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Auckland City Centre Residents' Group Submission on Wynyard Crossing Bridge (BUN60340404)

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The Proposal

Panuku Development Auckland has applied for resource consent to establish a permanent Wynyard Crossing bridge linking Wynyard Precinct with Te Wero Island. This proposal replaces the temporary bridge that has been in place since 2010.

The proposed Wynyard Crossing is a double-leaf bascule bridge along the same alignment as the existing bridge. When closed the bridge is 6m wide and provides for pedestrian and cyclist/scooter access. When open the bridge provides a 36m navigable channel for vessels.

The proposed bridge and its approaches are 148m in length and has a maximum height of 42m (which occurs when the bridge is closed). The operation of the proposed Wynyard Crossing will remain similar to the existing bridge. Construction is anticipated to take up to 12 months, during which time a temporary crossing will be used to provide interim pedestrian access between Wynyard Precinct and Viaduct Harbour Precinct.

Land use consent and regional permits are sought for the proposed structures, their use and occupation of the Coastal Marine Area for the demolition of the existing bridge, the proposed Wynyard Crossing, the proposed temporary crossing and associated works. Panuku are seeking a 35 year term of consent for the Wynyard Crossing bridge. The proposal is a restricted discretionary activity.

Reason for Submission

The City Centre Residents' Group (CCRG) does not believe that this proposal meets the current nor future needs for pedestrian and cycling amenity in this critical area of the Auckland Waterfront. The CCRG want to see the right designs, in the right place, at the right time for the right reasons and we believe Auckland deserves nothing less.

Submission

Future Proofing

The proposal makes no provision for future cycling and pedestrian growth generally, nor following the imminent construction of the Auckland Harbour Bridge shared path. The modelling justifying the design width is based on 2014 numbers, which, when considering the age of this area and the rapid change it has experienced, can no longer be considered valid. Pedestrian and cycling numbers have boomed, and micro-mobility services were not even in

existence at the time. In the two years between January 2017 and January 2019, cycling experienced a nearly 40% increase across the existing Te Wero bridge (as per Auckland Transport's statistics). Annual growth for cycling is at 9% year on year for the Auckland region.

The final issue here is that it appears that growth in pedestrian and cycling numbers is somehow expected to stop in 2030, by which time current predictions have 10's of thousands more residents in the city centre, let alone visitors and cyclists moving through the area. Even if all the assumptions based on the 2014 numbers turn out to be correct, the implied assumption that the bridge will continue to be sufficient after 2030 is simply wishful thinking.

Auckland Council and Auckland Transport both have aggressive and aspirational growth targets for walking and cycling. With a design life span of many decades, the bridge must be sufficient for the (un)expected growth in these modes.

The modelling here appears to be targeting a pre-determined decision that the bridge width is sufficient, rather than taking a true requirements based approach to identifying an appropriate crossing that meets the needs of the city.

Delineation

Pedestrians are at the top of the prioritisation hierarchy in the area, but forcing cyclists and pedestrians to share this relatively narrow width, one that is often heavily congested with pedestrians, only serves to reduce the amenity for pedestrians and cause conflicts between them and people on bicycles.

The proposed design for Auckland Harbour Bridge shared path has comment from NZTA that "in-depth analysis identified the attributes needed in the new design and said splitting the path for cyclists and walkers would make it "safer and more enjoyable for all users". This is counter to the proposed design justification for not providing separation in this proposal. With the Wynyard Crossing bridge expected to have many times the number of cyclists and pedestrians than the proposed Auckland Harbour Bridge shared path it is unacceptable that the planning for such a key piece of waterfront infrastructure will be incapable of meeting future demand in a manner that provides an acceptable and safe level of amenity to its users.

When considering the need of the young, the old and the mobility or sight-impaired, this forced sharing, this proposal places them as "traffic calming" rather than as people. This is the only route available to cross, and if they do not feel safe, then they are excluded from the basic amenity and access that this bridge is intended to provide. The argument that a narrower bridge is somehow better for pedestrians and vulnerable users does not hold up to the simple test of "would it be better for them if it were wider and cyclists were kept safely separate from them?"

The justification for the lack of delineation stems from above, where the width is pre-determined and thus space is inadequate for separation. It is clear that an appropriate design based on the huge volumes of pedestrians, the endlessly growing number of cyclists, and the safety and comfort of both would require adequate width as well as separation.

Alternate Cycle Route

The suggestions that signs would be adequate to advise cyclists to take another route is equally unacceptable. We have already spend millions on a temporary bridge so the suggestions that we replace it with a structure incapable of handling the cycling and pedestrian traffic that needs to use does an injustice to the future development of our waterfront, especially at a time when Council and Auckland Transport are attempting to grow acceptability, safety, and popularity of cycling. Greater width, along with mode separation improves amenity for pedestrians and supports the cycling mode shift under way.

