

Otatara Community Centre, Kindergarten & School access changes & Dunns Road Kea crossing relocation.

After thorough consultation, and on behalf of the Otatara School Board of Trustees, I am pleased to present a practical and viable concept that will help to mitigate the safety concerns regarding pedestrian and vehicle movements at the Otatara Community Centre, Kindergarten and School.

1. Closing the existing kea crossing on Dunns Road, and relocating it toward Invercargill adjacent to the community centre.
 - The kea type crossing is considered the most appropriate option for Dunns Road, providing children a safe place to cross. Kea crossings are specific to schools, so school patrols can control traffic and safely guide children across the road. These controlled crossings are generally safer than those that aren't.
 - The kea crossing will be positioned at an improved location, closer to the greater flow of pedestrian traffic that will utilise it. It is hoped this shift will also promote its increased use, reducing the current random wanderings across Dunns Road and provide a practicable focal point for pedestrian access to and from the community centre, kindergarten and school. This crossing will then feed onto a marked footpath across the western end of the community centre and across the community centre driveway to the corner of the kindergarten grounds. This footpath will be 2 metres wide, offset parallel to and 0.5 metre from the garden kerb along the community centre. This width and offset will enable the centreline of this footpath will line up with the kindergarten fence corner. From this point an existing footpath can be utilised to gain access to the kindergarten and either end of the school. Pedestrian flow along the footpath parallel with the east side of the kindergarten will be improved by removing a portion of low timber barrier. This will enable a more direct intersection with the path between the school and community centre car park, and some smoothing of the surface at this junction point will remove a potential trip hazard.
 - It is acknowledged that some of the proposed footpath is subject to shading by the western end of the community centre. I have confirmed that after recent 6 and 10.5 degree frosts, there was no adverse effect on the surface traction at this footpath and crossing location. The fact that it isn't level,

particularly at the driveway crossing, seemed to be an advantage. Level surfaces either side were quite slippery due to the frosts, particularly the community centre and kindergarten / school car parks. A grooved surface across the pathway is still an option which I have been advised is a very effective remedy to reduce the slip potential of any surface due to moisture and / or frosting.

- We are also proposing a 1 metre widening of the footpath between the kindergarten fence corner and kindergarten gate, to a width of 2 metres. We recognise the existing footpath is quite narrow around this area, being constrained between the fence and kerb line. This widening will match in with the more useful footpath width either side of this narrow section. Servicing of an existing storm water sump which will be beneath the footpath widening, can be facilitated by a solid alloy (with tread deck for traction) cover set flush into the footpath to the back of the extended kerb and channel. This kerb and channel will terminate at both sides of the existing dish drain.
- We are consulting with engineers to confirm the path across the community centre driveway and its merging with a widened footpath at the kindergarten corner, will be at an appropriate grade for pedestrian traffic. The kerb crossing at this point will be 4 metres wide (2 metres either side of the pathway centreline).
- Pedestrians will no longer be channelled across the school / kindergarten car park and drop off area, this being the present undesirable situation off the end of the existing kea crossing. Our proposed changes will be facilitated by the fitting of a gate (unlocked) at the north-east corner of the community centre (point 4. below details this concept). This gate could be shut for an appropriate period when the kea crossing is patrolled before the opening and closing of school, and left open outside of these times. As a result, no vehicles would be rounding the community centre and crossing the proposed new footpath over the driveway at the kindergarten corner during the busiest times. Installation of an additional speed bump just prior to where the footpath crosses this driveway, along with no parking marking and appropriate signage will be effective traffic control measures. These will reduce traffic speed, improve visibility and forewarn motorists of this crossing point.

