

## ATTACHMENT 1

### Written Feedback Received from Transport and Infrastructure Committee Members (TIC) on Great North Road Project

Cr. Watson	Notes concerns with current design. Proposes design changes to reduce cost.
Cr. Simpson	Concerned with overall cost. Encourages AT to review design and construction methodologies to find cost savings.
Cr. Walker	Opposed to current design. Proposes design changes to reduce cost.
Cr. Dalton	Support, with no changes to current design and funding.
Cr. Darby	Support for full project, no changes. Refers to detailed feedback included in letter from nine councillors dated Feb 2023.
Cr. Fairey	Support for full project, no changes. Refers to detailed feedback included in letter from nine councillors dated Feb 2023.

#### **Councillor Watson**

Firstly I would acknowledge the level of community expectation that has clearly been built up in progressing this project since 2016. The fact that the AT Board has previously approved this project and that their February meeting again approved subject to feedback from the Transport and Infrastructure Committee, has obviously reinforced that expectation.

There are of course other projects across the region where a similar sense of expectation has been built up over many years (and in a number of cases predating 2016). In some instances these projects relate to significant arterials serving populous suburbs with large secondary and primary schools where there aren't even existing footpaths on the roadside far less cycleways and wide separated pathways on both sides of the road. As a passing observation that sense of relativity isn't always sufficiently appreciated across the region in my view.

At the outset I would like to make it clear that I want to see cycleways progress far more quickly, far more inexpensively and with far less disruption to all concerned than has been the case previously (whether they be as the result of the creation of shared pathways or where appropriate, through separated interventions). In this respect I don't accept that roads such as Great North Road with existing wide pathways cannot be made into a safe cycleway by utilising the existing space (with consequential implications for the cost of not just the cycleway but other related initiatives as well).

There are enough existing examples of this to suggest otherwise including the northern side of Victoria Steet where a shared path appears to work reasonably well. In countries like Japan a 14% - 16% mode share is achieved almost entirely through such shared paths, often narrower than the spaces available in Auckland. As a general observation therefore (and not just in relation to this project) I would hope that in the constrained financial environment we face, more use can be made of existing infrastructure especially where wide pathways already exist.

In respect of Great North Road there are certainly locations where a cyclist would have to be careful when passing car park entries but that risk can be moderated through signage and careful riding at those points. Roads are most certainly dangerous for people cycling but the objections to utilising pathways are somewhat exaggerated in my view.

So I do want to see the key elements of this project progressed but would hope that a value for money review on the detailed work procedures could establish whether there are construction methodologies that could reduce the costs of projects such as this.

The inner and outer city already has a significant amount of first class separated cycling infrastructure. That is a real positive and I hope the useage of this infrastructure increases. The general area around Great North Road is one of these areas well served by separated cycle infrastructure including Karangahape Road, the Northwestern cycleway and will improve further with the approved section from Pt Chevalier through to Westmere shops.

I'm not sure what the mode share data is for this general area. If it is significantly higher for micro-mobility than other parts of Auckland then that is obviously a consideration that is relevant in a project such as this. We have heard anecdotal evidence but not as far as I am aware received accompanying statistics from a source such as the census for example?

As far as some of the other interventions on Great North Road go, the large number of raised pedestrian crossing on this 1.6 km section of road – 23 side road treatments – seems excessive, especially with the prospect of this road reducing its speed limit to 40 km in the future. If we accept that the ongoing speed reduction programmes are effective in reducing harm then the addition of so much physical infrastructure to such an extent seems over the top.

Similarly the raised speed tables at the three Great North Road signalised pedestrian crossings. Their potential removal could be investigated especially if car speeds are likely to be reduced anyway due to the narrower lanes. The speed tables could be added later without much additional cost if it were found necessary.

I would therefore hope savings could be found from some or all of the above in this project.

Additionally I would seek assurance over the minimisation of disruption to local businesses, residents and commuters. If a live motorway network such as the Northern Motorway can be worked on for 5 years with limited disruption to residents, motorists and businesses alike then I would expect a similar outcome should result from the much shorter and less challenging environment of Great North Road with the appropriate project management.

In this respect I further note the concerns of local businesses over the removal of 130 parking spaces. Assurances have been given by AT officers on a number of occasions regarding the 'limited' impact of such a level of removal of parking spaces and of an ongoing commitment to engage thoroughly with businesses over 'solutions'. Again this is a sensitive area that can be handled better than has been the case in previous instances and if such assurances are correct then one would expect little adverse reaction from businesses in the area.

Finally I would question the absence of any commentary on the implications for vehicular safety as a consequence of the removal of the median strip along Great North Road. Whereas in other carriageways the existence of a median strip is seen as providing a safety buffer zone for oncoming traffic I find it a little strange that no such concern appears to have been expressed in the case of Great North Road.

### **Councillor Desley Simpson**

Thank you to AT for arranging a site visit for the Great North Rd corridor on Tuesday 11 April. I am sorry I could not attend but XXXXX was able to be there and briefed me afterwards.

Great North Rd in this area is very close to town, and with increasing populations, but with some types of business (such as the car yards) likely to remain, it is important to balance priorities.

