

CCRG Submission on Auckland Transport's Proposed Queen Street Changes

7 May 2021

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The City Centre Residents' Group provide the following submission in response to the advertised changes to the city centre bus networks - <https://at.govt.nz/projects-roadworks/queen-street-changes>

It is not possible for us, or anyone else, to make constructive comments on a proposal that has had no discussion with the communities impacted.

While it is referred to as the Waihorotiu/Queen Street Pilot it was never discussed at the three co-design workshops so cannot be considered a pilot from that process.

We note the pilot principles agreed at these co-design workshops and have attached them to our submission.

The current proposals from Auckland Transport for W/QSV don't come close to delivering on those principles.

Neither do they deliver on the Government's Policy Statement on Land Transport.

*The purpose of the transport system is to **improve people's wellbeing, and the liveability of places.** It does this by contributing to five key outcomes, identified in the Ministry of Transport's Transport Outcomes Framework.*

1. *Environmental sustainability: **Transitioning to net zero carbon emissions, and maintaining or improving biodiversity, water quality, and air quality.***
2. *Inclusive access: Enabling all people to participate in society through access to social and economic opportunities, such as work, education, and healthcare.*
3. *Healthy and safe people: **Protecting people from transport-related injuries and harmful pollution, and making active travel an attractive option.***
4. *Economic prosperity: Supporting economic activity via local, regional, and international connections, with efficient movements of people and products.*
5. *Resilience and security: Minimising and managing the risks from natural and human-made hazards, anticipating and adapting to emerging threats, and recovering effectively from disruptive events.*

Looking at the City Centre Master Plan we note the following for W/QSV –

The proposal to increase diesel buses along W/QSV, and to block off one section for bus stops/parks/layovers, does not deliver on any of the CCMP Outcomes -

<https://www.aucklandccmp.co.nz/outcomes>

Neither does it deliver on Transformational Move 3 - <https://www.aucklandccmp.co.nz/transformational-moves/transformational-move-3-waihorotiu-queen-street-valley/vision-for-waihorotiu-queen-street-valley>

- A vibrant pedestrian priority shopping street at the heart of Waihorotiu / Queen Street Valley - Queen Street will support centre-running transit (starting with buses) and become the centrepiece of a greatly expanded pedestrian priority and low emissions zone.

We acknowledge the decision to utilise electric buses for the city centre red shuttle service BUT that expensive initiative is neutralised by the current proposal to bring more diesel buses into, across and through our city centre streets.

The Access for Everyone concept (A4E) should have been capable of providing the template for various pilots on W/QSV given that it was specifically developed for centre running light rail in 2019.

While light rail decisions are still some time away, the CCMP provides for the transformational moves that will facilitate light rail, and we expect those transformational obligations to be delivered.

However, progress by Auckland Transport on developing the concept into a formal business case has been very slow, so learnings are not available to assist with key decisions on W/QSV.

Non-the-less, if we look at the Vision for A4E - <https://www.aucklandccmp.co.nz/access-for-everyone-a4e/vision-for-a4e> - it is clear that there is no relationship between that vision and AT's current proposals –

Waihorotiu / Queen Street Valley - Setting out the central role of a pedestrian-priority Waihorotiu / Queen Street Valley - the people-focused heart of the city centre unlocked by Access for Everyone and the creation of a Zero Emissions Area.

The key theme in all of the above visions, policies, purpose statements, transformational moves etc., is that the environment comes first.

It is a fundamental tenet of public sector organisations that they Do No Harm.

The proposal to re-route/park/layover hundreds of diesel buses every day along W/QSV fails that tenet and more so because this street is already the most polluted in New Zealand.

We all want to encourage people to come into the city centre using public transport, but it is unethical when the public transport required to achieve that threatens the health of those who live, walk and work here.

CCRG believe that there are better options for bringing people into the city centre in a way that is healthy for all concerned.

This would involve less buses coming into and crossing the city centre together with people walking longer distances and/or catching the clean running city link buses.

Auckland Transport have already advised CCRG, that the primary reason for needing to take buses down W/QSV is their concern about losing passengers.

CCRG's view is that this is not a good enough reason to continue to poison our living environment – walking a little further is good for us, for retail and for the environment.

There is also no evidence to suggest that buses using Victoria Street cannot continue to do so.

The street *itself* is not closing, only one intersection is closing.

Diesel buses have alternate routes to Lower Albert Street via a range of options involving Fanshawe/Wolfe/Swanson/Wyndham/Federal etc.

We know this is possible as the various hotels in those areas have been using these routes for tour coaches for years.

This may require temp changes to streetscapes/parking but is still a better outcome than sending diesel buses across, or down, the already polluted W/QSV.

Pedestrian streets have clean air, are quiet, relaxing, usually have greenery, are pleasant to be in, and safe – double decker diesel buses are none of those things.

The idea of closing off six lanes of W/QSV between Wakefield and Wellesley Streets is an unworkable notion.

There are numerous small food outlets with street seating in this area and much of that seating is within a few metres of a diesel bus exhaust.

Aotea Square, and the surrounding areas, offer food, entertainment and events so it is essential that these pedestrian spaces are both clean and safe.

CCRG are supportive of the current Auckland Council proposed W/QSV pilot between Shortland and Customs Streets as this was the agreed space for the first pilot during preparation of the CCMP.

We cannot support the sudden proposal by Auckland Transport to run their own 'pilot' on W/QSV based on their recently prepared Business Reference Case.

We note the Baseline comments on page 5 of this report –

This report was developed to describe the baseline “assumed” future scenario upon which current and future projects can be built. It includes completion of the Midtown Crossover, Downtown Crossover, and Lower Albert Street Bus Interchange, as well as progression and completion of City Rail Link. However, this scenario assumes the Light Rail project as previously planned does not proceed within the horizon of this document.

This statement denies the existence of the CCMP and Transformational Move 3 referenced above, that specifically provides for centre running buses along W/QSV until the decisions are made on light rail. The rest of the street is to be designed as a quality pedestrian space that also provides for loading and servicing vehicles to support business and residential properties. This means automatically that the centre running buses are electric, as would be light rail, and we are not aware of any reason why Auckland Transport cannot make this their 'pilot' – electric buses and more people walking along W/QSV is exactly what the city centre needs now.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss our concerns more fully with Auckland Council and Auckland Transport as soon as possible to agree on staged proposals that deliver on the Transformational Moves in the CCMP.

Ngā mihi
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