

14 May 2008

FREE AND FRANK ADVICE

Hon Judith Tizard
Associate Minister of Transport
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Dear Minister

SUBJECT: CYCLING AND WALKING ON THE AUCKLAND HARBOUR BRIDGE

Transit acknowledges that the provision of appropriate access for cycles and walking across the Waitemata Harbour is a priority for the Auckland region.

Transit's territorial authority partners – the Auckland Regional Council and the Auckland and North Shore City Councils - passed resolutions in 2007 and 2008 supporting cycling and pedestrian facilities on the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

Provision of a walkway/cycleway is one proposal that will help the Auckland region increase the mode share of walk and cycling, which is a key requirement of the draft Updated New Zealand Transport Strategy.

Walking and Cycling Study

A comprehensive study, commissioned by Transit, the Auckland Regional Council, the Auckland Regional Transport Authority and the North Shore and Auckland City Councils – is investigating a preferred option for walking and cycling on the bridge.

The study began in March and is due to be completed with a recommendation for a walk and cycling option by the end of June, 2008. Regional support of the study findings is essential.

The study is investigating a number of issues:

- > Anticipated walking and cycling demand across the bridge
- > Design options given constraints of lane width on the bridge, separation of walkers and cyclists from traffic, the bridge gradient and its impact on speed (particularly of cyclists), and weather conditions i.e.: high wind.
- > Connectivity to the bridge and the wider walking and cycling network

- > Structural effects
- > Safety and security
- > Impacts on the operation of alternative transport modes
- > Other walking and cycling opportunities
- > Benefit and costs
- > Regional and national prioritisation [the Auckland Harbour Bridge is a vital part of the state highway network which carries high volumes of traffic at high speed, and is managed by Transit for the benefit of the wider community]

Other investigations

The current Additional Waitemata Harbour Crossing Study - jointly funded by Transit, Auckland Regional Transport Authority, Auckland Regional Council and the Auckland and North Shore City Councils – is tasked with determining a long-term solution for walking and cycling as part of the future crossing.

Given the likelihood that the next Waitemata Harbour Crossing will be a tunnel, the Auckland Harbour Bridge strengthening project must specifically include the detailed provision for a future walkway and cycleway, which is outlined below.

Auckland Harbour Bridge Upgrade

The Walking and Cycling Study coincides with preparations to strengthen the box girders [clip-ons] on the Auckland Harbour Bridge. This work will start in July 2008.

Structural elements have been incorporated into the current strengthening works to future-proof for walking and cycling facilities on the box girders – further works being dependent on the option selected. In any event, the structural strengthening is necessary before any walking and cycling facilities can be built.

The Walking and Cycling Study and the Box Girder Strengthening teams are working closely together identifying and investigating a range of cycling and walking options.

Cycle Action Auckland

Cycle Action Auckland (CAA) advocates strongly for the provision of walking and cycling facilities on the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

CAA chairperson Bevan Woodward, along with representatives of Walk Auckland, the Cancer Society and Living Streets Aotearoa gave a presentation to Transit's Board last week. They are concerned that a "window of opportunity" for cost effectively including for walking and cycling during the clip-on strengthening would be lost, and the upgrade work should be delayed until the Walking and Cycling Study is completed.

However, the two projects are independent of each other. Nothing being done in the structural upgrade of the clip-ons precludes, in any way, the provision for walking and cycling

on the bridge in the future. As noted above, the strengthening work makes it possible for a cycle and pedestrian facility to be added in the future. Consequently, it is not necessary for the structural maintenance work to be deferred pending completion of the walking and cycling study.

Cycle Action Auckland also believes there is a more cost effective way of providing for walking and cycling across the bridge than Transit's previous proposal of a separate cycleway and walkway, at a cost of \$30-40million. CAA's proposal, which it believes would cost around \$5million, centres on narrowing the existing traffic lanes on the bridge. The proposal will be considered alongside other options as part of the bridge walking and cycling study.

Transit has however advised CAA that it believes the \$5m is significantly understated and CAA has agreed to not quote this figure pending completion of the current study which will include indicative costs

Following the meeting, TV3 ran a short piece on CAA's proposal. The transcript is attached for your info.

Conclusion

Transit has been proactive in trying to find, in co-operation with regional partners, the best option for cyclists and walkers. The current Walking and Cycling Study is the fourth investigation of its kind since 2000. Cycle Action Auckland have been assured by Transit that any option about to be considered by the present study will not preclude or adversely affect any option about to be considered in the present study. Transit remains committed to finding a solution that meets the desires of the community, and the transport objectives set by Government.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick van Barneveld', written over a horizontal line.

Rick van Barneveld
Chief Executive