- Alternatively, perhaps this gate could remain closed from 8:15am to 3:15pm on school days, with appropriate signage attached to the gate advising this. The community centre can be widely utilised by combinations of the school, kindergarten, community and other patronage throughout the day, and elimination of vehicle traffic from in front of the main entrance during this time would have additional safety benefits for everyone.
2. Construction of a bus only designated park outside the school Learning Resource Centre, the extent clearly defined by painted lines and marked BUSES ONLY NO PARKING.
- This park, with the exclusion of other traffic, will provide safe access to and from buses for all Otatara Community children who commute between home and school via this means. We propose extending this area to approximately 1 metre from the bike shed that is outside the main driveway gate and complete it with an asphalt surface to match the existing car park. It has been recommended to realign and extend a short section of the security fence to run directly between the driveway gate and resource centre. New kerb and channel will be constructed close to the base of the realigned fence and join across onto the line of the existing kerb and channel that runs parallel to the resource centre. This combined with the park extension will provide adequate manoeuvring space for two buses to park alongside, enabling elimination of the bus from the community centre car park. These large vehicles are certainly undesirable in narrow and congested areas particularly around the community centre driveway. Presently, passengers are required to enter and exit the bus that is parked outside the community centre main entrance from and onto, at times, a busy driveway.
 - We have been advised by the Invercargill City Council that no additional drainage or sump would be required for the bus park. Appropriate contour can be engineered into the park extension so that water and pollutant run-off will be guided by existing and extended kerb and channel to an existing storm water sump adjacent to the existing bus passenger shelter.
 - Conventional vehicles would enter the school / kindergarten car park offset just to the east of the proposed bus entry point at the school's main driveway. Appropriate signage such as %Bus Park Entry+and %Car Park Entry+could be erected at the relevant entry points. Some physical separation of the bus and conventional vehicle entry points to the car park is recommended for

safety and clarification. This would be created by extension of the existing garden plot west to the bus entry point, and some truncation and kerb reshaping at the eastern end to widen and improve the vehicle entry at the existing kea crossing entry position. Trees and scrubs removed for the bus park could be replanted in the extended garden plot for this entry separation. This would complement the existing landscaping along the kindergarten and school road frontages and also provide some visual and audible noise screening from the Dunns Road traffic.

- All vehicles would then depart this car park as they presently do out the existing exit. We have been advised by specialist traffic consultants, that the close proximity of the relocated kea crossing to this exit point is considered to be a positive traffic measure. In fact, the closer the better, as vehicles are still travelling very slowly on exiting this car park and approaching the kea crossing.
 - Consideration has also been given to the close proximity of the extended bus entry manoeuvring space to one of the bike sheds. I have undertaken an evaluation of the usage of the bike sheds over a representation of days and weather conditions. I have concluded that average usage on any typical day rarely goes close to filling just one of the sheds, and this is mostly the one inside the main driveway gate that is safely separated from the buses by the security gate and fence. This shed is accessed by students wheeling their bike through the school's main pedestrian entrance, across to and down the driveway. It is noted that the bike shed outside the school's driveway gate and adjacent to buses accessing the park, is also used, albeit sparingly, but may fill up on days such as some of our sporting events and activities. I believe this poses no significant safety concerns as the buses are usually loaded and will have departed for the main depot prior to 8:30am and the arrival of most children. A similar situation for the buses exists for the afternoon pickup, as bus timetable pressure requires the buses to be parked up before the finish of, and departing very soon after, the close of the school day.
3. Elimination of the 12 car parks alongside the footpath adjacent to the kindergarten, and development of a bus pick up / drop off lane in this area was discussed.

