

Eastern Busway Pakuranga to Botany

Report of community meetings held in
March and April 2022

FINAL- 29 April 2022

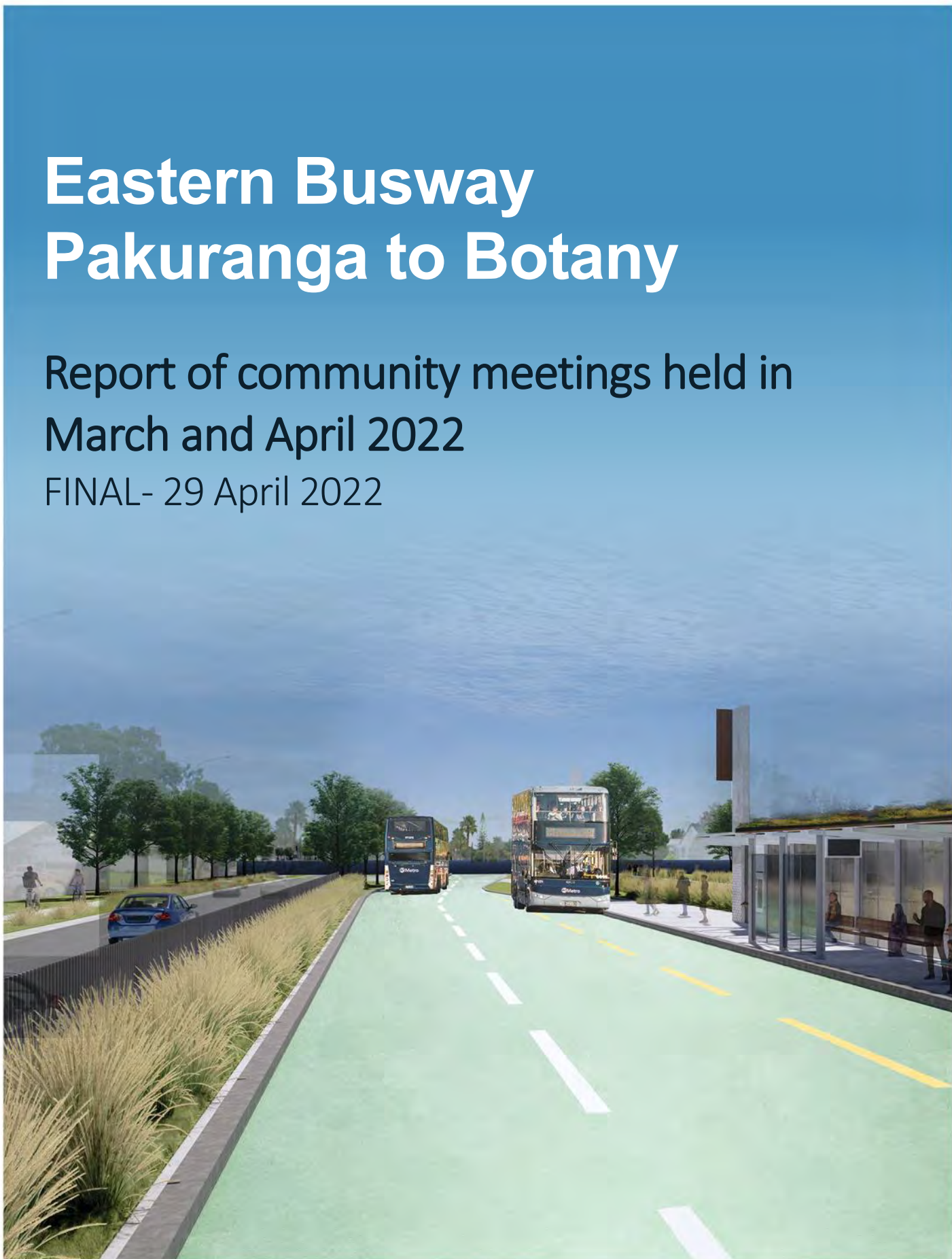


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1 Executive summary

The Eastern Busway project team hosted four community meetings in March and April 2022. There were three online events and one in-person public meeting, which were further to community consultation on the proposed design for the busway in late 2021. All sessions included affected property owners and residents of the Burswood community, interested parties and community stakeholders, and focused on the section of the proposed design between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Guys Reserve (or EB3C as it's referred to internally).

