

QUAY ST RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT: “POST-CONSTRUCTION” OVERVIEW

The Quay St road construction project was a legacy project inherited by Auckland Transport (AT). I was the “principal researcher” for Projenz Ltd who were requested to undertake an independent review of the project planning, methodology, work practices, programme and risks.

This pre-construction review concluded that project planning was comprehensive and robust. The examination of the then proposed project timing showed that “no time is good time” to work on this key transport route but the selected timing was endorsed subject to recognition of the need for higher levels of project communications and risk mitigation during implementation of the works. The review also noted that via the significant consents approvals process, there had been significant peer reviews completed prior to our involvement. These included: traffic control, construction noise, construction vibration, effects on local business, including cruise ship activities and effects on buses. As a direct result, the work methods varied to reflect the differing constraints on various sections of the project.

The pre-construction review developed a high-level risk profile. This identified three key high-level risk areas:

- Engineering and technical risks – multiple service providers working above and below ground in a complex, sensitive, highly trafficked waterfront environment. Weather delays etc.
- Public and Business disruption – a high traffic volume, high profile route in a commercial and tourist area.
- Public and Business Perception – working over the holiday period, plus much of the work is underground, hence major activity is not always highly visible.

These risks and the proposed mitigation measures were incorporated into the risk register that had already been developed by ARMA – West. As the mitigation for numerous risks involved consultation and communications with affected parties, the “communications” resources were bolstered. In particular a communications “expert” highly experienced in roading projects within highly trafficked corridors, was added to the project team.

During the works, I made regular visits to site to observe progress, work methods, traffic conditions and temporary traffic control measures. I observed a well managed work site, good compliance with COPTTM for temporary traffic control, the involvement of ambassadors from the bus companies and cruise ship teams, and the supportive nature of the Vector and Transport contractors. There was a noted difference between the works being delivered by Auckland Transport and Vector, and other contractors on adjacent sites around the lower CBD. This did contribute to some adverse commentary being wrongly attributed to the AT project.

I conclude that effectively the intent proposed / developed in the planning stage of the project was delivered in the field. A principal area of complication during delivery was the limited opportunity to accelerate the works - largely because of the tight working areas, prohibition on night works, requirement to maintain high levels of access for businesses, and the cyclic sequencing of work modules. As work proceeded, the project team did refine work cycles to improve productivity.

Another area of project execution identified as a key risk was the management of commuter peak traffic, especially from early February onwards when school holidays finish and the bulk of employees are back at work. This expected traffic demand and congestion did arise and project communications via media and on-site VMS signs were greatly increased in an attempt to suppress traffic demand along Quay St itself

Past experience on similar projects has demonstrated that it is immensely difficult to communicate effectively to road users that they should re-route over several alternative road corridors. This is another subject worthy of exploring in planning future projects.

Overall, it is concluded that the project has been delivered to a high quality in terms of engineering standards, temporary traffic management, stakeholder liaison, internal and external communications. Some valuable lessons have been learnt from delivery of this joint project. However, this aspect needs to be balanced with the 6-8 week reduction in road network disruption which would otherwise have occurred if the various project components had been implemented separately.

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