



BUSINESS SCHOOL

Retirement Policy and Research Centre

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To: Regional Transport Committee/AT Engagement c/o ATEngagement@at.govt.nz

Feedback: draft Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP), the 10-year plan for Auckland's transport network

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on the draft Regional Land Transport Plan.¹

The Retirement Policy and Research Centre (RPRC) is based in the Department of Economics at the University of Auckland Business School. Information on the people and their research is found on the website at <http://www.rprc.auckland.ac.nz>.

This feedback is focussed primarily on safety issues for seniors, children, and people with impaired mobility.

The Draft Auckland Regional Transport Plan (RLTP) states:

In 2019, Tāmaki Makaurau achieved a milestone with more than 100 million public transport boardings made – the first time that number had been achieved since the early 1950s....

More than a third of Aucklanders live within 500 metres of a frequent public transport service, yet the majority... still choose to use a private motor vehicle for most trips.

... many more Aucklanders need to access (public & active) transport choices to reduce congestion, Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and deaths and serious injuries (DSI) on our roads. (page 3)

Since the Britomart Train Station opened,... annual train patronage has increased 755% between 2003 to 2019 (2.5 million to 21.4 million). Since the Northern Busway opened in 2008, annual bus patronage has only increased by 60% from 43.6 million in 2008 to 73.1 million in 2019.

Over \$7.5 billion of new rapid transit projects are now either in construction or are in detailed design. (page 6)

Comment: This is clear evidence that public transport has not been meeting the needs of the public when it has taken 70 years and an 500% increase in the greater Auckland population (from 319,000 in 1950 to 1,630,000 in 2020)² to once again reach 100 million annual public transport boardings.

Outer suburbs and lower-income suburbs of Tāmaki Makaurau are poorly served by irregular and expensive public transport. In particular, public bus transport is failing to deliver a desirable alternative to private vehicles.

¹ See <https://at.govt.nz/about-us/transport-plans-strategies/regional-land-transport-plan/>.

² See <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/21957/auckland/population>.

Recommendation 1: To produce better outcomes for Auckland, use public consultation to explore the reasons why public bus transport is failing to deliver a desirable alternative to private vehicles.

RLTP states: *In July 2020 the council unanimously passed the Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan, which boldly aims to halve Auckland's greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) by 2030. The plan's main transport actions are to encourage mode switch to public transport and **active modes**, decarbonise AT-contracted buses, and advocate to Central Government for policies to support lower and zero-emission vehicles.*

In 2019, an additional 16,600 cars (330 per week) were registered in Auckland, adding to congestion, contributing to increased emissions, clogging freight movements and costing time and money. The road transport system contributes to 38.5% of Auckland's emissions and the final advice and Central Government's response to it is critical to tackling climate change. (page 4)

Comment: From 2018 to 2019, on average, the population of Auckland was increasing by 480 each week, so the corresponding increase in car numbers is not surprising. People struggled to rent or buy a house, but they could buy a car so they could get to work. An unreliable public transport system gives people little choice.

RLTP states: *Covid-19 has impacted some parts of our community harder raising social equity issues. Covid-19 has also changed the way we work. The rise of office meeting software such as 'Zoom' and 'Teams', has significantly impacted transport in Auckland, with major structural shifts in the need to travel for work purposes. People travel on buses, trains and ferries less frequently, with some have returned to the perceived 'safety' of private motor vehicles. As a result,.. Auckland Transport (AT) has had to rely on greater funding support from Auckland Council, and the Covid-19 Response and Recovery Fund to maintain services and top-up reduced capital expenditure through the Government 'shovel-ready' programme. (page 5)*

Comment: Covid-19 impacted those on lower incomes in lower-skilled occupations more severely than other groups in the community who were able to continue to work and earn from home. Occupations in hospitality and retail were hit particularly hard, and many have lost their employment permanently. Access to public or private transport matters less when you have no money and nowhere to go.

RLTP states: *In 2017, 813 people died or were seriously injured (DSI) on Auckland roads. Provisional numbers for 2020 show a continued decline since then, with 539 DSI for the year ending 31 December 2020. ... Auckland continues to have one of the highest rates of pedestrian, cyclist and motorcyclist road deaths in the world.... Eleven people died in the last two months of 2020 and 7 people died on Auckland's road network in February 2021 alone. (page 5)*

Comment: A recent positive change to Auckland City roads is the lower speed limit, reducing the fear and risk for pedestrians. Unfortunately AT has introduced frequent variations in the speed limit, from 30kph to 40kph and back again on the same street. The random variation appears to encourage motorists to ignore the speed limits. Police issued more than 400,000 infringement notices for using a phone while driving in 2020, and between 2015 and 2019 there were 22 deaths and 73 serious injuries from crashes in which drivers were distracted by a phone.³ Yet the fine for drivers caught using their phones behind the wheel has recently increased from only \$80 to only \$150.

³ See <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/fine-for-using-cellphone-while-driving-jumps-to-150-a-heartbroken-sons-warning/GAKSZA5WP2RUTH2AHGLFADIUDM/>.

Senior Road Users are more likely to be injured or die following a crash than younger people. In Auckland between 2015 to 2019, Senior Road User crashes resulted in 58 deaths and 398 serious injuries.⁴

Road deaths by age⁵

Age group	2017	2018	2019	2020
16-19	10	14	5	7
20-24	19	18	14	10
25-39	30	30	25	21
40-59	33	28	42	27
60+	25	34	32	24

Recommendation 2: Standardise 'safety' speed limit at 30kph in main pedestrian areas and around schools.

Recommendation 3: Increase the penalty for drivers using phones behind the wheel to \$1,000.

