

Feedback on the Auckland Transport “Code of Practice” from the Waitematā Local Board

The Waitematā Local Board (the Board) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Auckland Transport Code of Practice (ATCOP). This feedback has been prepared by Christopher Dempsey and Pippa Coom under delegated authority of the Board.

The Board is supportive of the development of the ATCOP as a document which sets out the design and construction of transport infrastructure for transport facilities and services in Auckland and brings together seven previous regional engineering standards of the legacy councils, into one overarching document. It is a very comprehensive document which deals with both the principles of transport planning and the associated technical specifications.

In providing feedback we focused on whether the implementation of ATCOP will achieve the transformational shifts and targets in the Auckland Plan, in particular the move to outstanding public transport within one network, as well as deliver Local Board plan priorities.

The Board strongly agrees that we need to get ATCOP right so that *“Auckland will move forward as a strong, sustainable, safe people-friendly city that will be admired world-wide as an example of a city that successfully integrates land-use planning, transportation and sustainability to create a great place to live, work and play.”* (final sentence of the ATCOP introduction).

Summary

The first three chapters; the introduction, integrated transport planning and innovation chapters are a positive step forward in creating the necessary links between transport, land use and sustainability. The vision of ATCOP is consistent with the Auckland Plan and Waitemata Local Board plan priorities.

The Local Board strongly supports the priority and commitment to sustainability and the provision of dedicated space for pedestrians as a fundamental principle. The Local Board also supports the recognition that place function and movement functions are inextricably linked in the direction setting of ATCOP’s introductory chapter.

However, overall the draft ATCOP is a “business as usual” document that hasn’t achieved a transformation in the technical specifications. A stronger link must be made between the movement function and place function of our city’s streets and roads in the design standards of the document. As drafted ATCOP does not provide new tools to deliver the Auckland Plan, City Centre Master plan, or Local Board plan priorities.

The Board has reviewed best practice examples from overseas including the New York City Street design manual and the Boston Complete Street guidelines. The Board requests Auckland Transport re-focus ATCOP with similar transformational specifications that will give meaning to the importance of ‘place function’ and prioritise the safe movement of pedestrians particularly in the city centre, and metropolitan and town centres.

Direction setting – transport, land use and sustainability

The Waitemata Local Board strongly supports the direction setting of Chapter 1 and in particular:

- the one system approach in the ATCOP, which includes working through integration, collaboration and taking a holistic approach to transport infrastructure.
- Consideration of and linking both the ‘place’ and the ‘movement’ function of streets and recognition that walking at the beginning and the end of the journey are integral parts of any trip
- The stated strong commitment to sustainability
- Inclusion of the ‘modal hierarchy considerations diagram’
- The safe system approach to road safety

The Board also supports the approach to integrated transport planning (chapter 2) in particular:

- ATCOP adopting the 7 “Principles” for the development of Auckland Transport projects and the safety and accessibility principles.
- Recognition that shared spaces are an important way to integrate place and movement function. Although we note that the concept of shared streets is only one method to deliver the goal of pedestrianizing urban streets and more work needs to be done in this area

- The stated objective to deliver the expectations of the Auckland Plan for transport infrastructure



Photo by Sydney, Shared space on Fort Street

The prioritisation of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport

The ATCOP states that “*integrated transport planning allows planners of the transport system to find a balance between the competing uses and demands on the transport system.*” However, in relation to pedestrians, the ATCOP needs to be clear about when it is prioritising pedestrians and where it is balancing them with other transport modes.

The Auckland Plan clearly calls for the need to reprioritise transport planning and give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, particularly where there is a strong “place” function eg town centres. The Plan also has the goal of balancing needs between movement and place.

The approach of aiming to balance, rather than prioritise, the transport modes in the ATCOP will have negative implications for the delivery of the Waitemātā Local Board priorities. These include: “dedicated, connected cycleways and quality road design that rebalances the priority of road users to all modes of travel (including cyclists, pedestrians, skaters and mobility scooter users).”

Despite the policy direction and the mode hierarchy of Section 1, ATCOP does not seem to clearly set out a priority for walking, cycling and public transport in those sections where actual infrastructure designs are discussed.

Best practise standards for international cities

While the ATCOP supports a shift in thinking for the transport network in recognition of pedestrians, this shift is only one aspect of what is currently best practice for international cities. The sense of place in international transport trends is very important. Two international best practice examples include the New York City ‘street design manual” and Boston’s “Complete Streets” guidelines. Both of these documents prioritise the sense of place over the transport infrastructure.

