

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, 13 June, 2019
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

In Attendance

Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai
(Chairperson)
Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Crichton Christie
Cr Vince Cocurullo
Cr Tricia Cutforth
Cr Shelley Deeming
Cr Sue Glen
Cr Phil Halse
Cr Cherry Hermon
Cr Greg Innes
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Sharon Morgan
Cr Anna Murphy

Scribe Jennie Thomas (Democracy Adviser)

Also in Attendance: - Sarah Bishop, Andrew Norriss, Duncan Ecob (Isthmus Consultants) and Angie Crafer (Flow Transportation Specialists)

1. **Apologies** – there were no apologies.

2. **Reports**

2.1 Complete Streets Masterplan Briefing

Her Worship the Mayor convened the meeting, welcomed staff, consultants and the public to the briefing. Sonya Seutter (Senior Strategic Planner) with Mark Seakins (Roading Consultant) ran the presentation.

Ms Seutter advised that the Complete Streets Masterplan is a key action from the already adopted City Centre and City Core Precinct plans. There is funding allocated in the LTP for the plan and will be utilised in conjunction with part of the Roading Infrastructure budget.

The presentation covered:

- A recap of scoping meetings held
- Design Principles
- Major Streets and Visions
- Scenarios and Commonalities
- Constraints and Opportunities
- Scenario Descriptions
- Street Typologies
- On Street Car Parking

Ms Seutter advised that since last meeting with elected members the feedback provided had been noted and changes made. Staff have:

- Examined and improved parking
- Studied traffic directions and improved traffic flows
- Considered the potential for some streets to be absorbed into developments without affecting traffic flows
- Viewed street trees as part of street infrastructure
- Analysed intersections and roundabouts to improve vehicle and pedestrian interactions
- Proposed shared paths to promote new cycle connections
- Included a new design principle

Ms Seutter described the eight design principles that have been developed including the streets for a thriving economy, after feedback that a business principle was needed.

Ms Bishop discussed 'The Vision' for:

- Dent Street – connecting the city core to the waterfront. Considering how we might draw the energy from the waterfront to the retail core – lifting amenity and allowing better vehicle access.
- Cameron Street – which has historically been the retail spine. Shared space could be confusing to the user. Consider how we could improve accessibility and amenity.
- Walton Street – the role of Walton and Bank Streets are to bring people into the city centre. Facilitation of the movement of vehicles and pedestrians. Amenity and connection into the wider city.
- James/John Street - strong connection for the waterfront to the city retail. Look at reducing lines of traffic. Could pedestrianise one of those streets.

- Vine Street – acknowledged we need vehicle traffic and some amount of parking. Draws in and attracts people into the city which creates vibrancy.
- Robert Street – connects East to West. Includes Laurie Hall. Look at bringing people through to the middle of town. Possible green space through to city retail.

Ms Seutter ran through the commonalities of all four scenarios that were being put proposed. These include:

- Mid block connections
- Dent Street promoted as a Waterfront Boulevard
- Long Term – Laurie Hall Park is expanded
- Intersections investigated in every scenario – Walton/Robert, Walton/Cameron. John/Dent, James/Dent and roundabouts
- Traffic Flow options – one and two ways and flush streets

The constraints and opportunities that exist are:

- Traffic backups on Dent Street (during peak afternoon)
- Walton/Cameron vehicle turn into the city core
- Constant flow of vehicle traffic on shared space to find carparking
- Pedestrian connections across and along Dent Street to and from Waterfront
- Roundabouts are difficult for pedestrians to cross

Ms Seutter along with Ms Bishop then described the four proposed scenarios, listed the proposed changes and the unaltered. Each scenario was discussed in terms of possible benefits and difficulties.

Ms Bishop advised that Scenario 4 was the proposed option which they wished to precede to model. Scenario 4 sees changes of:

- John Street one way in from Dent to Cameron
- James Street pedestrian only (in the long term)
- Cameron Street 'pedestrian only' extended
- Cameron/Walton intersection no turn into the city core
- Parking opportunities on Walton and Bank
- John and James traffic movements change between Cameron and Robert
- Rose Street shared space
- Bank Street one direction from Walton to Rose
- Walton roundabout modified

Remains:

- Rathbone Street as is
- Roundabouts
- James Street as is (to Robert)
- John Street as is (to Robert)

Ms Bishop advised that Scenario 4 primarily constitutes the option they wish to move forward with, to test and to build on with ideas from the other scenarios. It is a pedestrian focused, staged approach which would still provide a reasonable amount of vehicle access to the city core but which would not dominate. The option lifts pedestrian amenity and provides good connection to the Waterfront. There is still the potential for other elements of the other scenarios to manage transport and to increase green infrastructure in the inner city. This scenario promotes access to retail and provides vibrancy and enlivened habitat for people. Ms Bishop explained that this option needs testing and then these results can be further discussed to consider what this may represent in the future.

The Street Typologies graphic was explained various streets descriptions were discussed.

Dominic Kula (General Manager – Strategy and Democracy) advised the meeting that all the options have been included in the presentation but staff do have a preferred option being Scenario 4. Elected members feedback would be taken on board. This presentation was a step in the process which will be over the long term. There is \$1.2m in the budget for the next financial year and funding will be considered further in the next LTP.

