'* (page 33) is to be encouraged.

ii) Generally, the city has always been reasonably walk able and there are plenty of options for pedestrians. However it has never had the real pedestrian friendly centre that many European cities have where you can wander without worrying about traffic. Here pedestrians have traditionally been confined by formed pathways, with the possible exceptions of Cashel Mall and Cathedral Square. The aim of providing more amenity and freedom for pedestrians is to be encouraged.

Negative Outcomes

i) The issues with walking are crossing the avenues and the lack of continuous routes free of interruption by traffic. The river is the obvious location for a continuous pedestrian route but currently it too is interrupted by bridges and traffic which is only partially resolved by the Draft Central City Plan.

ii) 'Ways' are potentially also an issue, by being shared with cycles and public transport. Some sharing is probably fine, but what is described in Volume 2 for shared streets is a free for all that includes buses. The type of way varies and certainly in the original city lanes, sharing already happens to an extent. However none of those have bus routes shown through them. The alternative of streets like Victoria and Colombo Streets present a different case and potentially will not be that pedestrian friendly.

iii) There is also a push to have parking not visible from the street but in behind or within buildings, at least 10m from the street boundary. This is an understandable policy but will it in fact work against pedestrians by there being little visibility for either driver or pedestrian as cars come through gaps between buildings and crossing a pedestrian friendly footpath.

iv) Pedestrian friendly is not just about new paving materials and rebuilt footpaths, it is about creating a safe, carefree, walkable area. This may only happen once people begin living in the central city in large numbers.

v) The only pedestrian priority streets shown on the Transport Choices Plan (Volume 1, pg 86) are the ones that previously existed. There are no new pedestrian precincts being considered, even in obvious locations such as Gloucester St outside the Central Library.

Recommendations

i) The Branch supports the aim of a pedestrian oriented central city but we have reservations from the details provided in this plan that apart from a few isolated areas, this will not be achieved on a widespread basis.

8 - Car Parking

Volume 2, Part 3.5, Clause 7.9.5 Policy: Car Parking provided by activities and Clause 7.9.6 Policy: Car Parking not provided by activities.

Refer also to the NZIA submission, Appendix 1, part ii (2) for comment on the on-site parking rules for building in Central City Core and Fringe zones.

Positive Outcomes

i) The stated objective of moving short term on-street parking to off-street locations should not be an issue provided there is some form of car parking option provided. Plenty of people will come in to the centre if they can leave their car somewhere for free (or minimal cost) within walking distance of their destination.

Negative Outcomes

i) Volume 2, clause 7.9.6 'Policy: Carparking not provided by activities' aims to '*reduce the need for activities to provide their own parking*' however, there is a perceived need of building owners and their tenants for on-site carparking. While the plan does indicate an increase in off-site parking facilities, they appear to be indicatively located on the edges of the Central City. If Council is serious about its parking incentives it needs to provide detail in this plan before developers decide to go elsewhere.

ii) We question the definition of short and long term as being the only options under consideration. We suggest there should be consideration and incentives given for short term (less than 1 hr), medium term (1 to 4 hours), and all day parking. Some premises will often (in the case of office or mixed use buildings) need all three types.

Recommendations

i) The Branch supports the provision of free short term carparking either on or off street but suggest there also needs to be more incentives for the medium and long term parking if the city centre is to draw back the people and businesses needed to make the centre vibrant again, particularly in the short term Transitional city.

9 - Eco Streets

Refer: Vol. 1, pg 41, Green City: Eco Streets

Positive Outcomes

i) There is an indication that Central City streets will become 'eco streets' involving swales, permeable pavers, filtering of storm water and generally increasing the trees and plantings. All of these are commendable and often used techniques if they are feasible.

Negative Outcomes

i) The plan does not give much detail however (and it is not even mentioned in Volume 2) so the feasibility of swales in the central city is not clear. The city has been built on what was originally swampy land which has been drained to make it usable. With permeable pavers and swales letting water permeate ground that has been dry for decades, this may have unknown effects upon the ground conditions and the (already high) water table under the Central City.

Recommendations

i) The Branch supports additional trees and planting being introduced on a permanent basis but has reservations over the principles of discharging stormwater into the ground without extensive further study into the effects of this, including impact upon the foundations of remaining buildings and the water table.

CONCLUSION

Data collected by Council which forms the basis for this plan in terms of transportation has not been published for public comment, so throughout there has to be a lot of supposition on the part of the submitters. The Volume 3 appendices M to S are all noted as "*Appendix to be provided in final document*". This places all that information outside the scope of public consultation including Traffic Demand Analysis, Public Transport Analysis, and Parking Plan Analysis.

Under the process for determining the rebuild of our Central City as defined by the Earthquake Recovery legislation, we can only comment on this document as issued by Council and apparently have no right of appeal subsequently.

Therefore as a combination of this legislation together with the lack of detail provided in the draft Central City Plan, the Branch **do not support** the ***Transport Choices*** section of the proposed city plan.