

8. RICCARTON ROAD TRAFFIC/SAFETY PROJECT

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The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's support to implement the Riccarton Road traffic management/safety improvement project, for the section of road between Waimairi Road and Ilam Road.

BACKGROUND

The Riccarton Road traffic management and safety improvement project has now been under investigation for several years. City Transport Unit staff have been attempting to develop a road environment that creates an improved balance between:

- The issues raised for Riccarton Road in the 1997 Traffic Management Plan.
- The operation of the road as a major bus and vehicle arterial road.
- The operation of the road as a cycle route of choice for commuter and school cyclists.
- Pedestrian needs from the road.
- Recent developments in all of the above areas, and changing land uses on either side of the road.

Early in 2003, it was considered that the smartest approach to dealing with the range of issues on Riccarton Road was to investigate the road section by section. This report deals with the section of road between the Ilam Road and Waimairi Road signalised intersections.

The Committee is advised that this project was presented to the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board for comment at their March 2004 meeting, and their input will be verbally presented to this meeting.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES

Investigation of options for this section of road started from the following primary objectives:

- To provide a safe pedestrian crossing for pupils of Middleton Grange in the vicinity of the park entrance, opposite the National Bank.
- To provide cycle lanes between Ilam Road and Waimairi Road.
- To ensure no loss of service at intersections and along Riccarton Road.

Implicit in all project terms of reference is also the objective to maintain (at the very least) or improve the levels of safety for all road users.

These objectives originated from the following:

- The issue of the pedestrian crossing was raised by Middleton Grange School, and remains a concern to them while no crossing facility is available.
- The issue of cycle lanes was raised through the cycle network planning process which identified Riccarton Road as a highly used route and a high priority for improved cycle-friendliness.
- Preventing loss of service arises from the function of Riccarton Road as an increasingly busy arterial.

Other issues that have been identified in the investigation process, and need to be considered in the design are:

- On-street parking: A number of businesses of differing sizes exist on both sides of the road. A Plunket is located adjacent to the park entrance. Minimising any on-street parking loss is important.
- Traffic Management Plan 1997: The plan for this section of road recommends the installation of a flush median and improved crossing treatments. It also recommends realignment of the signalised intersections at each end of this section to improve vehicle efficiency and turning safety.

- Existing Road Safety Audit: A full safety audit of Riccarton Road was undertaken by Opus and the LTSA in June 2002. Its particular recommendations in relation to this section of Riccarton Road were:
 - Installation of a flush median between Ilam Road and Auburn Avenue (just short of the Waimairi Road intersection).
 - Definite need to cater for cyclists considering the numbers using the route.
 - Complex intersection at Ilam Road/Middleton Road requiring full redesign if possible, including cycle, pedestrian and disabled users.

PROPOSED SCHEME

Attached to this report is the scheme proposed for this section of Riccarton Road. The features and their rationale are as follows:

- A kerb-build-out immediately in front of Auburn Park entrance, and a matching kerb build-out on the opposite side of the road.
- The kerb-build-outs provide a shortened crossing distance for pedestrians (10.6m as opposed to 14m), and project them out between parked cars. Both changes will improve crossing safety for pedestrians.
- Cycle lanes marked the full length of the section, from intersection to intersection, with advanced stop boxes at the intersections.
- Both advanced stop boxes and cycle lanes are proven safety improvements for cyclists, and will have no effect on traffic capacity issues.
- A flush median is marked for the full length of the section of Riccarton Road.
- The median will improve the safety of turning vehicles, pedestrians who choose to cross away from the designed crossing points, and will also improve the safety of the new crossing point.

This proposed scheme meets all the project objectives, and also all of the other issues identified, bar one.

- The scheme will have no impact on on-street parking except where the pedestrian crossing has been developed. The cycle lanes do not require any changes to on-street parking.
- The installation of the flush median meets the requirements of the Traffic Management Plan 1997 and the safety audit.
- The crossing treatment meets the needs of the Traffic Management Plan 1997.
- The cycle lanes meet the recommendations of the safety audit.

The plan, however, does not go so far as to re-align the signalised intersection at Ilam Road/Middleton Road. This is a project that would require land purchase and have extensive impacts on all intersecting roads. The intersection change was outside the scope of the original project and remains so. The City Transport Unit planning team are aware of the difficulties of this intersection, and will programme any improvements at the appropriate time.

OPTIONS AND CONSULTATION

Prior to a broader public consultation, specific discussions were held with the property owners and users on the near the crossing point, and with Middleton Grange school. These parties involved the Plunket (south side), the National Bank, a Mr Rhodes (property owner) and others.

Several options for crossing points were discussed with these parties and different options were discussed a number of times. The options included a central pedestrian island with kerb build-outs in slightly different positions.

During the consultation process it proved impossible to reach agreement on a safe position for a central pedestrian island. The investigation required consideration of vehicles entering and leaving the National Bank car park, and turning into and out of Newnham Terrace. Also involved was a requirement for on-street parking near the bank cash-point machine, and for the Plunket. Ultimately, it was determined that a central island and build-outs could not meet all the safety and parking needs of the various parties. Hence the current design of build-outs with a central median.

A standard publicity pamphlet was distributed in November 2003 to all properties on this section of road plus surrounding properties, plus the normal distribution to LTSA, emergency services etc. The publicity leaflet focussed primarily on the location of the build-outs, and did not include the cycle lanes. As the cycle lanes had no impact on traffic movement or parking, it was considered appropriate to seek community feedback on the pedestrian issue primarily.

The consultation response to the leaflet was low - five mail returns and four phone comments. The support has been predominantly positive - the only negative comment was a cyclist who felt the build-outs were a hazard (including the cycle lanes on the publicity may have been wise after all). Two phone calls were about an unrelated issue regarding a nearby bus stop and shelter.

RECOMMENDATION

The scheme plan as presented meets all of the project's original objectives, and addresses most other issues that have been raised during the investigation and consultation processes. Given the extent of the personal-contact consultation, plus the leaflet drop's positive response, it is safe to say that the scheme is accepted by the community. It is recommended by the City Transport Unit, for implementation. The project will receive Transfund subsidy.

The following recommendations include the parking restrictions necessary to develop the kerb build-outs.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Committee recommend to Council that:

- (a) The installation of kerb build-outs and cycle lanes on Riccarton Road, from Waimairi Road to Ilam Road be approved.
- (b) The parking of vehicles be prohibited at any time, on the south side of Riccarton Road from a point 142m east of the intersection with Auburn Avenue, and extending eastwards for a distance of 14m.
- (c) The parking of vehicles be prohibited at any time, on the north side of Riccarton Road from a point 35m west of the intersection with Newnham Terrace, and extending westwards for a distance of 14m.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.