

15. CHARLESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD – PROPOSED 40 KM/H SPEED LIMIT

Officer responsible City Streets Manager	Author Bill Greenwood, DDI 941-8946
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The purpose of this report is to obtain the Board's approval to 'seek the community view' regarding the installation of a 40km/h Speed Limit within the Charleston Area. The Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) is in the process of introducing a new Land Transport Rule, whereby road controlling authorities will have more flexibility in setting speed limits subject to certain constraints to ensure national consistency and good engineering practice. The proposed 40km/hr Speed Limit in the Charleston Neighbourhood area has been informally discussed with the LTSA. No technical issues regarding the proposal are anticipated.

BACKGROUND

The Government is currently changing its policy on the installation and management of Speed Limits. Included in this change is a proposal to introduce 40km/h limits in local areas in which traffic calming has been introduced. The Charleston Area has been identified as an ideal area to 'trial' a 40km/h Speed Limit.

The Charleston Neighbourhood Plan (published by City Council in September 2001) aims to "help retain and enhance the physical and social character of Charleston". The Charleston area is bounded by Wilsons Road, Ferry Road, Ensors Road and the railway to Lyttelton. The Plan details a number of objectives to accomplish this including "improving the appearance and character of the neighbourhood areas through the development of streets and open spaces" and "achieving slow speeds for vehicles". An overall neighbourhood traffic management plan (within the Charleston Neighbourhood Plan) proposes intersection treatments, road narrowing and an area wide 40 km/h speed limit.

Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) has been implemented at a number of locations in the area, with intersection and road narrowings dating from the late 1970s. Kerb and channel renewal in the area, programmed in the Plan, is expected to be developed as part of the City's "Living Streets" programme, where streets are recognised as being just as important for non-motorised road users (pedestrians and cyclists) as for motor vehicles.

Existing mean traffic speeds of motor vehicles (measured mid-block) are typically between 38 km/h and 44 km/h, while 85th percentile speeds range from 46 km/h to 55 km/h, with most streets at or below 52 km/h. Traffic volumes for all streets in the area are less than 1,000 motor vehicles per day except for the west end of Charles Street near Wilsons Road where the volume approaches 2,000 vehicles per day.

LTSA collision records between 1997 and 2001 inclusive comprise 18 collisions, of which five were vehicles accessing the area from the boundary roads and 13 were internal to the area. Of these 13 internal to the area, seven involved parked cars being struck and two were poles struck. Only one collision involved a cyclist and no pedestrians were involved. Thirteen of the 18 collisions were at intersections and six of these were on Grafton Street. Only three of the 13 collisions inside the area resulted in injury, and the injuries were all minor.

DISCUSSION

The LTSA, based on staff and consultant discussions, fieldwork and technical analysis, in April this year supported the CCC initiative to implement a 40 km/h speed limit in the Charleston area. Part of the LTSA review included a consideration of the Council's proposal under both the existing procedures for changing speed limits and the proposed "Setting of Speed Limits Rule".

City Streets Unit staff now wish to consult with affected parties prior to preparing and implementing a City Council bylaw to reduce speed limits on the area's streets.

PROPOSED VALIDATION

Validation for the 40 km/h speed limit for the Charleston area is proposed to confirm whether the community and other stakeholders support a reduced speed limit. It would also demonstrate that traffic speeds in the area reasonably closely matched the speed limit, while resulting in no worsening of the (albeit low) collision rate in the area. Validation of the 40 km/h area wide speed limit in the Charleston area would be of interest in other parts of Christchurch as well as nationally, in light of the Speed Rule process currently underway.

1. Traffic Speeds

Traffic speeds are already consistent with a 40 km/h speed limit and are not expected to decline significantly with the introduction of lower speed limits. Nevertheless, speed surveys will be undertaken to quantify any speed changes. Speed monitoring may be complicated by the on-going construction and promotional work in the area aimed at reducing speeds. The success of lower speed limits should not be judged solely by the amount of reduction achieved in mean (average) operating speeds or the 85th percentile speeds.

2. Collision History

Evidence is available from New Zealand and overseas that lower speeds result in fewer collisions and reduced impact severity. Lowering speed limits on streets (or in areas) where speeds are already low should support community desires for speed reductions, but if speeds do not decline appreciably, there may be imperceptible changes to collision rates. Annual statistical variations in collision rates in the area may exceed any reduction in the underlying collision rate. As with speed surveys, while a collision analysis will be needed, the success of the initiative should not be dependent solely on an improved collision record.

3. Community Perceptions and Preferences

Just as relevant as vehicle speeds and collision rates will be the community's support for the initiative and perceptions of traffic speeds and safety. These could be gauged by opinion surveys before and after implementation. In asking residents, property owners and businesses (and their employees) whether they support the reduced speed limit, it should be explained that the initiative is unlikely to have a measurable effect on traffic speeds or collision rates, but would be introduced to support the overall concept of the neighbourhood plan. Any survey would need to contain sufficient background material to explain what is proposed and why, the existing speed regime, collision history, and the monitoring and decision processes.

Parallel consultation will also be needed with other parties including the LTSA, the Police, the Automobile Association, and relevant community, pedestrian, cycling and other transport groups.

CONCLUSION

The Charleston Area appears to be an ideal location to introduce a 'trial' 40Km/h Speed Limit. The proposed speed limit is supported on technical grounds. Before the Council introduces the relevant changes to the Fourth Schedule of the Christchurch City Traffic and Parking Bylaw, it is suggested that the community view regarding the proposal be sort.

Staff

Recommendation: It is recommended that:

1. Public consultation be undertaken to determine community and stakeholder views for a 40 km/h speed limit for streets in the Charleston area; and
2. Staff report back to the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board on the outcome of the consultation prior to proceeding with a bylaw to reduce speed limits in the area.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the recommendations be adopted.