

# Summary of feedback on the Freyberg Place Pedestrian Mall



**Freyberg Place viewed from Courthouse Lane (indicative only)**

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## Summary

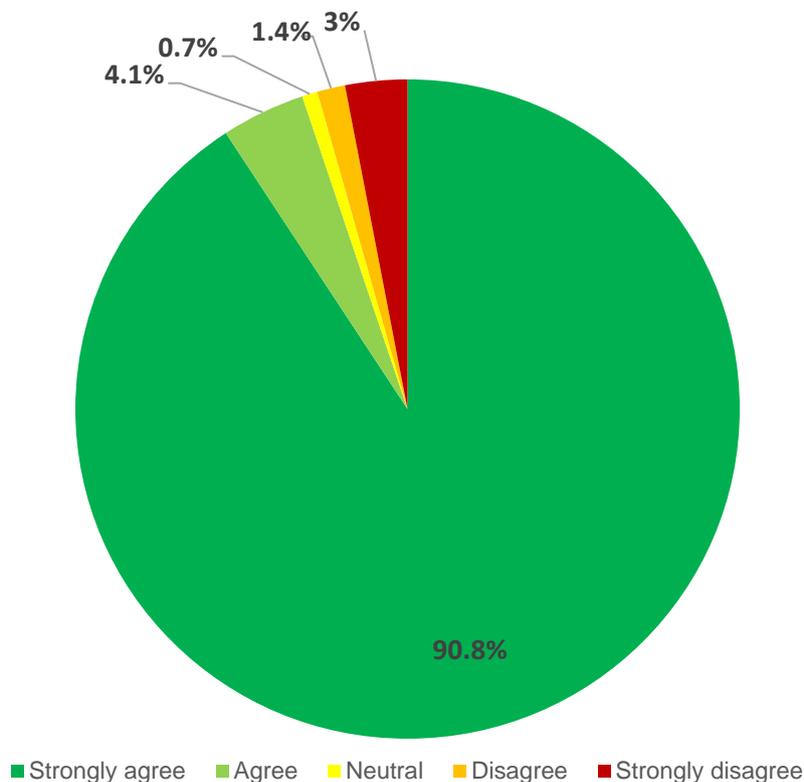
Auckland Transport (AT), in association with Auckland Council (AC), proposed changing Freyberg Place from a roadway available to motor vehicles to a pedestrian mall. We consulted from the 21<sup>st</sup> May to 1 July 2018 and received 665 submissions.

### Key themes in feedback

94.9% of submitters (628 submitters) supported changing Freyberg Place into a pedestrian mall.

4.4% of submitters (29 submitters) did not support the proposed change to a pedestrian mall.

The remaining 0.7% (5 submitters) were neutral on the proposal.



We also found the following key themes in your feedback:

- Prioritising walking and cycling within the central city (28.9%, 192 submitters) with High Street, Lorne Street, O’Connell Street and Queen Street being mentioned in particular
- Improving safety for people in Freyberg Place (21.7%, 144 submitters)
- The pedestrian mall should have been created when previous upgrades were completed (6.2%, 41 submitters)

## Outcome and next steps

After considering all the feedback we received, we have decided to proceed with changing Freyberg Place into a pedestrian mall.

We will do this by raising bollards (which are currently lowered to street level) at each end of Freyberg Place. This will prevent vehicles driving through the square.

We will make this change 15 October 2018.

# Background

## Context

The recent upgrade of Freyberg Place has created a vibrant community hub, which has become a popular destination for residents, workers and visitors to the central city.

Freyberg Place underwent a major redevelopment during 2015-2017, during which it was closed to traffic. After Freyberg Place reopened to motorised vehicles in 2017, a number of safety concerns were raised regarding pedestrian safety and the dangerous behaviour of motorists travelling in the wrong direction from Courthouse Lane to High Street.

AC also raised concerns regarding large vehicles parking on the square, which could damage the new infrastructure and would be expensive to repair.

