

## Pre-Construction Communication and Consultation Plan

# Newmarket Level Crossing

Communication Plan May 2017

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# 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to describe the approach to communicating Auckland Transport's (AT's) project to replace the level crossing connecting Sarawia Street and Laxon Terrace in Newmarket with a new bridge connecting Laxon Terrace and Cowie Street .

# 2 BACKGROUND

Auckland Transport (AT) has identified the need to close the level crossing at Sarawia Street in Newmarket to facilitate faster, more frequent Metro rail services made possible by electric trains, timetable changes and the coming introduction of the City Rail Link (CRL).

Level crossings generally are incompatible with a fast and frequent passenger rail service and the crossing at Sarawia Street is the busiest and most complicated level crossing in New Zealand. The constraint it places on service improvements (which affects much of the Auckland network) had previously been identified by other organisations Auckland City Council and KiwiRail which in previous years investigated closing the crossing and providing alternative access to Laxon Terrace and Youngs Lane.

AT and KiwiRail have discussed options to retain a level crossing in some form, e.g. as a pedestrian-only crossing, but KiwiRail confirmed that any form of level crossing in that area of the network would continue to constrain train movements and therefore overall network performance. .

Furthermore, closing the crossing removes altogether the safety risks associated with any level crossing. The Sarawia Street crossing is a priority to close because, while pedestrian and road traffic volumes using the crossing are low, there is a very high volume of rail movements. Interim improvements of the level crossing infrastructure were undertaken in 2015 to mitigate these risks in the short term, but it is agreed that the crossing needs to be removed.

AT's investigation into the feasibility of closing the crossing consisted of looking at a number of options, including reference to earlier options reviewed by Kiwirail and Auckland City Council. Concept designs were developed for the options to a common standard to allow comparative analysis to be undertaken. AT also considered options to retain convenient pedestrian and cycling access to the Newmarket Park area.

A Notice of Requirement (NOR) and a resource consent application for Auckland Transport's Newmarket Level Crossing Project were approved in July 2016 and then appealed to the Environment Court. Mediation secured agreement with the appellant which was endorsed by the Environment Court in March 2017

## 2.1 Options Previously Considered

Four feasible options were identified:

- Construction of a road bridge between Cowie Street and Laxon Terrace
- Widening of an existing pedestrian walkway linking Laxon Terrace to Furneaux Way to allow vehicle access and construction of a pedestrian/cycle bridge from Sarawia or Cowie Street to Laxon Terrace.
- Construction of a road through Newmarket Park to link Laxon Terrace to Ayr Street and construction of a pedestrian/cycle bridge from Sarawia or Cowie Street to Laxon Terrace.
- Construction of an underpass linking Sarawia Street to Laxon Terrace

Following analysis of all options, Option 1 was recommended to the AT Board in September 2013 as the preferred option to progress to Detailed Design. Following a series of meetings and presentations to the AT Board by the Cowie Street Residents Association, the AT Board commissioned an independent review of the AT options assessment. AECOM undertook the review and completed their report in October 2014, with the AT Board reconfirming their earlier decision to progress with the bridge option based on the review's recommendations.

Following this, three variant bridge designs were prepared and circulated for feedback among stakeholders, resulting in a preferred design for a Cowie Street bridge.

## 2.2 Community Engagement Background

AT began engagement with residents and community groups in November 2012. This included a public forum at the Parnell Community Centre in December 2012, involving about 100 attendees.

AT arranged two surveys to gather community, resident and landowner feedback - the first in early 2013 sought comments and prioritisation of options 1 to 3 (Cowie Street bridge, Furneaux Way link and Newmarket Park road) and following the decision on which option to progress, the second in late 2014 sought comments and scoring of three bridge design variants. This first formal feedback period concluded on 24 April 2013 with 188 responses, and the second concluded on Wednesday 24 December 2014 with 62 responses.

Recurring themes from the first survey form comments received included:

- The need to keep pedestrian and cycling access to Parnell, Newmarket and Newmarket Park.
- Concern over the removal of the crossing and questioning the need for its removal.
- Concern on the impact of a Newmarket Park road considering that the park has been recently redeveloped and improved.
- Mixed response on the safety impact for Newmarket Park users should a road be introduced, with some commenting that increased public presence makes the park safer while others believe there will be an increase in loitering and anti-social behaviour in the park.

