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Architectural Centre submission on: Manners Mall bus lane proposal

As we noted in our previous submission on this subject, 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.."

We are pleased to see that the Council has taken steps towards taking these points into account, and applaud the moves taken towards restricting car use in the Manners Mall scenarios chosen to present to the public.

Response to the Revised Proposal

In our previous submission, we noted that "the Architectural Centre cannot support the proposal as it stands and we strongly encourage the council to reconsider it" on the grounds that the proposal did nothing to encourage pedestrian or cycle use.

The Architectural Centre appreciates the work and thought that has been put into the revised scheme by the Council officers. We believe that of crucial importance to the acceptance of the scheme by the public will be the design of the key traffic / pedestrian intersections, such as where Manners crosses with Victoria St, or where Manners intersects with Willis and Boulcott Streets. We would urge the Council to put forward solutions to these junctions that treat the most important users at these junctions as the Pedestrians, and that their rights and usability are not tacked on at the end by roading engineers as so often happens. We offer some useful solutions for these junctions in the form of diagrams for the Council to consider (refer accompanying plan).

We recognise that Victoria St is seen by Council as a major vehicular through route but would emphasize that there should be no possibility of cars turning into Manners from Victoria as happens at present. If Manners is to be a bus route, then steps must be taken to ensure that it is a bus only route and not one that is used by cars, and trucks, etc as this will only clog the traffic and make conditions for pedestrians dangerous. We have not yet seen any evidence that Council has considered how businesses are to be serviced, and note that if vans are to be allowed along this bus route, then this will render the bus-route unworkable. There are no spaces available along this narrow street for van parking.

We are very pleased to see that the Council has taken on board our suggestions that alternative

pedestrian routes to Manners St be explored, and that as a result the development of Lower Cuba has been proposed as a low speed shared space. We look forward to seeing how this pans out, and would note that we believe the amount of cars in Council option 1 is adequate and that options 2 and 3 are excessive. We support the careful introduction of shared spaces, and would emphasize that vehicle speeds must be kept low.

We are however, disappointed that Council has not included our proposals for the to extend Te Aro Park on its Dixon St side, and would urge them to reconsider. Te Aro Park is presently an awful, marooned sliver of public space and needs to be enlarged and connected to the south side of Dixon St to make it work. With the removal of all buses to the north side of Dixon, there is no reason why not to remove all vehicular traffic from there, rather than the addition of lots of car parking. Cars should be diverted up to Ghuznee, or down to Wakefield, but should not be using Dixon to cut through. This area of Te Aro Park must be made as a pedestrian priority or pedestrian only area, not an area for cars. We include here a picture of how Dixon St can connect with Te Aro Park once cars are removed.



Figure 1: proposed extension to Te Aro Park]

Other matters raised by Council in the proposal include the pedestrian priority at Mercer St, of which we approve, and welcome as a major new pedestrian place. We believe that traffic should be not just slowed in this area but removed in entirety. This will encourage pedestrian access across from Willis into the Civic Square, a move which is to be applauded. We would note however that the encouragement of pedestrians into Civic Square will fail if there are not more activities in Civic Square such as cafes and restaurants, to make it a truly pedestrian friendly area.



Figure 2: the popular Piazza del Campo in Siena during the Palio. Ringed with cafes

We agree with the proposals that access to Bond St be stopped from the south-west end. We also support the Council's proposals for widening footpaths asymmetrically along Wakefield St, with wider footpaths available on the South side, and would also encourage that the same be undertaken on Manners Mall, where the south side of the footpath will get more sunshine and higher pedestrian (and cycle) traffic than the north side. We believe that Council needs to produce plans to work out exactly where cycle traffic is to go - and emphasise that safe, car-free routes are preferred.

Light Rail

Despite the improvements which have been made to the proposal, we feel however that there are important matters raised in the WCC's proposal for bus lanes in Manners Mall that are still not yet being addressed. We therefore state again that:

"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.**"

"The Architectural 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.**"(Arch Centre previous submission).

One of the highest priorities for the Council should therefore be the need to future proof the route for future Light Rail or Trams. If the Manners route has been selected as the most likely route, then we should take this opportunity to install the basics for this now (concrete base course etc, electrical supply, all but the tracks themselves). We believe that the higher carrying capacity of a small Light Rail system and faster travel times will in time be recognised as a better solution than the current bus solution, and would note that in many European cities of similar size to Wellington, that Trams are being installed as a matter of course. Wellington should not ignore this move towards Mass Transit any longer, especially with the city's support of increasing our inner city population.



Figure 3: the Trams in Barcelona. Typical Barcelona streamlined tram stop (note name).

Adjacent Traffic Improvements also Needed

The Architectural Centre also believes that the Council needs to broaden the scope of the enquiry, and to incorporate into the study the junction of Wakefield and Taranaki St. This street junction is on the route of one of the most important connections in the city - from the main thoroughfare of Taranaki St down to the major pedestrian drawcards of Te Papa and the Wellington Harbour. At present however, the traffic junction here is appalling, not only to the 5 directions of cars, but also to the pedestrian tourists and locals of Wellington. We propose that there is a major rethink of traffic and pedestrian flow through this area, and to that end we propose that the Council consider the creation of a major new public park in front of the Duxton hotel which will divert road traffic away from the junction and remove roads from the junction.



Figure 4: the proposed new Park. Refer full size accompanying plan

The removal of existing badly designed roads, traffic junctions and traffic islands will permit the creation of a large new area of public space. We believe that this park will transform the city's relationship with the waterfront, add in more useful links to and from the waterfront and Cuba St, be a major tourist feature in the way that Waitangi Park has been so successful, and would link seamlessly into the existing green space on the waterfront (once known as the Grassy Knoll). As a means of resolving the School of Music impasse, where Illot Green is too small for requirements, we also believe that this could be an excellent site for the School of Music, and it would tie in with the Town Hall and the Michael Fowler Centre as part of a Cultural Precinct.

Regards

Guy Marriage
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The Architectural Centre, Inc.