

HUTT CITY COUNCILTRAFFIC SUBCOMMITTEE

Report of a meeting held in the Lopdell Lounge, St Marks Church, 58 Woburn Road,
Lower Hutt on

Monday 30 November 2015 commencing at 2.00pm

PRESENT:

Cr M Cousins (Chair)	Cr A Finlayson
Cr T Lewis	Cr C Milne
Mayor WR Wallace	Cr M Willard

APOLOGIES: An apology was received from Cr Bridson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr T Stallinger, Chief Executive
 Ms K Kelly, General Manager, Strategic Services
 Mr B Sherlock, General Manager, City Infrastructure (part meeting)
 Mr G Craig, Divisional Manager, City Development
 Mr P Maaka, Urban Design Manager
 Mr L Earl, Traffic Assets Manager
 Mr B Monaghan, Divisional Manager, City Promotions
 Ms C Christensen, CBD Development Manager
 Ms K Glanville, Senior Committee Advisor (part meeting)
 Mrs H Clegg, Minute Taker

PUBLIC BUSINESS1. APOLOGIESRESOLVED:**Minute No. TRS 15501**

"That the apology received from Cr Bridson be accepted and leave of absence be granted."

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Comments are recorded under the item to which they relate.

3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

There were no conflict of interest declarations.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL - 15 December 2015

a) CBD - Free Parking Trial In Lower Hutt CBD (15/1675)

Speaking under public comment, **Chris Bishop MP** presented a petition regarding free parking in the CBD. He informed members that 1800 signatures had been collected. He highlighted two issues – firstly, that all suburban shopping areas had free parking and that the current situation was unfair to CBD retailers; secondly, that free carparking would “give a boost” to the CBD. He considered one hour of free parking was a good compromise. He highlighted examples of free car parking initiatives throughout New Zealand. He congratulated Council on the improvements in the CBD to date.

In response to questions from members, Mr Bishop considered that the CBD missed out on foot traffic as Westfield Queensgate offered four hours free parking. He believed that the first hour of parking should be free, then a charge imposed for the second hour and not the other way around as proposed in Option 3 in the officer’s report. He said a trial period should be between three-six months and that any loss of revenue could be recouped through a targeted rate for retailers.

Speaking under public comment, **John Vallely and John Bank** advised that their businesses had been in operation for 16 and 78 years respectively. They said that the existing businesses in the CBD urgently required support from Council. They asked that any free parking trial be undertaken with input from the retailers.

In response to questions from members, Mr Vallely said that they sought a CBD rejuvenation programme and not just an initiative for the Christmas period. He agreed that if free parking was introduced, along with a targeted rate for retailers, that extensive consultation would need to occur.

Speaking under public comment, **Warren Thessman** considered that charging for the first hour and then the second hour for free was the wrong way around. He suggested free parking for the south end of High Street.

Speaking under public comment, **Christine Bank** considered that Council had shown no empathy and not listened to the CBD retailers. She congratulated Council on beautifying the CBD and asked that free car parking be established in the CBD. She asked that angled parking be considered.

Speaking under public comment, **Melanie Boyd** expressed concern at the declining state of the CBD. She believed that the first hour of parking should be free and then a payment required. She considered that free parking would encourage more retailers to establish and bring more shoppers into the area.

In response to questions from members, Ms Boyd considered that urgent action was required by Council and that a trial for free parking should occur from January to Easter 2016. She asked that angle parking be considered for ease of manoeuvrability.

The Divisional Manager City Development elaborated on the report. He explained that all options had been thoroughly researched and that research showed that free parking was not an effective way to encourage more shoppers to an area.

In response to questions from members, the Divisional Manager City Development advised that there was no evidence in other free parking trials of higher retail spending but there were higher "feel good" factors. He added that there was evidence that free parking lead to higher foot traffic counts and a reduction in the decline of areas. He explained that paying for the first hour and not the second hour was designed to alleviate rushed customers. He said any time of the year would be suitable for a trial. He agreed that monitoring of any trial was essential and that there was no reason why members could not decide on a combination of the options.