- The loss of these car parks was not well supported. However, it has been recommended that removal of the last 3 car parks in this line by the kindergarten gate with the kerb line yellow dash painted to indicate ~~no~~ parking+would be a practical safety improvement. Their loss may also be required to accommodate potential footpath widening in this area, an option currently being investigated and as discussed prior.
 - Considering the present situation, the second last park is a potential safety risk, as there is no barrier such as a kerb and channel to prevent vehicles from rolling forward and across the footpath, with the potential crush risk to pedestrians against the kindergarten gate and / or fence. The end park which straddles a dish drain and storm water sump appears to have been added at the time of the last car park remarking in order to accommodate another park. The removal of this park would improve visibility and reduce congestion at the kindergarten corner where the proposed crossing of the centre driveway will be positioned.
 - At least 2 of these parks can be allocated across the other side of the car park, between the proposed pathway and vehicle exit, causing a probable net loss of no more than 2 parking spaces for the school / kindergarten car park (one space may also be lost due to the repositioned vehicle entry).
4. Changing the community centre car park layout to enable a two way access at the existing entrance. At almost 6 metres wide, this entrance is confirmed by the Invercargill City Council to be of adequate width as it is.
- This is required to support the gated closure at the northeast corner of the community centre. Traffic flow will be guided by a painted centreline at the entrance / exit, and a painted tear drop shaped roundabout and directional arrows. Elimination of the 8 existing central car parks near the position of this roundabout is seen as a positive traffic measure, improving visibility across and reducing congestion in, the car park. The parks along the north and east sides will be angle realigned to accommodate the clockwise traffic flow.
 - Extension of the existing walkway around the community centre car park. This would help to reduce the issue of pedestrian and vehicle traffic merging in the car park, which is very slippery (particularly for pedestrians) after a heavy frost. Three additional access points onto this footpath would be established to improve access onto, and encourage, its use. One will be

positioned to provide convenient access across to the community centre main entrance; the second at the right angle bend at the car park corner where there will be no parking space and a third via a narrow marked access corridor between the 4th and 5th parks along from the Dunns Road entrance / exit. This access point is positioned to avoid an existing retaining wall, and would also be coincident with the end / start of the footpath.

5. Disabled Parking.

- The creation of 1 disabled car park adjacent to the existing bus shelter in the school / kindergarten car park with an existing upgraded ramp already available from car park to footpath. This additional parking space is currently in a no parking area due to the location of the existing pedestrian crossing over the car park. Closure of this crossing will accommodate this additional parking space with no compromise to traffic congestion, flow or safety.
- Reduction of the 4 disabled car parks adjacent to the community centre front door to 2, and the possible allocation of 1 other space at the north-west corner the community centre car park to accommodate this requirement if / or when the driveway is gated. An existing access point onto the footpath through the low safety wall is adjacent to this park. We will confirm the number of disabled parking spaces required for the community centre, during our consultation with the community centre trustees. If the number of disabled parking spaces can be reduced it would potentially widen the available carriageway adjacent to the community centre main door.

6. Dunns Road.

- There is a lot of debate concerning current speed limits past some schools. Rural schools seem to get a disproportionate amount of concern on this issue, as accident statistics indicate the far greater problem is around urban schools. I don't believe Otatara is a true rural school, rather a school in a semi-rural setting with urban school traffic issues. We certainly have an urban size roll (300+) and growing steadily, reflected by the growth of the Otatara Community.
- It is worth considering that perhaps it isn't just the current 70kph speed limit past our children's and communities facilities on Dunns Road that maybe

problematic. It could also be a combination of increasing traffic volume and inappropriate motoring decisions.

- Current legislation has provision to implement a permanent speed limit reduction on 50 kph and 100kph roads. A speed reduction on a 70 kph road is not well catered for under this legislation, and the setting of these speed limits is largely outside the jurisdiction of the Invercargill City Council as the Road Controlling Authority.

Another issue at country schools is their presence is not always apparent from the motorists perspective. School buildings are often set back from the road and not visible until traffic is alongside. This is particularly an issue for those motorists unfamiliar with the area. During school drop off and pick up times the presence of parked cars on the roadside (with children getting in and out of them) can provide additional visual cues to approaching motorists that there is school activity ahead, and slow down accordingly. Therefore, it is conceded, some roadside traffic can be advantageous.

The current school board, and at least the immediate past board, has put an enormous amount of time and effort into attempting to improve these safety issues. These include but are not limited to regular reminder notices in our weekly school newsletters requesting respect to other road users (%share the road+) and adherence to road rules, parent and staff volunteers monitoring drop-off and pick-up practices and request more appropriate behaviour when required, to a coned, coridored and supervised crossing of the car park / drop-off zone off the end of the existing kea crossing. Unfortunately, with people's attitudes being as they are at times has made facilitation of some of these approaches challenging. Surely, the time has arrived for some form of permanent change to the current road and access infrastructure.