This report summarises the meeting process, attendees and the feedback provided. Attendees' comments have been collated and will be shared with the Auckland Transport Board ahead of their decision on the preferred design and next steps.

The main feedback themes from the meetings were consistent with those of the 2021 consultation and included:

- strong **opposition to the proposed Burswood alignment** and requests for the design to revert to the Ti Rakau Drive alignment that was previously consulted on in 2018
- concerns regarding the **impacts to property and property owners** in the Burswood area, and the potential for extensive future urban development
- questions around the **potential environmental impacts** including noise, dust, and impacts to wetlands and native species
- requests for **clarification on the project decision-making**, timing and funding
- feedback on **the communications and consultation process**
- other feedback, including bus station design and facilities, parking, the Reeves Road Flyover, and comments on the operational section of the busway between Panmure and Pakuranga.

The project team will provide further opportunities for in-person community engagement through two pop-in sessions in May, now that Covid-19 restrictions have eased. Results from these sessions will be reported subsequently.

2 Background and purpose

The Eastern Busway forms part of Auckland rapid transport network with separate lanes for buses to connect people from Botany, Pakuranga and the surrounding suburbs with the rail network in Panmure. It is jointly funded by the NZ Government, Auckland Council and the Regional Fuel Tax. The project includes cycling and walking paths, safety, environment and roading improvements and a new Reeves Road Flyover, giving people a range of transport options and more reliable journey times.

Creating a connected and sustainable 'turn up and go' rapid transit network will help people get around Tāmaki Makarau more easily. When the project is completed, it will provide 7km of free-flowing busway from the Panmure Train Station to Botany. Alongside the busway there will be 12 kilometres of protected cycleways and footpaths. The five stations will include parking for scooters and bikes and green roofs, collecting solar energy and rainwater.

The diverse and growing community of East Auckland will be home to an estimated 160,000 people by 2030. When the Eastern Busway is completed, it will carry more than 30,000 passengers daily, giving 24,000 more people access to a high-quality bus station within 1km walking distance of home as well as excellent facilities for those on bikes or on foot.

Auckland Transport (AT) has formed the Eastern Busway Alliance with Fletcher, ACCIONA, AECOM and Jacobs to design, consent and deliver the Pakuranga to Botany section of the Eastern Busway.

AT and the alliance have maintained a measured and evolving approach to consultation with property owners and the community. Initially, consultation on the updated proposed design was intended to take place in April 2021. Further refinement of the design scheme took place in consideration of budgetary pressures, and a preferred design was confirmed at AT's August 2021 Board meeting, just as the country went into lockdown.

Consultation began on 1 November 2021 after careful consideration into the effects on individuals' wellbeing and whether there would be a more suitable time for consultation to begin. Given the ongoing uncertainties of Covid-19 restrictions, the decision was made to proceed with consultation in November and December 2021 and start discussing the proposal with property owners rather than delay those conversations.

Feedback from the 2021 engagement process has been reported separately and conveyed to the project team and the AT Board. It is being considered as part of the ongoing development of the project design. Following the 2021 engagement, AT and the alliance team continue their commitment to listening to, and addressing, the concerns that community members have raised. They are keenly aware of the impacts of the proposed residential and commercial property acquisitions.

In February 2022 AT approved the proposed design for the busway section between Pakuranga Town Centre and Ti Rakau Drive Bridge. As much of the feedback from the 2021 consultation opposed the proposed section of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Botany Town Centre, AT has sought more time to review and understand the community's feedback for this section. In particular, the community highlighted the need to provide further clarity around the design options that were considered and the rationale for the proposed design of the busway through the Burswood community.