- Concern over the effect of Laxon Terrace/Youngs Lane traffic being redirected into Furneaux Way and how this may interact with new developments in the Broadway Park area.
- Concern that a Cowie Street bridge will affect Cowie Street property prices and be visually imposing.
- Concern that the community consultation did not extend widely enough to include residents further afield and that not all residents received the AT letter and survey response form circulated to residents in early April.
- Comments on the methodology used by AT to produce a benefit-cost analysis of the economic case for the various options.

The second survey asked landowners and residents to score each of three bridge variant options and whether an observation platform would be a desirable inclusion. The results favoured bridge option 3, as having the narrowest bridge width and therefore lowest impact on Newmarket Park land, cost and environmental impact while retaining an adequate level of service for the community served. The survey results are addressed in detail in Attachment 1.

Where able, AT has responded directly to these comments and concerns and has used the AT website as the primary means of disseminating further detail and information on the proposals, supplemented by letter drops and a regular Community Liaison Group meeting. The preferred option progressed following feedback from the second survey and a multi-criteria assessment conducted by AT is a combination of bridge options 2 and 3, with a bridge footprint similar to option 2 in order to satisfy road safety concerns raised by AT internal review and the project's Road Safety Audit.

Community Liaison meetings with residents and landowners from affected streets have been held in December 2012, February 2014, May 2014, September 2014 and April 2015.

AT also met with representatives of a number of community and resident interest groups, including the Newmarket Community Association, Parnell Community Committee and Broadway Park Residents Society over 2013 and met with the Cowie Street Residents Association to discuss their alternative design for an underpass linking Sarawia Street to Laxon Terrace in 2014.

The underpass proposal was first tabled by Cowie Street residents and Parnell Community Committee chair Luke Niue in June 2013 and was developed into a formal proposal in April 2014 following the AT Board approval to proceed with the bridge option. Throughout 2014 there was ongoing discussion and meetings between AT, AT's specialists, the Cowie Street Resident Association members and their specialists on the proposed underpass option. This discussion included provision of an updated report commissioned by Cowie Street residents in August 2014, refining their underpass option.

Discussion on the underpass proposal ceased after an independent review undertaken by AECOM in October 2014 that examined AT's options analysis (including the underpass option), and supported AT's decision to progress the bridge option.

In addition, local residents presented directly to the AT Board on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014. They also had ongoing dialogue with the AT Board chair.

The project received significant coverage within online blogs and social media, as well as national media coverage, including an appearing on Campbell Live (TV3) in October 2014.

## **2.3 Local Board and Councillor Engagement Background**

A meeting was held with Rob Thomas from the Waitemata Local Board on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012 and with the then Waitemata Local Board chair Shale Chambers and two members of the transport portfolio on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Subsequently, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013 an update was given at the local board's formal meeting to provide detailed reasons for why the crossing has to be closed, the options AT considered and the results of the survey. During the meeting, AT requested the local board's formal feedback on the options. Feedback was received on Option 3 (the Newmarket Park Road option), stating that the Local Board "rejects option 3 and confirms that it will not consent as landowner to construction of a two-lane road through Newmarket Park".

AT subsequently presented to the Waitemata Local Board on several occasions, including 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014 and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015 and 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

AT has also engaged with Auckland Council Parks, Sports and Recreation has largely been combined with meetings with the Waitemata Local Board, specifically the meetings held 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015 and 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017. We also met with them for a site visit on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and on several occasions at Council offices during the period from 2015 and 2017.

A meeting was held with Councillor Mike Lee on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2013 to update him on the options investigation.

On 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017 AT and Auckland Council Parks presented an update to Waitemata Local Board members an update on the Newmarket Level Crossing Project.

## **2.4 Mana Whenua Engagement Background**

Mana whenua are AT's partners and have been consulted in that capacity

The project has held nine Hui with Mana Whenua, with the first held on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and most recent on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017. Key discussion items have been treatment of stormwater, impact on adjacent Newmarket Park, landscaping and effect on native trees and plantings, and opportunities for aesthetic or artistic input into the bridge design. In addition, three site visits were held with Mana Whenua Kaitiaki on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014 and 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

## **3 PRE-CONSTRUCTION COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

AT will be proactive in its communications to ensure directly-affected individuals and groups (and other interested parties) are well informed about the project during the remainder of the design phase and throughout construction.

Auckland Transport, in conjunction with its selected construction contractor, will develop the following management plans prior to construction and will seek feedback as required:

- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (“CEMP”);
- A Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan (“CNVMP”);
- Urban Design and Landscape Plan (“UDLP”);
- Vegetation Management Plan (“VMP”);
- Ecological Management Plan (“EMP”); and
- Construction Traffic Management Plan (“CTMP”)
- A Communication, Consultation and Stakeholder Management Plan.