To ensure pedestrians can safely use the redeveloped square and to avoid expensive repairs we proposed to declare Freyberg Place a pedestrian Mall.

## Project Information

Officially declaring Freyberg Place a pedestrian mall, will provide a safer environment for pedestrians and people on bicycles, provide a stronger connection between the Ellen Melville Centre and the square, and address historical property boundaries, where the roadway currently crosses over areas of council-owned property.

Making Freyberg Place a pedestrian mall will mean that it can only be used by pedestrians and people on bicycles. No motor vehicles will be allowed to drive into or park on Freyberg Place, with the exception of:

- Emergency service vehicles
- Authorised vehicles subject to an authorised temporary traffic management plan

There are retractable bollards at each end of Freyberg Place. These are currently lowered, meaning vehicles can pass through. When Freyberg Place starts to operate as a pedestrian mall these bollards will be raised at all times to restrict access (but will be able to be lowered to allow emergency service vehicles and other authorised vehicles to pass through when necessary).

# Consultation

Public consultation ran over a 5-week period, from 21 May 2018 to 1 July 2018.

## Activities to raise awareness

Auckland Transport undertook a number of activities to publicise and gain the best exposure for the project. We were keen to receive feedback from everyone who wanted to have a say and get their views on our proposal. To publicise the consultation, we:

- Sent letters and freepost feedback form delivered to a wide catchment area including businesses, stakeholders and other affected parties
- Targeted social media including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
- On-site signage boards advising of the consultation
- A project webpage with online questionnaire
- 2 public notices in NZ Herald
- Stakeholder liaison with Heart of the City (HOTC) and the City Centre Residents' Group (CCRG)

## Giving Feedback

We asked if you support changing Freyberg Place into a pedestrian mall. Feedback could be provided using an online submission form (on our [Have Your Say website](#)) or a hard copy form included in the brochures. See [Attachment 2](#) at the end of this report for a copy of the feedback form.

# Your Feedback

## Overview

We received responses from 665 people, which we have analysed to identify key themes.

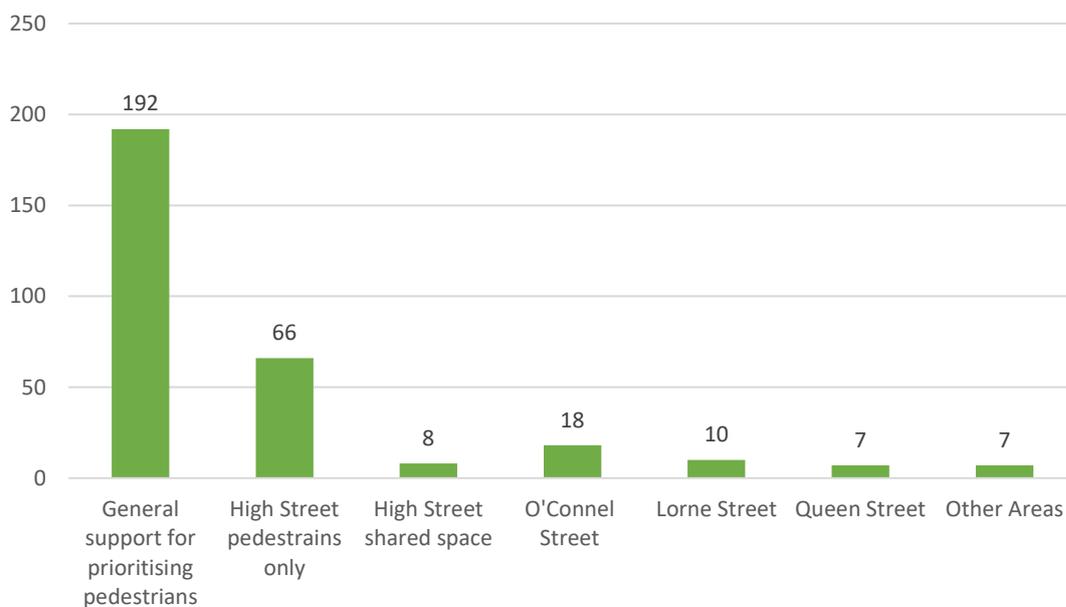
In addition, we received submission from Heart of the City and the Central City Residents Group. These are summarised in the 'Other submissions' section and their suggestions included in the list of suggestions.