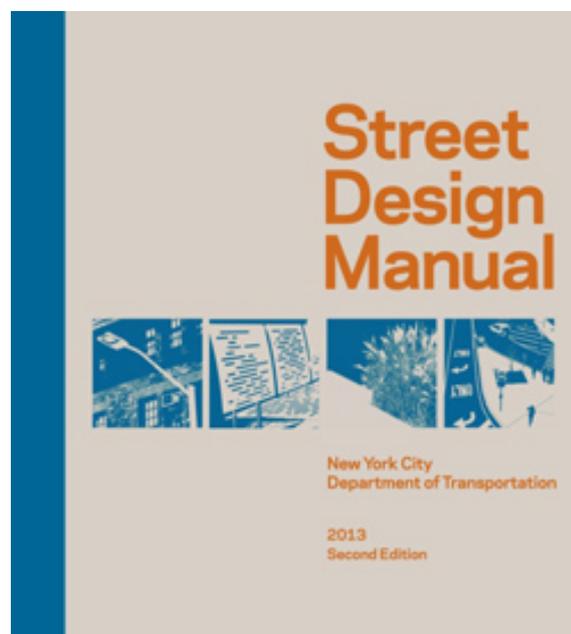
The Boston’s Complete Streets includes a three-pronged approach that informs roadway design to ensure that streets are shared by all users and not dominated by cars. It requires an emphasis on green design elements that promote an environmentally sensitive, sustainable use of the public right-of-way.

Greener designs incorporate street trees, rain gardens, and technology-assisted design elements incorporate intelligent signals, smart meters, electric vehicle sharing, car and bicycle-sharing, way-finding and social networks for greater system efficiencies and user convenience.

Innovation

The Board is concerned that ATCOP encourages design for movement function resulting in high speed environments (for example on roads classified as arterials). It needs to be clear in ATCOP where it is possible to innovate and exceed standards as distinct from the situations where compliance with the specifications is strictly required. For example it needs to be easy to adjust rules for town centres on arterial roads where a slower speed limit is appropriate.

The following feedback looks at how the technical specifications throughout the document will not deliver the direction setting approach that ATCOP commits to up front. We have covered issues of particular concern to the Board as we are not resourced to undertake an exhaustive review of the standards.



We also note there is a need within the document to recognise that the upskilling of engineers in understanding the shifts needed to move from hierarchical use functions to balanced use functions is necessary to give effect to the manual and achieve transformational transport and land use integration.

Place making function of “streets”

The concept of streets as compared to roads goes largely unrecognised in the detailed standards of ATCOP. As mentioned above one way that cities are beginning to challenge the conventional approach to transport planning is through the introduction of streets manuals, which treat urban streets differently to roads.

The Board requests that a “best practice” approach (as exemplified in the Boston and NYC guidelines) to transport planning is clearly reflected in the detail of ATCOP. Generally in ATCOP, there is a tendency to default to primarily providing for movement of motor vehicles (e.g. minimum width for a 16.6 metre tour coach on collector roads such as Richmond Road and an 18m semi-trailer or articulated truck on arterials). Also, it seems there is a general misunderstanding in terms of elements such as design speed, design vehicle, scale of infrastructure, safety considerations and delivering better urban outcomes of progressive street design.

Pro-active street design (as seen within the Boston and NYC guidelines) favours local trips, economic efficiency, non-vehicular trips and a compact urban form. Increasingly, street manuals are being used to deploy new tools focused on delivering broader land use outcomes than simply moving vehicles efficiently, consistent with the Auckland Plan. The Board therefore requests that ATCOP recognises streets as serving a multitude of mobility functions including public transport trips, short trips and economic exchange.

In addition the Board requests that a clear set of principles and subsequent technical standards which communicate the vision of how streets are critical to place-shaping, community building, and economic vitality (rather than just access and mobility) is incorporated within ATCOP.

Road classifications

The road classifications used in ATCOP reinforces the one-dimensional traffic planning of roads and design for movement function. This doesn't properly address the complexity of urban contexts, and the high place function of roads (such as arterials like Ponsonby Road).

The Board notes that the language suggests that the classes are not ‘set in stone’ and encourages wider planning consideration, which is positive, as we know, road functions change over time e.g. trams to trolley buses to cars. In further chapters, however, there are references to road classification that do not contain the same disclaimer about design flexibility and judgement and this is a concern. Road design

standards should be consistent with citywide goals for urban design, economic growth and safety. The Board therefore requests that a wider range of road classifications is introduced to ATCOP that better reflect community contexts and desired land use outcomes.

The high “place function” for arterials also needs to be recognised, so that they are not solely viewed as having movement functionality (for example as set out in Figure 5). Where there are arterials in town centres, their function needs to be set below the current standards. For example the width of town centre streets designated as an arterial roads are designed to a maximum rather than a minimum width. However, if tighter intersections in town centres were designed then this would ensure narrower widths and therefore lower speeds.

The road corridors through our town centres preform a function as social space as well as movement. Our town centres are the most extensive public realm that Council manages and although town centres frequently fall into the category of “road corridor” they need to be designed to recognise their vital function as social space.

Speed limits need to be reduced around schools and town centres. The standards need to easily allow for these reductions in speed to occur. Additionally, the tools to allow this to take effect need to be incorporated in the document.

Road layout and Geometric design

The design speed of a road in ATCOP (chapter 7) is based solely on “*the maximum speed that a vehicle can safely travel on that road under perfect conditions*”. Once again, place function is given less priority and the provision for cyclists and pedestrians are not commented on. Through these statements in this chapter, the vehicle (assumed to refer to motor vehicles rather than the legal definition of “vehicles” which includes bicycles) is given priority.

