

6 May 2011

Draft Annual Plan  
Wellington City Council  
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WELLINGTON

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Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: 2011/2012 Annual Plan**

**Introduction**

The New Zealand Retailers Association wishes to present the following submission in respect of the Wellington City Council's 2011/2012 draft Annual Plan.

**Background**

The Association is the largest group representing the retail industry in New Zealand.

Our membership includes the major supermarkets and general merchandise chains, specialised chains, traditional department stores and thousands of owner operators spread throughout the country.

The membership also includes a number of specialised trade groups representing manufacturers, distributors and retailers in the plumbing materials, metal fastener, pet, equestrian, jewellery, bicycle and sporting goods sectors.

Viewed nationally retail sales (including accommodation and hospitality) now total some \$65b and increased by 3.8% between 2009 and 2010.

Viewed regionally sales within the jurisdiction of the Wellington Regional Council now total some \$6.9b, representing 10.7% of total sales in New Zealand.

Between 2009 and 2010 sales within the Wellington region increased by 6.9%

**General Submissions**

The Association recognises the difficulty faced by the Council in presenting a "balanced approach" to its budget for 2011/2012 in the current economic climate.

We also acknowledge that it is a challenging task to develop income and spending streams that adequately "plans for the future, strengthens Wellington's infrastructure and delivers affordable rates".

Nevertheless we do have some very real concerns about aspects of the draft annual plan and accordingly comment of some of the economic development and transport issues set out in the draft planning document.

## **1) Economic Development**

We are generally supportive of the objectives set out in the economic development section of the draft plan which concentrate upon “underscoring Wellington’s reputation as a great place to live and visit”.

We totally endorse the on-going funding for Positively Wellington Tourism as well as the separate operation of the events development fund which supports major annual functions such as the Wearable Arts Awards which have a positive spinoff for retail.

We are also in complete agreement with the statement in the draft plan that the 2011 Rugby World Cup provides a major opportunity to showcase Wellington to a global audience during the current financial year.

We are in fact actively working with Council Officers to ensure that the retail sector plays its part in ensuring that visitors to our city enjoy their experience during this campaign.

## **2) Transport**

We are generally supportive of the objective to have a “safe, efficient transport system (in Wellington) that allows people to get to and from work, and to enjoy all that the city has to offer”.

Likewise we support the view that a transport network that allows easy movement of people and goods is also vital for business (within the city).

However, we do have some strong reservations about the following policy proposals contained within the draft plan and wish to make our views clear in the strongest possible way.

### **a) Bus Lanes**

We note that it is proposed that the Council will consider and implement further bus priority measures across the city to meet the growing demand and provide a viable alternative which is attractive to users.

In particular, we note that this year will see the extension of bus priority measures in Courtenay Place and Kent and Cambridge Terrace to complement improvements carried out in Manners Street and the rest of the Golden Mile.

The conversion of Manners Mall into a two way bus route was a disaster for local retailers as the project went way over time and caused considerable loss of earnings for the retailers in the area (the Council have negotiated a compensation package for some of these business owners). If the proposed bus lanes require significant road works then it is hoped that the Council and their contractors have learned from the Manners Street experience. If it is simply a matter of painting a “green lane” for buses then one could assume that this will cause no disruption at all. We would seek confirmation of this.

We would suggest that instead of simply creating “bus lanes” that serious thought be given to the routing of buses through the city. The practice of taking all buses through the Manners/Willis/Lambton Quay streets seems to us to be creating much of the congestion. A bus from Roseneath comes into the city in the morning full of people coming into work. It then carries on all the way to

Wilton with virtually no passengers before it fills up to bring the people of Wadestown into work. The reverse occurs at the other end of the day. Why do we take empty buses through the narrow streets of the city. Would there not be some logic in having fewer buses simply looping through the city connecting to the suburban buses at bus hubs at, for example, the railway station and Cambridge Terrace ends of the city? The benefit would be that we would have fewer buses coming through the city and therefore less congestion, better use of the buses in use and if the fare structure was right then the buses through the city could be “no charge” with the only revenue collection being on the suburban routes. This would also encourage greater use of buses during the day for transport around the city. Essentially, we are recommending that alternative options be evaluated and discussed rather than simply opting for more “bus lanes” as being the only idea “on the table”.

#### **b) Courtenay Place**

It is essential in our view that the Council undertakes full and open consultation of any redevelopment proposals of Courtenay Place.

We would have major concerns if the closure of Courtenay Place to vehicular traffic was on any Council agenda, wish list or in any way up for consideration.

Likewise we would have major concerns should the redevelopment proposals lead to a decrease in the number of loading zones or parking spaces within the Courtenay Place area.

#### **c) Parking**

We note that the Council acknowledges that parking in the CBD is important for shoppers, tourists and those working and visiting the city and that currently the Council provides more than 12,000 on street spaces in the central city and surrounding areas.

However, we have serious concerns about the proposals to increase parking fees by \$1 per hour (25%) and also to extend the time when charges might apply in some areas of the city.

This is totally unacceptable to the retail community. The Council want a vibrant CBD – the quickest way to kill the CBD’s retail sector is to lift parking fees to \$5.00 per hour. Some on the Council may have an agenda to reduce the car traffic coming into the city – highlighting a lack of appreciation of the importance of the car to the suburban resident. A quick visit to the malls in Lower Hutt and Porirua will clearly demonstrate that the shopper and their car are an integral part of the retail environment. We do not wish to be part of a social experiment to see what happens when you push parking prices to a certain point – please do not play with the livelihoods of thousands of retailers and their staff just to identify how elastic the price of parking might be.

We believe that in tight recessionary times many consumers will not support these higher charges and will opt to shop elsewhere, where parking is free.

The Council are happy to collect their rates from the retail community – please deliver some benefit in exchange.

The idea of extending the hours of operation of parking meters during the week will have a significant impact on the hospitality trade and the theatres. This appears to be simply a "revenue grab" without any consideration for the businesses concerned.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak to our submissions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Albertson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

John Albertson  
CEO