

## 6. WATSONS ROAD - PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENT

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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Board approval for the “do nothing” option for the proposed Watsons Road pedestrian safety project.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Watsons Road Pedestrian Safety Improvement project was initiated to investigate the need for a footpath on Watsons Road, particularly for the use of Harewood Primary School students walking to and from Harewood Primary School from the northern end of Watsons and Waimakariri Roads.
3. The investigation has shown that Watsons Road has a low pedestrian usage at present. Constructing a footpath would have land ownership and boundary issues. It would further require some additional road crossing or footpath treatments on Harewood Road. Realistically, there is no clear demand for a pedestrian facility in the area.
4. Three options were considered: do nothing, a path on Watsons Road, and a path on Waimakariri Road. Due to low pedestrian numbers, adequate current access provision, and a low comparative priority for the work, it is recommended that a path is not constructed.

### FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

5. Adopting the recommendation to “do nothing” will allow the capital provision for this project (\$56,000) to be allocated to other safety projects of higher priority. Adopting any other option for this project will exceed budget provision.
6. There are no legal considerations associated with the cancellation of this project.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board approve the “do nothing” option for the Watsons Road footpath project.

### CHAIRMAN’S RECOMMENDATION

That the staff recommendation above be adopted.

## BACKGROUND

7. Watsons Road is a local road with a 5m wide carriageway in a rural zone with a 50 kph speed limit over the largest portion of the road. It changes to 70 kph 200 m north of Harewood Road. There are no existing footpaths in Watsons Road.
8. The project was originally placed on the Transport & City Streets Unit's capital programme after resident requests to the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board. To investigate the requested pathway, staff conducted a pedestrian survey on a normal Tuesday afternoon during a school term. Four adult pedestrians were observed in the period 2.45 p.m. to 3.45 p.m. Harewood School also asked their school community in a newsletter what need there was for installing a footpath on Waimakariri Road or Watsons Road. Seven families responded supporting a footpath in Watsons Road, and one family supported Waimakariri Road. See map below for road location details.



9. At the time of the original request for a footpath there were gorse hedges on both sides of the southern section of Watsons Road with only 1.0 to 2.5 metres between the carriageway and the gorse. Following the removal of the gorse hedge on the Watsons Road (eastern side) frontage of 638 Harewood Road this year, there is now sufficient space for pedestrians to walk a safe distance from the edge of the carriageway for the whole length of Watsons Road.
10. However, for the northern half of the eastern side of the road, the legal boundary of the private property comes right up to the edge of road seal. To provide a path here would require negotiations over property purchase or access, and boundary movement. On the southern end of the road, although the legal boundary on the western side is several metres from the road seal, there is a gorse hedge and fence immediately adjacent to the seal. To place a path on this side of the road would require negotiation with the property owner to move their fence line. In other words, any path option on Watsons Road will require property negotiations which have no guarantees of either success, or endearing the Council to the local community. It is further noted, that no footpath treatments are provided on Harewood Road, meaning any Watsons Road footpath that terminates at Harewood Road would effectively leave pedestrians in an environment even less conducive to travel than Watsons Road.
11. Given the results of the on-site observation and the school's survey feedback, the implementation of a footpath on Watsons road has been reassessed, using the same criteria as other footpath requests. A prioritisation process developed to rank these requests considers factors such as pedestrian usage, volume & type of vehicle traffic, practical alternatives, technical issues with construction etc. Based on this process, Watsons Road is 11<sup>th</sup> on this list of 80 potential projects. The prioritisation process and usage figures would indicate a pathway along Watsons Road is not justified at this time, and the complexities of the property matters would support this.

12. In mitigation, however, to provide year round off-road access for pedestrians the Council's mowing contractor will be asked to mow the grass verges to the urban standard (which are not mown by the Watsons' Road property owners to the Council's standard). The shorter grass will allow pedestrian access.

## OPTIONS

13. Several options have been considered in the evaluation of pedestrian access from Watsons Road properties to Harewood School. The options and their assessment are as follows:
- a. Do nothing. This options is preferred due to:
    - The lack of pedestrian demand for a footpath on Watsons Road
    - The complexities of land ownership and use associated with the project
    - The opportunity for pedestrian access along the road's full length using berms.
    - The difficulties pedestrians may face at Harewood Road if encouraged to travel on a Watsons Road footpath.
  - b. Construct a footpath on Watsons Road for its full length (Estimated cost \$80,000). This option is not supported due to the rationale above. Were a footpath to be constructed, resolution of the Harewood Road problem could be achieved by either:
    - Extension of a footpath to the school on the north side, however this would likely increase the costs of the project by a further 50% - still with little known demand.
    - Or a Harewood Road crossing at the Watsons Road intersection - this is not desirable as children need to be encouraged to cross at the school patrol crossing outside the school which is also within the 40 kph school zone. Waimakariri Road does however lead directly to this crossing point on Harewood road, and children should be encouraged to use this road.
  - c. Construct a footpath on the south west side of Waimakariri Road from Watsons Road to the existing path at No. 99 (Estimated cost \$80,000). This is an alternative to the proposed Watsons Road footpath. This would not require as great a length of new footpath. It would also be a shorter distance for the majority of the Watsons Road residents to access Harewood School, but it would meet with some resistance from pedestrians from the middle section of Watsons Road because it would be further for them. This option is not recommended because there is already easy pedestrian access on the berms of Waimakariri Road, and this area too, has very limited pedestrian usage.
14. Due to low pedestrian numbers, available pedestrian access, and cost considerations, it is recommended that no path is constructed; the "do nothing" option is recommended.