The road layout chapter incorporates design standards for slip lanes. As it is no longer international best practice to have slip lanes there should only be limited circumstances for slip lanes due to the safety impact on pedestrians and cyclists.

Roundabouts also need to be carefully designed for pedestrians and cyclists with slow approaches and slow departures. Again, there should only be limited circumstances where these are installed due to the confusion they create for all users and lack of safety.

The Board requests that greater weight is given in the ATCOP to cyclists and pedestrians, as equal users of the road/street space in all road layout designs.

Cycling infrastructure design

The Board is supportive of design standards, which are similar to international best practice. Segregated cycle lanes need to be the default design option for all new roading projects. We also request the following additional cycling specifications:

- cycle detection equipment at signalised crossings – particularly on Auckland Cycle Network routes.
- Advanced stop boxes supported at signalised junctions, although feeder lanes need to be provided to maximise the benefits to cyclists.
- Cycle lanes routed around bus stop bays where feasible.
- Operation (hours) of bus/bike lanes should be maximised to benefit cyclists
- Cycle parking standards should include defined distances from parking to destination e.g. train station entrance.
- Provision of informal parking alongside cycle storage guidance

We also support the shared street provision for cyclists in chapter 5 but request the ability for innovation and focus on pedestrian amenity and safety is included.

Separated cycle lanes through intersections is an example of innovative design that we would like ATCOP to encourage such as this protected intersection design recently proposed by a Portland planner

(<http://www.peopleforbikes.org/blog/entry/video-argues-that-protected-bike-lanes-need-protected-intersections>)

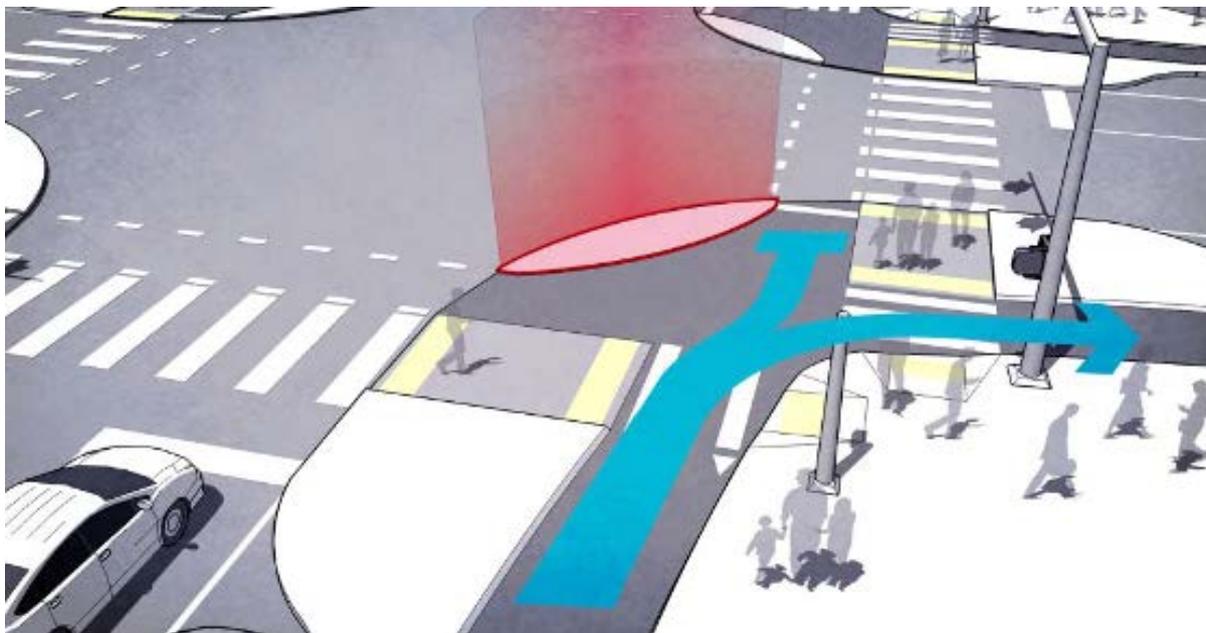


Image by Nick Falbo, Alta Planning and Design, Portland, USA

The Board notes that the routes and classifications for the Auckland Cycle Network (chapter 5.2) still has not been consulted on with Local Boards and that the Waitematā Local Board has requested Auckland Transport's "Cycle feeder" routes are renamed "Greenways" and that the standards align with Local board aspirations for a Greenways network.

Vehicle Types

We are concerned with some design matters related to vehicle types and the effects of potential over-design of intersections. The Board requests that Auckland Transport look to include international best practice design guidance based around a new base design vehicle being identified that better represents a typical urban vehicle delivering goods related to urban scale, for example, "Keep intersections as compact as possible."

Some evidence is emerging of 'vehicle inflation'. As vehicle sizes get larger, infrastructure gets larger to accommodate this size. Vehicle size is directly related to marketing strategies by vehicle manufacturing companies. We request that Auckland Transport disregard the effect of vehicle inflation and its impact on engineering standards.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. We look forward to seeing ATCOP finalised with the technical standards and specifications that will move Auckland forward as a strong, sustainable, safe people-friendly city.

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