

# Spokes Dunedin

## Submission on the DCC's 9-year plan

The DCC has said it is committed to improving life for Dunedin residents, to keeping costs down and to meeting its climate goals. It is these three goals that must drive DCC decision-making over the next 9 years. The draft 9-year plan has abandoned these goals, and with them, the wellbeing of Dunedin's residents and that of the city's rangatahi and future generations.

Active transport provides an answer to all three of these major Council goals. The health benefits of walking and cycling are clear. Increased use of active modes and public transport mean reductions in harmful air and noise pollution, which together are among the biggest killers and factors in reducing public health. Reduced car use will obviously also lead to reduced carbon emissions.

As we weigh funding priorities, we should ask ourselves: Will these decisions help create a Dunedin where tamariki have the freedom to move safely through their own community and connect with nature? The most child-friendly cities in the world prioritise sustainable transport and climate resilience—these aren't separate goals but deeply interconnected priorities. child-friendly city is inherently a low-carbon city—with safe streets where kids can walk or bike to school, clean air to breathe, accessible whenua and green spaces, and resilient infrastructure that can withstand climate challenges.

The investments we consider today aren't just about reducing emissions; they're about creating neighbourhoods where whanau can thrive without depending on cars for every journey.

### What's wrong

The Council has removed the medium- and high-investment packages from the draft 9-year plan, as well as removing funding for critical active transport infrastructure. The draft plan consultation document admits:

*"it is almost certain that we won't reach our city's 2030 goal without additional investment"*

By removing the two emission reduction investment packages from the plan, the Council has condemned Dunedin to failure. Meanwhile, South Dunedin residents are wondering whether they'll still be able to get insurance in the coming years.

The urban cycleways tunnels trail, linking the CBD to Green Island and Mosgiel, not to mention Otago's incredible inland cycling network, is now almost completely defunded. While the central government's withdrawal of support for active transport has affected this project, the DCC's support is critical. Community organisations have shown their ability to execute these projects on a shoestring budget, but the virtually complete withdrawal of funding essentially condemns progress.

## Public expectations

Looking at the public's responses to the early consultation on the long-term plan, the most significant items are directly addressed by promoting active transport:

*"... the strongest calls for us to do more were infrastructure and the environment."*

With more emphasis on active transport, infrastructure will be cheaper and the environment will be cleaner.

The benefits don't stop there. More active transport users means **everyone** will get where they are going more easily, especially if they are driving, while less need for spending on roads will mean the savings can be spent on improved footpaths and cycleways. Ōtepoti Dunedin will be a more sustainable and resilient city, the community's wellbeing will be enhanced, and if it's done right, increases to rates and fees won't be necessary. Together, these items tick the majority of the public's responses to the early consultation off the list.

## What needs to change

We ask that the Council reinstates the medium and high investment packages for reducing the city's carbon emissions. These will be critical if we are to have any hope of meeting our climate obligations. Without making a serious effort, Dunedin can not expect central government help in mitigating the worst effects of climate change to our local communities. With South Dunedin being one of the worst affected areas in the country, we must get this right. As the draft plan states:

*"the city's biggest emissions sources are agriculture (46%) and transport (34%)."*

Fixing agriculture is going to be tough. Reducing transport emissions is within our grasp.

We also ask that the Council reinstate funding for the Urban Cycleways Tunnels Trail. It is vital for our people's wellbeing and for economic growth that we can move around the city easily. Ever more cars on the road will only cause the opposite: economic costs and a worse environment.

Beyond that, we ask that the Council takes a common-sense approach to modernising transport infrastructure in Dunedin. Instead of highly expensive (and controversial) changes, we need to invest in the small things that make active transport safer and more inviting. The successful George Street upgrade shows that allowing a café to put tables on what was roadway makes the area more pleasant and safer for active transport users, while critically also creating more economic opportunity for our local businesses.

Changes like these can be made all over Dunedin at the cost of some simple street furniture, and without the need for multi-million dollar changes to our roading infrastructure. We have the flagship of George Street, which shows how it works; now it's time to push these changes, albeit at a far small cost, throughout the city. Our businesses need people, not cars, to frequent them. There's a reason the commercial real estate industry bases retail rentals on footfall, not car-wheel revolutions.

## **Savings and increasing revenue**

We are not just asking the Council to spend more money. If we make Dunedin really liveable, the real possibility exists to expand the ratepayer base, while there are a number of areas where the Council has the ability to cut spending or increase revenue, which will help fund the essential investments needed to meet the city's stated goals.

### **Expanded ratepayer base**

The best way to pay for necessary investment is to expand the ratepayer base, because this doesn't require cutting back on spending. And the best way to do this is to make Dunedin a great small city - the most attractive place to settle in Aotearoa. We can achieve this by harnessing the city's outstanding attractions and by making the city incredibly liveable at the same time. But we can't do that by allowing endless sprawl, which would only create greater financial dependency on continuously enlarged infrastructure spending. Instead, we need to encourage medium to high-density housing construction. Much more active transport is the only solution which allows for an increasing population without increased infrastructure costs. And at the same time, we get a city that is cleaner, greener and easier to get around.

### **Future central government funding**

The current central government is hostile to active transport, but polling suggests they may well not be in power beyond the election due next year. Dunedin needs to prepare itself for a new government that will support local initiatives like active transport support, that are aimed at improving public health and the environment. If we wait until the government changes, we could be caught without a plan and risk missing vital funding.

### **Grass verges**

We ask the Council to reconsider spending \$2.8 million on the maintenance of grass verges. The ecological benefits of allowing verges to grow wild are clear. However, if residents would prefer to keep these areas trimmed, they can be given responsibility for this. There is no reason that this couldn't work just as well as residents taking care of grass berms adjacent to their properties.

### **Parking revenue**

We also ask the Council to look to increase revenue from parking. Roadside carparks are currently priced at a level wildly lower than their market value. Free or cheap parking encourages car dependency and significantly contributes to traffic as drivers look for free spots. Studies estimate that as much as 30% of urban traffic consists of drivers searching for parking. Kerbside parking price at market value would match supply to demand, meaning those who really need those parks will get them, while removing a significant amount of vehicle traffic from our inner streets. The extra revenue the Council gains can be used for greater investment, or to reduce the burden on ratepayers.