RLTP states: *New safe cycleway infrastructure and shared paths have been built and progress is being made on the remaining elements of the Urban Cycleway Programme such as Te Ara Ki Uta Ki Tai (Glen Innes to Tāmaki Shared Path)... There has been a 16% increase in trips on bikes since 2016 and this will accelerate once the Urban Cycleways Programme... is completed. (page 7) ... Covid-19 highlighted the value of previous investments in AT HOP and the AT Mobile app and we are increasingly seeing the role technology can play in making our roads safer through the likes of red light cameras and more productive dynamic laning. **E-scooters and e-bikes for hire** and car-sharing schemes are further evidence of how technology is enabling changes in the way we travel. Ongoing investment in technology with a focus on transport customers is an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to delivering a better transport system. (page 9)*

Comment: All users of shared paths are required by law to use them fairly and safely. When bike-riding on a shared path you are required to: Keep left; When approaching pedestrians from behind, let them know you are there by politely calling out or ringing a bell; Pass on the right when possible, or pass in the safest way; Ride at a speed that does not put others at risk; and e-bikes should be at their lowest power setting.⁶ Cycling is excellent for fitness, a great way to get around, and an **active mode** of transport, as is walking, not to be confused with **e-scooters** or e-skateboards. The Auckland Council decision to restrict e-scooters to footpaths has destroyed the enjoyment of walking in the city and suburbs. Auckland surgeons are operating on more e-scooter injuries than motorbike injuries,⁷ and e-scooter crash victims are arriving at hospital with the sort of traumatic, multiple injuries usually only seen after car crashes. In January 2020, Auckland's e-scooter-related injuries cost taxpayers over \$40,000 per week.⁸

Recommendation 4: Improve safety for pedestrians, and restore Auckland City as a desirable destination by adapting the 2019 [Proposed e-scooter regulations in France](#), promoting both user and pedestrian safety, including:

- **Riding on the pavement is prohibited unless at walking speed.**
- **Only one rider is allowed per device.**

⁴ See <https://at.govt.nz/driving-parking/road-safety/senior-road-users/>.

⁵ See <https://www.transport.govt.nz/statistics-and-insights/safety-road-deaths/>.

⁶ See <https://at.govt.nz/driving-parking/road-safety/senior-road-users/>.

⁷ See <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/auckland-surgeons-operating-on-more-e-scooter-injuries-than-motorbike-injuries-with-total-costs-passing-400k/LD3YERKQA32LIR5G54QUN56C2Q/>.

⁸ See <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/111121216/acc-pays-out-740000-for-escooterrelated-injuries-in-five-months>.

- **No mobile phone use or headphones are allowed while on the e-scooter.**
- **Users must use cycle paths where available.**
- **E-scooters' top speed is capped at 25km/h.**
- **Users riding on permitted faster roads must wear a helmet and high-visibility clothing.**

Any infringement of these regulations is punished by a fine of NZD \$232, and up to NZD \$2,581 for exceeding the speed limit.

RLTP states: *Road pricing (or **congestion pricing**) is another important area of regulatory change. The current way Aucklanders pay for using their roads (primarily the Regional Fuel Tax) does not incentivise them to be used in the most productive way, or support climate change outcomes. (page 10)*

Comment: A recent NZHerald OpEd noted that "People living in poorer suburbs bear the brunt of the RFT. They tend to live in areas without easy access to public transport so are more likely to drive more and in cheaper, fuel-inefficient vehicles.. resulting in the purchase of more fuel".⁹ While the recommended solution was punitive tolls for single-occupancy vehicles, there are other ways in which congestion charging can be applied, without penalising inner-city dwellers.

Recommendation 5: Investigate the design and application of congestion charges in London, and user charges in other jurisdictions, while ensuring adequate protections for city dwellers.

Other Comments: RPRC endorses the Total Mobility scheme supporting people who cannot use public transport to travel, all or some of the time.

Contracted taxis: In Auckland, those who are eligible get a subsidised rate (a 50% discount, up to a maximum subsidy of \$40 per trip) on contracted taxis for door to door transport, and an accessible concession loaded on a Total Mobility AT HOP card used to pay for discounted travel on public transport.¹⁰

Mobility Parking Permits: allows parking near the destination in accessible reserved parking spaces, or parking longer than the stated time in certain car parks and metered spaces. Eligibility criteria include:

- Inability to walk and always require the use of a wheelchair.
- Ability to walk distances is severely restricted by a medical condition or disability..
- A medical condition or disability requires physical contact or close supervision to safely get around and cannot be left unattended. For example, if you experience disorientation, confusion, or severe anxiety.¹¹

AT HOP card: The reusable pre-pay smart card for travel on trains, ferries and buses around Auckland saves at least 25% discount off single trip cash bus, train and ferry fares, excluding SkyBus bus services and Waiheke ferry services. Gold AT HOP¹² cards cost \$10 and must be loaded with at least \$1 HOP Money at the time of purchase. The \$10 card purchase price is non-refundable.

Recommendation 6. The RLTP requires urgent attention and adequate solutions to address Auckland's immediate and long-term transport-related problems, and improve passenger safety on public transport, before, during and after the journey; pedestrian safety on footpaths and roads; and public health generally.

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⁹ See <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/ranjana-qupta-mitigating-aucklands-traffic-woes-through-tax/ZFLMV3DFJSFG5OU56DHBQIHMMI/>.

¹⁰ See <https://at.govt.nz/driving-parking/road-safety/senior-road-users/>.

¹¹ See <https://at.govt.nz/driving-parking/road-safety/senior-road-users/>.

¹² See <https://at.govt.nz/bus-train-ferry/at-hop-card/card-concessions-discount-fares/senior-supergold-concession/buy-a-gold-at-hop-card/>.