There are insufficient pedestrian and motor vehicle movements on Dunns Road to meet required criteria for the installation of a permanent pedestrian (zebra) crossing. These crossings can be installed on most roads, but are considered more appropriate for those with a posted speed of no more than 50kph. A potential danger of permanent pedestrian crossings at schools is motorists don't always expect to see pedestrians using the crossing outside of school hours. This increases the risk of pedestrians being involved in an accident.

There are a number of positive traffic control measures which could be implemented on Dunns Road. I have discussed these with the Invercargill City Council Roading Division, who are considering the following options:-

- Better positioning of the speed indicating devices relative to the school.

- Creating the motorists' perception of a narrowed carriageway by the lane marking as depicted on the concept plans either side of our proposed kea crossing relocation. This narrowing is proven to be an effective speed control measure.
- A low kerbed pedestrian island at the road centreline midway across the kea crossing.
- The painting of SCHOOL on the road surface at an appropriate location either side of the school as an additional visual cue for motorists.
- Modernised kea crossing signage. (which would be stored at the community centre)
- A cycle lane along both roadsides. New legislation requires all traffic on either side of a road to be moving in the same direction. I gather existing situations are exempt from this requirement.

The Invercargill City Council will be obtaining the necessary authorisations for the relocation of the kea crossing.

It will be prudent to consult with Mr Gavin McKenzie, School Property Advisor for the Ministry of Education and also the Southland Kindergarten Association. Our concepts would require some alteration to the infrastructure, so it will be necessary to obtain any required approvals.

Official permission for the proposed alterations at the community centre is still to be requested of the Otatara Community Centre trustees, but initial discussions with representatives has been supportive of our proposals.

Further consultation with the Invercargill City Council Parks and Reserves regarding the footpath extension around the community centre car park is still to be undertaken. I propose to meet with Mr Pagan, the Parks and Reserves Manager on his return this month, to present our ideas. I also propose to meet with Mr Barry Hanson from the Department of Conservation, Mr Brian Rance as a representative of the Otatara Landcare Group and Mr Frank Dean as a representative of the Otatara Community Group regarding this concept.

Consultation with the New Zealand Fire Service; particularly regarding patronage egress and fire appliance access at the community centre will be undertaken. Written comment / approval of our proposed changes will be requested.

We are still very willing to consider further suggestions and / or criticisms. If anyone has something they would like to offer, particularly from parents and staff of the Otatara Kindergarten and School, and also the wider Otatara Community, it would be great to hear from you.

Fellow school trustees, please have a thorough look over these concepts and if you could attend our next board meeting well prepared that would be great. I think it is important to keep up the momentum on this project. If you require additional information or clarification please contact me in the first instance. If I can't assist you, I guarantee I know someone who can. In the interim, Brett and I will continue to investigate funders and obtain quotes for the works required ready for presentation at our next meeting.

If the required approvals and funding for these changes can be obtained, then a realistic timeframe for the construction could be between mid December 2012 to late January 2013, utilising the lengthy closure of the kindergarten and school over this time. This construction could be staged to enable continuous access to, and car parking at, these facilities. This would be particularly relevant in recognition of the ongoing patronage of the community centre.

On behalf of the Otatara School Board of Trustees, I would like to express our gratitude to everyone who has willingly contributed professional practical thoughts, ideas, constructive criticisms, and support to get us to this stage. I have been privileged to meet such a wealth of knowledgeable and helpful people. For this project, there is no perfect solution, just one that is the result of a lot of compromise and commonsense. Your ideas, when implemented, will benefit the safety of all users of these facilities, particularly our children. I can think of no more worthy a cause.

Many Thanks,
Craig Thompson
for Otatara School Board of Trustees