

Local government Story

Ticket to ride harbour bridge decades off

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By [Mathew Dearnaley](#)

Cyclists keen to loosen Auckland's dependence on cars fear it may take them more than 20 years to gain permission to ride across the harbour bridge.

Transit New Zealand intends giving priority to adding six power supply cables to the bridge.

The agency says cyclists may have to wait for another harbour crossing to be built before being allowed to use the existing structure.

Although Transit came under pressure last year from Parliament's transport and industrial relations committee to study the feasibility of adding a cycle and walkway to the bridge, the roading agency is still waiting for a report from consultants about its load-carrying capacity.

The consultants have completed their investigation, but Transit regional manager Richard Hancy told the Auckland Regional Council's transport policy committee this week that they had yet to report back to his organisation.

Committee chairman Joel Cayford expressed concern to Mr Hancy that "inertia" might delay a cycleway for several decades if it depended on new capacity from another harbour crossing.

He said there was a strong likelihood that the next crossing would be a tunnel under Waitemata Harbour, which would be off-limits to cyclists and pedestrians.

Transit, which is now required by law to provide for alternative transport modes when planning new roads, would then have to allow cycles and walkers across the existing bridge.

Mr Hancy indicated that if the bridge were found to have insufficient load-bearing capacity to carry a cycleway as well as new power cables to boost electricity supply to the North Shore, the cyclists would have to wait.

Once a new crossing was built, however, the agency could spread traffic loads across both structures to make room for cyclists on the bridge.

This is likely to take at least 20 years, although Transit has appointed a director to start work next month to lead a crossing investigation team including regional council and Auckland and North Shore City representatives.

The potential delay has disappointed Glenfield businessman and multisport athlete Graeme Knowles, who presented the parliamentary committee with a 5813-signature petition last July calling for a feasibility study for a cycle and walkway.

Mr Knowles said last night that he would have preferred the Auckland and North Shore city councils to be involved in such a study with Transit, but the committee had led him to understand that the Government would ask the roading agency to conduct it.

Both Transit and Transport Minister Pete Hodgson had since told him there had been no such request,

meaning another year had passed of frustration for cyclists keen to be allowed to use a vital link between two parts of a region severely congested by cars.

Mr Knowles believed a cycleway could fit easily on the edge of a clip-on without reducing any of the bridge's traffic lanes.

He acknowledged there might not be room on the bridge surface for pedestrians as well as cyclists, but said there was already a rudimentary walkway under the bridge for maintenance workers to inspect the structure, and this could be enhanced to take members of the public.

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