

11 May 2020

Tēnā koe me koutou mā

Government Policy Statement on Land Transport

Healthy Families NZ is a large-scale prevention initiative that brings community leadership together in a united effort for better health. It aims to improve people's health where they live, learn, work and play by taking a systems approach to the reduction of risk factors for major health loss and improving equity in health outcomes.

The goal is for all New Zealanders to enjoy health promoting social and physical environments that enable healthy food and physical activity choices, being smokefree, drinking alcohol only in moderation and increasing mental health resilience and wellbeing.

Lower Hutt is one of ten Healthy Families NZ communities across Aotearoa, each location experiences some of the worst health statistics in the country. Healthy Families Hutt Valley is funded by the Ministry of Health and is being led by Hutt City Council.

We support the overall direction of the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport and the purpose of the transport system to improve people's wellbeing and the liveability of places. While we support the strategic priorities, our submission focuses on **play streets** and the significant role this simple transformation of public space can have in improving the wellbeing of our tamariki and whānau now and for future generations.

We are happy to provide further input and clarification on any of the points raised and would welcome the opportunity to be involved further.

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Introduction

The GPS helps to guide investment in land transport by providing a long term strategic view of the Government's priorities. Horizon scanning is vital as transport investments have long lead times, high costs and leave long legacies. By definition future transport planning and investment should enable continued transformation of the transport system rather than focusing on more of the same.

Innovative problem solving that anticipates and helps create a healthier and safer land transport network will require a legislative framework and a nationally-led policy that is nimble and able to respond to our changing environments.

The changes experienced throughout the response to Covid-19 has illustrated how being able to respond quickly to environmental changes can bring significant benefits. We encourage innovative and rapidly integrated solutions to the transport challenges we experience. These solutions will involve new technologies (such as electric scooters, buses and cars), reconfiguration of the activity class framework, modal neutrality, and more importantly for our wellbeing, a committed reintegration by design of walking, cycling and play into the local transport network. Active transport is a critical component of a fully functioning and resilient transport system and a healthy nation.

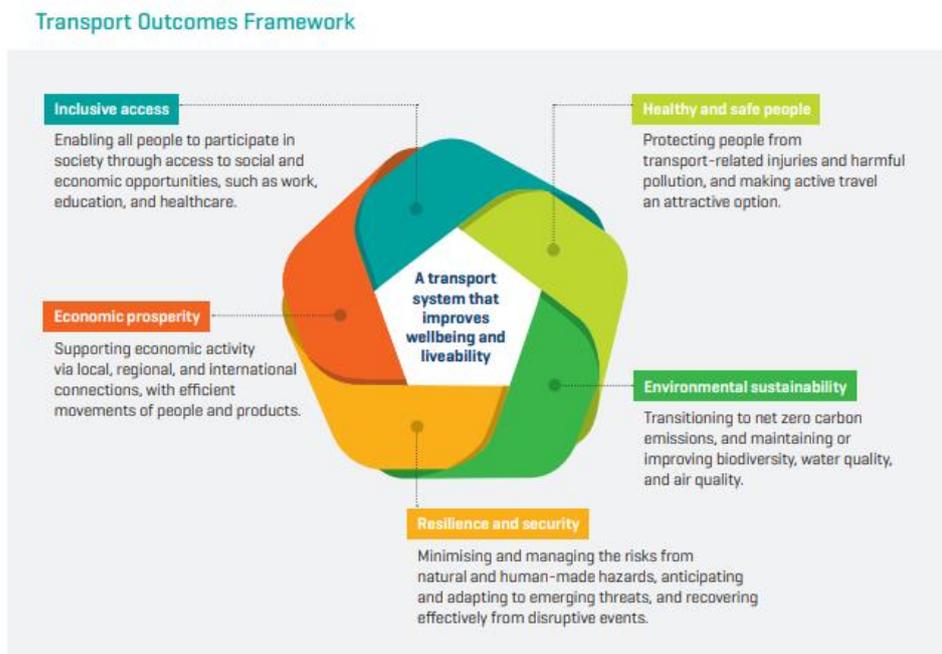
Some of the solutions that could be easily achieved in the local transport network and provide significant benefits are:

- Speed reductions - local government is already supportive of efforts to streamline the speed-setting process and has requested clear leadership from central government to support a more consistent and simple process for local government to implement.
- New technologies - clear guidance on sharing the road and the footpath that considers the role of electric transport options. This need for guidance has been recognised by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency and we welcome the Accessible Streets consultation that aims to address this.
- Reducing the volume of private vehicle use - increasing private vehicle use travel puts more stress on road networks and leads to more fatalities and injuries. The COVID-19 pandemic has given us a glimpse into what cities and communities might look like if we shift New Zealanders away from high dependency on personal car use and their subsequent domination of the carriage way. Short trips that are less than 2kms make up 30% of all journeys by motorists and we need to make it easier for people to make these trips actively.¹
- Play streets - temporary closure of a street to provide safe places for children and families to actively play.

