

10. "IN TOWN WITHOUT MY CAR" – INTERNATIONAL CAR FREE DAY

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The purpose of this report is to provide information to the City Services Committee on the **"In town, without my car!"** initiative, which is part of an European International Car Free Day event. This event was first piloted in 1997 in La Rochelle, which is a city with a population of 100,000 located on the French Atlantic coast. It was a joint initiative between the local council and a television network. The French Ministry of Land Planning and the Environment was impressed with the success of the initiative and invited other French cities to take part. This was in response to the growing concern about air pollution in France. In 1998 special laws were drafted specifically stating that all cities over 100,000 people had to enact an urban transport plan before 2000 with the aims of reducing urban traffic and developing public transport, cycling and walking strategies.

A total of 430 European cities from 12 countries took part in the event on 22 September 2000 and there is growing interest from Australia, USA, Colombia and Eastern Europe for a **"In town, without my car!"** event for 2001.

It has been suggested that with the Christchurch City Council's ongoing support and commitment to improving the environmental and social benefits of its citizens that the Council may wish to consider working towards linking up with the European International Car Free Day event for 2002. The event day in 2002 falls on a Sunday, which could provide an incentive for people/families to take a leisurely bus ride or cycle ride into the city to take advantage of the guided walking or cycling tours on offer as part of the event.

GENERAL OUTLINE

Following a successful pilot event run in 150 French and Italian towns in 1999 the Environmental Transport Association (ETA), co-ordinated Britains participation in the first ever Europe wide Car Free Day **"In town, without my car!"** on 22 September 2000. ETA is a British research and lobbying organisation that conducts and commissions research into environmental transport issues and lobbies the government to encourage its support of alternatives to the car (basically a 'green' Automobile Association).

WHAT HAPPENS?

Essentially, in the cities taking part the driving of private cars is forbidden in the inner city for a set period. Only buses, cyclists and pedestrians had freedom of movement. A range of options was made available to compensate such as cheaper or free bus travel, cycle lending and/or rental schemes, park-and-ride and shuttle services. The publicity and information campaign was very large: national and local media, local letters for retailers and businesses and residents, special leaflets and a free information phone-line etc.

OBJECTIVES OF A CAR FREE DAY

- To provide an opportunity for people to use an alternative form of transport to the car;
- To offer citizens a chance to rediscover their city, its inhabitants and its heritage.

The event may be exploited as an opportunity to pilot a long-term initiative designed to enhance public awareness of the pollution and congestion arising from the over-reliance of cars in city centres.

ORGANISATION OF A CAR FREE DAY

The report sets out the importance of consultation with key people within the community at the outset of the planning phase to ensure the success of the event. Among those who must be consulted are, retailers, hoteliers, tradespeople, local business, taxi drivers and residents of the car-free area. A 1999 report by Statistics NZ indicates that there are 540 retailers within the central business district (CBD) and some of those retailers may be worried about the effect that the day might have on their trade. Special efforts must be made to involve them at the earliest planning stages.

There are also approximately 6,000 residents within the central city and a further 33,000 who people commute each day.

STEERING COMMITTEES

Two structures could be set up to prepare the event:

- A steering committee made up of local and regional councillors, technicians and representatives from the different groups involved (Council officers, public transport representatives etc) to define the strategy.
- A technical committee made up of specialist Council officers (e.g. traffic engineers/planners) as well as representatives of the different groups involved to work on the detailed planning and organisational aspects of the day.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

A communication strategy and publicity campaign will need to be undertaken to ensure residents, retailers and commuters are aware of the campaign. Specifically this would involve:

- a letter from the Council addressed to all residents of the CBD some weeks before the event;
- a specific letter to each of the most affected target groups, retailers, businesses and residents, giving information about the event and inviting them to take part in its organisation;
- information documents: press launch, press kits, special newspaper articles outlining the history of the concept, supplements within newspapers and maps etc.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

The report outlines a range of technical issues that need to be addressed to ensure a 'true' car-free area within the city. These include installing barriers and checkpoints around the car-free area backed up by a buffer zone and the issue of dispensations to the car-free area. These dispensations would usually be for disabled people and emergency services, such as police, fire, electricity etc along with contractors who may have to undertake emergency repair work.

ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORT

To promote public transport the following could be considered for the day:

- higher frequency of services
- special fares; for instance:
 - free transport
 - promotional offers and/or tickets offering reductions at retailers, cinemas or swimming pools etc

To help promote the day additional support could be obtained by involving local cycling groups and schools and ensuring that:

- secure and sheltered cycle parking facilities are available within the CBD and
- the Council's 'Cycle Safe' and 'Walking School Bus' programmes are supported and are featured in the publicity.

PARKING FACILITIES

Council decisions regarding the provision of parking facilities on the day could take the following into account:

- providing motorists with an incentive to leave their cars and take alternative modes of transport; and
- providing motorists with park-and-ride facilities.

If the event is linked with subsidised or even free bus travel and with an increase in the number of free guided walks round the city it will achieve its objectives of providing people with the opportunity to use alternative forms of transport to the car and will also offer them a chance to rediscover their city, its inhabitants and its heritage.

EVALUATIONS

Sound evaluations will be necessary so that the council and the public are able to determine the success of the event and the ETA recommends the following evaluations before, during and after the event:

- air quality,
- noise,
- traffic flows,
- public opinion

Other evaluations of the day could be conducted with:

- residents of the city
- commuters
- retailers
- and the retailers customers

SUMMARY

If the ***“In town, without my car!”*** Day is to be as successful in Christchurch as it has been in Europe then the consultation, planning and promotion of the event will need to be as thorough. There has been some consideration given to perhaps implementing the initiative this year. However, the consultation process necessary and the planning required to make such an event a successful and positive experience for everyone means that it would be most unlikely to be achievable within the 3-4 months available, and as yet there is no budget programmed for the event.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Clearly there is insufficient time and budget to implement the event this year. However, the objectives are considered worthwhile and therefore if the Council wish to adopt such a process it should budget for ***“In town, without my car!”*** for 2002 and be fully involved in the planning and implementation of the event.

Recommendation: That the Council support the event ***“In town, without my car!”*** for 2002 by setting up a subcommittee to initiate, consult, plan, budget and implement.

Chairman’s

Recommendation: That the proposal be referred to the Living Streets Subcommittee for further consideration and evaluation.