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# Auckland's City Centre Bus Plan

For decision:

For noting:

## Ngā tūtohunga / Recommendations

That the Auckland Transport Board (board):

- a) Endorses the proposed plan for Auckland's City Centre Bus Services – Connecting the City Centre (City Centre Bus Plan, Attachment 1), subject to the inclusion of any feedback from the board, the inclusion of economic information noted in paragraph 6, and any non-substantive changes approved by the Chief Executive; and
- b) Notes commencement of stakeholder engagement on this proposed plan.

## Te whakarāpopototanga matua / Executive summary

1. Auckland Transport (AT) has developed a concept plan to improve bus services to meet future demand for travel to the city centre. The proposed City Centre Bus Plan (Proposed Plan) contributes to AT's broader plan for transport in the city centre, focussing on the movement of people rather than vehicles, and is complementary to AT's proposals to make the city centre safer and more pedestrian friendly.
2. The Proposed Plan delivers on the 2020 City Centre Masterplan (CCMP), and also aligns with the key strategic guidance provided by core high level land use and transport plans, including the Auckland Plan, Future Connect and the Regional Public Transport Plan.
3. The proposed plan will ensure our city centre bus services are customer centric, easy to use, efficient to operate and can support strategic aims, including economic growth, for the city centre.
4. The major benefits of the Proposed Plan include:
  - Improved accessibility and connectivity for users of buses and the wider public transport (PT) system;
  - Increased mode shift to PT;
  - Improvements in air quality and environmental targets for the city centre by moving buses to off-street locations;
  - Improved safety and throughput of people, particularly on Customs Street and Wellesley Street; and

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- Delivery of the new CCMP and Access for Everyone proposals.
5. This has been brought to the board because AT would like to release the Proposed Plan (Attachment 1) to provide a platform for engagement and dialogue with elected members and stakeholders to test the overall concepts proposed, including the respective transport functions of place and movement. Full consultation with the public will be undertaken on specific infrastructure interventions during business casing at a later time. These will be provided separately to the board.
  6. Work is being progressed on assessment of the economic value of bus services and patronage in the city centre. Prior to release, a summary will be included in the public facing document.
  7. Alignment with existing strategy and stakeholder engagement are critical to the success of the Proposed Plan. An engagement plan (Attachment 2) has been prepared to set out how AT intend to engage with key stakeholders and elected members on the Proposed Plan.
  8. The capital cost estimate to deliver the proposals is around \$350m, with a phased delivery. Funding is identified in the draft 2021 – 2031 Regional Land Transport Plan (draft RLTP).

## Ngā tuhinga ō mua / Previous deliberations

Date	Report Title	Key Outcomes
October 2019 Customer and Innovation Committee meeting	Updated Bus Reference Case (aka City Centre Bus Plan)	<p>General support for the principles outlined in the paper. Board members wanted to defer the release of the City Centre Bus Plan until the adoption of the CCMP.</p> <p>Desire to see some graphics to help visualise Customs St and sell the vision and also a completed Safe Systems Assessment Framework (SSAF).</p>
May 2021 Design and Delivery Committee meeting	Auckland's City Centre Bus Plan	<p>General support for the Proposed Plan was provided with additional information requested for the board to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate the need for continued access by bus even after completion of Auckland Light Rail and the City Rail Link (CRL);</li> <li>• highlight the benefits of through routing buses across the city centre and how this delivers to growth requirements; and</li> <li>• demonstrate the spatial efficiency that buses offer and highlight the need for priority on key routes.</li> </ul>

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## Te horopaki me te tīaroaro rautaki / Context and strategic alignment

9. While the city centre represents less than 0.1% of the Auckland region by area, it generates 20% of the region's gross domestic product (GDP). It is the highest density employment area in the country and supports 125,000 jobs, along with a population of 35,000 and is projected to grow strongly in future years.
10. Buses contribute substantially to Auckland's economy and are vital for moving people to, from and around the Auckland city centre. 450 buses arrive in the city centre every morning carrying up to the same number of people as 30,000 cars. The number of buses arriving at peak times is expected to increase by 25% within 10 years.
11. Auckland's continued population growth and concentration of jobs primarily in the city centre has put a car-reliant transport system under significant strain. This makes continued improvement of the region's PT system crucial. As Auckland grows, the bus system will remain the 'heavy lifter' and needs to be adaptable to meet the growing needs of the region. A robust and reliable bus network is therefore key in providing a whole-of-region solution which cannot be achieved solely by projects like CRL and Light Rail Transit (LRT). Even after these two major projects are completed, buses will be required to carry the majority of people into the city centre. There are some corridors that cannot be served by train or light rail and are entirely dependent on buses as a means of PT access to the city centre.
12. A technical bus reference case for the city centre was completed in 2020. This document updates the technical specification for bus services in the city centre following material change since the previously published reference case in 2016, including the implementation of the bus New Network. It details approved short-term bus changes, for example due to CRL works. It also provides recommended next steps, including the concept design included in the Proposed Plan.
13. Auckland Council (Council) and AT have a range of strategies and plans for the city centre. In particular, Council have adopted the CCMP which focuses on prioritising access in the city centre for walking, cycling and PT.
14. Another strategic move, aligned with the other strategic plans and strategies, is to progress towards a zero-emission bus fleet for Auckland. In December 2020, the board approved an accelerated transition to zero emission buses. For the city centre, we are committed to a zero emissions operation by 2030. Electric buses will require inter-journey charging at off-street interchanges. Moving buses to off-street facilities as opposed to terminating on-street, and additional bus priority will also help with improving air quality in the city centre.