I am pleased to see provision made with two large loading zones for the various car yards. That solves an existing safety and business issue. I also note that the existing four traffic lanes (2x bus, 2x general traffic) will remain plus provision for parking (as I understand it, alternate sides depending on time of day). This is good.

Furthermore, providing for safer treatments at side streets will in my view reduce both risks for pedestrians and cyclists travelling along the corridor, but also cars turning out of these side streets. I do not think cyclists being asked to use the footpaths is a good alternative. These footpaths are not always wide where there is street furniture like bus shelters. This will put them in conflict with, and reduce safety for, people on foot, and many people riding bikes will simply not use such lanes and stay in the bus lanes which are less safe and will hold up buses.

I would encourage AT to continue to look for savings in this and other projects. Are raised tables necessary at the signalised intersections? I do remain concerned at the overall cost of AT projects and wonder if there would be benefit in a wider review of construction methodologies – perhaps that is something the new chief executive could pick up. Nonetheless, with the supporting funding from Waka Kotahi this seems to me to be a worthwhile project and I look forward to hearing what the AT Board's final decision on it is.

### **Councillor Wayne Walker**

Having taken the time to cycle the route on more than one occasion and after the site visit on the 11th April I make the following comments.

- 1) Make use of the existing footpath first. Along much of the length - especially on the southern side the footpath has adequate width to serve as a shared path.
- 2) Fill in the tree wells so that they are level with the footpath; utilise the rubber compound that allows for permeability and the expansion of the trunk while also enabling cycle and pedestrian movement on the surface.
- 3) Limit raised tables at the signalised crossings.
- 4) Retain the existing trees. Many of these appear to be Liriodendrons which make attractive street trees. The location of the street trees are not a barrier to use of the footpath as a shared path above.
- 5) I note that there is the precedent of footpaths used as shared paths elsewhere in Auckland.
- 6) Note that cycleways that run between passengers alighting from buses and bus stops is hazardous, as is routing of stand-alone cycleways behind bus stops.
- 7) Allow use of dedicated bus lanes for cyclists, together with the above.
- 8) Note that there are very few businesses - especially on the southern side - that have significant vehicle movements across the footpath - given that the footpath is used as a shared path.
- 9) Where possible reduce the number of businesses/apartments etc that require vehicle movements accessing/egressing onto Great North Road. For example, the Bunnings Warehouse access off Great North Road could be substituted by access which is already available off the side road.
- 10) Avoid the use of the hazardous concrete barriers (as initially deployed on Upper Harbour Drive) or 'tim tams' - these are hazardous to cyclists
- 11) Note that young cyclists may well find it dangerous cycling close to motorists - which would be the situation on the proposed separated cycleways. A shared path on the existing

footpath offers more width to accommodate cyclists passing each other. Footpaths are also currently used by mobility scooters, etc.

12) I believe the above approach is also suitable for the extension of the cycleway to the Meola/Pt Chev.

13) So in summary I am opposed to the design as it stands. I believe it to be very expensive and consider that the limited funds available could be deployed to greater effect through a more pragmatic use of existing footpaths as shared paths, use of dedicated bus lanes, etc.

### **Councillor Angela Dalton**

To confirm to you my support for the GNR Improvements project to proceed with no changes to the current design or funding. The proposed investment is critical to the strategic outcomes for our city in terms of safety, longevity, fit for purpose and just as importantly the third-party funding it brings with it.

This is an excellent project I wish you every success in getting it across the line and delivered safely.

### **Councillor Chris Darby**

#### **Re: Great North Road Improvements**

Kia ora koutou Wayne and board members,

You will recall I was a signatory to the 27 February joint letter from councillors, expressing support for the Great North Road Improvements project.

I write yet again, urging the board to finally commit to the project.

It is now seven years since this project was initiated. It has undergone thorough engagement, with design changes resulting. Schools, residents' groups, business groups, MPs, and other advocates numbering almost 50 organisations, back the project.

It is now at a point where it's Auckland Transport's final call, with reputations on the line.

Please give the green light to the Great North Road project - a green light to; bus priority, stormwater quality, safe cycling, a treed landscape, freight loading, pedestrian safety and reduced emissions.

In anticipation – ngā mihi maioha

### **Councillor Julie Fairey**

My feedback is brief. I have already written to AT (letter dated 27th February 2023), alongside eight of my councillor colleagues, in support of all three Inner West projects, and my view of their necessity has only increased in the intervening weeks. In that period there was an accident where a cyclist was hit by a car at an intersection that would have been much safer had this project already been done.

The Great North Road project has been through years, and many rounds, of public consultation, is widely supported in the community, and will provide significant improvements for all transport modes along this corridor. It should go ahead as soon as possible.

I have rarely seen a transport project so widely supported, in particular by local business and resident associations, and noting the much needed improvement adding truck lay-bys for the car transporter trucks that serve car dealerships in the area too. You may be aware of the #CarTruckParty campaign undertaken by locals to draw attention to this safety issue over the

last few years. I note that even the (then) local MP came out in favour of all three Inner West projects, which is pretty much unheard of for Jacinda Ardern to do on a local government issue.