In response to questions from members, the Divisional Manager City Promotions outlined a possible marketing campaign including the existing block booking on the radio network, social media avenues, website notification, cinema advertising and the Hutt News. He considered a two week concentrated effort would be sufficient.

Mayor Wallace noted that the one hour free parking before Christmas was not intended to be a trial and was to show Council's support of the retailers.

RESOLVED:

Minute No. TRS 15502

"That the Traffic Subcommittee:

- (i) receives the petition for free parking in the Hutt Central Business District submitted by Chris Bishop MP; and*
- (ii) refers the petition for free parking in the Hutt Central Business District submitted by Chris Bishop MP to the appropriate Council Committee for consideration and response to the matters raised in the petition."*

The motion was taken in parts. All parts were CARRIED on the voices.

RECOMMENDED:	Minute No. TRS 15503
<p><i>“That the Traffic Subcommittee recommends that Council:</i></p> <p>(i) <i>notes that some retailers and Central Community Committee members have requested Council consider free parking in the Lower Hutt CBD to attract more shoppers and customers to the city centre and increase retail spending;</i></p> <p>(ii) <i>notes that officers have considered newly available international research and reviewed recent free parking trials in New Zealand towns and cities. There is nothing to suggest from this research or trials that free parking is successful in improving retail sales and increasing vibrancy;</i></p> <p>(iii) <i>notes that four parking options have been considered:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Option 1 – Free parking for the week before Christmas; and</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Option 2 – Free parking on days of events in the CBD; and</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Option 3 – First hour paid parking and second hour free; and</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Status quo;</i></p> <p>(iv) <i>notes that the Status Quo is the option preferred by officers and is consistent with officers position and recommendation in February 2013;</i></p> <p>(v) <i>notes that metered parking areas are covered by Council’s Traffic Bylaw 2007 (adopted by Council 3 July 2007 and amended 20 November 2014) and that Council may by resolution specify the days and times for which fees apply to each metered parking area and may by resolution prescribe, abolish or amend fees as Council may reasonably require;</i></p> <p>(vi) <i>notes that officers have been advised that it is technically possible to implement these three options on the current parking meters; and</i></p> <p>(vii) <i>notes the estimated loss of revenue to Council from each of the options as follows:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Option 1 – Loss of revenue \$20,000 (excl. GST) – one off in 2015</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Option 2 - Loss of revenue \$40,000 (excl. GST) – 12 months</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Option 3 – Loss of revenue \$62,000 (excl. GST) – 4 months.”</i></p>	
RECOMMENDED:	Minute No. TRS 15504
<p><i>“That the Traffic Subcommittee recommends that Council notes that a comprehensive report by officers in 2013 [Report No. CDC 2013/1/25] concluded on the basis of the available evidence at the time that free parking is not an effective strategy to attract more shoppers to the city and increase retail spending.”</i></p>	

Members agreed that free parking prior to Christmas was to show Council’s support for the retailers. It was noted that the trial would be carefully monitored. It was acknowledged that while a free parking trial was not a solution it was a start to halting the decline in the CBD.

RECOMMENDED:	Minute No. TRS 15505
<p><i>“That the Traffic Subcommittee recommends that Council agrees with regard to Option 1 to abolish parking fees in the HC2 (Shoppers) zone for the period Friday 18 December 2015 to, and including, Thursday 24 December 2015.”</i></p>	

The CBD Development Manager explained the Food Truck initiative. She noted that people were attracted to the weekly event and were staying longer, enticing more retailers to open longer hours. She supported the proposal to have free parking coinciding with special events in the City.

Members discussed whether having a number of parking options would create confusion amongst customers. It was acknowledged that free events bring people into the City and to provide free parking for some of those events would be beneficial to the City.

