



**Submission on the
Draft Greater Christchurch Travel Demand
Management Strategy**

From

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Draft Greater Christchurch Travel Demand Management Strategy

SOC is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission on such an important topic.

In our opinion, the “Feedback” form provided with the Summary document was not well-suited to our viewpoints, so we have prepared comments as follows:

Issues

The ‘Plan’ ignores a number of major global change drivers currently facing us, which make the present situation totally different from earlier ages. These and other drivers will bring changes outside the range of prior human experience, in terms of their magnitude, speed of arrival and likely simultaneity.

In the context of the Plan, the change drivers include present economic circumstances, which are much more deep-seated than is commonly believed, and are likely to endure for many years. These in turn are closely connected to, and interact with, the effects of local and global resource depletion (especially, but not only, petroleum, with the expectation of radical increases in fuel prices); to the potential impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events; local and global pollution of land, air and water, and many others.

There appears to be no recognition of the likely severe economic outcomes of either the concurrent, overlapping, or sequential occurrence of these events, namely, the affordability (and practicability) of remedial measures.

The ‘Plan’ is at heart a ‘business as usual’ document which assumes that life will proceed, in a linear fashion founded on the myth of perpetual economic and population growth. In the present day, we see this as indefensible and very unwise.

The ‘Plan’ skirts over the issue of what is in practice in many respects an inert and largely unresponsive town planning process. In our opinion, when any one of the drivers referred to above begins to ‘bite’, the City may well be brought to its knees. We also question the idea, referred to occasionally, of some elements of ‘Urban Design’ becoming involved when we are not aware of either its existence within, or the possibility of its adoption by, the current town planning process.

The ‘Plan’ appears to place faith in what we see as an inadequate town planning system to somehow take us into an uncertain and arguably threatening future, when it is clear from all we see around us that this is more like a utopian dream than a realistic expectation.

The town planning process under which the ‘Plan’ has been created is based on an essentially car-centred environment. In pursuing this goal the City has centralised amenities to the extent that they have become increasingly inaccessible to non-car

owning families – the number of which will soon grow. Using public transport to fill this gap to an acceptable level will be inefficient and therefore the provision is likely to become unaffordable. Further, town planners have prohibited the formation of compact communities through the use of inflexible, naïvely-founded, zoning and rules based methods.

From all the available evidence it is clear that not only is our City on the path to collapse within the next decades, but that we may already have run out of time to put in place any remedial ‘big fixes’ which require significant use of capital.

This being so the ‘Plan’ should be abandoned and replaced with an action plan which is centred on urban remodelling – doing the best we can with what we already have; at its heart should be decentralisation, and the formation of compact communities which are encouraged to develop for themselves an increasing degree of self-sufficiency.

Achieving this would require local authorities to adopt a supportive role which would encourage communities to make use of local skills and other resources; included in this would be the localisation of appropriate industrial, commercial, educational, and recreational activities.

In effect Christchurch would in time take the form of an aggregation of urban villages.

Sustainable Otautahi Christchurch takes the view that, in principle at least, we have no other options available to us. Time has run out for anything else.