

## EPNA Light Rail 3

To recap the current Light Rail proposal and the various issues which we believe need addressing.

The project has been picked up by the government as part of the Green Party coalition agreement, and the responsibility transferred to NZTA.

It is currently undergoing a business case review – in our view it first needs a more detailed engineering review, and a proper consultative process around the various details – many of which will impact this area.

This was the same issue with the previous 1999 proposal, later abandoned – and why we would like to see this get a more detailed technical review quickly, and allow us to comment properly on what will be one of Auckland's biggest infrastructure projects right through our area.

### **Key high level risks and issues:**

- The proposal combines 2 different types of LR – an Airport and community link – this compromises Auckland's first LR and fails to satisfy both requirements.
- Our existing local bus routes aren't replicated, and local frequencies appear to go from the current 2min out to 10min.
- Also we can see no discussion or comment on whether there will be capacity available when it gets to our inner area. This is relevant when we see proposed new bus routes taking people to a Mt Roskill station/interchange.
- Removing parking, and having only 1 lane for all vehicle traffic, with many of the turns across likely to be eliminated, will have major vehicle flow impacts around the entire area
- The local technical issues, such as reduced stops, raised platforms and key infrastructure such as a tunnel under K Rd, making New North and Dominion Rd an at grade major intersection (by removing the flyovers), will have major impacts on how this area operates.
- The construction impacts will be huge. We've seen with Sydney how disruptive construction can be, and that it can last several years. The recent road works are very minor in comparison, and only for weeks not years.
- It's being proposed outside of an overall plan for how Auckland will use LR. There might be some secret plan AT or NZTA are keeping to themselves, but how this fits in to other networks is unknown.
- The process of removing it from AT to NZTA is unusual and has by-passed normal consultation so far.
- We don't even know if LR to the Airport will even be supported by passengers. Where would that leave LR for Auckland and our area? We have to wonder why Melbourne, as a leading LR city has consistently chosen rapid (heavy) rail for its airport connection? As Auckland did until very recently. Why would we expect these recent Auckland decisions to pass business case scrutiny when Melbourne leads the world in this area?
- We're aware of Council work on new rates based on perceived property value increases that they feel flow from projects of this nature, and we may be subjected to new rates to fund this.

### **We do currently have a chance to at least have some say on this project.**

AT are consulting (until Dec 14<sup>th</sup>), on their Regional Public Transport Plan for 2018-2028.

In it they say they will:

- expand the Rapid Transit Network with the completion of:
  - delivery of Light Rail services.

Here we see where this project fits. While budgets are set elsewhere, this is where the strategic direction is set for public transport. It is a Land Transport Management Act requirement, and sets out the changes that will occur to Auckland’s public transport system.

We believe that it is therefore an appropriate place to raise issues around how this project fits into a wider LR framework, and what impacts will flow – including on other public transport routes.

The plan has 4 focus areas – Focus 1 is “Expanding and enhancing the Rapid and Frequent Networks”

Under that focus they see the Airport to City LR being operational in 2024. It’s listed as a key project in table 10.

Full details, and a pdf of the plan can be found here:

<https://at.govt.nz/about-us/transport-plans-strategies/regional-public-transport-plan-rptp/>

The appendices also give some confirmation of other impacts from the LR route:

- The City Link bus Wynyard to K’Rd is removed from 2021 due to LR construction (pg 85)
- Appendix 4 has post LRT changes to be decided. It flags new routes from Titirangi, Blockhouse Bay, New Lynn, Lynfield to a Mt Roskill station/interchange and then LR up Dominion Rd
- It notes removal of subsequent routes up Sandringham Rd, as well as ones below:

LRT between City and Mt Roskill			
Route Descriptions	Year	Time (in minutes) b	
		Mon-Fri peak	Mon-Fri Interpea
	2018	7am-9am	
	2021	4pm-6pm	
	2028		
24B - New Lynn & Blockhouse Bay to City Centre via New Windsor, Sandringham Rd and University	TBD	Removed with LRT	
24W - Wesley to City Centre via Sandringham Rd and University	TBD	Removed with LRT	
243x Express service	TBD	Removed with LRT	
248x Express service	TBD	Removed with LRT	
25B - Blockhouse Bay to City Centre via White Swan Rd Dominion Rd and University	TBD	Removed with LRT	
25L - Lynfield to City Centre via Dominion Rd Extension, Dominion Rd and University	TBD	Removed with LRT	
252 – Lynfield to City Centre via Ian Mckinnon Dr	TBD	Removed with LRT	
253 – Blockhouse Bay to City Centre via Ian Mckinnon Dr	TBD	Removed with LRT	
295 - Ellerslie Station to Royal Oak and City Centre via Oranga Ave, Tawa Rd, Buckley Rd and Gillies Ave	TBD	Removed with LRT	

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To us that raises a large number of issues around use of other routes, and what research has been done to back up the LR project. Will people still prefer to stay on one bus, with a seat, and therefore force AT to increase services on Sandringham and Mt Eden Roads? How will services on those roads be impacted anyway eg slower routes with a new major New North/Dominion Rd intersection which gives priority to LR?

Or will AT have to enforce these closures to maintain LR capacity, if airport passengers don’t choose to use LR?

