

25. PEER STREET SIGNALISED PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Officer responsible City Streets Manager	Author Lee Kelly, DDI 371-1355
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The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee to recommend to the Council the installation of a signalised pedestrian crossing on Peer Street outside Villa Maria College.

BACKGROUND

The Road Safety for Schools Steering Group (RSFS) was invited to attend the site. After this visit, and as an initial investigation into the issue, a video camera was set up to record pedestrian movements. After reviewing the tape it was clear that as students exited the Peer Street entrance they did so in groups of between 10 and 15 students at a time. Therefore it was determined that the proposed 9 metre island north of Bowen Street with a 'holding' area of just 2 metres would not be sufficient to cope with the number of students who will need to use it each day.

The RSFS then set out to clarify the safety issues and to fully investigate options to improve the 'crossability'. The aim was to then subject these options and a final recommendation to the safety audit process and to the City Streets Unit peer process so that the safest crossing option was decided upon, agreed to and supported by the Unit.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

- Peer Street is a minor arterial and the outer ring route and carries 12,500 vehicles per day
- Students access across Peer Street, both to and from the school, is difficult because of the traffic volume
- The number of students crossing range between 100–150 at the start and end of the school day with another 100 pedestrian crossing movements outside the peak school times
- The difficulty for students wishing to cross has been evident for some time. However, with the introduction of the Orbiter bus route in 1999 the problem has escalated
- The Orbiter is a popular service for students at the school. It is a fast, frequent service that runs in a circulatory route of the city and once the students are on board it enables them to get home quickly and safely
- To access the Orbiter service the students need to cross Peer Street and travel down Bowen Street (see attached map) to meet up with the service on Waimairi Road.

OPTIONS

Four options and a final recommendation for a formal crossing facility were presented by the schools advocate at the City Streets Unit concept review meeting on 29 May 2001 and to the City Streets Unit Scheme Plan Assessment Team on 30 August 2001

Option one: To install one 9 metre pedestrian island north of Bowen Street and monitor the situation.

Option Two: To install a 'Kea' crossing ('Kea' crossings provide a school with the legal right to stop traffic to allow children to cross. This type of facility is operated almost exclusively at primary and intermediate schools.)

Option Three: To install a signalised pedestrian crossing incorporating the Bowen Street intersection.

Option Four: To install a signalised pedestrian crossing with sensors.

INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

Option one was discounted as a single island would not have the capacity to cope with the number of students wishing to cross at any one time and the school community and the community board had already expressed their concerns over this option.

Option two was discounted as research has shown that a 'Kea' crossing for secondary school students would not offer them improved safety. It is well documented that a 'Kea' works well at primary/intermediate schools because the younger children are more likely to take the 'job' seriously and the compliance of the crossing is good. Older students are more likely to ignore this type of crossing as they tend to perceive it to be "uncool".

Option three was discounted on the advice of the signals engineer as he believed that by incorporating Bowen Street into the signals that would then allow the small number of vehicles using Bowen Street to dictate to vehicles on Peer Street which is a minor arterial.

Option four is the recommended option. This is to install a signalised pedestrian signal crossing with sensors. The 'sensor' is located in the footpath adjacent to the signal poles with the pedestrian call button. This means that if a pedestrian were to push the pedestrian button but then decide not to cross then that phrase would be cancelled and vehicles travelling along Peer Street would not be required to stop unnecessarily.

It is proposed that the signalised pedestrian crossing would have signal poles on the kerbs west and east of Peer Street and an overhead mast arm signal.

CONSULTATION

Staff have consulted with the owner occupier at no 38 Bowen Street and the owner of the tenanted property at 26 Peer Street and they are supportive of the initiative. The owner of the tenanted property at 20 Peer Street expressed some concern for the loss of one parking space outside his property on Peer Street. We were able to mitigate his concerns by providing an extra crossing point to his property from Bowen Street.

FUNDING

The Road Safety for Schools has prioritised this project and is able to fund it this financial year 2001-02.

It has been suggested that \$8,000 which was the cost of the 9 metre pedestrian island originally planned for Peer Street and funded by the community board could now be used to offset some of the costs of installing a signalised pedestrian crossing.

CONCLUSION

Road safety research indicates that a pedestrian actuated traffic signal may be the best solution at mid-block locations where pedestrian activity is concentrated along a short section of road, carrying high traffic volumes. In addition, providing 'crossability' for pedestrians, especially the most vulnerable, children and the elderly, is an important part of the "Living Streets" philosophy adopted by the City Streets Unit and supported by the Council.

The area engineer is also leading an initiative to install a signalised pedestrian crossing on Curletts Road for Riccarton High students and the local community. Curletts Road and Peer Street form an important and heavily used section of the ring road route that intersects with Main South Road and Yaldhurst Road. The pairing of these two new pedestrian facilities would provide consistency in the treatment of school crossing points along the arterial route.

Recommendation: That a signalised pedestrian crossing be installed on Peer Street north east of Bowen Street outside Villa Maria College.

Chairman's Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.