

# Memorandum

To: Rob, Douglas-Jones  
From: Anthony Williams, Principal Urban Designer  
Date: 11 May 2018  
Subject: MT. EDEN VILLAGE EXPANDED BUS STOPS - URBAN DESIGN  
Attachments: ASSESSMENT

- Mt Eden Bus Stops Catchment Analysis
- Alternative Bus Stop Location - Valley Road at Mt Eden Road

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## INTRODUCTION

Auckland Transport seeks to expand the two existing city bound bus stops in the centre of Mt Eden village from one stop in length to two. The current bus stops have been found to offer inadequate capacity during these peak hour conditions. This intervention is viewed as particularly necessary to address the a.m. peak period when buses are frequency is very high. In direct response to Auckland Transport's proposal to expand bus stop capacity in the village, the Mt. Eden Business Association has conducted their own assessment of the current issues through their consultant, Haines Planning.

This urban design assessment reviews the urban design related aspects of the proposal within the context of Mt. Eden Village and its surrounding network, and those matters also raised by the Mt. Eden Business Association. It should be noted that Auckland Transport's current bus stop expansion is also supported by several other interventions including extension of the bus lanes on Mt Eden Road, and increased parking controls, intended to better manage bus access and encourage shorter stay parking to support business in the village.

## AUCKLAND PLAN CONTEXT AND ITS REFRESH

The Auckland Plan identifies Mt. Eden Road as a regional arterial road within the quality transit network. The quality transit network includes rapid and frequent bus services, identifies movement and place as important and recognises the importance of modal priority on these routes. The proposal is consistent with the approach signalled for both town centres, regional arterial roads and the quality transit network in the Auckland Plan. The Auckland Plan refresh also places greater emphasis on public transport, which over time could also see significant benefits to town centres well serviced by public transport.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE VILLAGE

Mt. Eden Village is a Special Character Area and a Town Centre Zone in the Auckland Unitary Plan, and also includes several scheduled historic heritage buildings to the south of the proposal. None of the historic heritage buildings, identified in the Auckland Unitary Plan as being scheduled heritage buildings, are in the immediate vicinity of the proposed expanded bus stops.

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The Special Character Area recognises that transport context has had an important role in the history and development of Mt Eden Village. The special character values of the Mt Eden Village retail strip are noted as being closely associated with the establishment and expansion of Auckland's public transportation networks over the last 150 years. This is particularly the case for the intersections of Mt Eden Road, Stokes Road and Essex Road.

The Auckland Plan, Auckland Plan refresh and Unitary Plan all note that centres (including Town Centre like Mt Eden village) should be served by good public transport.

## **HISTORIC, BUSINESS, AND VISUAL AMENITY OF THE VILLAGE CENTRE**

The Haines report suggests that any increase in the existing bus stop capacity in the central area of the village will reduce its historic and visual amenity and business viability.

In fact, this route and town centre developed largely as a result of public transport in the form of trams. As such, public transport in its various forms from the past, have been an integral part of the evolution and history of Mt. Eden Road and the village centre itself. Importantly, the proposed expansion of bus stops has been designed to ensure it will not impact on any of the adjacent building or their verandas, including any 'sites with character defining buildings'.

I also note that it is the entire collection of buildings in the village, their collective presence/composition and historic origins, which creates the attractive street amenity, not their individual heritage status. In my opinion, the impact of the proposal on the Special Character/Historic Heritage values of Mt Eden village would be negligible, particularly given that it does not impact any building/verandas overhanging the road or other physical works, and only includes relocating a sign and road painting.

With respect to the concern regarding increased frequency of bus services and the visual effects of buses operating on the road, the proposal actually seeks to ensure freer movement of buses along Mt Eden Road and the village. From a visual amenity perspective, this could see reduced travel times for buses through the village, which would be positive. Auckland Transport's buses also legally comply with the dimension classes set by the NZTA and it would be unprecedented (and unusual) to try to control vehicles from using an arterial roads on visual amenity grounds.

Overall, I consider the adverse effects related to the northbound bus stop identified in the Haines report as serious to be largely temporary in nature and mainly limited to the a.m. peak period, which is typically before most of the shops in the village are open. Additionally, the proposal is expected to improve bus movement through the village, which should result in positive business and amenity effects compared to the existing situation.

## **ACCESSIBILITY AND WALKABILITY WITHIN THE COMMERCIAL AREA**

Pressure on footpath capacity typically occurs only in the a.m. peak period and well before most businesses are open in the village. Expanding the bus stop area from one to two spaces (along with the other interventions) is likely to enable buses to move more freely through Mt Eden Road and the village and reduce crowding.



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The option of a more peripheral location for a bus stop at the northern edge of the Mt Eden village, beyond the commercial area, has been considered. [FIGURE A](#) provides a summary of pedestrian catchments analysis, based on an ideal 600m catchments, incorporating topographic and road crossing constraints. The existing centrally located village bus stops (city-bound and out-bound + petrol station bus stop south of Poronui Street) are shown in red.