We know that transport plays an important role in helping to achieve many other outcomes for New Zealand. It enables and shapes other social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Transport design that prioritises active transport is a major building block of our community-wide prevention system for good health because it puts people first, especially children. Public health crises and a declared climate change emergency require us to re-think what streets are for and how they are used. We can achieve greater social capital outcomes from our public investment in land transport by making the most of our existing transport system and using it in ways that improve our health and wellbeing. This is real value out of our investment.

¹ <https://www.transport.govt.nz/mot-resources/household-travel-survey/>

Play Streets



Play streets are **community led** and **short-term road closures** on low risk streets that allow local residents permission to take ownership of how they want to use this space. Play streets align to the Transport Outcomes Framework, contributing to the following outcomes:

- Healthy and safe people – play streets are a building block for growing **use and comfort** with **active travel** for both young people and their whānau.
- Resilience and security – play streets directly contribute to **community connectedness** which is a fundamental element of local response to **hazards and disruptive events**.
- Inclusive access – play contributes to the **physical, mental and emotional development** of our young people, providing the skills, experience and mindsets that enable them to be **successful learners and contributors to society**.
- Environmental sustainability – playing on the street locally contributes to the Government’s net zero carbon emissions goal by **reducing the number of trips by car** being made to a local park, playground or destination as play can be achieved closer to home.

Significance of play

Play is essential for cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. It builds fundamental physical literacy, fosters creativity and innovation and builds the ability to identify and manage risk. Play contributes to not only children’s lives but also the wellbeing of their whānau and community.² Play is a human right under the UN convention on the Rights of the Child.

Playing is of significant benefit to the mental and physical wellbeing of not only children but also for adults. The feeling of being free, detached from all of life’s stresses, and just simply happy often

² International Play Association, 2018

occurs when we are active, playful and child-like. The recent Covid-19 crisis reminds us of the importance of play for mental and physical wellbeing.

Why street play is important

- The street is a blank canvas - it allows for truly child-led free play, providing important benefits over structured, organised activities in designated spaces.
- Children like to play near home and have traditionally done so. A 2007 poll found that 71% of adults played out on their street every day compared to only 21% of children today.³
- Children need ample space to play energetically. Many children can't get to parks and other open spaces easily whereas the street is instantly accessible.
- Playing in the street increases community cohesion. It brings neighbours of all ages together by providing a sense of common space and shared ownership. It can engender a sense of collective responsibility and thereby increase the safety of the neighbourhood.
- Street play increases contact between children and adults, helping to build up familiarity and trust.
- Children learn valuable skills when they play out in their neighbourhoods. They learn important social skills and they gain understanding about the world around them.
- Playing in the street allows for 'semi-supervised' play. Parents can get on with housework or looking after other children in the house while allowing children to play outside. Children are far more likely to play outside every day if allowed to play near their home, rather than relying on parents to take them somewhere else, like the park.
- The street is the 'starting point for all journeys'. The ability to play independently in the street is a first step towards greater independent mobility around the neighbourhood for example visiting friends, going to the park or walking to school.
- Streets constitute the vast majority of public space in any community, to see them only as places to drive and park cars completely undervalues them. Streets can and should be places where people can sit, talk, read, play and walk, even sing and dance if they want to. To achieve this we need to start shifting mindsets of what's possible and use them differently.

Play streets contribute to greater equity

- No matter where they live, our tamariki need to be able to move about freely in fun and healthy ways. Play streets build the confidence and ability for children to get on a bike, walk, or scooter to school, their friends' place or sports practice across town.
- Our streets have the capability of providing something for everybody. Play streets are a collaborative process where residents shape their public realm together. It is fundamentally about inclusion and shared community ownership.
- 40 per cent of the population don't have a car so the current car-centric transport system is inequitable, discourages independence and active transport options.^{4,5}
- Play streets build on the strengths and assets within neighbourhoods and community. Taking this strengths based approach has been proven as a successful response to the economic challenges many neighbourhoods face.

³ <http://playday.gn.apc.org/resources/research/2007-research/>

⁴ https://www.indexmundi.com/new_zealand/demographics_profile.html

⁵ <https://figure.nz/chart/Ea5wL8XHqa6l3VL2>

- When neighbours connect and talk to one another they can begin to help one another with transport challenges for example, car sharing, carpooling to school or work, shopping for your neighbour.
- Play streets result in real time and immediate change, not from a plan that can take a number of years to implement, but from interventions that work and are driven by the community.
- The NZ Living Standards Framework has a direct link to the Transport Outcomes Framework. The transport system is deeply embedded in our aspirations for a better nation. Transport equity for road use and modal choice will improve everyone’s standard of living.
- Communities need agency to promote health equity. Community driven solutions like play streets help to create health equity and are crucial for wellbeing.