## Ngā matapakinga me ngā tātaritanga / Discussion and analysis

15. With significant growth and change in the city centre over the past decade issues have emerged which are affecting the quality of PT services to and from the city centre. The Proposed Plan seeks to address these issues. It is intended to be a consultative document to provide a basis for understanding why further change is needed to the city centre bus network, proposed changes, benefits and timing.

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**Strategic Matters**

16. In March 2020, the Council adopted a refreshed CCMP which sets a strategic direction for the city centre over the next 20 years. It seeks to make the city centre a more accessible and attractive place to live and work. It recognises that the CRL, along with other PT measures, are needed to enable safe, healthy and sustainable travel options into and around the city centre. In particular, the CCMP highlights the need for eight transformational moves, including the need to prioritise both Customs Street and Wellesley Street as transit streets.
17. AT's strategic objectives include providing better travel choices for Aucklanders, better connecting people, places, goods and services and providing an excellent customer experience on all services for customers. The current bus network in the city centre does not support these strategic objectives, nor those of the CCMP. The termination of so many routes in such a confined space creates place and movement conflict. The dispersed nature of bus stops in the city centre and the lack of intuitive wayfinding, makes interchanging and navigating the city centre difficult and limits accessibility.
18. Virtually all buses arriving in the city centre are diesel-powered. There are air and noise quality concerns related to the presence of high numbers of diesel-powered buses within the dense environment of the city centre.

**Customer feedback**

19. AT collects regular feedback from customers, who have told us that buses in the city centre do not work as well as they would like to meet their needs. Customers rate the experience of using buses in the city centre substantially lower than the rest of Auckland. There are four main areas that need to be addressed - transfers, legibility of the system, quality/safety and travel time.
20. Residents, property owners and businesses are concerned about the amenity and environmental impacts of the current on-street bus use, in particular buses using streets for parking and waiting for more than a very short period of time.

**Operational**

21. There is significant competition for space in the city centre and buses offer an extremely space-efficient way of moving people into the city centre. More than 1,000m of linear kerb space is given over to buses at multiple, often unsuitable, on-street locations.
22. Efficient and customer-oriented bus services require kerb space for bus stops and short-term bus parking, off-street areas for driver facilities, and integrated interchanges. The ability to store buses throughout the day between peaks is crucial for services which have a very high peak volume, such as the NX2 service. They also need prioritised road space for movements across key arterial city centre corridors.
23. In addition, the Inter Regional Coach Facility at Sky City offers a poor customer experience and is disconnected from the rest of the PT system. The long-term needs of coach operators and customers need to be considered. There are benefits to better connecting the inter-regional facility in some way with urban bus services.

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## Preferred solution

24. The Proposed Plan, which contributes to Council's broader plan for transport in the city centre, focusses on the movement of people rather than vehicles, and is complementary to AT's proposals to make the city centre safer and more pedestrian friendly. The Proposed Plan is intended to be released, as a basis for dialogue with elected members and stakeholders, ahead of broader engagement with the public to occur as part of a business case process in 2022.
25. The Proposed Plan is intended to ensure city centre bus services meet the future needs of our customers and the city centre. The three steps outlined in the plan propose changes to both bus routes and bus facilities in order to deliver several improvements.
- Step 1: Create dedicated reliable bus corridors along Customs Street and Wellesley Street.
  - Step 2: Provide new customer centric off-street bus interchange facilities.
  - Step 3: Make changes to services so that routes run through the city centre as opposed to terminate in the city centre.
26. The existing and proposed service route patterns are illustrated below in Figures 2 and 3:

CURRENT SITUATION - 2021



Figure 2: Existing bus route service pattern

NEW STRATEGIC APPROACH - 2028 (AM PEAK HOUR, 2 WAY)



Figure 3: Proposed bus route service pattern

27. AT proposes to deliver the plan over the next 10 years, which will allow some short term 'wins' for the system, while continuing progress towards the full, longer term plan and taking advantage of other projects in the city centre.

