

6 December 2008  
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### **Architectural Centre submission on The Bad Manners Mall buslane proposal**

This is a submission from the Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington, as well as the functional and inspirational planning of our city.

The Architectural Centre believes there are four key principles which must be supported in any alteration to the inner city's transportation network. These are:

- 1) the improvement of, and encouraged use of, pedestrian traffic
- 2) the improvement of, and encouraged use of, cycle traffic
- 3) the improvement of, and encouraged use of, public traffic
- 4) the reduction of, and discouragement of, private vehicle traffic

We believe these are important to address in the context of sustainability and global climate change, and to improve and support the inner city's liveability and vibrancy.

The Manners Mall buslane proposal only complies with 3) and undermines 4). It does nothing to encourage 1) or 2). As such the Architectural Centre cannot support the proposal as it stands and we strongly encourage the council to reconsider it.



***Manners Mall: although it has many faults at present, it is primarily a Pedestrian Place***

### **Comprehensive Plan needed**

We believe that what needs to be undertaken first is a comprehensive plan for the future of the main traffic routes in central Wellington for both Pedestrian traffic and for Public Transport. The recent strategic (Ngauranga to Airport) traffic review really concentrated only on Private Car based traffic, and treated other - more sustainable - modes of transport with disdain. Modes of transport such as Cycle or Pedestrian were treated cursorily, and Light Rail - although given overwhelmingly massive public support - was not addressed at this time at all. A review was mentioned that may take place within the next 5 years. The issue has been shamefully whitewashed by the relevant Authorities. Instead of the requested Light Rail project, what has been proposed is a Overbridge across the edge of the Basin Reserve Cricket ground. We expect better from the Authorities which exist to serve our city.

### **Light Rail**

The Architecture Centre believes that the only future for growth in Wellington is with a high capacity Public Transport system such as Light Rail. Without continued provision of and support for high quality Public Transport, the city will soon choke and stagnate. Wellington has a striking paucity of major transport arterial options, and they need to be prioritised for both Pedestrians and Public Transport. Private transport can, and must be forced to take a slower and more congested route: Public Transport must be given priority.

We appreciate that the introduction of Light Rail may seem to some to be a far off target, but we emphasize that the city needs to start planning routes now for a system that may well be needed within the next decade. First amongst that is the need to plan and advise retailers and Wellingtonians on the selected traffic route. Possible routes need to be evaluated now, and the effect on private vehicular traffic analysed if a route is solely set aside for public transport and other road users are excluded. At present there are several major clashing points along the main bus route through the city: apart from those clashing points, public transport routes move fairly smoothly. One of the most congested and frustrating traffic intersections is the junction of Manners, Willis and Boulcott Streets. The proposal by the Council to add further to this congestion point by adding in two-way traffic flow along Manners does not, on the face of it, appear likely to improve it.

### **Pedestrians First**

The accurate assessment of Pedestrian needs in the city is of utmost importance, and we can not support any proposal that takes away from current pedestrian usage, without giving some thing back of equal or better value. If buses are to be permitted down Manners Mall, then an appropriately sized equal area of high quality pavement area should - and must - be provided to compensate. The current proposals do not actively consider this, and cannot be supported until they do.

The current proposals focus predominately upon the treatment of Manners Mall as a possible traffic route for buses, and mention (but do not show) that Dixon Street and lower Cuba Street would be given additional parks in the manner of Blair and Allen Streets. We note that Allen Street and Blair Street are not appropriate models for Dixon Street, and are not an equivalent exchange for the loss of the pedestrian route of Manners Mall. While they are successful in acknowledging their urban history and are useful mixed traffic areas for that part of the city, they are elaborate carparks, rather than urban design supportive of pedestrian and cycle traffic.

We believe that Manners Mall must retain viability for pedestrian traffic, but if reconfigured as an expedient route for two lanes of buses, we very much doubt that the width of Manners Mall will allow for this. A single lane of buses may be able to cater for these three modes of traffic (pedestrian, cycle and bus), but regardless, increased quality pedestrian/cycle streets should be provided to address the loss which will occur if the Manners Mall project is to go ahead. Other issues such as parking and loading areas for trucks, Courier vans etc, and the alternative routing for Taxis must be addressed before the scheme is significantly furthered, and we note that the crossings of Manners St at both Victoria and Willis are badly in need of replanning for pedestrian safety.

### **Dixon Street Boulevard Proposal**

We propose to the Council that the opportunity be taken, after a suitable and total urban evaluation, of creating a major new pedestrian improvement in Wellington.



*Dixon Street: currently an unpleasant divisive barrier to the Park.*

We note the following: that the current Te Aro Park is badly compromised by the traffic routes either side up Dixon and down Manners. We suggest that the traffic is reduced to running one side only of Te Aro Park, and that the Park is replanned and joined to Dixon St frontages, and extended as a Pedestrian only zone along the full length of Dixon St on the flat, incorporating a wide strip of paving suitable for walking and cycling: a Boulevard.



*Rue de Clichy, Paris: an enjoyable pedestrian Boulevard*

We do not support any extra creation of parking within Dixon St, and believe that it must be made a totally pedestrian amenable area. Extensive mature planting should be undertaken along the new boulevard, and high quality paving and landscaping features installed. Courier vans and taxis must not be allowed to use this street. This way there will be an extended pedestrian boulevard pavement on the sunny side of Dixon St that will mesh with the sunny side of Courtenay Place, and achieve the added advantage that the Council is seeking - a continuation of the Golden Mile from Courtenay through to Willis.

### **Cuba Street**

The Architectural Centre also proposes that the lower part of Cuba St become an extension of Cuba Mall in order to strengthen the pedestrian link through to Civic Square and the flow through to the Waterfront; and that pedestrian crossing points on Cuba at Manners, Wakefield, Vivian and Ghuznee are all altered to create a more amenable Pedestrian zone. Cuba Street has a fantastic and atmospheric ambience by a combination of building type, planting, paving, physical orientation, shop front displays and of course the people who inhabit it. It is a hugely successful car free space that is a bonus for Wellington's image as both a caring and creative capital. It is potentially at some risk of being literally overshadowed by taller buildings being created that will create shade.

### **Outdoor Space**

The Council needs to urgently change its hours of reference for protected sunshine into Outdoor Spaces, enlarging it greatly from the currently restricted 12-2 only. Outdoor places are for all day, not just for weekday lunchtimes. Finally, we believe that it is important to state unequivocally now that private vehicle traffic will not be further encouraged in central Wellington, and that active steps be taken to implementing a high quality public transport system in Wellington to cope with the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Manners Mall proposal: we appreciate this aspect of the democratic process and hope our comments, observations and suggestions have been helpful to you.

If you have any questions about any of the points raised please contact me.

Yours sincerely

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