**Overall LR role**

We are still concerned we are only being shown 2 LR routes in next 10 years, without being given any overall LR plan for Auckland. LR is mass transit ie the units can move a large number of people (with greater proportion standing) – it works well for shorter high-density situation like inner city/CBD areas. It's not rapid transit due to low speed through shared spaces, dwell times to off load/board large numbers makes it slower over medium to longer distances. The Wynyard/Queen St may only average 10-12km per hr. Combining large sections with major speed differences, was the flaw in the last proposal, and maintaining consistent frequencies was too difficult. We fear that until proper network engineering analysis is done, based on practical real-world knowledge, this may still be the case.

We sense a lack of any medium to long term LR plan – just 2 years ago AT's preferred Airport connection was rapid rail. Then LR was to be on multiple arterial roads eg Sandringham, Dominion, Mt Eden. In just 2 years that overall plan appears to have been dropped, and 2 new government driven routes are the only plan we see. And that is still at too high a level to allow informed consultation.

When looking at consultation we also need to consider funding and that our taxes, rates, fuel charges are supporting this project, and no doubt ongoing operating costs/subsidies. And we are very mindful of the work Council is doing to try and gain extra revenue through various additional rates that can be applied to perceived property value increase due to these types of projects. If this form of funding is to be used, we would anticipate it would have to start for the first LR route, or it becomes unfair to impose it on subsequent routes.

We believe there are alternate LR options, and that an overall plan with staged process that prioritise all routes and options is needed. We don't see LR just replacing routes and the past flawed CBD centric "spoke" options. Given disruption and costs we also believe the first routes must have certainty that they will be well utilised, and support the wider transport network. The basis of public transport is connecting homes to work and study places. We know that Auckland has a diverse non CBD based employment economy and 90% of job growth will be outside the CBD. Areas such as Newmarket, and wider new industrial areas will take much of the future growth.

These wider areas will rely on rapid rail, and we believe LR needs support rapid rail.

We'd like to see previous CBD "loops" investigated as the first LR options. Previous concepts connecting Wynyard/Britomart/University and back across Wellesley/Aotea and possibly an upper town loop based on K'Rd would move people within the CBD, to rapid rail at Britomart and the new CRL stations. This in our view would not only support the 2-3bn on the CRL, but allow investment for increased frequencies. CBD "loops" could be 2 loops circulating both ways at a later stage. They may also connect the key Grafton hospital site. These CBD LR routes would also be able to reduce bus CBD bus congestion.

At some point we will need to accept interchanges – and if these are quick and efficient and offer local amenities, we believe these would work. That would then allow other LR routes to feed or loop passed the CBD LR routes. We could envisage some form of Dominion Rd LR route looping around part of K'Rd, allow an interchange in a vibrant, attractive area, which could be its own destination, or a stop for groceries on the way home. When looking at interchanges, this current plan forces one down at Mt Roskill for many commuters, by removing their bus routes into the city, so surely interchanges in more attractive destination could work.

Multiple LR routes could then interchange in a few key locations allowing a greater area of connectivity throughout the inner suburbs, but also better rapid rail connections for many.

Our point isn't that the above is necessarily the best long term idea, but that we can't see the overall plan or view of how LR will operate in the wider context. In just 2 years plans have changed rapidly and give us no confidence AT/Council have a proper vision of LR for the city. The other aspect is that we're on the cusp of major changes in LR technology with guided on road systems, and other vehicle changes coming. We maybe have a chance in coming late, to jump to new technology in a sensible staged approach. Again an overall network layout would facilitate that.

While we understand the temptation of Council and AT to accept the government's funding support and alter previous plans, we believe Auckland and our local communities must be part of meaningful consultation, in deciding the best options for us.

Therefore, as this LR project is part of the 10yr consultation underway. We'd urge you to take the time and make a submission.

This link gives access to pdfs of the plan

<https://at.govt.nz/about-us/transport-plans-strategies/regional-public-transport-plan-rptp/>

The "Give your Feedback" link will take you to a survey on SurveyMonkey – allowing anonymous submissions. To us that is open to abuse and raises general AT consultation issues.

We'd suggest making sure you put your name and email, so that AT must respond and take true local concerns seriously. We have no doubt that many others from outside the area will be making submissions on a range of their own issues eg cycle lanes etc

We see a number of responses:

- Firstly you can support if happy with the proposal
- You could oppose the Airport/Mangere LR route entirely
- Or you can oppose as not enough technical detail has been confirmed and consulted on. And that you request proper consultation on the project, at a local level with full details.

We believe it's essential that AT and NZTA start to consult properly on the project, and that until then it would be foolish to support something with unknown impacts and flow on effects.

Again it's crucial that as a community we submit, in order to become involved. We've been ignored as a community so far. Local business associations have had meetings/briefings but not the local community and actual public transport users. Even during AT's current consultation the nearest information point to us was New Lynn at 5-7pm this evening.

This email will also go up as a pdf on our website – which also has the previous two, detailing concerns and issues/background. [www.epna.org.nz](http://www.epna.org.nz)

This has been a tricky issue to investigate and time consuming to get these emails out – while we will try and get a physical newsletter out, we are running out of time, and it may be difficult to do before consultation closes.

So in the meantime if you could pass these emails, or a simple link to the website, to friends within the area, and encourage people to take the time to submit. By including your full details and email, we can try and get AT and NZTA to consult with us further.