### **3.1 Community Engagement Pre Construction**

The Cowie Street Bridge Community Liaison Group (CLG) is to be re-activated. This met under an independent chairman and comprised Cowie Street, Sarawia Street, Laxon Terrace and Youngs Land landowners and residents, along with representatives of other interested community groups such as the Parnell Community Committee Incorporated, Parnell Incorporated, Newmarket Community Association, and the Waitemata Local Board.

This group will continue to ensure resident and landowner feedback is adequately captured and questions or concerns are addressed appropriately.

The CLG will meet at least twice before construction commences and at least once every three months during construction.

### **3.2 Mana Whenua Engagement Pre-Construction**

There is an existing regular Mana Whenua forum to provide for an on-going iwi role in the design and construction of the project and the intention is to maintain this forum until completion of the construction period.

### **3.3 Network Utility Operators Engagement Pre-Construction**

The project will share the detailed design with key network utility operators, including KiwiRail, Vector, Watercare, and any other utility operator that is determined to be affected, or potentially affected, by the project works. We will seek feedback from utility operators to minimise the impact upon their operations and incorporate this feedback into the design and construction methodology where reasonably practicable.

The project has an existing communication channel with KiwiRail, and they have provided input into the design to date. The project will initiate contact with other utility operations during the remainder of the detailed design phase to ensure their feedback is received and understood.

### **3.4 Heritage New Zealand Engagement Pre-Construction**

The project will prepare a draft Historic Heritage Management Plan with the objective of providing a framework for the avoidance, remediation or mitigation or adverse effects on archaeological remains during construction, as far as reasonably practicable.

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## 4 COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Ensure excellence of relationships to the greatest extent possible with residents and stakeholders (and thereby protect and enhance AT's reputation) by the following:

- Be transparent and proactive in our communications to the public and other stakeholders
- Ensure that the community and stakeholders understand AT's decisions and the rationale behind them. This includes clearly articulating how feedback has informed the development of project documents such as the Construction Environmental Management Plan, and where it has not, reasons why it has not.
- Inform the community and other stakeholders of detailed proposals and the work programme before it commences
- Inform the community and other stakeholders of project progress
- Promptly inform residents and other stakeholders of any changes to the programme, and explain why change has been necessary
- Engage with the community in order to foster good relationships and to provide opportunities for learning about the project.
- Receive and respond to questions, issues and complaints so as to minimise dissatisfaction and build relationships and trust
- Correct any misinformation and/or misunderstandings that may exist
- Respond promptly to, any community or stakeholder concerns and feedback, and where possible use feedback to improve project outcomes.

## 5 PARTNERS

- Mana Whenua

## 6 KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- AT Board and chairman
- Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- Waitemata Local Board
- Local residents and land owners within the designation footprint and other who are affected by close proximity
- Media
- Community Liaison Group attendees
- Newmarket Community Association
- Parnell Community Committee
- Parnell Inc.
- Bike Auckland



- Local community – wider catchment area
- Auckland Council Parks, Sports and Recreation (for Newmarket Park)
- KiwiRail
- Vector
- Watercare
- Other utility providers
- Heritage NZ

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## 7 KEY MESSAGES

- After extensive engagement with residents and community groups on, and exhaustive investigation of, possible options, AT has decided to proceed with building the Cowie Street road (over rail) bridge following the planned closure of the Sarawia Street/Laxon Terrace level crossing.
- AT has endeavoured to balance the concerns of local residents and the wider community to arrive at a preferred option most acceptable to all concerned.
- The Cowie Street bridge considered by AT to provide the best option in respect of unimpeded road, cycle and pedestrian access. It has minimal impact on Newmarket Park land, complements planned greenway cycle and walking links, minimises changes to the existing traffic network and can be delivered with minimal construction disruption to the majority of local residents and park users.
- AT is now completing the detailed design phase for the new Cowie Street bridge and road. The design incorporates feedback from the community, the local board and Mana Whenua. The design and construction follow recognised urban design principles to ensure the new bridge complements its local environment and is as attractive and unobtrusive as possible
- AT is committed to working closely with Mana Whenua, the Waitemata Local Board, residents, landowners and other interested community groups to obtain their input and feedback throughout the pre-construction process.
- Traffic impacts generated through shifting Laxon Terrace vehicle movements from Sarawia Street to Cowie Street will be minimal given there will be a small number of vehicles – principally residents and visitors - that will use the new configuration.
- AT expects the crossing to be removed and the new vehicle link to be open during 2018

### 7.1 Key Messages Concerning the Level Crossing Removal

- All urban level crossings constrain the speed and frequency of rail movements and prevent the Auckland Metro network from achieving its maximum level of service. In addition, they all have inherent safety risks that increase with the frequency of fast, quiet, electric trains. Furthermore, frequent services reduce the opportunities for people, bikes and vehicles to cross the track while increasing the nuisance value to the neighbourhood, of regular ringing of crossing bells
- This level crossing is the busiest and most complex crossing in New Zealand in terms of rail movements, contributing to service disruption and delays to current rail services.