RECOMMENDED:**Minute No. TRS 15506**

"That the Traffic Subcommittee recommends that Council agrees with regard to Option 2 to abolish parking fees in the HC2 (Shoppers) zone for up to 12 days during 2016, the dates to coincide with events in the CBD, and delegate authority to officers to determine the specific dates to apply this authority."

RECOMMENDED:**Minute No. TRS 15507**

"That the Traffic Subcommittee recommends that Council agrees with regard to Option 3 to amend the current parking fees in the HC2 (Shoppers) zone for the period 1 January 2016 to 30 April 2016 to:

<i>Shoppers (Green HC2) Zone</i>	<i>First hour \$1.50 Second hour FREE Two hour maximum duration Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm Saturday P120 (no charge) Sunday and public holidays Unrestricted."</i>
----------------------------------	---

RECOMMENDED:**Minute No. TRS 15508**

"That the Traffic Subcommittee recommends that Council:

- (i) requests officers to monitor and report back to Council the results of the trial;
and*
- (ii) requests officers to consult on options for targeted rate or general rate funding along with potential reduction in services options for any extension of free parking in the CBD beyond this trial. These options could be consulted on during the Annual Plan 2016/17 process."*

b) Margaret Street Proposed Bus Stop (15/1117)

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Chris Bishop MP** said he was surprised at the proposed bus stop on Margaret Street as Council had completed work to beautify the area. He considered that buses on Margaret Street would have detrimental visual and amenity effects on the street.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Graeme Cromie** expressed opposition to the proposal and said he was concerned at the short timeframe provided to respond to the officer's report. He informed members that he had engaged a traffic engineer, Harriet Fraser, at his own cost. He noted that the primary reason behind the proposal was a safety issue but could find little evidence that suggested a safety issue existed.

In response to questions from members, Mr Cromie reiterated the short timeframe to respond to the officer's report and asked that Council undertake a meaningful discussion with all stakeholders in Margaret Street before any proposal proceeds. He advised that Harriet Fraser's report found that Margaret Street was narrower than Bunny Street and was therefore unsuitable for bus stops. He considered that bus stops hinder retailers as shops become invisible.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Paul Borrie of United Travel** expressed opposition to the proposal. He advised he had invested in upgrading his business and planned to carry out a street frontage upgrade in 2016.

In response to a question from a member, Mr Borrie considered better scheduling would solve the bus congestion issue on Queens Drive.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Richard Small of Pacific Legal** explained that his business relied on the street frontage for the viability of his business. He advised he was concerned with the short timeframe to respond to the proposal, the loss of carparks and the impact that would have on businesses in Margaret Street. He considered there was a lack of investigation into the proposal.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Blair Smith, Chartered Accountant** considered that Margaret Street was not a suitable location for a bus stop.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Trent Stevensen of Empire Skate** advised that the loss of six carparks would have an adverse effect on his business. He was considering not renewing his lease in 2016.

In response to a question from a member, Mr Stevensen advised he had not seen any evidence to suggest a safety issue existed.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Jim Zadimas and Mr John Zahariadis** advised that they were partners in a property management company with interests in Margaret Street. They expressed concern regarding: the short timeframe to respond to the proposal, the amount of visible frontage being reduced, the lack of proof that a safety issue existed, the removal of several car parks and the lack of loading bay spaces.

In response to a question from a member, Mr Zadimas accepted that investigations into loading spaces in Margaret Street was ongoing.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Phil McLaughlin of the RockShop** believed that the proposal would adversely affect his business.

In response to questions from members, Mr McLaughlin expressed concern at the short timeframe to respond to the proposal. He said that if the proposal continued that the owners of the RockShop may look to close the business if retail sales were adversely affected.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr Wayne Hastie and Ms Rona Hewitt from Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC)** expressed support for the proposal. Mr Hastie explained that Hutt City was a key interchange for public transport. He said that up to 1300 passengers use the Queens Drive bus stop every day and this had created bus queues and traffic safety concerns. He informed members that a Hazard Notice had been issued by New Zealand Bus. He stated that bus schedules had recently been reviewed with some changes made but this had not eliminated the safety concerns. He advised that the goal was for improvement in bus movements.

