

### 13. BELFAST ROAD - SCHOOL CROSSING FACILITY

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<b>Corporate Plan Output:</b> Safe Routes to School 9.5.65	

The purpose of this report is to seek the Board's approval for the construction of a pedestrian crossing facility on Belfast Road to the east of Shannon Place, for children attending the Belfast Primary School.

#### BACKGROUND

The old Waimairi Plan recognised the desirability of a link from Ballymena Drive through to Belfast Road. The school community has for a long time sought the development of an alternative route to school to avoid the hazards presented along Main North Road. The safest and most practical route runs south from Tyrone Street, through Ballymena Drive and the new subdivision, along Shannon Place through to the school. Kerb and channel replacement in Tyrone Street is also allowing implementation of improvements to pedestrian facilities.

The recent subdivision of the area represented a good proactive opportunity for the Council planners and Safe Routes to School programme to provide a pedestrian/cycleway reserve and crossing facility for the inevitable rise in the numbers of children that will attend Belfast School. This link completes the thoroughfare parallel with the Main North Road. The development of the above route also allows for the placement of some innovative handrail and footpath signs. These will guide pedestrians and cyclists to the proposed safe crossing points as well as highlighting them to passing vehicles, thereby improving the safety of the school journey. It is hoped they will establish a precedent for other SRTS crossing points in Christchurch. The lack of a pedestrian island at this point could be described as the only 'missing link' to the safe route to school identified.

Information from the school shows that the roll at January 2000 will be 320, expected to go up to 370 by the end of year. From the school roll 85 children live in Belfast north of Belfast Road. About twenty of these children cross Belfast Road and walk through from Shannon Place, 25 come by car, with the remaining 40 mostly crossing Belfast Road at the Main North Road intersection. Clearly a lot of these children could now easily take the proposed alternative route.

In 1999 the City Council formally adopted a Children's Policy. This Policy states that 'the Christchurch City Council is committed to ensuring that its policies, planning and programmes impact positively upon the welfare and wellbeing of children/tamariki and their families/whanau.' It goes on to say that 'the Council sees it as important to involve children and their perspectives, in planning and the decision making process.'

From time to time the opportunity to provide a safer crossing point over a busy road for children and other pedestrians is lost because it conflicts directly with the wants and needs of the local residents. This particular pedestrian island is a case in point. A team within the Unit has identified, after consultation with the Belfast School Community, a safer alternative route to the school for those children travelling from the north of Belfast Road. This route would enable, with supervision, most children the opportunity to walk or cycle to school, on quieter, safer roads than the Main North Road that they have previously been forced to use.

Belfast Road to the east of Shannon Place carries a traffic volume of about 2500 vehicles per day and services the freezing works, an industrial area, and acts as a through road between Marshland and Main North Roads. The roadway width is 12 metres, which is narrower than is generally acceptable for an arterial where heavy trade vehicles make up a large portion of the traffic. There are no recorded crashes in the vicinity of the Shannon Place intersection.

### **OPTIONS**

City Streets staff carried out a thorough study of the options for providing a safer pedestrian crossing point. Locating the crossing point to the west of Shannon Place or promoting the use of March Place were discounted as not being close enough to the road crossing desire line. Zebra and Kea crossings are impractical because of the distance from the school.

1. The installation of a pedestrian refuge would be part of a 'holistic' approach to the problems that Belfast Road poses. Physical structures on the road, such as a pedestrian island, have been identified as an effective means of reducing the speed of vehicles. The City Streets Unit, as part of its policy, is committed to encouraging more parents to allow their children to walk and/or cycle to school. Parents will only allow their children to do this when they perceive that the roading environment is safe. Providing a safe crossing point over a busy road helps to create a roading environment safer for everyone. Installing a pedestrian refuge requires the banning of roadside parking to some extent.
2. Kerb build-outs on both sides of the roadway at the same location would be a less favoured option. This would provide a short crossing distance and improved visibility for pedestrians and motorists. The big disadvantage is that children have to look for vehicles approaching from both directions at the same time and carefully judge speeds and distances. This skill is not generally acquired in children less than 11 years of age. Less kerbside parking would be lost with this facility.

### **OBJECTIONS**

Residents of the adjoining properties have expressed strong opposition to the positioning of an island in the roadway in the proposed location.

The loss of on street parking would directly affect these residents and detract from the amenity that they currently enjoy. Placing an island in the centre of the roadway would make it more difficult to turn from the roadway into these adjacent properties. (In this instance no turning manouvre would be prevented)

Very few children have been seen crossing the road in this area.

#### **OTHER ISSUES**

Improvements to the Belfast Road/Main North Road intersection which were proposed and rejected in 1996 are being reconsidered. Encouraging the Police to step up their speed enforcement campaign in the area, along with a publicity and education campaign outlining the safer use of the route and aimed at the children of the school is also planned.

As Belfast Road is classified as a Minor Arterial road, the Board's recommendations will be referred to the Council for resolution.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Board recommend to the Council that a pedestrian island be installed in Belfast Road to the east of the intersection with Shannon Place.
  2. That the residents' concerns be addressed where possible by investigating and providing alternative parking facilities on the road.

in on the installation and that consultation take place with Shannon Place residents regarding providing a footpath on the side not currently provided with a footpath.