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**To:**

Let's Get Welly Moving

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## Submission by the NZ Centre for Sustainable Cities on the 'Central City Safer Speeds' project

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### Main points

1 We support the changes proposed under the LGWM Safer Speeds proposal. Our main points are:

- First, we strongly support lower speeds in much of the central city, for reasons of health and safety, sustainability (carbon emission reduction, reduced noise and better air quality) and quality of life (including improved accessibility);
- Second, while we would contest the need to retain 50 km/h limits on some major roads such as (parts of) Vivian St, we consider the overall proposal by LGWM to be pragmatic and realistic as an initial step;
- Third, we urge complementary investment in *separated* cycle lanes on some major streets (where 50 km/h limits are maintained) where it would be desirable to maintain cycle access.
- Fourth, the impact of the speed reductions should be carefully monitored, with observations of (before and after) traffic speeds, traffic (motor vehicle, cycles, pedestrian activity), deaths and serious injuries, air quality and noise; and the analysis published.

### About the New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities

2 The New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities is an interdisciplinary research centre dedicated to providing the research base for innovative solutions to the economic, social, environmental and cultural challenges facing our urban centres. We undertake a range of research,

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published as journal articles, policy papers, working papers, and blogs, as well as making submissions from time to time to central government and councils on a range of issues relevant to cities, from climate change policy to compact urban development. See <http://sustainablecities.org.nz/> and <http://resilienturbanfutures.org.nz/>

### **Further points**

3 As a group of researchers with a long interest in urban issues, dynamics and quality of life, our view is that a regime of low speed limits in the highly built up environment of the city centre is critical to safe and high quality travel. But – less obviously – it is also critical to the economic activity and quality of life of the city centre. While these speed limit changes are being presented as primarily a safety measure, and of course we support the safety gains, we consider that the quality of life aspects to be equally important, even if not as readily quantifiable. One of Wellington’s key attributes is its walkable (and compact) city centre and these measures are likely to help improve and strengthen this vital feature.

4 We accordingly strongly support the analysis in section 2.2 (‘Supporting a vibrant and accessible central city’) of the background document for this proposal. With growing numbers of people wishing to live in or near the city centre, or enjoy visiting it, it is critical that policies support the quality of life of those people. (In the medium term, we would argue for measures to remove the problem of State highway 1 running through the CBD, perhaps by undergrounding part of it. However, that is beyond the scope of the present submission.)

5 We also underline the importance of complementary urban design measures to improve quality of access for cyclists and pedestrians in the city. One recent analysis suggests that much more could be done to achieve this. Donovan and Munro (2013) write:

‘Rectifying issues with intersection design would go a long way towards improving the pedestrian environment in New Zealand. This is especially important in central city locations where intersection designs that curtail pedestrian movements will effectively undermine the potential for localised agglomeration economies....’  
(Donovan & Munro, 2013, p.42)

6 This quotation points to the case for addressing multiple aspects of the urban environment in order to achieve thriving and vibrant city centres that generate high levels of economic activity and are attractive places to live. Speed limits are important, but other aspects of urban design (including intersections, intersections and the place of trees and small green spaces on road reserves) should not be neglected. Clearly, much of this goes beyond the scope of the present consultation, but should inform the wider goals of LGWM.

7 Significantly, we are ambivalent about the stated strategic approach of LGWM, “to move more people with fewer vehicles”, as we see providing accessibility and quality of life (‘well-being’) as more important than merely moving people (mobility) as such. But we agree that the Safer Speeds proposal will make an important contribution to the goal of providing alternative, more sustainable means of access within the city centre, such as provision for cycling, walking and public transport.

8 We would be very happy to engage directly with LGWM on the proposal if that is considered useful.

## References

Donovan, S., & Munro, I. (2013). *Impact of urban form on transport and economic outcomes. January 2013. NZ Transport Agency research report 513*. Retrieved from Wellington:  
<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/research/reports/513/docs/513.pdf>