



City urged to back track for tram revival

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By Merania Karauria | 28th September 2010

Trams attract tourists, rejuvenate businesses and bring in the money - lots of it.

That's the experience of 33 members of the Council of Tramway Museums Australasia (COTMA) who stayed in Wanganui for two days and nights last week to visit the Tram Shed, and who also hired the Waimarie, and took in all the other sights on offer from Neville Gorrie's double-decker bus.



On Thursday they travelled the old tram routes to Aramoho, Wanganui East, out to Castlecliff and around the city, which was also the anniversary of the day the trams ceased to run in Wanganui 60 years ago.

But trams, like Wanganui's No12, which is ready for service, require partnerships to get them running, say the members.

In Christchurch, three successive mayors have supported the trams.

To keep the trams running, the Tramway Historical Society (THS) is in partnership with the council, which provides the tracks. THS provides the drivers and maintenance, and a tourism operator runs the business.

The trams also give a lot of retirees an ongoing interest.

Christchurch City councillor chief planner and COTMA secretary Dave Hinman said trams brought profile and image to a city.

"But you have to include the tram route when planning any upgrades," Mr Hinman said.

And there should be enough room for three trams in the planning, he suggested.

The plan on the drawing board for the Tram Shed route should be done properly from the start, and would be the best in the country, he said.

If 100 people travelled in a tram they took 50 cars off the road, and it was the best clean and green way of shifting people around.

"They run in harmony with the traffic, and there are minimal overhead wires."

Christchurch's plans to extend the tram route was now under way, he said, and would take



in all the retailers between Worcester and Cashel streets, then extend down High St to Tuam St, to the Lichfield Park Turners and Growers.

Stage two would include the site for the proposed market and the Music Centre as well as the Christchurch Polytech.

Warren Doubleday, COTMA chairman from Ballarat, said the Tram Shed supporters had done a magnificent job on the No12.

“They have fitted it out and done all the mechanical work and have given credibility to the group,” he said.

Mr Doubleday said the Victorian government had donated \$89,000 from the Bendigo Box Tram Museum and arranged supply of surplus equipment to rebuild the No12.

Since the trams had been running in Portland, Victoria, \$35 million had been generated over the past 10 years, Mr Doubleday said.

The group also offered to Wanganui its collective expertise in getting trams back on the tracks.

“We’re just a phone call away,” Mr Doubleday said.

Councillor Rob Vinsen, mayoral candidate Jango and council roading manager Rui Leitao met the group at the Tram Shed on Thursday.

While Wanganui has been waiting 18 months for the signal to start laying its tracks, Auckland was getting its tram system under way around the Viaduct in time for the World Cup.