

20. RESTELL STREET AT HAREWOOD ROAD - SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Officer responsible City Streets Manager	Author Lee Kelly, DDI 941-8355
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The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Board to implement safety improvements at the Restell Street/Harewood Road intersection by banning right turning vehicle movements from Restell Street into Harewood Road and from Harewood Road into Restell Street.

BACKGROUND

On the 31 May 1991 a meeting was held at the Social Welfare Conference Room, Winston Avenue. It was attended by members of the then Shirley/Papanui Community Board, Council engineering staff and staff from New Zealand Railways who discussed the proposed installation of railway barrier arms at the Harewood Road and Langdons Road railway crossing.

Council engineering staff had been concerned at the number of collisions that had been happening at both rail crossings and had requested that New Zealand Railway consider the installation of barrier arms.

At this meeting New Zealand Rail stated that barrier arms could be in operation from 16 June 1991 at both crossings, however, the installation of barrier arms at the Harewood Road crossing would depend on the intersection layout at Harewood Road/Restell Street being changed.

New Zealand Rail wanted to see the right turn vehicle movements from Restell Street into Harewood Road banned as they believed that there would be a high probability of those right turning vehicles anticipating the right to cross before or after a train, in front of the queue stopped at the barrier and consequently serious injury or fatal collisions happening.

The Council agreed with this assessment and in 1991 recommended to the Shirley/Papanui Community Board that right turn vehicle movements from Restell Street into Harewood Road and from Harewood Road into Restell Street be prohibited by the installation of a median island.

Due to the local business communities objection to the proposal it was not approved by the Board and a 'scaled down' version was finally implemented. The 'scaled down' version remains as the current configuration of the Restell Street/Harewood Road intersection and railway crossing. It consists of kerb build-outs on Harewood Road west and east of the railway crossing and a median island on Harewood Road on the east approach to the crossing.

This work went against the technical recommendations of the Council's engineering staff and at that time staff made it clear that collisions would continue to happen if the right turn from Restell Street into Harewood Road remained. This technical view was based on the fact that there is only 14 metres between the Restell Street/Harewood Road intersection and the railway crossing, it has an acute angle and a narrow road width and all these factors combine to limit the 'sight' distance for those vehicles turning right from Restell Street into Harewood Road. Visibility could only be improved with a complete reconstruction of the Harewood Road approaches to the crossing, with the view to changing the profile of the road.

Council staff again proposed banning right turn vehicle movements from Restell Street into Harewood Road in 1997 as a safety improvement to eliminate reported crashes.

This work was not implemented because of further objections from the business community who believed that the work would result in a loss of customers due to a reduced number of vehicles travelling past.

The Board's decision at this meeting was:

That the Restell Street/Harewood Road intersection safety improvements be deferred until the Northlands Mall service road construction has been finalised.

In 2003 the City Streets Unit is again recommending the banning of right turning vehicle movements from Restell Street into Harewood Road and Harewood Road into Restell Street by seeking approval from the Board to extend the existing median island on Harewood Road east through the intersection of Restell Street.

A total of 14 crashes have been reported at this intersection over the past 10 years (see attached Land Transport Safety Authority crash data base 1993/2002). Following the most recent crash (fatal, June 2002) the Council decided to undertake another review of the intersection.

Analysis of the crash data indicates that the majority of crashes involve motorists right turning from Restell Street into Harewood Road. The two latest collisions, the June 2002 fatal collision and the September 2002 injury collision, both involved motorists right turning from Restell Street into Harewood Road, becoming trapped between the railway line and the barrier arm and then being hit by a train.

Following the June 2002 fatal crash the Council received a copy of a report written by the attending Police Officer, Constable James Simpson of the Papanui Police, outlining the factors leading up to the crash and recommending to Council that consideration be given to extending the median island on the east side of the railway crossing on Harewood Road to prevent vehicles right turning from Restell Street into Harewood Road. This is the recommendation that the City Streets Unit is presenting to the Board today for approval.