Elected Members provided comment and made queries which included:

Scenario 4 was seen as the most preferred option by the majority, but not all, elected members with many noting it was the way forward.

There was some support expressed for investigating opening the Cameron Street mall as a shared space. It was noted that public perception would need to be considered if there was an option for the Cameron Street mall to be opened up.

It was queried where public transport fits within the plan and how local and the Intercity visitor buses can be used to connect the Town Basin with the CBD.

It was acknowledged that Dent Street was seen as a constraint to access from and to the CBD from the waterfront as it was an arterial route. It was noted that traffic design can be affected by the outer ring of intersections such as the Nixon Street upgrade. It was suggested that the Port Road and the Nixon Street intersection could be altered to mitigate the arterial traffic along Dent Street.

Different options of providing pedestrian access to the Waterfront were suggested including an overhead pedestrian bridge.

It was clarified that parking would not be completely removed on Bank Street but managed during peak traffic flows.

It was queried and clarified that shared space would have localised mobility parking and loading zones.

The challenge for visitors who see the canopy and come into the CBD but then struggle to know where to park and make their way back to the mall was noted.

The development of a parking building is considered as a possible long-term future development but is outside the scope of this plan. Possible future development opportunities are considered as to what can be offered to the city scape and vis versa.

It was suggested, that to mitigate some of the arterial traffic along Dent Street, Commerce Street should be made more attractive for commuters to travel along.

Ms Crafer was queried regarding the traffic flow from James and John Street and the impact this has on Dent Street. Ms Crafer advised that the aim is to have better pedestrian amenity which will reduce traffic using those streets. This should result in lower traffic running through that core area. There is mix of commuter and street traffic on Dent and the aim is to make a safe and attractive means of getting pedestrians across Dent Street while retaining the capacity of four lanes. Queuing will occur back from the bridge once you have a crossing, she explained. At times, there will be two queues of traffic but they will be split. Comments around Robert Street were noted and Ms Crafer advised they would look at greater definition in that area.

There was a suggestion to incorporate pocket parks within the plan.

There was some support for the extension of Laurie Hall park.

Some questioned if the plans views were bold enough and needed to be focused on a longer term. A one-way system on Walton street was suggested and a request to allow for tree lines and cycleways on Bank Street.

A further view expressed was that Bank Street should also be one-way, with traffic flows up Bank and down Walton Streets.

It was also suggested that streets could be removed altogether with a shopping complex ideally being located over John and James Street with the second storey allowing a walkway across to the Waterfront.

There was a view expressed that Whangarei is a service centre and if Laurie Hall park was to be closed off this would discourage shoppers into the city centre. This could create a satellite city scenario. It was noted that if we make it significantly harder to allow traffic into the city centre we will need to provide more accessible parking. People do not like to walk distances. Concern was also expressed

regarding the Walton Street intersection and access to the Hundertwasser attraction once completed.

There was discussion on the need to identify bus stops where pedestrians can be picked up and dropped off. It was noted that there is a parallel piece of work being undertaken on the Bus Depot at present.

A futuristic approach to the Dent Street crossing was suggested. If people wish to work and live in the city centre then this is an opportunity to be innovative.

The consultants and staff were thanked for the opportunity to view the different scenarios. It was noted that modelling will provide more detail.

Ms Seutter advised that our consultants have looked at how to improve parking. The option ensures we are not reducing carparking, some streets will have reduced parking while others will increase. There are areas identified (blue circles) which could in future be developed into carpark buildings.

Mr Seakins advised that the Transportation Strategy's intention is to get more investment in public transport and walking and cycling to help accommodate future growth. Mr Seakins advised that we are looking at a public commuter service for rural centres including Hikurangi, Ruakaka, Waipu and Parua Bay. Shifting these people to public transport would assist in freeing up parking.

Comment was made if you want an active CBD then you need carparking in a logical place and the design principles need to include this. Parking is needed for our local people including the elderly and for parents with children. These people are unable to walk long distances where often tourists are expecting to. Concern was also raised that there was not enough carparking for the Hundertwasser Art Centre.

Another view was expressed that we need to consider the changes that may occur in the next 30-40 years with possibly more scooter and uber usage. If there is good public transport, including for the outlining areas, this will be utilised more. For the future, we need to think about what makes a city centre attractive and not just parking.

There was discussion on the majority of the Whangarei population living outside the city centre and how a lot of these people will not be catching public transport into town.

There were queries around the extra parking that was illustrated in both Lower Cameron and Bank Street.

It was stated that economies of scale needed to be considered in relation to Park N Rides and that they need to be viable. The varying workforce hours was also acknowledged, with it being noted that the working day now covers 24 hours. The dynamics of users of traffic have changed.

Future changes to lower impact traffic including autonomous and hydro vehicles should be planned for. Further bike parking was requested to be considered as part of the plan.

Mr Kula advised that the next steps would be to review all the feedback received. This feedback will assist in prioritisation, and the discussions we will have with the public. Staff will summarise the feedback and schedule a follow up meeting. He noted there will be a further discussion with this and the new Council.

Her Worship the Mayor thanked the consultants and expressed her hope that the feedback today had been helpful.

3. Closure of Meeting

The meeting concluded at 3.03 pm.