



Living Streets Hamilton

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Submission on the proposed Waikato Regional Policy Statement

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I wish to be heard in support of this submission

If others make a similar submission I do not want to present a joint case.

Living Streets wishes to comment on the following provisions, all of which we **completely support**:

3.2 Decision making. We are in total support of points (a) to (n), with particular emphasis on (d) a precautionary approach, (f) regard to the potential for cumulative effects from activities and (l) the consideration of a mix of methods to achieve objectives.

3.4 Energy, particularly the minimisation of energy demand, increased efficiency of energy use, and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

3.9 Efficient use of resources.

5.1.5 Air, education and advocacy, particularly (v) promoting the benefits of alternative modes of transport and (vi) the benefits of low emission vehicles and the promotion of initiatives that minimise air emissions from land transport.

6.1.5 Growth strategies which integrate land use planning with infrastructure.

6.1.7 Information to support new urban development, particularly point c: multimodal transport links and connectivity, both within the new development and to neighbouring areas, emphasising the safe and efficient functioning of existing and planned transport.

6.3, particularly points c: the efficient and effective functioning of infrastructure, including transport corridors, and d: a coordinated and integrated approach across regional and district boundaries and between agencies.

6.3.1: Plan provisions, particularly points a: roading patterns and designs support the use of public transport, b: walking and cycling facilities are integrated within developments; c: different transport modes are well connected; f: development does not add to existing road safety risks and where possible should reduce such risks; h: development patterns should support the use of rail or sea for freight movement.

6.5.1 District plans shall...encourage innovative energy technologies and provision for multimodal transport systems.

6.5.4

Local transport strategies: ...developing local strategies for encouraging walking, cycling and use of public transport in urban areas and other demand management initiatives.

6.5.5 Public transport strategies: improve public transport services for established towns, villages and rural-residential centres, and promote the benefits and uptake of public transport.

6.5.6 Managing travel demand: investigate a range of methods to reduce the demand for transport.

6A- Development principles: particularly point (f) on page 6-23: minimise energy and carbon use ... by compact urban form, and design and location which minimises the need for private motor vehicle use, encourage walking cycling and the use of public transport and maximise opportunities for people to live, work and play within their local area.

Comments and requests for action:

All of the above points are completely in line with the aims of Living Streets and any other active transport groups. We heartily encourage the development of towns and cities where private car use is unnecessary for the most part; and where cycling and walking are safe and preferred methods of transport, linked by efficient public transport systems. Overseas studies have already shown that “live, work, play” communities tend to thrive and grow while urban sprawl and suburbs dependent on private car use are increasingly out of favour. This is reflected in house prices and the willingness of people to live in such areas. Encouraging compact cities and towns, linked by efficient public transport systems, will reduce carbon emissions, reduce road tolls, reduce stress, and improve health by encouraging the use of active transport for short trips. What could be better?

The problem is that under current government regulations, the dream is unlikely to be realised. As we have repeatedly said, there is little point in expensively designing dreams, in the form of policy statements that are little more than wish-lists, when central government policy is so fixated on major road construction that all funding for cycling and walking initiatives has been cut off. Local and territorial authorities are powerless to make improvements unless they can raise the finance completely via the rates take. This might be more possible than many believe, in that if value for money is perceived, rate payers might not be completely reluctant to comply. However, it is grossly unfair, and very short-sighted on the part of central government, to adopt this approach.

As ever, Living Streets urges Environment Waikato to strenuously lobby central government for the reintroduction of sensible subsidies (at least 50% rather than the current 5%) for all walking and cycling initiatives, and preferably raise that subsidy to 90%, to more accurately match the level of support given to major highway construction. Highways are a losing proposition in the face of rising fuel prices and the impact of climate change. We need to make this apparent to central government, as forcibly and often as possible. And Environment Waikato could make a small start by hastening the implementation of the Hamilton to Auckland commuter rail link. It would suggest that the desire expressed in section 6.3: a coordinated and integrated approach across regional and district boundaries and between agencies, has some real support. As an encouragement about what can be achieved, the following document may be of interest.

Others can do it, why can't we?

Author:

Shannon Boorer, Passenger Transport Strategic Planner, Environment Canterbury

On the northern border of Switzerland lies a small city which is achieving big things with its public transport system. The population of Schaffhausen is around 33,000 which is similar to Timaru in South Canterbury with a population of around 27,000. The Timaru public transport network consists of four urban bus services which run every 30-60 minutes and two school routes. These carried a total of 218,000 passengers in 2009/10. The Schaffhausen public transport network includes six urban bus routes which operate at a ten minute frequency throughout the day and carry around 13 million passengers a year. This means that up to 40,000 passenger trips are made every day on the buses in Schaffhausen, while the daily patronage in Timaru is only around 800.

Although Switzerland is half a world away from New Zealand and there may not seem like any point in comparing the two, there are actually quite a few similarities between the cities of Schaffhausen and Timaru when you take a closer look. This suggests that we could learn some valuable lessons from Schaffhausen and try to achieve similar levels of success with a relatively small and simple public transport network. First we need to start by dispelling a few common myths.