1. The relocated village bus stops recommended in the Haine's report (city-bound and out-bound + petrol station bus stop south of Poronui Street) are shown in yellow.
2. Catchment areas common to both options 1 and 2 are shown in orange (red + yellow)

The results indicate that the existing centrally located bus stops in the village have marginally better catchments than the relocated bus stops proposed in the Haines report. While a relocated bus stop to the Valley Road intersection may relieve pedestrian footpath pressure during peak ridership periods in the a.m., it also penalises bus patrons and commuters, who frequent businesses and travel in a lower carbon emissions modes. I also note that crossing the Valley Road/Mt. Eden Road intersection is particularly problematic for pedestrians during peak periods (see [FIGURE B](#) below).

Lastly, high quality public transport facilities and services are considered essential components of any vibrant healthy town centre and should be provided in a reasonably central location. This is supported by the Auckland Plan, the Auckland Plan refresh and Unitary Plan, which all note that centres should be served by good public transport.

## **MICRO CLIMATE OF BUS STOP AREA**

Some concern has been raised over exhaust fumes from buses. The volume of general traffic is much higher than the number of buses and creates more unwanted exhaust fumes when idling at signalised intersections throughout the day. With respect to buses, exhaust fumes are worst at peak times, and during the morning peak period, most shops are yet to open and pedestrian traffic visiting the village is at a low volume level. The introduction of electric buses, which is currently being trialled in Auckland, will also address noise and fume issues in future.

## **VEHICULAR FLOWS, OVERSIZE VEHICLES AND CIRCULATION**

The extended bus stops either side of the signalised intersection in the centre of the village will assist with unblocking the intersection, which currently suffers from buses overhanging the intersection. It should also be noted that Mt. Eden Road is an oversize vehicle route.

## **CYCLIST ACCESS**

The lack of a designated cycling lane through the village is not directly related to the proposed bus stop changes. Moving the stops to the edge of the village will not provide space for cycle facilities to be installed, particularly if parking is to be retained on the road. The additional bus stop proposed by Auckland Transport will not improve or

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worsen the current situation. A dedicated cycle lane is not part of this proposal but would require the permanent removal of parallel parking on Mt. Eden Road in the village and beyond.

## **FUTURE VILLAGE VIABILITY**

The proposal is unlikely to reduce the viability of the village because most of the frequent bus service activity will occur outside of the main shopping and visitation periods (a.m. and p.m. peak). Similarly, the remaining visual impact of the expanded bus stop, which constitutes a very small percentage of the overall composition of the village offering, is unlikely to adversely impact on the overall desirability of the village as a place to shop and visit. People who have traditionally visited the area for shopping and dining will continue to come.

## **ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE VILLAGE**

I do not consider that the incremental increase to the existing bus stops proposed would negatively impact on economic activity in Mt Eden village. The loss of parking spaces is negligible in this context, and visitors and shoppers tend to find alternative locations to park such as the large public car park off Essex Street. The dispersion of bus riders, as a result of an expanded bus stop facility, will be beneficial overall, particularly during non-peak hours when passenger numbers are lower.

It is also noted that Auckland Transport's proposed bus stop expansion is also supported by several other interventions including extension of the bus lanes on Mt Eden Road and increased parking controls intended to better manage bus access and encourage shorter stay parking to support business in the village.

## **ROADS AND STREET FRAMEWORK**

The Roads and Streets Framework (RASf) has been applied to the subject area to identify Mt. Eden Road's typology and its place and movement needs, the wider network priorities, and likely mode priorities. The initial review indicates that the existing and future street typologies for Mt. Eden Road are "Main Street Arterial". The mode priorities will be pedestrian, bus, cyclist, car, and deliveries, in that order. The physical and operational interventions would focus on pedestrian experience, safety, 24/7 traffic operational management, efficient public transport service and place significance.

I consider the expanded bus stop proposal to be consistent with the Roads and Streets Framework process.

When considering service deliveries and the RASf, these should not be a high mode priority for this location. For example, operational interventions would favour less busy off-peak hours and night-time deliveries, which can be actioned without adversely impacting higher priority modes, such as pedestrian and bus service related interventions.

When considering the impact of converting the bus stops to on-street parking, I would recommend a review of all the alternative uses, such as mobility parking or a

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continuous 24/7 busway before the reintroduction of on-street parking, which should commence further from the intersection than currently.

