

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

Subject	Update on the Additional Waitematā Harbour Connections project
Date	12 November 2020
Briefing number	BRI-2066

Contact(s) for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Direct line	Cell phone	1st contact
Brett Gliddon	General Manager, Transport Services		s 9(2)(a)	✓

Action taken by Office of the Minister

- Noted**
- Seen by Minister**
- Agreed**
- Feedback provided**
- Forwarded to**
- Needs change [please specify]**
- Withdrawn**
- Overtaken by events**

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12 November 2020

Minister of Transport

Update on the Additional Waitematā Harbour Connections project

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with an update on the Additional Waitematā Harbour Connections (AWHC) project following your review of the recent business case planning document and meeting with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency officials on Monday 9 November 2020.

Background and outcomes from recent planning work

2. Waka Kotahi, Auckland Transport (AT) and Auckland Council have been working in partnership to develop a business case which analyses the current and future problems faced in Auckland's Northern Motorway corridor (including the Auckland Harbour Bridge and the Northern Busway). The business case assesses several options for addressing these problems and recommends a way forward to provide a comprehensive and long-lasting response.
3. The recent business case has recommended the following programme of investments to address the travel choice, resilience, and productivity issues identified in the study area:
 - Further investigate options to optimise existing infrastructure and delay the need for major investment (e.g. by influencing growth patterns or using road pricing).
 - Upgrade and enhance the Northern Busway over the next few years to increase its capacity, reliability and overall service quality into the future. A Detailed Business Case further investigating Northern Busway enhancements is already being progressed by AT.
 - Develop an additional rail-based rapid transit connection for the North Shore (including across the Waitematā Harbour to the city centre), that supplements and integrates with the upgraded Northern Busway and the wider public transport network to provide more public transport travel options.
 - Improve roading connectivity to address resilience issues and growing all-day congestion on the state highway system, including the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

Next steps

4. The next phase of the programme will be for Waka Kotahi, AT and Auckland Council to progress the Strategic Transport Networks planning work in the form of a Single Stage Business Case.
5. The business case will start by further investigating an additional rail-based rapid transit connection across the Waitematā Harbour, focusing on the form (including mode) and alignment (route) of the new cross harbour rapid transit connection.
6. Once the rapid transit connection is better understood, the study will undertake further investigations into both the wider rapid transit network on the North Shore and what roading system improvements should look like, when they are required, and how any new road crossing would interact with the preferred rapid transit route. This will include assessment of crossing options.

7. This future business case planning work is expected to begin in 2021. This work will take an integrated full system approach and interdependencies with other transport projects need to be a key part of this future investigation.
8. Engagement with stakeholders and the community will take place during the next planning phases in 2021 to help shape the project and gather insights into what customers need for future connections.

Further information on business case findings

9. Following review of the AWHC business case, you requested additional information on aspects of the business case. This information is outlined below.

Auckland Harbour Bridge – heavy vehicles

10. The Waka Kotahi long-term plan for the Auckland Harbour Bridge still focuses on managing the main structure and extension clip-on bridges so that the bridge continues to provide the connectivity needed to cater for all vehicles crossing the harbour.
11. While the Auckland Harbour Bridge has been strengthened on several occasions in the past, further strengthening is no longer possible. This means that maintaining the structural integrity of the bridge is likely to require some restrictions on heavy vehicles in the future, such as limiting the lanes they can use, the number of heavy vehicles allowed on the bridge at any one time, or the time of day they are able to travel on the bridge.
12. With a programme of ongoing monitoring, maintenance, upgrades and load management means the bridge is able to carry reduced loads indefinitely. While careful and ongoing strategic management of the Auckland Harbour Bridge will ensure its prolonged life as a critical link, there will have to be some loading restrictions in the future. The timing of these restrictions will be driven by a number of factors, but the current maintenance strategy assumes they will be needed within the next 20 years.

Northern Busway Enhancements Detailed Business Case

13. The Northern Busway Enhancements Detailed Business Case is currently underway by AT and is due to be completed in mid-2021. The AWHC findings confirmed that the Northern Busway needs to be progressively enhanced by the late 2020s-early 2030s to meet the growth in passenger demand until a supplementary higher capacity rapid transit network can be delivered. While parts of the busway operate well, undersized stations, gaps in bus priority, and city centre constraints mean the busway is not used to its full potential. Over time this will mean bus travel times will become increasingly unreliable, people will have to wait longer at stations, and it will take longer to board buses.
14. Addressing these issues will enable a better customer experience, maximise the benefits of the busway, and possibly delay the need for major further investments. The enhancements are likely to include a variety of improvements, such as station platform lengthening, filling gaps in bus priority (e.g. northbound between Fanshawe Street and Esmonde Road), and city centre public transport improvements. The enhancements may also include operational improvements such as installing ticketing gates at busway stations (much like at train stations) to enable faster, all-door boarding. The current study will also confirm the urgency and timing of these improvements.

Decarbonisation

15. The main opportunity for the AWHC programme to support decarbonisation of the transport system is through supporting mode shift to public transport. Specific metrics on the scale of mode shift and emissions reductions depends on key assumptions around land-use, road pricing and the form and function of future investments (which has not yet been confirmed). The findings of the AWHC project showed that:

- the Northern Busway and rapid transit parts of the programme enable a significant increase in cross-harbour public transport trips and mode shift, especially for trips to the city centre
- the road components of the programme result in slightly higher vehicle kilometres travelled per capita (through longer trips), but generally don't reduce public transport use.
- Sea level rises will require the raising and protection of the current SH1 Corridor along portions of the motorway south of Akoranga and North of the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

Tunnel options and fiscal implications

16. Previous detailed work by Waka Kotahi on a combined road and rail crossing was undertaken in 2016. This assessed the environmental, social, cultural and consenting challenges adjacent to the SH1 corridor. This work concluded that it is unlikely that a bridge option could be consented under current legislation.
17. The recent business case also preferred a tunnel option for the additional rapid transit connection due to lower consenting risk and the ability for a tunnel to deliver a faster and more direct link between Takapuna and the City Centre. However, the business case also notes that a bridge option should be considered in the next phase, given its lower cost. The trade-offs between cost, consenting risk and key outcomes (fast travel times across the harbour and direct links with Takapuna) will be considered in more detail in the next phase of planning work, expected to begin next year.
18. The affordability of the programme of works will also need to be fully considered in the next phase of investigations. Current financial models and funding sources will need to be supplemented through additional investment and/or alternative mechanisms in order to fund the programme. At this stage, it is clear this programme would not be viable if solely funded on a pay-as-you-go model via the National Land Transport Fund.

It is recommended that you:

1. **Note** the contents of this briefing

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Brett Gliddon

General Manager Transport Services

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Hon Michael Wood, Minister of Transport

Date: 2020