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The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of trend information coming out of the annual Citizens Survey and the City Streets Strategic Outcomes Customer Satisfaction Survey. This information is expected to be of value to the Committee in a number of ways. Firstly, it will form one of the inputs to the Outputs and Standards Review. In this way, it should guide the Committee in making decisions on the balance between improving service levels to enhance satisfaction or endeavouring to modify expectations. Therefore, and secondly, it will assist the Committee in determining and prioritising future programmes, which may include physical works, or education, awareness and promotion programmes.

BACKGROUND

The Council has undertaken the Citizens Survey for several years. Each year a number of roading and traffic related questions are asked. For the last two years, the City Streets unit has supplemented this research information with a survey which relates the “strategic outcomes” of the unit to a number of satisfaction measures. The unit’s annual monitoring report presented the data for this latter survey along with a number of “system performance” measures, such as travel time and safety statistics.

An interim report “City Streets Customer Research – Where to Now?” is attached. The report discusses the findings of these two surveys and provides both trend information over time and also general comparisons with other Council services.

GENERAL FINDINGS

A number of key messages are apparent. These include, from the Annual Citizens Survey:

- *Generally, the level of satisfaction has been gradually increasing or is stable. The exceptions are traffic movement and safety, and road works disruption.*
- *Community dissatisfaction appears to be higher for roading related services than for any other Council service area.*
- *“Road and Footpath Maintenance ”has increased from 31% the “Most Important Council Service” in 1997 to 41% in 1999, exceeded only by “Rubbish and Recycling”.*
- *Improving traffic safety and efficiency seems to be a higher priority than the condition of roads and footpaths in terms of where more money should be spent.*

The Strategic Outcomes Survey measures satisfaction as the gap between expectation (what people want) and actual experience (what they perceive they get). From this survey:

Mobility

- Over the last two years expectations for all users but taxis have increased
- Also, private car drivers experiences fell indicating that the gap is widening
- There was a significant widening of the gap for wheelchair users
- Wheelchair users and disabled pedestrians have the highest gap

Business Efficiency

- The gap for trucks and vans closed significantly between 1998 and 1999

Safety

- Cyclists day-time expectations and experiences both increased between 1998 and 1999, and the gap narrowed significantly
- Night-time safety appeared to be a growing concern, particularly for cyclists, the elderly and wheelchair users

Cycling

- A slight increase in perceived safety, but the gap between expectation and reality remains wide

Walking

- The gap between the expectations and reality for wheelchair users was the largest of all users, and it has widened over the last two years
- Motorists attitudes towards pedestrians are of significant concern

Assets Management

- While expectations were fairly constant over the two years for all assets, experiences tended to be lower, thus widening the gap for all assets except bus shelters
- Trees plants and grass, road signs and markings ranked the best
- Cycle facilities, kerbs and channels, and footpaths ranked the worst

Physical Environment

- A slight decline in those feeling their street environment encouraged a community spirit

SERVICE LEVELS AND SATISFACTION

These results confirm that there is considerable scope to improve satisfaction. The key questions will be at what cost, and what services should be reduced to enable those services of most concern to be enhanced?

The Outputs and Standards Review, and the subsequent review of Asset Management Plans, will enable the Committee to identify options for changing service levels to target those issues associated with asset condition. For example, the frequency of footpath resurfacing, type of pavement resealing, frequency of gutter cleaning, rate of improving street lighting in residential areas, to name but a few. These relate to how much work we do in renewing existing assets and decisions are relatively straight-forward. We can make trade-offs based on different budget scenarios. As long as our assets are cost-effectively maintained over their life-cycle, we can specify any service level our community decides it wants to pay for.

Many of the community concerns, however, appear to be drawn from the effects of significant traffic growth and changes in road user behaviour in recent years. Traffic delays are increasing and the potential for conflicts between motor vehicles and cyclists and pedestrians is growing. Freight volumes are growing steadily as the economy grows and the impact of heavy vehicles in residential areas is becoming more noticeable as businesses work around the clock to compete in the global economy.

While these matters can also be addressed in the Outputs and Standards review, the complexity of the issues makes it unlikely that they will be able to be resolved within the timeframe of that process.

The Council is working to finalise a Transport Strategy which will cover all modes of land transport and deal with a number of policy issues. Also, the Committee will over the next year be considering major roading proposals (many in association with Transit NZ) for improving the City's arterial network. These processes will enable the Council to determine the long term major investment needs in the City's transport system. A key question will be the extent to which growing traffic volumes need to be catered for directly through expansion of the roading asset, and the extent to which the community's expectations about the level of service that is to be expected in Christchurch can be modified.

Mobility and safety can both be regarded as "service levels" and, therefore, different transport scenarios can be developed through this process and put to the community to assist "price-quality trade-offs". The Cost-Benefit analysis is a crude form of setting a level of service, for example the current cut-off ratio of 4 sets a benchmark for when capacity or safety improvements are said to be justified from the road user's perspective.

The cost of changing service levels is likely to be a key factor in making choices, and if the community has a meaningful stake in setting service levels then in the long term satisfaction should increase.

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

While service levels can be changed, so too can expectations. For instance, if people accept that it is normal to wait for 2 cycles at traffic signals rather than 1, and that is what happens, then the expectations-experience gap will narrow thus increasing "satisfaction".

Expectations can be modified by experiences elsewhere. For instance, someone returning from a driving experience in Bangkok, Sydney, or even Auckland, could change their opinion of "congestion" in Christchurch. They can also be modified through communication and understanding. Should there then be a strategy to positively modify expectations aimed at gaining widespread community understanding of what the "norm" should be?

There are of course many dimensions to this, and "community" needs to be considered in terms of the different interests. A possible basis is:

User Stakeholders

Private car users
Heavy vehicle users
Cyclists
Pedestrians
Bus users
Motorcyclists
Disabled

Non User Stakeholders

Residents
Businesses
Tourists and visitors

Each will have a view, often in conflict with other views.

These views need to be tested against a range of possible service level options and cost structures and also against a possible “expectations modification strategy”. They then need to be balanced alongside long term City objectives and environmental parameters.

PROCESS

The attached report sets out a possible process for the City Services Committee to follow in achieving, at an agreed cost, the desired long term outcomes of:

- closing the gap between expectations and experiences
- achieving higher levels of customer satisfaction

Recommendation: That a plan of action be developed to address those issues, and that the plan’s recommendations be used as an input to the Outputs and Standards project and the 2000/01 budget process.

Chairman’s

- Recommendation:**
1. That the above recommendation be adopted.
 2. That the City Streets Unit consider means of gaining a greater understanding of:
 - (a) The relationship between transportation demands and the quality of the urban environment.
 - (b) The relationship between costs and services.
 3. That the Committee consider an appropriate pink pages provision in the 2000/01 draft Annual Plan for public education of the issues.