## Key themes

### Priority for pedestrians and other modes

192 people indicated that they would like infrastructure to prioritise walking and cycling and/or cater less to private vehicles more broadly than just Freyberg Place. People regularly mentioned other specific areas that they would like to be pedestrianised in addition to Freyberg Place:

- High Street was by far the most popular candidate with 66 people indicating that they would like it become a pedestrian mall and 8 indicating they would like to see it become a shared space
- O'Connell Street (18 people)
- Lorne Street (10 people) and
- Queen Street (7 people)



15 people, who supported the proposal, thought that the changes would be beneficial for local businesses by encouraging foot traffic in the area.

## Safety concerns

Among those in favour of the Freyberg Pedestrian Mall safety for pedestrians was a major concern. 144 people sighted safety concerns as a reason for their support of the proposed changes to Freyberg Place. Often these people reported being surprised by vehicle traffic moving through the square. People were also particularly concerned with the safety of children from traffic in the square.

- 6 people reported witnessing unsafe driver behaviour including cars moving the wrong way through Freyberg Place.
- 8 people (who disagreed with the proposal) questioned whether closing Freyberg Place to traffic would improve safety or thought that the square was safe enough at present. These people pointed to low numbers of vehicles moving through the square and slow speeds as reasons they thought the current arrangement was adequately safe.

The people that stated they did not consider safety to be an issue are in direct contrast with the 144 people who sighted safety as a reason for their support of the proposal, which includes 6 people who mentioned specific instances of dangerous driver behaviour. However, we accept that AT does not have any records of crashes on Freyberg Place.

There were 5 people who mentioned that they would prefer cyclists to dismount their bikes when moving through Freyberg Place. Most of these people saw cyclists as a safety hazard in the pedestrian mall.

## Congestion Issues

Increased congestion on High Street was the most cited reason for disagreeing with the proposal.

9 people worried that closing Freyberg Place to traffic would increase congestion at the High Street Victoria Street intersection. These people also noted that Freyberg Place was useful for couriers and delivery drivers who could use Freyberg Place to avoid being stuck in congestion.

## Retrospective support of Freyberg Place

Some people indicated a preference for Freyberg Place to have become a pedestrian mall at the same time the remodelling work was completed. (41 people).

It is possible that some of these people were confused about the nature of this consultation as the redevelopment work is complete and will not be affected by this decision as the bollards already exist and simply will be permanently raised.

## Lack of parking

Availability of parking was another concern for those who opposed the changes to Freyberg Place:

- 4 people mentioned that closing the square would make it more difficult to find parking in the area especially on High St.
- One person was particularly concerned with the supply of short term (30 min or less) servicing High St.
- 4 people thought that the proposal would have a negative effect on the local businesses as customers would have difficulty navigating by car and parking.

## Noise concerns and antisocial behaviour

Two responses referred to noise from community activities and buskers as an issue for residents living close by to the square. One person also referred to attracting more rough sleepers to Freyberg Place.

## Road Stopping

CCRG and one other person indicated they were in support of a road-stopping proposal rather than the pedestrian mall proposal.

## Other Submissions

### Heart of the City

The project team has met and liaised with HOTC about their submission. HOTC was concerned about ensuring business feedback had been considered, given there was an agreement to go from mostly open to mostly closed over time. After discussion, HOTC concluded that business feedback had been taken into account and feedback supports the proposal to re-designate Freyberg Place as a pedestrian mall. There are however issues that must be addressed in the area, including concerns around traffic congestion. HOTC is committed to working with AT and the High Street business community to explore ways in which these concerns can be addressed. HOTC also suggested it would be beneficial to develop a management plan to give greater clarity on how the square will function for events. HOTC has indicated that there might be a benefit to have one organisation control the area e.g. AC rather than the current arrangement of both AT and AC.