If the Great North Road Project does not go ahead promptly it will send a negative message not only to this community but more widely – that no matter how much support projects of this nature have unless there is absolutely no objection at all then AT will not do it, regardless of how many rounds of consultation, how many changes made to address genuine community concerns. I think this is the biggest risk with not going ahead with Great North Road – the loss of public trust and confidence that AT can make these big decisions to take climate action, and that AT will support locals seeking safer roads around their schools and town centres.

I hope this is useful.

## Letter from 9 Councillors (February 2023)



### Councillors' Office

27 February 2023

To: Wayne Donnelly, Acting Chair, AT Board Mark Lambert, Acting CEO

Cc: Mayor Wayne Brown

Inner west street improvement projects

Tēnā kōrua,

We are writing in relation to the three inner west street improvement projects (Great North Road, Waitematā Safer Routes, and Point Chevalier to Westmere) as we are concerned by the rationale Auckland Transport appears to be giving for pausing the projects and the proposed next steps, which may result in further delays to funded, shovel ready and vital projects that are clearly supported by the wider community.

This has implications not just for these projects but for how AT delivers across Tāmaki Makaurau.

As you are aware, these projects have been planned since at least 2015 (in the case of Great North Road the planning goes back to pre-2010) and are long overdue for delivery. We understand the projects were ready for construction last year but were paused for a "stock take" following the local body elections. We understand decisions about the projects will be made at the AT board meeting on 28 February 2023.

AT has carried out several rounds of consultation on the projects, which have confirmed strong and consistent public support. AT has reported receiving extensive correspondence since pausing the projects, and that the correspondence has been overwhelmingly in support. Most recently, the six major schools along the route, two Business Improvement Districts, the Grey Lynn Residents' Association, the Auckland Regional Public Health Service and many other community groups have publicly issued a joint call for all three projects to be urgently delivered.

AT has included the inner west projects in the current Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP), the current Auckland Transport Alignment Plan, and in AT's Statement of Intent for the current year.

We understand, however, that only two of the projects have government co-funding available from the National Land Transport Fund (Great North Road, and Point Chevalier to Westmere). It is unclear why AT has failed to seek and obtain funding for the third project (Waitematā Safer Routes). We seek an urgent explanation in relation to this.

As you know, Auckland Council adopted the Transport Emissions Reduction Pathway (TERP) last year, which identifies "supercharging walking and cycling" as the first transformation, including "upgraded and expanded walking and cycling networks that serve more people". The Mayor's letter of expectation sent in December directs AT to implement the TERP. We are not aware of any reason why these projects should not proceed. They have very wide community support; they are consistent with the TERP; they deliver much-needed safety improvements for all road users; and the BCRs confirm they represent good value for money.

It is unclear why they have been paused when the rest of AT's capital programme, including many roading projects, appears to be progressing. We are concerned the inner west projects have been targeted for particular scrutiny because they include walking and cycling infrastructure, when in fact Auckland Council and AT have urgent climate and safety targets that require these types of projects to be prioritised. Our concerns are exacerbated by AT's well-documented history of failing to deliver walking and cycling projects.

We seek clarity about AT's decision to put these projects on hold, as it currently appears AT may have put these projects on hold at the request of one elected member. If this is the case, it is contrary to our respective governance roles and sets a concerning precedent. Those of us who were on previous councils are not aware of AT ever acting at the request of one elected member in a manner that is contrary to agreed strategies and plans or the Mayor's letter of expectation.

We appreciate that AT is under pressure to find cost savings, but any pause or deferral must be based on criteria that are applied in a "stocktake" evenly across AT's entire capital programme.

We are also very concerned at any suggestion that AT might look to defer parts of the inner west projects. The projects form a connected network of walking, cycling and bus improvements, and the benefits of the projects depend on delivery of the planned network. AT risks losing those network benefits and creating stranded infrastructure if it only delivers parts of the projects. We also understand that Waka Kotahi has recently advised AT that it risks losing co-funding if it continues to delay delivery of walking and cycling projects. To the extent AT has not yet secured government co-funding for the Waitemata Safer Routes, it needs to do so urgently.

Finally, we remind AT that it is not required to make a political decision in relation to these or any other projects. AT's responsibility is to make operational decisions that implement the strategic direction set out in the RLTP, the Statement of Intent, the TERP, the Government Policy on Land Transport and other documents.

We would be grateful for your confirmation that AT intends to recommend to the board that all three projects should proceed, with any further government co-funding to be sought immediately.

Sincerely,

Julie Fairey, Albert-Eden-Puketāpapa Ward Councillor

Kerrin Leoni, Whau Ward Councillor

Shane Henderson, Waitākere Ward Councillor

Richard Hills, North Shore Ward Councillor

Chris Darby, North Shore Ward Councillor

Josephine Bartley, Maungakiekie-Tāmaki Ward Councillor

Angela Dalton, Manurewa-Papakura Ward Councillor

Lotu Fuli, Manukau Ward Councillor

Alf Filipaina, Manukau Ward Councillor