

We have been investigating the government's plans for Dominion road. The first is around the Light Rail to the airport proposal, and the second are the comments that Dominion Road would be included in the new Urban Development Authority and its wide powers, to both compulsorily acquire public land to pass to third parties (developers) and to by-pass Unitary Plan controls. We will cover the details over a number of emails.

Light Rail (LR) – Wynyard to Airport

EPNA was involved in questioning an initial Dominion Rd/Western Line/Queen St LR project back in 1999/2000. We were involved in the hearing that designated the "loop" sections through the Countdown car park and through the sites that are now being used by Council for an over-height development.

The issue back then was about the lack of detail on the technical aspects and local adverse impacts, and the immediate impact on investment in the area. That project was later abandoned due to its inability to provide proper network frequencies. And we've seen the subsequent lack of investment and uncertainty – the proposal has hung over the area for many years, and one reason we didn't see proper town centre upgrades.

We feel we are again in a similar situation with a new high-level plan, that many assume will happen as it's a coalition requirement of the Greens. Previous airport link plans, which had multiple detailed analysis over several years, were to use express rapid rail services for the airport via Puhinui and Onehunga. The bus or LR options on Dominion Rd are a recent high-level government to Council/AT agreement (ATAP), however AT are now required to consult on their Regional Public Transport Plan, which is a legal requirement, and the first opportunity we as a community have to question and comment, oppose or support these plans.

But this is really around the wrong – first should come proper details and then meaningful consultation, before decisions are pre-judged. Despite our area being part of one of their biggest ever projects, they are only holding 4 information sessions, and the nearest to the impacted area is in New Lynn between 5-7pm on Wed 5 Dec - maybe AT haven't heard of peak traffic!

There are a number of issues/impacts that need to be reviewed and understood when deciding whether to support an Airport LR project on Dominion Rd as a suitable AT project:

- This proposed project in our view is primarily to service the airport, and that can be seen in its design to date.
It's not a community friendly, frequent stop route like many Melbourne routes. There have been comments that it's to enhance the local area – if that was the case we would have stops every 300-400m and it would at least match current well used bus destinations directly or at least provide good connections.
- Stops are at least double the current bus stop distances, to allow a faster through route for airport passengers ie 800m to 1km apart.
- Peak Frequency reduces from 2min out to 5min or 10min.
- With LR empty capacity can't be fed on at Valley Rd as currently happens, so whether there will be enough capacity remaining for the inner sections is unknown
- The route to Queen St via Ian McKinnon only matches some express routes now, so current key destinations, such as Mt Eden railway station, Symonds St/Kyber Pass and University will be missed.
- Current bus routes on Dominion Rd will be stopped – likely to also include the Outer Loop
- The remaining vehicle lane adjacent to the footpath is likely to be slowed, and we're aware of a petition to somehow fit cycles lanes in as well.

- Waiting platforms are likely to be in the centre of the road beside the LR tracks. This will mean re-routing the vehicle lanes around these somehow.
- A vehicle lane directly alongside the footpath will degrade the pedestrian/business environment, and may pose safety issues, requiring barriers.
- We were told in the earlier plan, that LR would be on raised platforms, and apart from 1-2 controlled intersections, vehicle turns across would be stopped. This will alter all local flows.
- Also a single vehicle lanes at controlled intersections will be much slower with all the allowed turns from just one lane, and in conjunction with pedestrians, and with LR having signal priority in both directions.

The issue still remains as to where the 20,000+ vehicles a day will re-route to. Given people are already well served by, and in fact utilise the buses on Dominion Rd, those in vehicles will need to find alternate routes.

The pre-construction works will also likely be substantial. Both with the 100 year old local sewage/storm water systems which feed under Dominion Rd, which may also need wider network upgrades prior to any LR construction, but also other construction along the route which will impact normal Dominion Rd flows – especially as these move out from the CBD. There is a tunnel under the top of K Rd and a bridge over spaghetti junction to join back into Ian McKinnon Dr, which will obviously impact many commuters, for a long construction period.

Also it appears they will remove the Ian McKinnon flyover and make New North Rd/Dominion Rd an at grade signalized intersection. That will obviously slow all those arterials (including Sandringham Rd), which currently have 47,000 vehicles per day.

There was also talk in the previous plan of grade separating Dominion/Balmoral road, eg a flyover, to avoid another arterial crossing the tracks.

Once construction starts, we'd expect to see immediate disruption to buses/cars, and general traffic movement in the area. This would likely last for several years. And experience from Sydney and Edinburgh ring alarm bells with their major cost and time over-runs. The extent of impacts will depend on how various sections are undertaken, and what alternate routes are put in place.

It's difficult to see many of our local businesses being able to survive that level of disruption.

There is much more detail that is not being presented on platform positions, and how people will get to and wait alongside these, and how vehicle lanes move around these obstructions. In AT's images only one has stop/platform – at Mt Roskill, and shows the platform blocking the entire vehicle lane ie traffic must have been re-routed around the centre:



As with the previous 1999 proposal we believe the key technical issues need to be decided and reviewed quickly – so as to rule the project viable or not. Network frequency and likely slow speeds are crucial. And the type of units that can cope with passenger luggage and commuters, and impacts on commuters – ie less seats etc.

And as a community we need to be consulted and have enough information to support or reject the proposal.

A business case is currently being prepared, but that is the wrong way around given AT are currently consulting on their 10-year plan (submissions close 14 Dec), and no consultations with communities and transport users have been undertaken.

This is a complex issue, and we'll aim to prepare further background info to email out over the next week.

It also has wide ranging impacts, one of which is of concern is that Council and AT have signaled these types of projects could be partially funded by various "value uplift" taxes or rates ie by them assuming property values will increase because of these projects, and that gain could be taxed or hit with a targeted rate. They are currently doing work on that area as well.

We'd also appreciate feedback, questions etc.

In the meantime, here are two links to articles:

Firstly, Mike Lee's Herald op-ed. Mike has probably done more for public transport than anyone in Auckland and raises his concerns:

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12159819

And Newsroom have a general summary of issues:

<https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2018/11/25/335511/light-rail-ideology-over-practicality>