- For these reasons it is necessary to close the crossing:
  - in order to maximise the efficiency of Auckland’s Metro services, both now and after CRL (City Rail Link) increases the network’s capacity to run more trains more often
  - to ensure rail passengers will experience fewer and shorter delays
  - to eliminate the safety risk presented at this level crossing.
  - to eliminate the noise from warning bells currently endured by residents.
  
- The Cowie Street Bridge will divert residential traffic using Laxon Terrace and Youngs Lane to Cowie Street instead of Sarawia Street and the bottom of Sarawia Street will be reconfigured as a no exit road once the crossing is removed. Pedestrian access will remain via the walkway from Laxon Terrace to Furneaux Way and the new bridge from Cowie Street.
  
- The access path from Furneaux Way will remain closed to traffic and as such will continue as a walk way connection from Laxon Terrace to Middleton Rd. This will mean that both Laxon Terrace and Youngs Lane will remain no exit roads with access thereto only via the recommended Cowie Street bridge.

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## 8 CHANNELS

### **Briefing for the Mayor and Councillors, AT Chairman and CEO**

Possibly written (or in person as requested) – facilitated by Wally Thomas, Chief Stakeholder Relationships Officer

### **Waitemata Local Board:**

Briefings in workshops and/or via reports in the agenda of the monthly meetings - facilitated through AT's Elected Member Liaison representative.

### **Mana Whenua engagement**

A regular series of hui has been established and will continue throughout the project. This will be facilitated through AT's Maori Policy and Engagement representatives.

### **Network Utility Operators**

Meetings have been held with Vector and KiwiRail previously, and we will continue to share design information with network utility operators primarily by email, supplemented with face-to-face meetings as required to discuss detailed feedback.

### **Heritage NZ**

Detailed design information will be shared with Heritage NZ primarily by email, supported by meetings as required to discuss the detail of the project.

A Historic Heritage Management Plan will be prepared prior to construction activities commencing and we will consult with Heritage NZ upon this plan. This plan is to be submitted to Auckland Council at least 20 working days prior to designation-authorized activities commencing.

### **Website**

To:

- describe history and proposals for the whole project
- provide FAQs
- provide progress updates
- illustrations as available

### **Media**

- Media statements will be prepared and proactively distributed as necessary for key stages of the project.
- The media will be responded to in respect of queries, complaints or issues.
- Regular newsletter – probably primarily for email distribution, including on website and some hard copies for letterbox distribution.

### **Social media**

- A register of interested parties who have requested emails will continue to be kept and used to share messages covering progress and updates.

- Facebook and Twitter may be used if and when appropriate

### **Letter drop**

Letter/flyer drops will be made to the local catchment as necessary. This will include invitations to Community Liaison Group meetings and advise of any disruption or unusual work associated with construction, for example to advise an upcoming 'block of line' weekend when trains will not be running and key constructive activities will be most intensive.

### **Face-to-face meetings/workshops**

Meetings will be held with stakeholders as required. The Cowie Street Bridge Community Liaison Group is the primary meeting mechanism to engage with affected residents, landowners and key community representatives.

This will be the preferred method of communication with network utility operators and Heritage NZ to discuss any concerns or feedback in detail.

### **Auckland Transport Contact**

Dai Bindoff is the Auckland Transport Communications Manager for this project. Dai can be reached via phone on 09 448 7110, via email at [Dai.Bindoff@at.govt.nz](mailto:Dai.Bindoff@at.govt.nz) and via post at Civic – Level 1, 6 Henderson Valley Road, Auckland 0650.

Dai will endeavour to respond to letters and emails within 3 business days.

### **Construction Phase Contact**

A 24 hour contact line and email will be set up once a construction contractor is engaged, with both an Auckland Transport and contractor point of contact for the duration of the construction works.

A Construction Communication and Consultation Plan will detail any changes proposed to consultation during the construction phase.

A database containing the contact details for interested parties will be maintained, and a log kept of communications received, when received, response date, and nature of the AT response. Minutes will be kept of all Community Liaison Group meetings.