



## **NATIONAL ROAD CARRIERS PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD OF INQUIRY FOR THE EAST WEST LINK PROJECT PROPOSAL**

**28 August 2017**

**EPA Reference: 126392**

Thank you for this opportunity....

My name is Tony Garnier, Director of TG Enterprises Ltd an independent Auckland-focused firm who assist organisations to address strategic issues affecting their performance and growth aspirations.

I am joined by Grant Turner, a National Road Carriers executive with responsibility for Auckland.

As you have seen from the National Road Carriers submission and heard from Grant's opening presentation, their business focus is to represent the freight transport sector.

Our starting premise today is that:

Without a transport network able to move freight and people around Auckland efficiently and safely we put at risk our self-belief that this is an attractive and successful city to live, work and visit – a fast growing, international scale city.

Our presentation is divided into two sections – From a freight viewpoint:

- The problem we have -
- Our proposed solution -

We have a power point with photos showing what is now 'normal' traffic congestion in the project area

Taken a few days ago, you can see that the local roads in the project area are not up to the standards needed for an international city of our size, ambition and pace of growth.

This is not surprising. The area was designated industrial in the 1960s and when a strategic east-west road access was first planned.

The 100s of businesses that have established since then, together with the rail hub, are today supported by 1000s of freight trips a day. It is a cluster which generates about 8 percent of New Zealand's GDP.

Traffic counts at key local road intersections record a heavy truck every 6-to-8 seconds through the working day.

This business growth – not just in the precinct but across Auckland and the upper North Island and which the freight sector services every day from the east-west project area – is generating three trends:

- More freight trips + more rail freight
- More commuters and other commercial traffic
- More congestion

The pictures reinforce NRC's submissions identifying numerous failings of the local road network and the damage this is doing to the freight distribution task:

- The extended congestion and its time-cost to freight operators.
- The poor access between the industrial area, especially the Southdown Railway Freight Terminal and the motorway network for inter- and intra-city freight delivery.
- The safety risks and mutual inconvenience arising between heavy trucks, and pedestrian, retail and residential traffic in and adjacent to Onehunga's retail centre.
- The inadequacies of the local street network to efficiently and safely handle the scale and volume of heavy freight traffic – around 6000 heavy freight vehicles (HPMVs) per working day & projected to grow by 6% a year for the foreseeable future.
- The stop-go trips, sometimes 20-30 minutes to travel Neilson and/or Church street – adding to driver frustration & concerns over their regulatory driver limits (13 hours), adding to vehicle running costs (about \$100 per hour), and adding to emission pollution.

Our submission explores each of these points in some depth, and which I will take as read and not repeat.

**Taken together, the combined impact of these defects reinforce why National Road Carriers strongly supports the application.**

So the problem to be fixed – is the lack of an efficient road system.

Over an extended period NRC has come to a view that a new motorway-to-motorway road built as a limited access state highway is required.

We considered alternatives. For a number of years NRC supported an upgrade of Neilson Street. But the worsening congestion and impacts mentioned above led to a firm view that a retrofit on Neilson St would be inadequate for the growing freight tasks the local road would be required to service.

We were also helped in forming our support for a new road by a series of studies undertaken some years ago – including Opus (2005), GHD (2007), Beca (2009) and others - indicating that without a strategic, efficient East-West corridor, by 2020 congestion will be severe and end-to-end most working days.

One of our pictures by chance was taken on such a day. End-to-end congestion is happening!

If anything, since we lodged our submission in March, evidence supporting the case for a scaled-up fit for purpose strategic corridor has been reinforced by two major developments.

First, the opening of the Waterview Tunnels that completes the Western Rig Route and which was also planned for in 1970. The benefits have been immediate:

- 30+ years to plan, design and build – two weeks to release significant economic and social benefits. ((Aside – surely, we can do better?))
- People travelling from North Shore to Auckland Airport and the release of congestion on other parts of the network have added 40 minutes of free time to many commuters lives – instead of leaving for work at 6.30 they can now do so after 7 am.
- An increase in traffic of around 2000 v/day coming off SH20 at Onehunga – but without an East West Link is adding to Neilson, Church and Onehunga retail area congestion.
- Because of the extra interest to use the western route to head north there are now long traffic queues backing up at Onehunga lights.

This worsening local congestion reinforces why a strategic and seamless east-west route is needed – as in the Waterview area, it will return local roads to the local community

Second, the plans unveiled recently to develop Auckland's rail network means not just more rail freight serving the Southdown Freight Terminal but also more road freight.

The Rail head already handles more containers – from truck to rail and rail to truck – than any port in NZ, other than Ports of Auckland and Tauranga.

Within 10 years a 3<sup>rd</sup> and possibly a 4th rail line on the main trunk will likely be in place. The new East West Link needs to be ready to take up this additional traffic. Without it, the chaos on Neilson and Church will become even more chronic.

This growth and these developments reinforce Auckland's emergence as a mid-sized international city of scale – a city with more than half NZ's population within 250 miles of the project area and served by the freight traffic generated in or destined for the project area.

Only in the last few years have we begun to give urgency to investing in the 'catch-up' infrastructure with capacity and scale required to adequately service Auckland's rapid growth.

**Our proposed solution – a new foreshore road**, or more accurately; to retro-fit a strategic road able to service the heavily developed industrial area and distribution hub that has materialised since the 1960s.

Completing it with speed and urgency is one of the many legacy projects holding back Auckland's effort to put in place a transport network – I emphasise the word network – that reduces congestion, supports growth and productivity and improves access to employment.

Along the route are many sub-stories – mainly to do with design – and which we have requested the Panel give attention to ensure the new road is:

- Part of Auckland's (planned/ integrated) strategic transport network – not an arterial, and not a local road – but an east-west point-to-point providing seamless access into the industrial area of Southdown-Penrose-Onehunga;

- A route that clearly and safely separates through traffic from freight heading to the rail head and other industrial zone businesses – ultimately 3-lanes in each direction; and,
- Ideally, no traffic lights – but slip lanes and/or what some call turn-pikes for entry to the freight/industrial area;
- As part of an integrated local, arterial and strategic traffic management system we recommend for the area, we suggest that other local traffic (including business/freight) should be encouraged to use the Neilson/Church arterials.

Another design sub-story strongly supported by NRC is grade separation with Great South Road.

- Doing as part of the project will eliminate a potential major bottle neck – similar to that just fixed at the intersection between Kirkbride Road and SH20 on the Airport access route – and avoid having to do later, when traffic volumes will be much higher.

Briefly, some further points:

NZTA's intentions to improve wetland areas and provide new access to the foreshore should be commended – it adds a dimension and opportunity to 'clean-up' a reclaimed piece of foreshore that is unlikely to happen without this project.

NRC also appreciates that there is another major sub-story ((if I can use that term)) associated with the cluster of issues around Ann's Creek that you are having to process: –

- The nip-and-tuck on precious industrial 6 land
- The causeway, the helicopter pad
- Dealing with railway lines, power station & high voltage cables and pylons,
- Flora and fauna.

This is a complex urban development project by any stretch; partly attributable to a failure to convert planning for this area of Auckland done 50 years ago.

Finally, we submit that none the points of detail we have raised here and further ones in our submission are reason, in our view, to reject the application.

The rationale for a strategic east west link based on the NZTA proposal is strongly supported by NRC. Is it a compromise, yes. Can improvements be made, yes.

But the consequences to the freight sector - and the role it plays in securing Auckland's (New Zealand's) standard of living and lifestyle - of the application not succeeding far outweigh the matters of detail we have raised and, from our observations, concerns of others submitted to you.

Thank you.