Between February and April 2022, the project team:

- analysed and reported on the 2021 consultation. The report was circulated to stakeholders and published on the project website
- developed and distributed a summary of the 14 design options considered for the section of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Botany Town Centre, with rationale for the preferred design being selected. This was entitled 'Design options' and was sent to partners, stakeholders, affected property owners in and around the Burswood community, and published on the project website
- created a March 2022 project update, bUSway, which included a summary of the consultation themes and next steps. It was published on the project website and widely distributed to community members and individual and group stakeholders

- held regular meetings with project partners, stakeholders and property owners to further discuss the design, the rationale for the proposed alignment through Burswood, limitations with the previous design and other options considered for this section of the busway
- held three independently facilitated online community information sessions, hosted using Zoom, on 22, 24 and 26 March 2022. These were specifically designed for affected property owners and community members around Burswood, and focused on the proposed section of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Guys Reserve
- held an independently facilitated, in-person community meeting at the East City Wesleyan Church in Burswood in the early evening of 20 April 2022. As with the online information sessions, this was specifically designed for affected property owners and community members around Burswood, and focused on the proposed section of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Guys Reserve. It was arranged during March 2022 when Auckland was at the red setting of the Covid-19 Protection Framework and the maximum number of attendees was 200. Meeting invitations were therefore sent directly to affected parties only, to ensure the meeting could take place within the legal capacity limit.

This report summarises the process and feedback received through the online and in-person community meetings held in March and April 2022.

The online information sessions and the in-person community meeting were intended to provide the Burswood residential community and affected property owners with:

1. further information and clarity around the proposed section of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Guys Reserve
2. an opportunity for members of the project team to listen to community feedback, concerns and needs.

3 The engagement process

3.1 Online information sessions

The purpose of the online information sessions was to enable the community to talk with the alliance team to gain more in-depth knowledge of the design options, rationale, decision-making process and next steps. The sessions also gave the alliance team an opportunity to hear directly from affected community members and property owners, which is their usual approach to consultation outside of a pandemic context.

Invitations to the online briefing sessions were sent to impacted property owners, people who signed up for updates during the 2021 consultation and key affected stakeholders (including the Burswood Resident Collective and Howick Residents and Ratepayers Association). The sessions were also mentioned in email updates sent to a wide range of project stakeholders.

Attendees included affected property owners, project neighbours, interested parties and community stakeholders, an independent facilitator to run the meetings and the question-and-answer session, and senior members of the Eastern Busway Alliance.

Three sessions were held using Zoom, at the following dates and times:

- Tuesday 22 March 2022, 12pm to 1pm, with 29 community participants
- Thursday 24 March 2022, 5pm to 6pm, with 19 community participants
- Saturday 26 March 2022, 11am to 12pm, with 8 community participants

One participant chose to attend more than one of the meetings, so in total across the three sessions, approximately 55 community members took part.

During the sessions, alliance team members provided a project overview, an outline of the 14 design options that were investigated for the section of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Botany Town Centre (including the 2018 design), an overview of the decision-making process and next steps. This was followed by an interactive question and answer session, during which community participants raised a range of questions and issues, as outlined in section 4 below.

3.2 In-person community meeting

A common theme voiced by participants in the three online information sessions was a desire to meet in-person to further discuss the project and how it would affect the Burswood residential community. As a result of this, and the project team's desire to meet affected parties face-to-face as soon as Covid-19 restrictions allowed, a community meeting was held from 6pm to 7pm on Wednesday 20 April 2022. It was arranged when Auckland was at the red setting of the Covid-19 Protection Framework and the maximum number of attendees was 200. Invitations were therefore sent to directly affected people only, to ensure the meeting could take place within the legal capacity limit.

Invitations were sent to impacted property owners, people who attended the online sessions, and key stakeholders including Elected Representatives, the Howick Local Board, the Burswood Resident Collective and Howick Residents' and Ratepayers' Association. Translated invitations were delivered to Mandarin speaking affected property owners.