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## Benefits

28. Implementation of the Proposed Plan is expected to give rise to a multitude of benefits, including:

- Development of more intuitive solution for customers; all bus interchanges are concentrated in a handful of locations.
- Improved safety and throughput of people, particularly on Customs Street and Wellesley Street.
- Mode shift to PT estimated at around 1,000 bus trips from private vehicles during weekday peak as a result of reduced bus journey times, connections and access.
- Expanded access to an additional 30,000 jobs and 10,000 people within in the city centre, including better access to the hospital.
- Around 1,000m of linear kerb space freed up.
- A reduction in the number of buses terminating in the city centre by 50%.
- Delivery of the new CCMP and Access for Everyone proposals.
- A vastly improved environment for pedestrians and bus customers.
- Off-street passenger facing facilities for buses with potential for integrated development opportunities.
- Improved air quality in the city centre.
- The creation of a regional hub for local bus and inter-regional coach services.

## Ngā tūraru matua / Key risks and mitigations

29. The following table highlights the key known risks associated with the programme.

Key risk	Mitigation
Risk of limited stakeholder support for the plan and a lack of social licence for bus infrastructure in the city	Develop engagement strategy ahead of releasing public facing document. Identify champion(s) for the project.
Risk that the scope of the project is downscaled, or project is delivered in a piecemeal fashion	Secure political support, funding and public support as early as possible.

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Key risk	Mitigation
Risk that the Proposed Plan is competing for space with other modal priorities	The Plan has been developed as part of the wider AT strategy and plans for the city centre however, ongoing connection with all other plans and projects in the city centre will be required. Obtain buy-in that this plan is delivering the outcomes of CCMP.

## Ngā ritenga-ā-pūtea me ngā rauemi / Financial and resource impacts

30. High level cost estimates (P50) suggest ~ \$350m of capital investment is required to deliver the network changes and infrastructure in the Proposed Plan. Ongoing operating expenditure requirements in the order of an additional \$6m per annum are expected.
31. Two-line items are included in the draft RLTP - Downtown Crossover Bus Facilities (item 56) and Midtown Bus Improvements (item 61). Together, these two-line items form the funding basis for the Proposed Plan.

## Ngā whaiwhakaaro ō te taiao me te panonitanga o te āhuarangi / Environment and climate change considerations

32. The changes proposed in the Proposed Plan are expected to result in substantial mode shift to PT, brought about by additional priority and improved customer facilities. The new facilities will include provision for a fully electric fleet, allowing for better air quality and reduced emissions in the transport sector. Moving buses to off-street facilities as opposed to terminating on-street, and additional bus priority will also help with improving air quality. By 2025, more than 50% of buses running in the city centre are expected to be zero emission and all buses in the city centre emissions free by 2030.

## Ngā reo o mana whenua rātou ko ngā mema pooti, ko ngā roopu kei raro i te maru o te Kaunihera, ko ngā hāpori katoa / Voice of mana whenua, elected members, Council Controlled Organisations, customer and community

33. The high-level concepts explained in the Proposed Plan have been discussed with the Auckland Planning Committee, containing several elected members, as well as the Auckland City Centre Advisory Board. There is overall support for reducing the number of buses terminating on-street in the city centre, detuning traffic and improving priority for buses through the city centre.

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34. The plan responds directly to the feedback gained from the CCMP consultation and addresses key issues with the current city centre bus network raised by our customers.
35. An engagement and communications plan is included in Attachment 2.

## **Ngā whaiwhakaaro haumarū me ngā whaiwhakaaro hauora / Health, safety and wellbeing considerations**

36. In response to earlier requests, an initial Safe Systems Assessment Framework has been undertaken for the plan. Health, safety and wellbeing considerations of the plan include:

- Improved safety on Customs Street and Wellesley Street: vehicle speeds are expected to be lower and reduced exposure to general traffic;
- Improved safety for those transferring between buses in the city centre;
- Improved safety for pedestrians on Wakefield, Commerce, Gore and Fort Streets, due to the removal of buses;
- Reduced death and serious injury across the network, as a result of fewer cars being on the road and mode shift away from car, and
- Improved safety for cyclists along Customs Street and Wellesley Street.

## **Ā muri ake nei / Next steps**

37. The following next steps are noted:

- Board endorsement of the Proposed Plan;
- Complete research to understand the wider economic benefits of buses in the city centre, for incorporation into City Centre Bus Plan;
- Undertake engagement with elected members, stakeholders and partners;
- Confirm funding for implementing the City Centre Bus Plan proposals through the final 2021 – 2031 RLTP;
- Develop an indicative business case and detailed business case for investment approval including consultation with the public.







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## Te whakapiringa / Attachment

Attachment number	Description
1	Draft City Centre Bus Plan
2	Draft Engagement Plan

## Te pou whenua tuhinga / Document ownership

<b>Submitted by</b>	Pete Moth <b>Manager, Service Network Development</b>	
	Jane Small <b>Group Manager Property and Planning</b>	
<b>Recommended by</b>	Mark Lambert <b>Executive General Manager – Integrated Networks</b>	
	Jenny Chetwynd <b>Executive General Manager – Planning &amp; Investment</b>	
<b>Approved for submission</b>	Shane Ellison <b>Chief Executive</b>	