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AUCKLAND REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT AUCKLAND CITY CYCLING AND WALKING FRAMEWORK 2007

To: Cycling and Walking Framework
Transport Strategy
Auckland City Council
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From: Auckland Regional Public Health Service
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1. Thank you for the opportunity for the Auckland Regional Public Health Service to provide a submission on the Draft Auckland City Cycling and Walking Framework 2007.
2. This submission represents the views of the Auckland Regional Public Health Service (the Service). The Service provides public health services for the three district health boards in the Auckland Region (Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waitemata District Health Boards), with the primary governance mechanism for the Service resting with Auckland District Health Board. This submission represents the views of the Service and does not necessarily represent the views of the three District Health Boards.
3. The Service understands that all submissions will be available under the Official Information Act 1982, except if grounds set out under the Act apply.
4. The primary contact point for this submission is:

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Introduction

5. Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS, the Service) has a statutory obligation under the Health Act 1956, to improve, promote and protect the health of people and communities in particular for the Auckland Region.
6. The Auckland Region faces a number of wellbeing challenges through changing demographics, increasingly diverse communities, outstanding infrastructure needs, transport needs and urban design and urban intensification issues.
7. There is a shared responsibility between the health sector, local authorities, central government agencies, non-governmental organisations and individual community members, to advance population health and community wellbeing. There is a need to foster stronger partnerships that work collaboratively to improve the wellbeing of the people of the Auckland Region.
8. The Service has identified six 'vital few' service delivery outcomes that it believes are critical to achieving public health:
 - reduction in the incidence and impact of infectious disease.
 - reduction in the incidence and impact of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
 - reduction in the incidence and impact of tobacco and alcohol related harm.
 - reduction in the incidence and impact of cancer.
 - reduction in the incidence and impact of environmental inequalities.
 - reduction in the adverse effects of environmental hazards.
9. The Service believes that public health issues are inseparable from, and integral to, Council's cultural, economic, environmental and social wellbeing processes, which are mandated through the Local Government Act. In addition, Council has a duty to consider health and wellbeing under other legislation such as the Health, Building and Resource Management Acts.
10. Public health typically focuses on 'upstream' approaches to prevent disease and promote health.¹ Action is needed at all levels, but 'upstream' strategies should receive particular emphasis. Given the high level nature of the framework, it is well placed to incorporate these upstream concepts.

General Comments

11. The Service strongly supports the intention of the Auckland City Cycling and Walking Framework to provide good quality walking and cycling facilities. This and the commitment to public transport, leads to reduced dependency on the private vehicle and greater opportunity for physical activity. Encouraging physical activity is paramount to public health and wellbeing.
12. The Service acknowledges the Framework's reference to the New Zealand Energy Strategy that recognises "the role that cycling and walking have in reducing carbon emissions and energy consumption, and in promoting health through cleaner air and exercise."
13. The service believes it would significantly enhance the framework to include greater recognition of the benefits of walking and cycling for public health. These include:
 - Increased physical activity
 - Reduced air pollution and carbon emissions
 - Reduced road traffic injury
 - Reduced noise
 - Improved social interaction and social cohesion
 - Promoting child independent mobility

¹ Wilson N, Watts C, Signal L, Thomson G. Acting upstream to control the obesity epidemic in New Zealand. New Zealand Medical Journal 2006;119(1231).

14. To assist councils in providing for the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of their communities, the Service produced the second in its State of Public Health Reports entitled "Improving Health and Wellbeing: A Public Health Perspective for Local Authorities in the Auckland Region"² (SOPHAR Report) in 2006. This report clearly sets out the areas where Council decision-making will have wide influence and impact on the wellbeing (including health) of its community.
15. The SOPHAR Report states "If more people were physically active, there would be a reduction in the rates of chronic diseases and overall morbidity. Regular physical activity is linked with reduced rates of obesity, cardiovascular disease, certain cancers and diabetes."
16. The current obesity epidemic is a major public health issue, any measures that contribute to reversing the declining levels of physical activity will assist reduction in obesity. In her opening address to the New Zealand Walking Conference 2006, the Hon Annette King stated "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."
17. The SOPHAR Report identifies air pollution as a health issue. "There is increasing evidence that exposure to unacceptable levels of pollutants in air can shorten life expectancy and contribute to a range of health problems."
18. Objective 7 in the Cycling and Walking Framework prioritises pedestrians and cyclists in future planning and design. The Service supports the concept of establishing a hierarchy of transport users, prioritising people access/pedestrians within all transport planning. For example, the City of York's Transport Plan hierarchy of transport users: (see Appendix One)

Recommendations

19. ARPHS suggests that the National Guidelines for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design be included in appendix F. Hon Annette King in her opening address to the New Zealand Walking Conference 2006 made reference to overseas research, now being replicated in New Zealand; that provides evidence of the link between increased urban pedestrian surveillance and a reduction in crime. She stated research "shows that having more people walking around in urban areas contributes to a decrease in crime, but for this to happen we need more pedestrian areas in the first place."
20. The Service would like to recommend *Providing for Pedestrians: Principles and Guidelines for Improving Pedestrian Access to Destinations and Urban Spaces*, July 2003 (available on www.doi.vic.gov.au) as a worthwhile guideline for the development of the walking implementation plan.

