



25 May 2021

Hon Michael Wood
Minister of Transport
Wellington

Kia ora Minister Wood,

Walking & cycling over the Auckland Harbour Bridge - time for an independent review

It's been 17 years since the Government's Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee asked Transit (predecessor to the NZ Transport Agency) to find a solution to walking and cycling across the Auckland Harbour Bridge. Four years later, [Transit advised in May 2008](#)ⁱ that it had ensured structural elements would be incorporated into a strengthening project to "future-proof the clip-on lanes and allow for future walking and cycling options" on the bridge.

So why hasn't it happened yet?

Unfortunately NZTA's response has ranged from reluctant cooperation to outright obstruction.

Some examples:

- In February this year, NZTA senior management advised the Government's Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee that the AHB can no longer be strengthened but failed to mention the [Holmes Consulting strengthening solution](#)ⁱⁱ previously prepared for NZTA.
- We have found instances of [deceptive behaviour by NZTA](#)ⁱⁱⁱ, including the manipulation of information by requiring consultants [Beca to backdate their advice](#)^{iv} to support a pre-determined position for a NZTA Board paper.
- In May 2019, NZTA senior management declined the consented and funded SkyPath design by choosing what it said was a superior design – the Northern Pathway. NZTA management said [their new design gave certainty to Aucklanders](#)^v, it would cost approximately \$120M and that construction could start in 2020. However NZTA failed to disclose they hadn't designed the pylons (supporting legs) nor the landings at each end. One year later the cost had increased to \$240M, and technical issues remain unresolved.
- NZTA's latest plan for the Northern Pathway is to build an entirely new bridge across the Waitemata Harbour, this will be prohibitively expensive eg: circa \$400M, and not something the Government should allow to be fast-track consented.
- NZTA has not produced any substantive reasons for choosing not to deliver SkyPath, a [feasible engineering solution it helped design](#)^{vi}, had NZTA Board sign-off as buildable ([per](#)

[page 14 of these Board minutes^{vii}](#)) and [assured the Minister of Transport in this letter from NZTA's Chair^{viii}](#) that "Assuming the detailed business case confirms the economic case, the Skypath project will be able to proceed to implementation."

- NZTA has rejected a short trial using the western-most lane for walking and cycling. Their traffic analysis assumed no-one would get out of their cars to walk, scooter or cycle. NZTA has rejected the [international evidence that road capacity reductions results in less traffic](#).
- Despite NZTA's advice to the contrary, we don't really know if the bridge is "at capacity". The truss bridge (the centre 4 lanes) certainly are not. For the clip-ons, NZTA assumes a significant capacity loss is due to the differential temperature effect (when the top and bottom plates of the clip-ons have different temperatures). NZTA uses the theoretical maximum loss of capacity, NZTA have refused to take the advice of their peer reviewers Hyder to carry out the actual testing to see whether such a large allowance is necessary.

Why have we seen this behaviour from NZTA?

NZTA is not comfortable with a low-cost solution for walking & cycling on the Auckland Harbour Bridge because this doesn't fit their narrative that we regularly [see in the media^x](#): '*the Bridge is at capacity, it can't be strengthened hence a new crossing will soon be needed.*'

NZTA's approach is at odds with the Government's Policy Statement on Transport (GPS 2021 – 2030) that requires reduced private vehicles and trucks in favour of the more sustainable modes.

Our request of you:

After 17 years, it's time for an independent panel to review the situation, this should consider:

- i) the options for walking & cycling across the bridge
- ii) determining the actual capacity of the AHB and the options for strengthening it
- iii) review the Beca/NZTA relationship to ensure best practice management of the bridge
- iv) the merits of a short trial of one traffic lane for active transport.

We trust you will agree that it is appropriate for an independent review and look forward to your response to our request.

Regards,



Christine Rose, Chair
Mob: 021 056 3784



Bevan Woodward, Trustee
Transport Planner



Andy Smith, Trustee
Living Streets Aotearoa

Website links:

- i [http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/080519 transit assurance to arc.pdf](http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/080519_transit_assurance_to_arc.pdf)
- ii [http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/ahb strengthening for nzta - holmes.pdf](http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/ahb_strengthening_for_nzta_-_holmes.pdf)
- iii [http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/crampton letters nzta.pdf](http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/crampton_letters_nzta.pdf)
- iv [http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/3_081030strongemail to beca.pdf](http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/3_081030strongemail_to_beca.pdf)
- v [http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/new design offers certainty nzta.pdf](http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/new_design_offers_certainty_nzta.pdf)
- vi [http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/nzta memo supporting skypath.pdf](http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/nzta_memo_supporting_skypath.pdf)
- vii [http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/nzta board minutes-20180820 pg 14.pdf](http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/nzta_board_minutes-20180820_pg_14.pdf)
- viii [http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/nzta board assurance to minister re skypath 21 august 2018.pdf](http://www.getacross.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/8/122895821/nzta_board_assurance_to_minister_re_skypath_21_august_2018.pdf)
- ix <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/auckland-harbour-bridge-can-no-longer-be-strengthened-traffic-could-be-restricted-says-nzta/5D65SRWXVHIMTRTSEMO2MQFOCI/>