The meeting provided an opportunity for affected Burswood residents and the project team to meet in person as a group for the first time, to discuss the project, design options and rationale and the decision-making process.

Attendees included affected property owners, project neighbours, interested parties and community stakeholders, an independent facilitator to run the question-and-answer session, and senior members of the Eastern Busway Alliance. Approximately 85 community members attended.

During the meeting, alliance team members provided a brief project overview and a summary of the proposed design for the section of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Guys Reserve, the decision-making process and next steps. Attendees were then invited to raise questions, comments and issues. While the session was not recorded, alliance team members took careful notes of the feedback, as reported below.

4 Summary of feedback and input

The main themes from the question and answer sessions in each of the meetings included:

- the rationale and alternatives for the proposed design of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Guys Reserve
- property impacts, the potential acquisition process and potential future urban development in the Burswood area
- environmental impacts and concerns around noise, dust, health effects and impacts to wetlands and native species
- project decision-making, timing and funding
- communications and consultation process
- other comments, including bus station design and facilities, parking, the Reeves Road Flyover, and comments on the operational section of the busway between Panmure and Pakuranga.

4.1 Design

In line with feedback from the 2021 consultation, attendees expressed strong opposition to the proposed design of the busway between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Guys Reserve, and in particular the proposed Burswood alignment. Burswood residents and community members were outraged at the potential impact to their homes and community and wanted the design to revert to that proposed in 2018 – the online option along Ti Rakau Drive.

Some of the detailed questions and comments included that:

- there was previously a bus route that followed Burswood Drive, but it was removed due to low patronage. Participants felt that this demonstrated a Burswood Station and busway alignment was poorly considered.
- Ti Rakau Drive is three lanes wide in each direction through most of the commercial section between Ti Rakau Drive Bridge and Guys Reserve, so people felt that would provide room for a busway or bus lanes to stay on Ti Rakau Drive
- road widening is also needed for other parts of Ti Rakau Drive to accommodate the busway, including through the Pakuranga section, so attendees questioned why this same approach couldn't be applied through the commercial section
- participants felt that as the busway is designed for many decades of operational use, then the budget should not be constrained by the cost of purchasing commercial properties on the Ti Rakau Drive corridor
- people suggested that an elevated structure above Ti Rakau Drive would be more suitable and have less impact on properties. When the high cost of this option was pointed out, one person said, *“What’s the difference in cost between the Reeves Road Flyover and a Ti Rakau Drive elevated option? Why can’t you spend the money on an elevated option for Burswood – invest the money and do it right.”*
- participants questioned whether the online option would actually be very inconvenient for businesses. They asked whether the Burswood option was proposed simply because it would be cheaper and easier to purchase residential properties rather than affect commercial properties

- residents felt that a busway along Ti Rakau Drive would provide better access to the commercial properties on either side of Ti Rakau Drive
- some participants suggested alternative alignment options, such as using Torrens Road or following Burswood Drive all the way up the peninsula.

In summary, residents and residential property owners made it clear that they supported the busway overall but wanted the design to revert to that proposed in 2018. They oppose the Burswood option.

4.2 Property impacts

As detailed above, there was widespread concern from attendees around the potential impact that the proposed Burswood alignment would cause to their properties and community. Questions and comments focused on the following:

- the potential property acquisition process and how it would impact property owners. Specifically:
 - the timing of the acquisition process given the AT Board has yet to make a final decision on the alignment for this section of the busway. Property owners want certainty and to know what is happening with their properties, as they feel like they are in limbo and cannot plan their future
 - if the Burswood alignment were to be confirmed, how long would property owners have before they are asked to move out, could they rent their property in the meantime, what costs could they claim, how would any changes to the property market and valuations affect them, and what impact would the busway have on property prices for neighbouring properties?
 - whether Bunnings had been consulted on the proposed design
- concern about the potential for urban development or intensification. Community members want to understand what plans exist for developing the Burswood suburb. There was particular concern that neighbouring properties would be acquired and replaced with intensive development, and/or Kainga Ora affordable housing, but that there had been no public communication or consultation on this. One person commented that, *“A huge number of properties would be affected by compulsory acquisition, and we haven’t been told anything about it.”*
 - Similarly, residents questioned the extent to which the potential for urban development in the area was part of the justification for the proposed Burswood alignment, and felt that more communication was needed on this
- residents expressed concern about the potential impact of construction and the operation of the busway on the properties neighbouring it, and how to keep them safe.