Objectives:

21. The Service questions whether the aims follow on from the objectives. Do the aims cover every issue you consider important for pedestrians and cyclists?
22. The objective 'Fewer pedestrian and cyclist accidents / pedestrians and cyclists feel safe' is appropriate, but the aims listed are not good indicators of whether this will be achieved. Two further aims are more important: reducing traffic speed (in areas with high numbers of walkers and cyclists) and reducing traffic volumes. Both higher traffic speed and traffic volume are associated with more pedestrian injury.
23. Aim 9 is to 'Investigate ways to minimise the effect of motorised vehicles on walking and cycling environments.' Traffic calming is the most important solution to this. The service believes council should adopt a city-wide traffic calming strategy, focused on areas with high numbers of vulnerable road users. The City of Hull in the UK has achieved impressive reductions in road traffic injury with widespread traffic calming (reducing speed to under 30km/h) – see http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/portal/page?_pageid=221,53015&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL for further information on Hull's experience. The increase in safety for pedestrians and cyclists –

² http://www.arphs.govt.nz/publications/Sophar06/Sophar_report06.asp

including better perceived safety – will help to promote more walking and cycling. Traffic calming will also significantly contribute to other objectives, including ‘Facilities are pleasant to use and people enjoy cycling and walking’, ‘Communities are better places’ and others. Traffic calming should be a key measure in any walking and cycling framework.

24. Under the objective of ‘Equity in planning for pedestrians and cyclists’, the walking and cycling the service would like to see the framework include, or include plans to advocate for, a road user priority scheme such as that adopted by the City of York in the UK. This scheme gives priority to walkers and cyclists in planning decisions. This is appropriate, since shifting from car use to walking and cycling benefits everyone – particularly other car users through reduced congestion; conversely, a shift to greater car use has adverse effects on everyone. Thus, walkers and cyclists warrant priority in planning decisions. (See Appendix One)

Targets:

25. The Service questions whether the targets are appropriate (both the measure and the target)? According to the framework, Auckland regional cycling and walking targets have been set at 15.5 per cent for 2016, an increase from the current 15.1 per cent of morning-peak trips. A much more ambitious target should be set, and measures taken to achieve this target.
26. Subject 6
 - Specific 1 - While safety belt compliance is relevant to the LTCCP, ARPHS questions the relevance to cycling and walking. Perhaps a target related to helmet wearing may be more appropriate.
 - Specific 4 – ARPHS suggests it might be more useful to disaggregate the accident statistics and focus on areas where there are cyclist and pedestrian black spots.

Monitoring

27. Traffic volumes and speeds are important influences on walking and cycling rates and should be monitored. For instance, the service suggests traffic speeds could be measured in a sample of town centres, residential streets outside schools
28. ARPHS would like to see the Targets include more explicit support for safety initiatives for children, such as the Walking School Bus initiative, and effort to reduce hazards around schools for both cyclists and pedestrians. If we believe that the habits established in childhood influence the rest of one’s life then a focus around children would bring long term benefits. In the above mentioned opening address, Hon Annette King stated that she was “amazed to learn that today over half of New Zealand primary school children are driven to school” and “that travel surveys show that 40 per cent of peak time car journeys are now education-related”

Conclusion

29. The Service is broadly supportive of the Cycling and Walking Framework, in particular the Service acknowledges the benefits to health and wellbeing, through increased opportunity for physical exercise and improved air quality as a result of less dependence of the use of private motor vehicles.
30. Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours faithfully

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

Appendix One

Designing cities around people, not cars

The City of York has won numerous awards for developing an integrated transport network that does not rely on private cars and meets local air quality objectives. An integral part of that strategy promotes sustainable active alternatives to the private car that are both convenient and reliable by using public transport, walking and cycling. York was one of the first local authorities to adopt a hierarchy of transport users when making decisions related to land use and transport and in implementing transport measures. The order of priority is:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Pedestrians | 5. Powered two-wheelers |
| 2. People with mobility problems | 6. Commercial or business users (includes deliveries and heavy goods vehicles) |
| 3. Cyclists | 7. Carborne shoppers and visitors |
| 4. Public transport users (includes bus, coach, water, taxi and rail) | 8. Carborne commuters |

Source: Edwards P, Tsouros A. *Promoting physical activity and active living in urban environments: the role of local governments*. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2006: 8.

http://www.york.gov.uk/content/45053/64877/64891/Local_transport_plan/Local_transport_plan_summary.pdf.