In the highly constricted road reserve of Mt. Eden Road, the mode priorities identified in the RASF review need to be applied in any future interventions. For this context, on-street car parking is not considered a high priority intervention.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The proposal will not significantly increase the intensity of buses through the area or the number of bus patrons riding. However, it will result in less friction and freer bus movements along Mt Eden Road and through the village in a.m. and p.m. peak hour conditions. In summary, and for the reasons set out above, I consider that the proposal submitted by Auckland Transport is unlikely to;

- adversely impact on the long term viability of the village
- create unacceptable exhaust fumes throughout the day,
- affect any permanent views of Maunga Maungawhau,
- adversely affect the heritage amenity / value of the village as a whole,
- create unacceptable difficulties for service deliveries,
- compromise cyclists and oversized vehicles,
- create a less desirable place to shop when considering Mt. Eden Village as a whole.

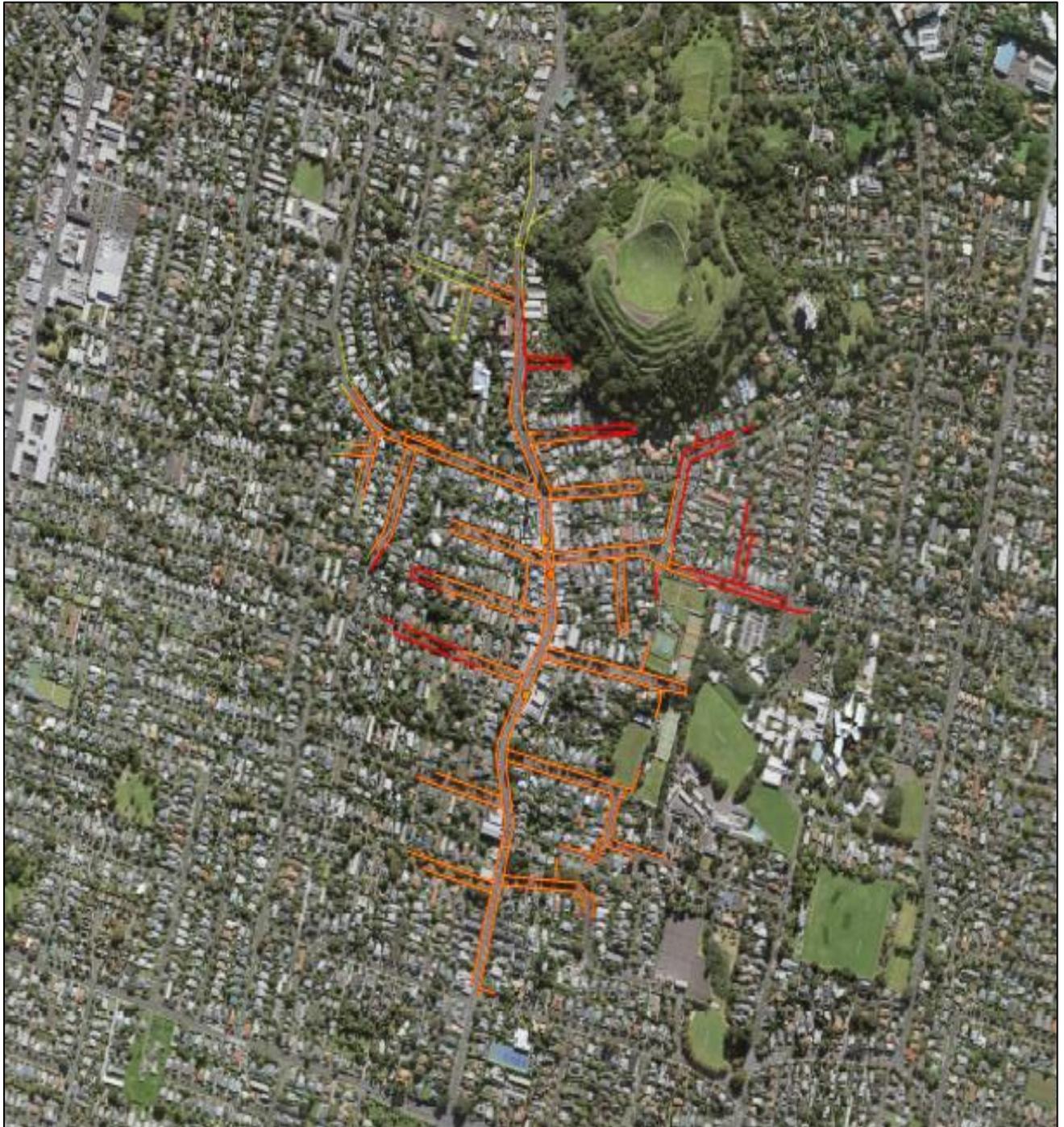
**Anthony Williams, Principal Urban Designer, AT**

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## FIGURE A

### Mt Eden Bus Stops Catchment Analysis

- Proposed expanded existing bus stop pedestrian catchment in red
- Pedestrian catchments of relocated bus stop to Valley Road in yellow
- Pedestrian catchments common to both bus stop locations in orange



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## FIGURE B

### Alternative Bus Stop Location - Valley Road at Mt Eden Road