4.3 Environmental impacts

Attendees raised concerns about noise, dust and traffic disruption caused by the busway and/or its construction. There were questions about how dust and noise impacts would be measured, and suggestions to reduce environmental and construction impacts.

There were also questions around the potential impact of the busway on wetlands in the area, and a range of native species such as moho pererū / banded rail, tuna / short finned eels, parore fish, ongaonga / native

stinging nettle, kahukura / red admiral butterflies, pīwakawka / fantails, wētā, skinks and pekapeka / long tailed bats.

4.4 Project decision-making, timing and funding

Given recent media articles and changes to the AT Board decision-making timing, participants sought clarity on when AT would make the final decision on the alignment. Attendees raised questions about the project's funding, wanting to know how secure this was, and what impacts that might have on timing.

Attendees also asked about the AT Board decision-making process, when they would be informed of the outcome, and what would happen if the proposed alignment was not endorsed.

4.5 Communications and consultation process

Attendees asked questions and raised concerns about the communications and consultation process. Specifically:

- attendees at the in-person meeting on 20 April 2022 asked how well the session had been advertised, who knew about it and why all residents had not been invited
- there was suspicion that commercial property owners had already been told they wouldn't be affected by the design. Some people felt this demonstrated that the decision on the alignment for this section of the busway had already been made
- there was a general sense that AT and the Eastern Busway Alliance were not listening to residents' concerns and had already made up their mind to proceed with the proposed Burswood alignment despite community opposition. Some felt that the in-person meeting was not sufficient and not long enough
- there were requests to have further opportunities for the community to engage with the project team and decision makers
- some people questioned why there had not been any communication from AT about the project between the previous design in 2018 and the current proposed design, which was communicated in 2021
- residents asked what kind of communications they could expect during construction.

4.6 Other themes

A range of other questions were raised at both the virtual and in person meeting, including bus station location and facilities, parking, Reeves Road Flyover, and comments on the operational section of the busway between Panmure and Pakuranga. They included:

- why a third busway lane was needed for the stations, and whether the buses could instead simply stop while remaining in their lane
- whether there would be toilet facilities at each bus station
- a request to connect the new cycleway with the existing walking and cycling paths in the Stonedon Drive and Highbrook areas

- questions around parking, whether bus users would park in local streets, and whether the congestion around Bunnings would get worse
- a challenge to the Reeves Road Flyover in terms of its impact on encouraging private vehicle use and increasing emissions
- questions relating to the section of the busway between Panmure and Pakuranga that is already operational:
 - Why are some buses still using roads and the original Panmure Bridge rather than the busway?
 - Why are buses often travelling slowly on the new busway, at speeds below 30km/h, when the neighbouring road traffic travels at 50km?

5 Next steps

Feedback from property owners and the Burswood community is greatly appreciated. Particularly because the in-person meeting provided the first opportunity for members of the project team to meet the community face-to-face following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. AT and the Eastern Busway team thank everyone who has taken time to attend the sessions and share their opinions.

Following requests from attendees, further opportunities to hold in-person public engagement sessions have now been confirmed and will take place in May.

Feedback from all the sessions will be shared with the AT Board ahead of their decision on the preferred design alignment. Once the decision has been made the alliance will communicate directly with affected property owners, stakeholders and the community.

Following the AT Board decision, detailed design of the chosen alignment will progress and further community consultation will be organised to seek feedback from the community. Ongoing engagement with mana whenua, Elected Representatives, the Howick Local Board, property owners, key stakeholder groups and the community will continue throughout the project, as a key aspect of the Eastern Busway's social license to operate.