One of the main reasons used to explain the low level of bus usage in Timaru (and many New Zealand towns) is that it is a small city which simply does not have enough people to support public transport. However, this is proven incorrect in Schaffhausen which has a similar sized population to Timaru but carries over 50 times as many people on the buses every year.

Another common argument heard across New Zealand is that we do not have the population densities to support a strong public transport network. With our rural background many of us still prefer a big backyard to a high rise apartment seen in crowded European cities. Once again, Schaffhausen proves that this is not always the case. This small city is set in a rural area with many smaller towns nearby, similar to Timaru with its rural surroundings and neighbouring towns like Temuka and Pleasant Point. Schaffhausen covers an area of 33km² and actually has a lower population density than Timaru which only has an urban area of 23km².

	Schaffhausen	Timaru
Population	33,000	27,000
Area	31 km ²	23 km ²
Population Density (people per km)	1,087	1,143

Traffic congestion is often thought to be a key factor driving a successful public transport system. When the roads are busy it can become slow and frustrating to drive a car so more people use public transport to move around. In Timaru, the traffic flows relatively freely so it is quick and convenient to drive to your destination and there is no need to use the bus. Again, Schaffhausen shows that congestion is not necessary to make public transport

successful. The city has very little congestion on the roads due to the low population but people still use public transport. There are bus lanes at some intersections and bus priority at all traffic lights despite the lack of congestion. This is because they want to make the bus as fast and attractive as possible - as their transport planner explained, "Stopping at bus stops is slow enough so you don't want to wait at traffic lights as well".

Another excuse for driving that is often used in the south is the weather. During winter it is too cold to walk and wait for a bus. However, residents across Switzerland prove that this is not a barrier. In Schaffhausen the average daily high during winter (January) is only 1.6°C but patronage on the buses remains strong all year round. The buses are frequent and reliable so residents know that they will never have to wait any longer than ten minutes for the next service to arrive.

A common myth used to justify our low bus usage in New Zealand is the cultural cliché that Kiwis love their cars too much. It is seen as part of our culture, unlike many European cities that have a strong public transport history. However, this love of cars is a relatively recent phenomenon and is also found in many European countries where BMWs, Mercedes Benz and Porsches are a common sight. As the managing director of Vienna Transport Strategies consultancy points out "Swiss people are not so different from anyone else; all other things being equal many would prefer to drive private automobiles" (Nash, Andrew; www.andynash.com).

Although Switzerland has a lower car ownership rate than New Zealand, it is still considered quite high by European standards and has grown considerably in recent years. In 1984, 69% of Swiss households owned a vehicle but this increased to 81% by 2005 (www.worldradio.ch). The main difference is that it is less convenient to use your car in many Swiss cities, particularly due to the lack of parking available. Authorities deliberately restrict car parking numbers which frees up more space for other modes and makes driving difficult so public transport becomes an appealing option. Car sharing schemes are also popular as they give people access to a variety of vehicles with dedicated parking spaces so they can use a different car to suit their trip purpose.

The cost of motoring in New Zealand is relatively cheap and there is a perception that it is more expensive to drive in Europe and cheaper to use public transport which is why it is more popular. In part this is true. The cost of purchasing a car is generally higher in Switzerland than New Zealand, but many people opt to lease instead. Once you have access to a vehicle, petrol prices in Switzerland are some of the cheapest in Europe and only slightly higher than New Zealand at around \$2.20 a litre, which is very comparable when wages and the cost of living are taken into consideration. Public transport is not particularly cheap. In Schaffhausen, a daily bus pass costs around NZ\$8.70 compared to only \$2.50 in Timaru or \$4.60 in Christchurch. The Swiss fare structure is designed to encourage people to use public transport regularly with integrated monthly and annual passes that reward high usage. In 2009 an Annual Swiss Pass cost around NZ\$4300 which provided access to all public transport modes across the country. Once someone has purchased this ticket, it encourages them to use public transport as much as possible during that year to make the most of their investment.

Another popular myth used to explain the strong public transport networks in some European cities is that public transport is ingrained in their history. While this may be true in some cities, Schaffhausen again illustrates that this is not always the case. Like many

cities around the world, including Christchurch, they removed their tram lines during the 1960s and have had to rebuild their system with buses in recent years. There are examples of town squares surrounded by beautiful old buildings which were once used as car parks but are now clear open spaces for the public to enjoy. Schaffhausen experienced a time when cars were growing in importance, but its residents made the conscious decision to improve public transport and reduce the dominance of private vehicles.

Overall, Schaffhausen dispels many common misconceptions about what is needed to create a successful public transport network. They illustrate that small cities can achieve big things by providing a frequent and reliable bus service which is given priority over private vehicles. As a result, buses in Schaffhausen carry more people in a week than Timaru buses carry in an entire year. This suggests that there are lessons to be learnt from such examples and that places, like Timaru, could have a stronger public transport future if we choose to head in that direction.