In response to questions from members, Ms Hewitt advised that the ideal situation would be a 'bus only' road. She confirmed that the proposal met the requirements for turning circles for bus manoeuvrability.

In response to questions from members, Mr Hastie advised that safety and capacity issues were the triggers for the proposal. He noted that once a Hazard Notice was issued, GWRC was legally bound to investigate. He added that the Health and Safety Act required action and that if the Hazard Notice was not acted upon, and an accident occurred, culpability was widespread.

Speaking under public comment, **Ms Tonia Haskell, Chief Operating Officer, Mr John Nisbet and Mr Bill Geddes from New Zealand Bus** expressed support for the proposal as the current situation was a safety issue. Mr Geddes said that the bus stops in Queens Drive were dangerous.

In response to questions from members, Ms Haskell explained the implications of Council not taking any action after the Hazard Notice had been issued, noting that all parties were liable should an accident

occur. She acknowledged that marketing and education were an important aspect of pedestrian safety. She advised that if the situation was not changed then the services could be removed from the City. She further explained that it was not the number of incidents reported but the subject matter which raised concerns.

The meeting adjourned at 4.12pm and resumed at 4.18pm.

Speaking under public comment, **Senior Sergeant Warren Harris** advised that the current bus stop site had reached saturation point and Police had concerns regarding safety. He considered the Margaret Street proposal to be a safer option.

Speaking under public comment, **Inspector George Fa'alogo** outlined the crime rates in the current bus stop site and concluded that the area was not a crime problem area. He said all data available did not support an escalation in crime should the bus stops move to Margaret Street.

The Urban Design Manager elaborated on the report. He explained that Council's Road and Traffic Division had been party to the research into the different options. He said he had notified all retailers of the report on 30 October 2015. He stated that the detailed research concluded that the Margaret Street proposal was the best option available.

In response to questions from members, the Urban Design Manager advised that the Bunny Street carriageway was slightly wider than Margaret Street but that the footpaths were more narrow. He reiterated that bus turning circles had been calculated as part of the research. He said that a bus stop further north of Queens Drive was too far away for connecting buses, the footpaths were too narrow and that it did not provide good sight lines. He confirmed that officers would investigate the possibility of the loading bay area should the Margaret Street proposal be recommended. He acknowledged that the best option was for a bus depot but that was not possible. He noted that the safety issues present in the current site would be alleviated by the proposal.

Members discussed whether the proposal would present similar crowding and safety issues in the future. The option for a possible site on south Queens Drive was considered.

Members noted that it was uncertain exactly what safety risk existed at the current Queens Drive bus stop site, that the Margaret Street retailers strongly opposed the proposal and that Council needed to support retailers in their business. Members were mindful that a Hazard Notice had been issued.

MOVED: (Cr Cousins/Cr Willard)

"That the Traffic Subcommittee recommends that Council approves the proposed new bus stop at Margaret Street, Lower Hutt, attached as Attachment 1 to the report."

The motion was declared LOST by division with the voting as follows:

For

Cr Cousins
Cr Willard

Total: 2

Against

Cr Finlayson
Cr Lewis
Cr Milne

3

MOVED: (Cr Milne/Cr Lewis)

"That the Traffic Subcommittee requests officers to investigate the South Queens Drive site option for the proposed new bus stops."

RESOLVED:

Minute No. TRS 15509

"That the Traffic Subcommittee requests officers to investigate the South Queens Drive site option for the proposed new bus stops."

5. QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 5.55 pm.

Cr MJ Cousins
CHAIR

**CONFIRMED as a true and correct record
Dated this 15th day of December 2015**