## **City Centre Residents' Group**

The CCRG supports our proposal to close Freyberg Place to traffic. Long-term, the CCRG would prefer that Freyberg Place ceased to be a legal road by going through the road stopping process, but acknowledge the need to designate Freyberg Place as a pedestrian mall as a short term solution. If the road was stopped, CCRG noted this would allow Auckland Council to be solely responsible for Freyberg Place and the Ellen Melville Centre rather than AT and AC sharing responsibility.

**feedback**

General themes	Specific Issue	AT Response
<b>Safety concerns</b>	- Cyclists pose a danger to pedestrians	- The design of Freyberg Place aims to have an open space feel with its terraces, seating and planting design which encourages an open communal and slow speed environment. AT do not envisage cyclists will be a safety issue to other users of the square. Given there is no specific laid out cycle path or route for cyclists, care, and consideration should be taken in these high-pedestrianised areas.
	- There is no safety concern on Freyberg place	- There have been observations of near misses at this location, with vehicles travelling in the wrong direction entering from Courthouse Lane. The removal of traffic would improve safety for vulnerable pedestrians and cyclist but also other motorist in this area.
<b>Congestion Issues</b>	- Closing Freyberg place will add to congestion at the High Street/Victoria Street intersection	- Traffic count surveys were undertaken prior to the constructions phase of Freyberg Place’s development in 2014 and the reopening of Freyberg Place to motorised vehicles in 2017. See graph in <a href="#">attachment 1</a> . The volume of vehicles using Freyberg Place as a thoroughfare was very small originally but there was a dramatic drop in those numbers after the project was reopened to motor vehicles in 2017. This means the displacement of vehicles to High Street would be minimal as the current traffic volumes are small.
	- Freyberg place is a convenient route for motor vehicles to avoid congestion on the end of High Street	- There is also no evidence according to our surveys to indicate that there will be a significant increase in traffic using High Street. Enabling vehicle increases and safety issues for pedestrians. - AT will work alongside HOTC and the High Street community to explore ways in which concerns around congestion in the area can be addressed.
<b>Lack of parking</b>	- Closing Freyberg Place to traffic will make it more difficult for delivery vehicles to unload	- To accommodate businesses with deliveries there were a number of loading zones installed in key areas, such as Courthouse Lane, Chancery Street, O’Connell Street and High Street.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Closing Freyberg Place to traffic will make it difficult to park in the surrounding area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is no parking on Freyberg place so the only impact on parking will be that vehicles circulating in the area to find a parking space will need to go the full length of High Street – which as mentioned above will have minimal impact on the level of traffic on High Street. AT will work with HOTC on addressing parking availability.</li> </ul>
<b>Noise concerns &amp; antisocial behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Closing the road will increase noise and attract more people who sleep rough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While it is expected that formalising the road as a pedestrian mall will enhance the pedestrian nature of the space it is not anticipated that it will have a significant impact on an increase of the activities of buskers or use of the space by rough sleepers</li> </ul>
<b>Inconvenient to residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Freyberg place convenient route for delivery drivers, rideshare drivers and taxis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are adequate alternate routes for taxis, ride share services and delivery vehicles rather than the use of Freyberg Place as a short cut.</li> </ul>
<b>Overcrowding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traffic decreases overcrowding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is no expectation that the number of pedestrians using Freyberg place will increase so dramatically that the space will be over crowded merely because motor vehicles are no longer able to use the area.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on businesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Closing Freyberg Place will negatively affect local businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The purpose of a pedestrian mall is to provide better mobility and accessibility for pedestrians by removing motorised vehicles from this area. Its aim is not only to improve the experience for shopping, community and other business activities in the area but to also enhance the local surroundings in terms of improved infrastructure, air pollution and improved safety in regards to the reduction of observed conflicts between motor vehicles with pedestrians.</li> </ul>
<b>Emergency situations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Closing Freyberg Place will make it difficult for emergency vehicles to access the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussions with Emergency Services, including the Police indicate that they would prefer to use the Courthouse Lane carriageway during any potential emergencies. There is an existing fire panel located along here, which is not accessible from High Street. Emergency service vehicles will be exempt from the restrictions and will be able to gain access Freyberg Place at all times.</li> </ul>
<b>Management of AT Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Auckland Council should spend resources maintaining other infrastructure like parks, gutters berms etc.</li> <li>- Worries that council owned assets such as Freyberg Place will fall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formalising Freyberg Place as being entirely a pedestrian mall should help to reduce damage to the infrastructure that can be caused by motor vehicles.</li> <li>- Both Auckland Council and Auckland Transport take pride in the many facilities we provide our ratepayers. Recent upgrades like Freyberg Place does play an important part in connecting communities and creating that vibrancy. We would like the public to advise us if things are not</li> </ul>