The alternative routes presented in this report require either navigating the extremely busy viaduct footpaths, a "solution" with much greater conflict with pedestrians, or traveling on road without separation from traffic, a route that is inappropriate for slower, younger and older cyclists. The lack of planning to improve these alternate routes mean that they are not acceptable to present as solutions to the bridge being too narrow.

Further to this, as part of "Consultation on Westhaven to City cycle route: Section 1" (<https://at.govt.nz/media/1973581/westhaven-to-city-cycle-route-section-1-feedback-and-decisions-report.pdf>), a project that covered the route from Westhaven Drive to Market Place, under Appendix 2 Key themes and submitter comments with AT responses, Table: "Support and opposition for 'on-road' aspect", Auckland Transport makes clear that the "alternate" route proposed in the Wynyard Bridge Crossing report is suitable only for "cyclists comfortable with riding on the road" and that "A separated cycling facility, which less experienced and recreational cyclists can use, is provided via *Beaumont Street and North Wharf*." This makes sense, in that Auckland Transport has designated the waterfront route, including this bridge, as a "Metro" route in their statutory "Auckland Cycle Network" – this is the highest level of importance in their cycling hierarchy. This route is already a high priority cycle route, and will only continue to grow in importance.

The Wynyard Bridge Crossing report has decided, based on what appears to be little more than an opinion, that redirecting cyclists to a secondary route is an acceptable response to their design choices, contrary to Auckland Transport's strategic cycling planning. This appears again to be related to the need to justify pre-made decisions on a bridge width and (lack of) separation – as a result the proposal just becomes further and further removed the current reality of the city centre. Hand-waving cyclists away does not resolve the conflicts with pedestrians and the poor amenity that they (and cyclists) will inevitably experience should this design proceed.

City Centre Master Plan/Identity

The refreshed City Centre Master Plan, which incorporates the 2012 Waterfront Plan, is about to go out for public consultation, and that plan has a strong focus on an Accessible City Centre. This includes quality public open space, quality public transport, zero emissions, and encouragement for better cycling and pedestrian facilities in the city centre. A wider bridge at the Wynyard Crossing is needed in order to give effect to the strategic outcomes required for our waterfront.

One of the key new factors in the refreshed City Centre Master Plan is Tamaki Makaurau : Our Place in the World. This gives effect to the Auckland Plan statements that "Maori culture and identity is Tamaki Makaurau's point of difference in the world. The objective is to reflect this in the city centre with one aspect of that vision being to "give physical reality to Auckland's Maori identity". It is difficult to imagine a more prominent, iconic and appropriate location to give physical reality to this vision than through the appropriate designs for the Wynyard Crossing bridge.

While the current design proposals may make a strong visual statement on our waterfront they do not reflect Maori culture and identity. The CCRG believe that this is such a critical aspect of our waterfront planning that it requires a new design that gives effect to the Auckland Plan and CCMP commitment to Maori identity i.e. "a Tamaki Makaurau design approach founded on Maori design" as reported to Council Planning Committee on 3 July 2019.

We recognise that this may require more time but time is not the critical factor in relation to this structure. Panuku have also advised the ACCAB that "if consent is delayed, and the bridge is not able to be built in time for the Americas Cup, additional repairs to the current bridge to minimise the risk of it not operating properly will be undertaken. Construction of

the new bridge will be pushed out to after APEC (in 2021) to minimise disruption during this busy time of the city.”

About the City Centre Residents’ Association (CCRG)

Our Mission

To represent and advocate for all Auckland city centre residents, to Auckland Council, the Waitematā Local Board and other relevant agencies & organisations.

The purpose of such representation is to make known the concerns of residents, placing their interests and concerns at the centre of all decision making that affects residents in the city centre, and by doing so work towards achieving the best possible living environment.

We work to support community building in the city centre.

CCRG welcomes the diversity of representation from all sectors of the community and seeks to create an environment where everyone feels welcomed, affirmed and supported in line with the spirit of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We look to cooperate and engage with other Auckland City Centre organisations having similar objectives.

Our aim is to continually work to improve the liveability and quality of the city centre.

People First

Arts/culture is about people’s stories. Business exists to serve and employ people. Transport exists to move people and their things. Governments exist to represent the will of people. Infrastructure exists to house and support people to live healthy lives. The environment has to be protected to provide food & water for all living things including people

So we must therefore develop the city with a future focus on people