Further, this report to Council from Constable Simpson was supported by his supervisor on this case, Detective Sergeant Grant Wormald, and was received at Council with a covering letter from Inspector Derek Erasmus, Road Policing Manager, Christchurch Police. The report and covering letter are attached.

The upcoming construction of a roundabout at the Langdons Road/Sisson Drive/Restell Street intersection, as part of the new traffic management plan around the redeveloped Northlands Mall, will result in more traffic along Restell Street and an increased risk of more crashes at the Restell Street/Harewood Road intersection.

CONSULTATION

Initial consultation was undertaken with the business owners in Restell Street in April/May 2003 and this was followed by a formal publicity leaflet delivered in May 2003 with a close off date for submissions of June 13 2003.

Four submissions were received; two submissions were in favour of the proposal, one submission was opposed to the proposal on the grounds that it would inconvenience a number of staff and the fourth submission, the same text but with 17 signatures and/or business cards attached, was also against the proposal.

- Submission one supports the proposal and included a suggested change to the current plan to improve the proposal from a cyclist's perspective. This suggested change has been reviewed by staff and has been included, with a slight modification, into the plan. The suggested change eliminates the need to provide a 'cut through' through the median island adjacent to Restell Street to provide for cyclists. Cyclists will instead be catered for by a crossing point on Harewood Road just west of the railway crossing.
- Submission two supported the proposal.
- Submission three is opposed to the proposal. The submission came from the staff of a business located on the corner of the Main North Road and Winston Avenue who believe that it would cause them great inconvenience. A written reply was sent to the submitter. A copy of their submission and the author's reply is attached.
- Submission four came from Rex Price, a business owner from Restell Street. The submission had been photocopied and 16 other businesses in the area had attached their business cards and/or signatures in opposition to the proposal. The submission received stated that 'they' were concerned with the ramifications if the proposal is implemented, although the submission did not specify what these ramifications would be. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that some businesses perceive that they will lose business, that it would be inconvenient for staff and customers if the proposal was implemented and that the crashes at the intersection and crossing, including the fatal, were caused by the individuals involved in the crashes and not 'something' that would be repeated if motorist drove as they should.

CONCLUSION

The provision of right turning vehicle movements from Restell Street into Harewood Road and Harewood Road into Restell Street should not continue.

The crash data supplied by the Land Transport Safety Authority clearly supports (unfortunately) the predictions of both New Zealand Railways and Council engineering staff that collisions will continue to happen because of the difficulty of the manoeuvre, the volume of traffic, the close proximity of the railway crossing and the difficulty some motorists can experience in determining approaching vehicle speeds and distances.

Providing a safer roading environment by implementing engineering safety improvements does have the potential to impact on adjacent businesses and residential properties. Staff are aware of this and work hard to minimise the impact. Ultimately safety concerns must outweigh convenience.

RECOMMENDED OPTION

The proposed work would see the existing median island on Harewood Road being extended east through the intersection of Restell Street see attached plan.

A crossing point, including the relevant painted symbols, will be installed for cyclists on the west side of the railway crossing. This will then eliminate the need to provide a 'cut through' through the median island adjacent to Restell Street.

The design brief for the project will also investigate the 'turning circle' currently available for vehicles wishing to turn left into Restell Street from Harewood Road with the view to seeing if this movement can be 'eased' in any way.

BUDGET

The budget for the Restell Street/Harewood Road Safety Improvements is \$37,219.

CONSTRUCTION

It is recommended that the proposed safety improvements at the Restell Street/Harewood Road intersection be installed during July/August 2003.

As already stated in this report, it is important to have this work undertaken before the roundabout is installed at the Langdons Road/Sisson Drive/Restell Street intersection. The roundabout is a part of the new traffic management plan for the redeveloped Northland Mall and is currently programmed to be completed by August 2003.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Board approve the proposed safety improvements at the Restell Street/Harewood Road intersection.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That in the best interests of community safety, the proposed safety improvements at Restell Street/Langdons Road intersection be approved and the work commence as soon as possible.