Play streets contribute to safety

- Safety is the most significant reason why people, especially children, play less and no longer walk and cycle to school.^{6,7}
- Our transport system needs to protect people, not put them in danger.
- Play streets break down the barriers, perceived and real, between people and make our communities safer.
- Streets that have been engineered for speed are wide, making them difficult to cross, creating barriers for street play and active transport.
- Mode neutrality means thinking differently about how our streets are used; street parking creates safety challenges for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Safer travel will also improve wellbeing and liveability.

Play streets build connectivity

- Highly liveable cities and towns are people-friendly places with healthy environments that improve wellbeing and economic prosperity.
- The transport system contributes to liveable cities and towns by providing people with good multi-modal travel options.
- Walkable and cycle friendly neighbourhoods are fundamental for healthy, lively communities, providing people with the travel options necessary to access places for earning, learning, and participating in society.

Play streets create healthier people and environments

- The way we transport ourselves and our goods from one place to another should not be detrimental to the health of our people or environment. As a society we’ve engineered physical activity out of our busy daily lives and now we’re experiencing the health and wellbeing impacts of this lack of activity.
- To meet our climate change objectives and obligations we need to think globally but act locally. The street provides the perfect opportunity for people to create a healthier environment in the place where they live. This will have a significant positive effect on building awareness, sharing information and taking action.

⁶ <https://www.cmnzl.co.nz/assets/sm/4467/61/paper164-Mackie.pdf>

⁷ <http://iportal.huttcity.govt.nz/Record/ReadOnly?Tab=3&Uri=5098120>

- Play streets build the confidence and ability for people to move around their neighbourhood actively, this contributes to mode switch from fuelled vehicles delivering more low emissions travel.
- The roadside berm is fertile land for everything from healthier living infrastructure, edible gardens, micro projects, and better landscapes. Everyone in their local community has their own pocket park – it’s their front yard. Reclaiming of public space by community for community that includes the street and the berm through play streets, will enable residents to re-envisage the street as a whole and provide for a healthier environment and more active neighbourhood.
- A street that is good for people is a street that is good for health. Play streets is an effective way of promoting, socialising and mobilising action for healthy street objectives (refer to healthy street indicators below).
- Walking and cycling is a key way of putting physical activity back into our everyday lives, improving our health, wellbeing and that of our environment. Setting aside times for safe active travel on the local street is the beginning of re-imagining their use for better active transport options and opportunities.
- Liberating public spaces like streets, car parks and road reserves for play has enormous potential to improve the health and wellbeing of our nation.



Source: Lucy Saunders

Healthy Street Indicators, UK

Engagement

- What better way to gauge community views than connecting with families on the street while their children are playing. Engaging and collecting evidence and insights during street play activations enables direct feedback to city designers to help shape land use, urban form and street design in a way that reduces car dependency, makes walking, wheeling, cycling and micro-mobility safe and attractive travel choices, and reduces emissions from transport.
- Play streets will change attitudes about how a street is used because engagement and understanding takes place in situ.

- Play streets will motivate people to act in support of the health of their street. This will not only be a great way to collect data, evidence and information but also in gathering local support to implement effective solutions. Your idea + our support = healthy street!

Summary

The intent of the GPS is to guide investment and decisions around the land transport system with the aim of improving wellbeing and liveability for New Zealanders. Healthy Families Hutt Valley works in partnership with communities and local government with the same aim of improving wellbeing through influencing and changing the systems that support communities to thrive. We are in the unique position to raise the increasingly strong community voice wanting more ownership of how their streets are used, while highlighting the system barriers and regulations that make it hard for Council to support and enable this community led action.

We believe a transit hierarchy that prioritises active transport and play best begins in the less crowded, low risk streets and that our communities will benefit from a Council that has the scope to legally and logistically support residents to experiment and trial play streets. Play streets will be an important part of shifting perceptions and behaviour and help to influence modal shift, while at the same time improving people's wellbeing and the liveability of their neighbourhood.

We acknowledge that the transport system is complex and that Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is currently reassessing priorities with a greater emphasis on active transport and modal shift. A key change to enable modal neutrality is to make the regulation changes required to enable communities to safely rediscover their streets as places to play, move and recreate.

The current contractor based traffic management system (TMS) has complicated regulations that limit the ability of our local Road Controlling Authority Traffic Management Coordinator to enable communities to use their streets differently. This means we currently cannot legally close a safe street for just a few hours of play.

We therefore seek leadership from Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency to simplify the code of practice for temporary traffic management for a safe street closure so that play streets can flourish throughout New Zealand. We recommend that Waka Kotahi NZTA Transport Agency mandate a nation-wide dispensation from TMS requirements for all cul-de-sacs so they can be easily and safely closed for play for the wellbeing of our children, our community and our future.