

Extension of the Tram Route Submission - Received by Email

Name:	Andrew Macbeth [andrew.g.macbeth@gmail.com]
CC:	
Sent:	Mon 21/04/2008 11:47 pm
Your Submission:	<p>Tram route extension through City Mall – submission</p> <p>I wish to record my opposition to the proposal to extend the tram route through the City Mall. I do not want more ratepayers' money and staff time spent on this proposal, in addition to the "sunk cost" of hundreds of thousands of dollars already spent preparing the mall for tram tracks. My office is located above the High Street Mall (in the Link Centre) and I am well aware of the lengthy construction period that local shopkeepers have had to endure because of the increased complexity of installing foundations for future trams.</p> <p>I do not think there will be enough vintage trams to run the service; there are hardly enough now for the existing route, and they are increasingly old and hard to service, I imagine (not to mention expensive). This proposal might make more sense if it were a centre city public transport service aimed at the residents of Christchurch, but the route is too convoluted to provide much advantage.</p> <p>As an urban design guru said recently, "Build for the residents and the tourists will come; build for tourists and they won't stay long".</p> <p>The trams are not well used by locals. They are too expensive and too slow – walking speed. The new route will have even slower operating speeds than the existing route, with the complexity of turning onto and off Manchester Street, performing a figure eight and the requirement to travel slowly in the City Mall. With few trams available, the headways will probably increase on both the existing service and the new one, undermining the commercial viability of the existing service and reducing the usefulness of both services for locals and tourists alike.</p> <p>In addition, there is a significant but poorly-documented safety problem for cyclists. Unlike most international tram systems where the tracks are straight, the problem in Christchurch is caused by the gentle curves of the tram tracks into and away from the kerb. This makes it easy for cyclists to get stuck and fall off, usually (but not always) resulting in minor crashes not reported to the police. I have heard of cyclists having bad falls because of the tram tracks and / or being struck by following motor vehicles and requiring extensive surgery and dental care. This issue was not evident in the council report, which stated that "a traffic safety audit has confirmed that there are no serious safety issues". Any decision to continue with this proposal should be after a comprehensive analysis of cyclist safety on the existing facility. Extension of the tram route will exacerbate the safety problems. The by-law change sought for the tram extension should only be countenanced if cyclists are also allowed to travel through the mall. Their use of the mall would be much more compatible with pedestrian use than the trams.</p> <p>If the mall by-law is to be altered to allow trams, I recommend that a comprehensive report of all future costs (both capital and operating) be prepared and made public prior to the decision.</p> <p>There are no good reasons to extend the tram route, in my opinion, and this project should be stopped now before more public money and staff time is wasted.</p> <p>I wish to be heard at any meeting called to consider submissions on this matter.</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p> <p>Andrew Macbeth 7 Ryeland Avenue, Ilam Christchurch 8041</p>