**Alternative arrangements**

- into disrepair and are not properly managed
- No need to spend more money on further changes
- Freyberg place could be closed to motor vehicles during events in the square instead of at all times as is proposed
- The road in Freyberg Place should become a Local Purpose Reserve controlled by Auckland Council rather than a pedestrian mall
- going well or assets are not being maintained, this ensures we are aware of those issues and can address them before they become a costly expense or a safety concern to the public.
- No additional funds are required by this project. All of the necessary infrastructure is already in place and can be easily adjusted to prevent motor vehicle access.
- Given the limits on how often a road can be temporarily closed for events this option was not considered suitable for Freyberg place and did not have the additional benefits of a pedestrian mall that comes from preventing motor vehicles from using this space.
- A road stopping process was initially assessed and later discounted for Freyberg Place in the early stages in the discovery of the preferred option. The preference for the pedestrian mall was based on the understanding that the process would be more cost effective in terms of reduced costs and resourcing, efficient in terms of staff time and a reduction in potential court action. This was considered a better option in preserving the ongoing rights of the public to use this space.

Traffic volume surveys were undertaken after the upgrade work on O’Connell Street shared space was completed prior and post redevelopment works on Freyberg Place. The traffic volume in 2014 was considered low. The 2017 volumes saw a further decrease, which were extremely low. This demonstrates that closing Freyberg Place to traffic will have minimal impacts on the displacement of traffic through High Street.

Traffic volume results for Freyberg Place-

<b>Before (Oct 2014)</b>	<b>After (Oct 2017)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volumes weekday morning peak hour - 9</li> <li>• Volumes weekday Interpeak hour - 2</li> <li>• Volume weekday evening peak hour - 12</li> <li>• Volumes Saturday midday peak hour - 17</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volumes weekday morning peak hour - 2</li> <li>• Volumes weekday Interpeak hour - 1</li> <li>• Volume weekday evening peak hour - 2</li> <li>• Volumes Saturday midday peak hour - 3</li> </ul>



**Personal Information**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb \_\_\_\_\_

Post code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Glue here

Glue here

Providing personal details is optional. Providing your postal or email address ensures that we can contact you with updates to the project.  
The following information is for statistics purposes only, and does not affect your feedback.  
PRIVACY: AT is committed to protecting our customers' personal information.

Fold here

**What best describes your interest in this proposal?**

(Please tick all that apply)

- I live or own property near Freyberg Place
- I own a business near Freyberg Place
- I work or study near Freyberg Place
- I often walk through Freyberg Place
- I often cycle through Freyberg Place
- I often drive through Freyberg Place
- I often park near Freyberg Place
- Other (please specify)

**How did you hear about this project?**

(Please tick all that apply)

- Information posted/emailed to me
- Auckland Transport website
- News article (paper or online)
- Newspaper advertisement
- Blog e.g. Bike Auckland, Greater Auckland
- Social media e.g. Facebook, Neighbourly
- Word of mouth
- Other (please state)