

28th May 2020

Traffic Resolutions Office
Wellington City Council
113 The Terrace
Wellington, 6140
via: trfeedback@wcc.govt.nz

Re: Proposed traffic resolutions for temporary street changes – Stout Street – TR102-20

ABOUT THE CHAMBER

The Wellington Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) has been the voice of business in the Wellington region for 164 years since 1856 and advocates for policies that reflect the interest of Wellington's business community, in both the city and region and the development of the Wellington economy as a whole. The Chamber is accredited through the New Zealand Chamber of Commerce network and as part of our wider organisation is also one of the four regional organisations of BusinessNZ.

Through our three membership brands, the Wellington Chamber of Commerce, Business Central and ExportNZ, our organisation represents around 3,500 businesses across the central and lower North Island. Our organisation is one of the four regional organisations that make up the Business New Zealand family and is also accredited through the New Zealand Chambers of Commerce network.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Wellington City Council's *Proposed Traffic Resolutions for Temporary Street Changes – COVID-19 Response Projects*. Specifically, the Chamber wishes to comment solely on traffic resolution TR102-20 – Stout Street and does not wish to comment on the other proposed projects.

CHAMBER POSITION

The Chamber writes to **oppose proposed traffic resolution TR-102-20** in its current state.

The Chamber fully supports the effort to increase Wellingtonians' ability to social distance as the country continues to work its way out to the COVID-19 crisis.

However, we do not believe the Wellington City Council (the Council) have provided sufficient information regarding traffic resolution TR-102-20. We believe without this information we are unable to form a supportive view, and that the problem and policy solution remains ill-defined. Specifically, there is no information about the timeframes of this temporary order, nor about the impact of removing the car parks, such as the occupancy rates of the 39 car parks due to be removed. Further, it is not clear whether this is the best pedestrian route to and from the transport hubs of the bus station and train station – as there is no data provided about the number of Wellingtonians who use Stout Street to commute between Lambton Quay and the Stations, nor is there other information provided about the alternative pedestrian routes that are used in the city.

We believe the following questions ought to be answered before this project moves ahead:

1. How many pedestrians use this route daily?
2. What is the occupancy rate for the 39 car parks due to be removed, and the impact for traffic and parking demand?
3. Has any economic analysis been undertaken to assess the impact for businesses in the area that rely on customers using these car parks?
4. What alternatives are there for people that depend on using these car parks?
5. Why was this route chosen to be part of the overall traffic resolution strategy for managing COVID-19?
6. What is the timeframe for keeping the widened footpath?
7. What other routes are the council considering implementing similar measures?

The Chamber believes that this information must be made available to the public before a decision on the project is made.

The Chamber is surprised that given the parking sensors have been adopted for all Wellington City car parks, that the proposal has not provided any information about how the 39 car parks are utilised and the general demand there is for parking in this area.

Our city and our business community cannot afford to have any haphazard decision making at any level in the current economic environment. While it may seem like just 39 car parks, there are customers, businesses, and residents that will depend on using those car parks. Keeping the city open for business, regardless of the mode of transport Wellingtonians wish to use, has never been so important.

The Chamber would also like clarification on the timeframe for keeping the widened footpath should the project proceed. The project has been proposed as a solution to the COVID-19 crisis and need to social distance. Will the project continue until the crisis and social distancing requirement is declared “over”?

The Chamber is well aware of “policy implementation by stealth” and the belief by some to remove car transportation from the city altogether. If this is the intention, that the removal of these parks is to become permanent, that this be fronted as such so the issue can be properly debated and voted on.

The Council needs to clearly state what this project's benefits are for all Wellingtonians and outline how it will resolve any negative outcomes should the car parks be removed. While the Council may be trying to solve one issue, it is creating several more for other customers, businesses, and residents in the area. The Chamber appreciates the Council's overall objective for this project, but without statistical evidence, a cost-benefit analysis, and other supporting information, we cannot support this project.

CONCLUSION

Due to the lack of information, the Chamber does not believe the Council has thoroughly considered the economic impact this project may have on the surrounding area. **Therefore, the Chamber opposes traffic resolution TR-102-20.**

We simply do not have a clear picture of the implications of this project. We agree that more needs to be done to ensure Wellingtonians are safe when commuting, but we must be practical in how we respond to both the health and economic crisis, equally.

This submission also serves to highlight a long-standing concern of the Chamber and its members. Parking in Wellington's CBD continues to be an issue. The lack of car parks, the loss of major car parking buildings, and the pressure from some groups to remove more street parking. All while the city's public transport system issues have not been solved and we are managing through a public health crisis that requires us to keep our distance from others.

The Chamber will not support the removal of any car parks until the Council has a CBD-wide strategy to mitigate any concerns residents and businesses may have, and take satisfactory steps to address the current shortage of car parks in the city.

The Chamber remains ready to assist the Council with its parking strategy and looks forward to continuing the discussion with Wellington's business community in mind.

Kind regards,



John Milford
Chief Executive
Wellington Chamber of Commerce